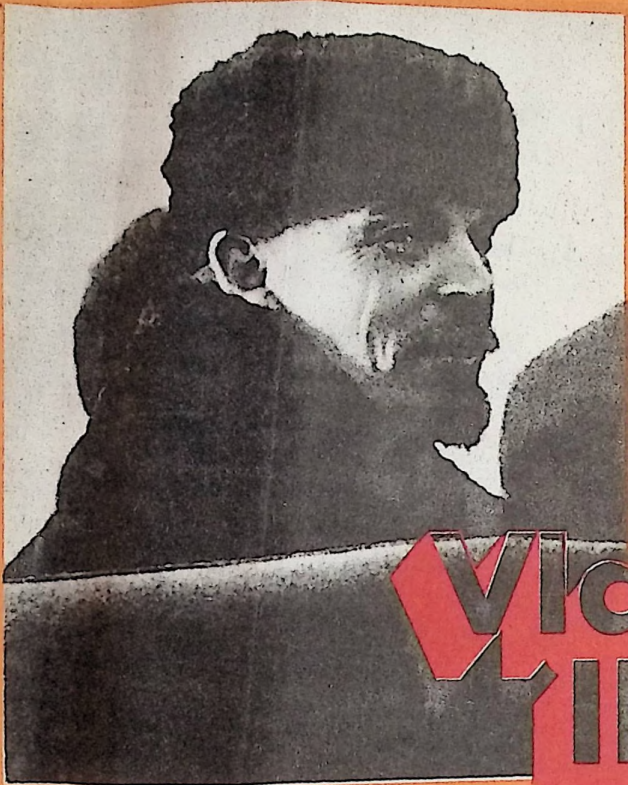


Political Affairs

Theoretical Journal, Communist Party USA, March/April 1997

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Remembering
The Greatest
Leader of the
International
Working Class...

Vladimir Ilyich LENIN

1870 - 1924

■ Class Struggle - Hall

■ Wheeling-Pitt - Winebrunner

■ Vietnam Today - Tynes

■ Social Security - Perle

■ Healthcare in Cuba - Sloan

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The Class Struggle: the Most Basic Fact of Life

Gus Hall

The class struggle is the most basic fact of life in our capitalist society. It determines who we are. It molds our personality, our character.

It is a major factor in how we think, how we approach all questions in life. It is basic in our politics, in our ideology, in our culture. It is basic because it is basic in real life, the real world we live in.

The class struggle is the most fundamental, defining feature of our capitalist system. There can be no capitalism without the two main, opposing classes – the working class and the capitalist class. There can be no capitalism without the every day class struggle between them. A study of the class struggle is a study of capitalism.

Some call it working-class ideology; others call it the ideology of Marxism-Leninism, or socialist, or Communist ideology. I will simply call it our ideology, because it is just that – ours.

The working class of all countries has the same ideology. Each working class reflects the specific racial and national composition of its country.

Our U.S. working class is a single class – multiracial, multinational. But all are exploited as a class. That is what unites the class, exploitation as a class. Class “oneness” is the most fundamental question within the class struggle.

There can be class unity only if the organizations of the working class, specifically the trade unions, fight against both class exploitation and the super-exploitation as a result of racism.

The struggle against racism is most successful when it is related to the working class, the class struggle and class exploitation.

The main opposite ideology is ruling class, capitalist ideology, including anti-Communism. Capitalist ideology has an advantage in a capitalist society because it is the ideology of the ruling class.

Its sole purpose is to defend and cover up for the capitalist system of exploitation for corporate profits. It is rooted in the idea that there is no class struggle or class exploitation.

The capitalist class, the monopoly corporations, spend many millions every year to spread its ideology in the mass media, in movies, books and magazines, in the schools, in the workplace – everywhere.

Another opposite trend argues that U.S. national interests overshadow and supercede all other interests. Therefore, they argue, there must only be cooperation and collaboration between the bosses and the workers in the common interests of the whole country.

Then there are the more middle-class currents. Their ideology is based on the concept of downgrading and minimizing the working class. They push concepts of class collaboration, labor-management partnership and social democracy.

Working-class ideology and an understanding of the unrelenting class struggle between the exploiters and exploited enables workers to avoid the pitfalls of all the anti-working-class ideological trends.

LABOR: SOLE SOURCE OF PROFITS ■ Exploitation of workers in the production process – the source of all profits – takes place at the point of production. It is here that the working class produces more than it gets back in the form of wages and benefits. It is the difference between the added value this class produces and what it is paid that is the source of all profits. Marx named it “the law of surplus value,” or “the law of profits.”

For example, today out of a working day of 8 hours, the average worker works 2 hours and 9 minutes for himself and 5 hours and 51 minutes for the boss. That’s corporate profits.

The fact that surplus value (profits) is generated at the point of production and that workers in this relationship to the corporations daily confront naked exploitation compels them toward unity and struggle because the labor process is social, collective and increasingly global.

Workers in basic and mass production industries carry on the class struggle at the point of production daily. They must constantly use their accumulated organizational skills. They have a history of fighting the class enemy. They understand, through

Gus Hall is the national chairman of the CPUSA.

struggle, the necessity of class unity based on Black, Brown, white unity.

The working class is molded in this production process and thus forced to play an advanced role in the struggle for a better life.

Thus, a working-class outlook is shaped by a constantly reinforced understanding on the part of workers that they are not getting a fair shake, that exploitation is unjust and has no moral justification.

The experience of struggling against exploitation itself becomes a part of the cumulative objective framework that molds a working-class outlook.

UNITY OF THE MANY ■ The class of exploiters has political power. They have the government machinery, the armed forces, the police. They have control over the press, radio and television.

The ideology of the capitalist class justifies the use of governmental authority and force in the interests of the few, even when such use is against the best interests of the people as a whole and of the nation.

The working class under capitalism has no such instruments on its side. Workers are compelled to seek strength in their great numbers, organized into unions. Their only weapon in struggle is the unity of the many.

Mass action, mass movements, and strikes are concepts that grow from this realization. Disjointed actions by individuals is not a working-class trait. There is no other section of the population that has such compelling reasons for acting in mass as has the working class. It is in this process that the working class is made and molded, by capitalism, into the leading class. It is through this process that the working class realizes that as a class, under capitalism, they have no place to go, that there is no escaping the class struggle.

The process of alienation that takes place under capitalism pushes non-working class people into a feeling of helplessness, to shifts and swings as individuals. Such helplessness and frustration is overcome in the working class because the worker has a class to turn to and from which to gain strength. This, in turn, leads to action, to struggle to collective effort. This becomes a feature of working-class ideology.

Thus, only after the basic nature of the working class, and within that the basic industrial and mass production workers is firmly established, is it possible to view the working class as a part of a much wider and a more complex social, political and eco-

nomic framework.

Then we can ask: Has the working class changed over the years, especially as a result of the scientific and technological revolution? Of course. Are other sectors much bigger and more important today than even ten years ago? Of course. How could it be otherwise. However, this does not change the position or role of the basic industrial, mass production workers – i.e., steel, auto, electrical, rubber, machine tool.

The actions of these workers impact the whole class. When they move, the whole class moves. When they win a struggle, the whole class wins. And the fact is that the greatest surplus value (profit) still comes from exploitation of these workers.

Victory in the all-out class war by Wheeling-Pitt will mean not only victory for the steelworkers and their union in its eight plants. It will mean victory for all steelworkers. It will save the steel union. It will greatly affect the upcoming basic steel contract negotiations. It will have an impact on all contract negotiations. It will be a tremendous class victory.

THE ONLY REVOLUTIONARY CLASS ■ It is true that there are moments when other groups or sectors of people project radical ideas. And, that at moments other groups or sectors come to the fore to play a special role. But they are just that – momentary.

The working class is the *only* consistently revolutionary force because it is the only force that is directly and consistently exploited. This is not a choice or decision of the class. It is the objective reality of the class struggle.

The middle class and professional strata experience exploitation second hand, more indirectly. This is reflected in their ideology, in their attitude about exploitation, in their approaches to life and struggle. They are exploited more as individuals. The working class is exploited as a class.

However, as mass layoffs, downsizing, mergers, monopolization and the overall deterioration in the quality of life more and more victimize intellectuals, professionals, academics, students, scientists, etc., they gravitate toward the class that is in the center of the oppression, the working class. They increasingly tend to identify their self-interests with the working class. Ever greater numbers become an integral part of the class struggle.

It was Marx who first stressed that the most revolutionary class, the working class, appropriates the

Continued on page 24

Strike in Steel

Denise Winebrenner

We are winning them. We have won them: Bridgestone/Firestone, Bayou Steel, Ravenswood - but they are getting harder and harder.

USWA President George Becker

The structural crisis of capitalism has forever changed collective bargaining in the steel industry. It is changing the steelworkers union, steelworkers, their families and communities.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the Little Steel Strike in 1937. The Little Steel Strike set the pace for the expanding standard of living for basic industrial workers and created decent wages, health care, workplace standards and pensions.

During these years the organization of basic industrial workers, steelworkers, auto workers, electrical and rubber workers, into the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) opened the door for all workers to buy a home, send the kids to college and build a stable future for seniors. With their friends and allies in the Communist Party, the left and progressive movements, industrial workers chipped away at the walls of racism. For one brief shining moment, they expanded democracy and kicked open doors of opportunity. Industrial workers directly challenged capitalism's absolute control of the wealth and won impressive victories. Mass production workers' struggles on the picket lines and in the halls of legislatures achieved living standards that were the envy of the world.

The election of Reagan signaled the upsurge of reaction in the 1980s as the ruling-class response to the structural crisis of capitalism. It is a trend that continues with the rise of the fascistic right and its mass base in the religious right. Riding the high tide of the Cold War on labor, which just about destroyed the left in the basic unions, the ruling class pulled out all the stops to destroy the working class. The anti-working class assault was and is designed to mount a frontal assault on the industrial

unions through plant closings, scabbing, massive, global contracting out, the export of jobs abroad and the internal cancer of labor-management schemes. This is all designed to hamstring labor's political action.

Meanwhile, change swept through the leadership of the unions, including the USWA. Cold War approaches collapsed in disarray in the mid-'80s. For the first time in decades, Phelps Dodge set back the USWA in basic industry during the 1983 copper strike in Morenci, Arizona. Since 1983, steel monopolies, like U.S. Steel, downsized over 300,000 basic steelworkers out of the mills and onto the welfare lines throughout the industrial heartland, ripping cities and communities to shreds. Youngstown, Gary, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Baltimore, McKeesport, Wheeling and hundreds of towns and cities are victims of a corporate neutron bomb.

Almost like a smoker who knows full well that cigarettes are the kiss of death, the USWA clung to class collaborationist bargaining in the '80s. Despite heroic efforts by the rank and file, concessionary contracts and the break-up of coordinated bargaining (until 1986, there was one basic steel agreement which covered the entire industry) characterized union efforts to get a contract.

But in 1985, in the Ohio and Mon Valleys, for the first time since 1959, 8500 steelworkers struck the Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel (WP) complex which stretched across three states, Ohio, West Virginia and Pennsylvania. For 98 days, steelworkers, who had only heard or read about strikes, held tight and achieved a contract, albeit a concessionary one, but a USWA contract nonetheless.

If nothing else, the struggle in 1985 was the preview of coming attractions for the entire union, indeed, the entire working class. Bankruptcy, chapter 11 and 7, scabbing and open attempts to break the industrial unions, were unknown until the '80s. Now they are household words among working-class families.

Underfunding worker pension funds and gutting massive amounts of capital to pay golden parachutes for CEOs were rare. Million dollar salaries

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for steel company executives was kept under wraps. Now it is standard operating procedure among all monopolies and merits attention from the media.

Plant closings and layoffs were not called "downsizing" in the '80s. Now, every private enterprise and even the public sector extols downsizing, as if the wrenching unemployment experienced by the steelworkers heralded a golden age.

The labor-management participation time bomb in the USWA contracts of the '80s has been elevated to the status of law with Congressional legislation, the Team Act, in the 1990s (the USWA opposes and is actively lobbying to defeat the Team Act.)

The corporate-media ideological weapon of blaming the victim, the broad sweep of softening up, splitting and disarming the working class, took many forms against basic workers including holding them and their unions responsible for plant closings and bankruptcy.

All of the corporate tactics used to drive U.S. workers into poverty and destroy their achievements over 60 years were first tried out on a group of steelworkers in the Ohio and Mon Valleys. The ruling class implements a policy of industrial concentration.

A DIFFERENT LABOR MOVEMENT ■ Today, the labor movement is not the same. The 1985 showdown at Wheeling-Pitt signaled the end of an era which culminated in the 1995 AFL-CIO elections and labor's defeat of the Contract on America just months ago. The working class is kicking up its heels, meeting the corporate offensive head on. The USWA played the leading role in turning around the AFL-CIO. In the three short years since the Becker administration took office, the steelworkers rescued the struggle at Bridgestone/Firestone – and won. Union rubber workers in, scabs out and a good, non-concessionary contract was achieved.

They are also honing their skills to tackle the non-union, mini-mills with their victory against Bayou Steel in Louisiana, a right-to-work state. With the announcement of the unification of the USWA, UAW and IAM to form the largest, most powerful industrial union in the country, the steelworkers built a powerful core which changed the nature of the AFL-CIO. They are rebuilding their union with the launching of the Steelworkers Organizing Committee II (SWOC).

But most importantly, the USWA fights. It has not abandoned workers, left them out to wither on

picket lines for years or called off a strike and worked without a contract.

Today steelworkers at Wheeling-Pitt are on the cutting edge again. However, they didn't volunteer – they were targeted.

On October 1, 1996, the contract negotiated between the USWA and Wheeling-Pitt and approved by the bankruptcy court expired. For the first time in nearly a decade the union went to bargaining table without a judge looking over their shoulder with the final word on wages and benefits. Steelworkers made the ultimate sacrifice to pull the company out of bankruptcy. They worked – hard – under second class contract and their communities endured deepening poverty.

RAW EXPLOITATION ■ Since the 1985 Wheeling-Pitt strike and bankruptcy contract, there are 4,000 fewer steelworkers today. At Wheeling-Pitt there was the most extensive Labor Management Participation Team plan in the industry and the cheapest contract. When Wheeling-Pitt emerged from bankruptcy in 1996, it was sitting on \$406 million in cash – unheard of in the steel industry.* From the 2.4 million tons of steel produced, rolled and shipped by steelworkers, Wheeling-Pitt stuffed double the industry standard into their vaults: \$8 per ton shipped is the average in the organized sector of the steel industry (the difference between the unionized sector of the steel industry and the non-union sector is grist for another article) compared to \$16 per ton shipped at WP. In the past 4 years the owner of WP, New York financier Ron LaBow, has reaped a cool \$28 million in personal profits. As the expiration of the union contract approached in 1996, Wheeling-Pitt had every intention to keep and expand private profits, with or without the bankruptcy court. Steelworkers put it this way: In a recently aired radio spot a 21-year veteran steelworker explains the strike to his 5-year old son, "The man who owns the company wants to keep all the money to himself. He doesn't want to share so daddy can have a future, so you can go to school." The son replies, "Why don't the police arrest that man!" The strike is about raw exploitation.

"Never," was the Wheeling-Pitt position in the months prior to the contract expiration. Never was their posture when steelworkers voted to strike and, as we go to press, it is still the company battle cry.

(All figures from the USWA research department).

This is the company answer to workers demand for a defined pension, a guaranteed \$40 per year of service a raise, ending contracting out and saving jobs. Faced with an iron curtain on the company side of the table, steelworkers had no choice but to strike. On October 1, 1996, union picket lines went up and furnaces in Ohio, West Virginia and Pennsylvania cooled down.

Steelworkers are smart. They noticed that this struggle was different when Wheeling-Pitt shipped out all steel products prior to the contract deadline. In 1985, mass picketing halted steel shipments during the strike and helped build solidarity. The other tip-off was the agreement that the company would cease coke production (coke, processed from coal is the yeast of steelmaking). During the 1985 strike, a similar agreement between Wheeling-Pitt and the USWA saw coke produced and shipped during the strike, under armed Pinkerton Guard.

FULL COURT PRESS ■ In 1996, the company hired a public relations firm and kicked off relentless mass media campaign. The propaganda barrage looks like the national elections complete with phony polls, staged rallies, mass mailings and paid advertising. Woody Guthrie could have had Wheeling-Pitt in mind when he observed, "Some folks rob with you with a shotgun, others with a fountain pen."

In terms of scale and viciousness, this ideological campaign is the new feature of the strike. The USWA estimates that Wheeling-Pitt has spent over \$70 million in the past 6 months to destabilize the union at its base. They mobilized the ultra-right religious network, operating on the "love technology" theory, organized stoolpigeons and a Gingrichite Congressman plus the traditional ruling class weapon of the press to demoralize, isolate and destroy the union.

During the 1996 elections the AFL-CIO spent \$35 million on the entire national elections campaign. In this strike one steel company in one region of the country has doubled that amount. With the rest of basic industry negotiations on the horizon, and an increasingly frisky AFL-CIO, which had just dealt the 91 Republican Revolution a blow a section of the ruling class drew a line in the sand, throwing their full weight behind WP. With the half a billion dollars steelworkers created for them in the bank and backed by a wounded, but still standing ultra-

right the company could bankroll ideological union-busting.

In the first month of the strike, hundreds of steelworkers and their families marched on the company headquarters in Wheeling demanding negotiations, not talks. Steelworkers initiated a leafleting campaign at the Wheeling Downs race track, also owned by WP. When Wheeling-Pitt announced that widow's benefits would not be paid, thousands joined in union protests. One entire wall of USWA local union 1190s hall in Steubenville, Ohio was filled with support from other unions, churches, civic organizations and small businesses. With 2531 members from the steel and coke producing departments of the Wheeling-Pitt complex, 1190 is the largest of the 8 local unions on strike and the epicenter of the strike. The family committee was up and running, organizing food distributions and dealing with financial crisis.

But in the shadowy world of the ultra-right, other forces were at work. Steelworker/stoolpigeons who were active in the Cooperative Partnership Agreement and the LMPT at WP, were busy organizing a back-to-work campaign. They wrote a petition and garnered 1100 steelworker signatures to negotiate reopening the mill. It sounded innocent enough, except that it was addressed to both the union and the company and implied that steelworkers would return to work while talks took place.

In fact the union had, for a year, tried to negotiate. Thus, this small group began to undermine the union leadership and the strike. What is interesting and unique about this group is their willingness to be interviewed in the press and even have their picture taken. The local union leadership exposed this scheme, but, as the strike was starting to be measured in months, damage had been done.

LABOR SOLIDARITY ■ In November, the union took action. It appealed to local unions throughout the industry in Ohio and Pennsylvania and rank-and-file steelworkers from local unions at WCI, LTV and USX came to Steubenville for house-to-house visits with striking steelworkers and their families. By December 22, over 5,000 steelworkers and their families filled the St. Johns Arena for a USWA sponsored support rally - a stunning answer to this phase of destabilization.

In response to the back-to-work petition, USWA

president George Becker told the rally that the union would pull the LMPT off the table. The Cooperative Partnership Agreement would not be part of the new contract. It doesn't work, said the president.

Support poured in at the rally. Richard Trumka, secretary-treasurer of the National AFL-CIO joined the federation officers from three states and affiliated local unions on the platform. Over \$160,000 was raised to blunt the impact of the holiday season on the picket lines.

How did this small group of stoolpigeons have the credibility among the rank and file to get 1100 signatures on essentially a back-to-work petition? There appears to be three reasons: the reinstatement of total company control over hiring and promotion, the LMPT and the impact of the religious right.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION ■ From the early 1970s to the mid-'80s the steel company's absolute control over hiring and promotion in the steel industry was limited by the affirmative action program, the Consent Decree. Until the Supreme Court decision creating affirmative action in the industry, the rule in hiring and promotion was, "It is not what you know, but who you know." Racism and segregation by nationality ruled the mills – women, outside of clerical, were as scarce as hen's teeth.

The Consent Decree dented the company's choke hold on hiring and upgrading forcing the companies including WP, to meet racial and gender quotas. Entrenched company racism and cronyism was limited.

The crisis of the '80s all but destroyed affirmative action in the industry. This opened the door for Wheeling-Pitt and other companies to return to the bad old days of racism and the good-ol-boy system of hiring and upgrading.

At WP, as rank-and-file steelworkers went door to door to answer the media campaign and the back-to-work movements petition, one name kept popping up, Uncle Bernie. Bernie Ravisio is a member of USWA 1190.

It turned out that Uncle Bernie played a unique role for WP acting as a one-man employment agency. How does a rank and filer get that kind of power? Only from WP, only from the company. This subversion of democratic rights is right out of the days of the shake-up and buying the boss whiskey to get hired on at the mill.

At WP, the "Uncle Bernie Syndrome" went to the extreme of nationality-based hiring, resurrecting

Italian nationalism. They went through the Italian churches and clubs to seek out the right steelworker. For example, the back-to-work movement put together a full slate for the April 2 local union elections. All names on their slate were Italian, one nationality – a practice that had been dead for over 30 years. An outstanding campaign and leadership by the pro-union, pro-strike multi-racial and multi-national incumbent officers won the election, but it was a struggle.

THE MANY FACES OF COLLABORATION ■ The USWA's experience with the LMPT, or CPA at WP, is well known. This internal cancer reached its zenith at Wheeling-Pitt because of the devastation of job losses and pressures from the nearby Weirton mill, which has a company union (it is not part of the USWA) and is the largest Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP) steel mill in the U.S. Clearly, as the Communist Party and others have argued for years, LMPT leads to company unionism. But it also allows the company to organize a base in the rank and file to crystallize a back-to-work movement that can get 1100 signatures on a phony petition.

The third reason or challenge that the USWA faces at Wheeling-Pitt is the impact of the religious right. The network of company ministers and consultants is shadowy and vicious.

A man by the name of Wayne Alderson showed up at the Wheeling-Pitt strike in 1985 and is back on the scene in 1997. He is a self proclaimed born-again capitalist and has been heralded by Pat Robertson, the Christian Coalition, Charles Colson, of Watergate CREEP fame, D.C. Burnham, former chairman of Westinghouse and George Stinson, former chairman of National Steel, which was also the sole owner the Weirton mill before the ESOP. Alderson was on Reagan's short list for Secretary of Labor. He boasts of meetings with John D. Rockefeller IV, currently, Senator from West Virginia and Republican presidential candidate, Bob Dole. He has been recognized by former Presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter. Beginning with the 1978 long strike in coal, Alderson has been a background figure at every major confrontation where the union has been weakened, broken or the company shut down. Phelps Dodge and Eastern are two examples linking Alderson and plant closings or union busting. He is the CEO of a consultant company, Value of the Person Inc. based in Pittsburgh.

His doctrine is vicious, schooling companies on

the "love" techniques to invade the personal lives of workers and their families under the fig leaf of religious counseling and spiritual relief. In 1978, the *Daily World* hit the nail on the head when it ran the headline, *Bosses Launch Anti-Labor Cult* comparing Alderson to Jim Jones, leader of the fatal Jonestown Cult.

Working through local preachers, Alderson arrive in Steubenville shortly after the massive USWA rally in December, 1996 and the exposure of the phony back-to-work petition. By March 3, 1997, one month almost to the day before the local union elections and referendum on the strike, Alderson is the featured speaker at a rally where labor and management will pray together.

Meanwhile through the media, Wheeling-Pitt is running full page adds directly attacking USWA President George Becker and hammering on steelworkers to go back to work.

On March 24, the Alderson inspired ministers organized a children's rally which was broadcast live on TV throughout the region appealing to end the strike. The rally looked like every Republican campaign mass rally during the national elections where school kids are bused in from friendly school districts - in this case of the 42 buses of high school kids, 32 were from one school district, Brooke County, West Virginia, home to many of the mill bosses.

To top it off Wheeling-Pitt announced the closing of three of the struck mills, 230 jobs on the chopping block, two days after the children's rally and four days before the local union elections.

LABOR COUNTERATTACK ■ The USWA didn't break stride. The union won a bitter court case forcing Ohio to grant 3900 of the 4500 strikers unemployment compensation - bills could now be paid. They kept up the door-to-door campaign and added other innovations to mobilize the entire rank and file, active and retired, in steel mills throughout the industrial Midwest.

The Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) led the way in January, 1997 when 100 retired steelworkers from LTV and USX loaded up two buses and walked the picket lines with Wheeling-Pitt strikers and delivered checks to embattled local unions.

Beginning in February, every weekend a flood of support rolled into Ohio valley and Mon Valley from steelworkers from Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, Illinois, Ohio, West Virginia and Pennsylvania. Steel-

workers and auto workers arrived on buses, in cars and pattered in on motorcycles in massive roving picket lines of solidarity. When Detroit auto and steelworkers rolled into Steubenville, the striker's soup kitchen fed 1,000 people.

At the February Basic Steel Industry Conference, held in Cleveland, President Becker appealed to the union's core steelworkers to collect a dollar a week from every working steelworker. Local union officers representing 150,000 steelworkers went to their respective members with the Wheeling-Pitt story. Every week at steel mill gates from Baltimore to Gary to Birmingham, steelworkers dug in their pockets and pulled out a buck, five bucks, a ten or a twenty to win the strike against WP. Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been deposited into the USWA-Wheeling-Pitt assistance fund.

Instead of negotiating with the union, Wheeling-Pitt tried to buy the Bethlehem Shipyards in Baltimore. Maryland USWA members knew the Wheeling-Pitt story and answered with a union delegation to Ohio and a check for \$10,000 to strikers. Shipyard workers, members of the machinists union, torpedoed the Wheeling-Pitt deal rejecting the company's black mail contract of \$8 in concessions. Shipyard workers are also facing a plant closing, but stood their ground, refusing WP's bid to work for KMart wages.

WP's arrogance abounds: it shopped around to buy up other facilities while announcing the closing of its core facilities in the middle of a strike; it thumbed its nose at West Virginia Senator Rockefeller who had been holding meetings between the company and the union in his Washington office; it spent millions to split and destroy the USWA and drive an entire region deeper into poverty.

All of this backfired when Wheeling-Pitt steelworkers went to the polls on April 2 and cast their ballots of union confidence reelecting the local union officers leading the strike. The company suffered a crushing defeat.

As we go to press, negotiations have restarted in Pittsburgh. History is being made. On April 26 for the first time in its history, the AFL-CIO will hold a solidarity conference in Pittsburgh. National federation President, John Sweeney, called the unprecedented conference to develop new and bigger strategies for bringing Wheeling-Pitt and Ron LaBow, the owner, to justice. The full weight of the 13 million member AFL-CIO is poised to fall on WP.

The USWA is determined not to just save the

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Vietnam Today

Jarvis Tyner

The U.S. war against Vietnam ended in 1974 with the dramatic total breakdown of U.S. and puppet-led forces, followed by the frantic and desperate withdrawal of U.S. troops. Millions of dollars of military hardware were abandoned and multi-million dollar fighter jets were tossed into the sea. Television scenes showed thousands of Vietnamese collaborators banging the gates of the U.S. embassy in Saigon and hanging on to the sides of helicopters as they were taking off. While the media conveyed panic and chaos, we were actually witnessing the final victory by the forces of national liberation and socialism over U.S. imperialism, the world's most powerful imperialist class. It was a historic victory that set a positive example for progressive forces all over the world. It was, of course, a victory for the American people as well.

At the first Congress of the Party after liberation, Vietnamese comrades made an important decision. They decided to change their name from the Vietnamese Workers Party to the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) and officially declared the end of the national liberation phase of their struggle and the beginning of the new phase – the transition to socialism. However they were not allowed to go forward peacefully.

Soon after their liberation, the genocide in Cambodia began. In 1976 while the rest of the world set back and watched, the Vietnamese, acting like real Communists, went into Cambodia to end the slaughter brought on by the Pol Pot-led, Khmer Rouge forces. In 1979 in the middle of their rescue mission China, which backed Pol Pot, invaded Vietnam from the north. Vietnam then faced the difficulty of a two-front struggle. Acting decisively, they were able to repel the Chinese attack. This was done with a worker-and-farmer militia, not with their regular troops. In 1989 they were finally able to withdraw from a stabilized Cambodia. On the initiative of Vietnam, a peace agreement to end all hostilities was signed with China in 1990.

Jarvis Tyner is vice-chairman of the Communist Party.

While this represented another great victory, it came with great pain and at great expense. From 1964 they had withstood 25 years of intensive war and conflict – more if you add their fight against French rule after WW II. In all, they lost over two million people. While the U.S. claims 2,500 soldiers were missing in action (MIA), there were over 300,000 Vietnamese MIAs during the ten years of war with the U.S., two million injured and two million affected by poisonous chemicals, including 50,000 deformed children. There were 55,000 U.S. casualties but Vietnam lost over one million men, women and children.

SURVIVING THE CRISES ■ From the mid-'80s on, aid from the Soviet Union began to decrease and eventually stopped altogether. With the collapse of socialism in Europe, Vietnam was on its own in a capitalist-dominated world with little aid coming from any country. Many were predicting Vietnam's abandonment of socialism and ultimate collapse. Some on the left, who were beating a hasty retreat themselves, said Vietnam had to give up the fight for socialism in order to survive. They said the same about Cuba. They were wrong on both counts. These forces underestimated the strength of the Vietnamese and Cuban people and the socialism they built.

While the transition to socialism has not been easy, the Vietnamese have never given up their fight for freedom. In the past years there have been hundreds of examples of their steadfast resistance to oppression, their defeat of invaders and their overcoming all manner of hardships. Communists, starting with the Party's founder the great Ho Chi Minh, have played a heroic vanguard role through thick and thin since the 1930s. Even when the USSR and other European socialist states collapsed, they refused to give up and continued their struggle for socialism.

By the mid-'80s however, they faced a new problem, a full-blown economic crisis. They experienced negative economic growth rates; with mass unemployment and an annual inflation rate of 800 percent. At the end of 1987 about two million people

were suffering from hunger and in some cases starvation. It was a serious crisis and concrete measures had to be taken.

Taking a long, hard, honest look at what they faced, they decided to find a better way (different from the Eastern European model) to make their transition to socialism. Communist Party leader Pham Van Dong the former prime minister said if they continued to follow the centralized, subsidized model of building socialism, they would still fall short of achieving it by the middle of the next century. Because this was a different part of the world at a different point in history and facing a different relationship of world forces, their path to socialism had to be based on the new world realities.

Their solution was a multi-sectored economy which they call *Doi Moi*. The Party and the people of Vietnam fully endorsed the program whose three basic sectors include a socialist sector, cooperatives and small family businesses and a capitalist sector that includes joint ventures with foreign corporations.

A PARTY DEDICATED TO SOCIALISM ■ The Communist Party Congress held last year ran from June 28 to July 1 and had the important task of evaluating ten years of the *Doi Moi* program.

The Congress was held in Hanoi at the Ba Dinh Conference Hall located in the main square, where the Ho Chi Minh mausoleum is found. Taking part were 1,198 delegates representing over two million Party members.

All of Hanoi was decked out in bright red hammer and sickle banners and beautiful pictures of Ho Chi Minh greeting the Eighth Congress. Some of the banners greeting the Congress had corporate sponsors. Can you imagine Pepsi Cola sponsoring a banner welcoming the Congress of the Communist Party here? They did in Vietnam.

When Gus Hall and I were there in 1972, Hanoi and the whole of North Vietnam were on an austere war footing. Few goods were in the shops and mostly bicycles on the street and many people dressed the same (women in black outfits, men in plain pants and shirts).

This time there were few signs of destruction from war. The city was rebuilt and the streets were bustling with people going about their daily activities. While there were still many bicycles, the streets were also full of cars and trucks – Toyotas, Hyundais, Hondas and Nissans. Everywhere were

billboards advertising foreign companies such as Panasonic, Hewlett-Packard, Coke, Pepsi, BMW, Nissan and Goldstar to name a few. The most controversial part of the new economy are the joint ventures between the Vietnamese and huge transnational corporations. People may ask, "are they going back to capitalism?" The answer is no, Vietnam remains a socialist country. But the question remains, how does it work?

The headquarters of the Orian-Hanel corporation, a company that produces 1.6 million TV tubes a year is the best example. The Vietnamese set up what is actually a socialist state-run, capitalist enterprise. They are on the controlling side of a 60/40 partnership with a South Korean manufacturer of TV tubes, based on a 30-year lease. This South Korean company – the third largest manufacturer of TV tubes in the world – supplies the technology and the know-how. The company works out of an ultra-modern facility (like those found in Silicon Valley). It was built by a Vietnamese construction company based on the specifications of the South Koreans. The place was beautiful and included accommodations such as tennis courts and day care facilities. The company exports 70 percent of its TV tubes. They employ 1,400 workers – all but 30 are Vietnamese – who are learning advanced skills and are paid above average Vietnamese wages. The company must comply with Vietnamese labor laws and contribute to the general social fund which pays for health care and education among other things. All workers are unionized and they have the right to strike. The director of the factory said they were very satisfied with the quality of work and discipline of the workers. Their plans are to keep the technology of the plant on the cutting edge of world standards.

The Eighth Congress took a positive attitude toward the great progress of *Doi Moi*. Vietnam's economy is now growing at a brisk pace of eight to nine percent per year. Here in the U.S. a three percent growth rate is considered to be excellent. Although it's not the same, because the two economies don't start at the same point, the Vietnamese economy is rapidly expanding and expected to double by the turn of the century. The industrial sector, the fastest growing sector, is expanding at an amazing 12 percent annually.

One of the great advantages of this program is that it is building the material basis for socialism by raising the technological level of the whole society,

vastly expanding the ranks of the working class and raising the national standard of living. At present, Vietnam is still an agrarian country with the working class accounting for only 6 percent of the population and 16 percent of the work force. It is hard to build socialism with a small working class, (there are just 3,284,00 members of trade unions).

With the Doi Moi program, things are rapidly changing for the better. By launching one of the most ambitious home garden campaigns in history, they have almost eliminated hunger. Every front yard has a rice paddy. Vietnam now exports rice and has given tons of rice to Cuba and North Korea which are still experiencing serious economic crises.

To lower inflation they raised the interest paid in savings accounts to 12 percent. This caused people to save more and spend less. It slowed down inflation and provided more capital for developing the economy.

Also helping to accelerate development is the oil recently discovered in the south – quite a large deposit I was told. Oil is one of their major sources of hard currency and the basis for much of their trade. Vietnam belongs to the ASEAN regional trading group which has boosted their international trade relations to a new level. These are some of the real gains that Vietnam has made with the new economic program.

NEGATIVES ■ There is a down side which the Vietnamese are well aware of. As you can imagine, pressures on the Party to move to the right and to back off from building socialism are tremendous. At the Congress comrades, especially General Secretary Do Muoi, spoke openly about problems brought about by the new economic program: crime, a rise in theft, corruption (including by government officials), swindling, manufacturing of fake goods, loan-sharking and of course exploitation. There have been reports of corporations setting up sweat shops and violating Vietnamese child labor laws. All you can say is that when dealing with capitalism, you have to be vigilant. The government and Party had to take action. The ideological struggle to win people to a socialist way of life is assuming greater importance.

They have many social problems, some of which are left over and a result of the war: drugs, prostitution and health problems which are worse in rural areas. They were recently forced to charge

people a minimum amount for healthcare services. There are serious shortages of medical supplies and there are 800 people – out of 74 million – who have AIDS.

Capitalism and greed go hand-in-hand. A major problem for Vietnam is the inherent counter revolutionary risk that greed brings into society. Vietnam has always had a domestic capitalist class, including those who were millionaires. During the war they supported national liberation. While the working class is growing this class element is also growing at a very rapid pace and it includes repatriated Vietnamese who became very rich abroad. This last group are committed capitalists. These numbers will grow in Vietnam. Whether they will try to gain political expression and power is of great concern to the Vietnamese.

It is significant that the Party is open and frank about dealing with these problems. They are engaged in a fierce ideological struggle among the masses to counter the negative bourgeois trends that emerge out of these circumstances. The main battle is to convince masses that socialism, which uplifts the standard of living for everyone, is better than capitalism, which makes the few wealthy at the expense of the many.

SAFEGUARDS ■ However they had to go further to insure that the building of socialism stays on course. Safeguards had to be created. It is illegal to form a capitalist political party and so far, no one has tried. Secondly, the socialist sector is basic. Electric power, oil, steel, cement, and transport are kept in the socialist sector. You can't build or run anything without these basic sectors of industry.

Thirdly, and most importantly, there is the revolutionary spirit of the people who have sacrificed everything for their freedom and independence. Ho Chi Minh's great inspirational slogan "Nothing is more precious than Independence and Freedom" is the rallying cry for Vietnamese patriotism. In this case the Vietnamese people are not going to allow foreign corporations (that earlier tried to come in at gunpoint) to take over Vietnam by other means. The Party is confident this is not going to happen.

After visiting Vietnam and feeling the pulse of the people, I agree with the CPV's assessment. They do have a revolutionary spirit that is unyielding to those who would try to destroy their homeland. That spirit came through loud and clear.

A fourth safeguard is that Party members are

banned from any profit-making positions in the economy. No Party member is allowed to be an exploiter. The final safeguard is the Vietnamese army. It remains well-equipped and as I was told, many of the anti-aircraft guns are still in place.

Ideologically the CPV stands on solid ground. They clearly state they are the vanguard of the working class. They are a Marxist-Leninist Party to which they add the thinking of Ho Chi Minh. Comrade Ho was a Marxist-Leninist of the highest order. He particularized and applied the science to the Vietnamese experience. His writings should be read. He was a revolutionary fighter for working-class power and socialism. Page one of the Party's constitution says its objective is "to build an independent, democratic and prosperous Vietnam, an equitable and civilized society, and to successfully lay the material conditions for socialism and ultimately communism." Daily, they are turning these objectives into reality.

At every meeting with the top leadership they asked about Comrade Hall and sent him their warmest greetings. With fondness they remember our 1972 delegation which toured during the war. Several people mentioned Henry Winston's visit to attend Ho Chi Minh's funeral. They have the highest respect for the role played by our Party during the war; membership in the CPUSA is a badge of honor as far as Vietnamese Communists are concerned.

SOLIDARITY AND INTERNATIONALISM □ Our greeting to the convention there was received enthusiastically. The *New York Times* covered the convention and reported it received big applause. This was due to the high regard our Party is held in. When I mentioned our conclusions based on recent Party growth, that it is possible to build a mass Communist Party in the U.S., the place exploded with applause. I met the the Minister of Labor, several members of the Political Bureau, the deputy mayor of Ho Chi Minh City and numerous members and leaders of the Communist Party of Vietnam.

I also had a terrific meeting with Madame Binh who was Vietnam's Paris Peace negotiator. We talked about the U.S. political scene and the recent elections - their favorite topic. Madame Binh is now the vice president of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

Since returning from Vietnam we send them the PWW regularly. The Vietnamese comrades sent a

beautiful letter in response praising the paper and thanking us for the subscription. They want deeper and more regular contact with our Party which we warmly welcome. They are on the Internet and we exchange and use each others material frequently.

There were 35 international fraternal delegations that attended the convention. The prime minister of China, Le Peng, made a good speech and was enthusiastically received. Vietnam and China now have very good relations. This has a positive impact worldwide and especially in the region of Southeast Asia.

Vietnam has excellent relations with Cuba. They have sent bicycles and tons of rice to help the Cubans survive the U.S.-led blockade. They have spoken out against the Torricelli and Helms-Burton amendments. They are looking into how they can send oil, a resource the Cubans need. At the Congress the Cuban representative was enthusiastically received by the delegates. He told me the Vietnamese economic model was the direction that Cuba wanted to go towards. When the blockade ends, Cuba can experience tremendous growth.

The tourist facilities in Vietnam are excellent and the natural sites are magnificent to behold. We are in the process of organizing a tour to Vietnam of Communists and progressives. It is a beautiful, interesting country that is an inspiring place to visit. There is a growing movement here in the U.S., with New Haven, Connecticut leading the way, to develop sister city relations with Vietnamese cities.

The fact that U.S. corporations were losing investment opportunities forced Clinton to establish diplomatic relations with Vietnam in 1995. Most Favored Nation status is expected soon.

An important lesson for freedom fighters everywhere is that the Vietnamese Party has shown the world it's possible to fight for socialism under the difficult and complex circumstances of a world where capitalism assumes greater prominence - even as the crisis of capitalism deepens. They did not abandon socialism or Marxism-Leninism, but used its great strength, creativity and flexibility to fight for their principles under these new conditions. Vietnamese socialism has survived and is growing. Their achievements need to be studied; new doors have opened for successful struggles for all revolutionary parties, including our own. □

Saving Social Security & Medicare

Vic Perlo

The capitalists are out to wreck Social Security and Medicare. They are in a hurry to do it while they think they have a chance. They have on hand the same trained seals – Senator Moynihan and economist Baskin – who provided ammunition for the assault in the 1980s that significantly weakened the Social Security system.

Social Security was won by labor during the fight for unionization, led by Communists and other militants in the 1930s and 1940s. The U.S. system is much weaker than those in Europe where unions are stronger and Communist Parties are larger. We have the stingiest system of any industrialized country.

So far, opposition to the wrecking attack is weak and defensive. Even the AFL-CIO, along with other organizations (AARP, e.g.) offers concessions to the pirates and makes no demands for improvements. That's bargaining against yourself!

President Roosevelt envisioned a system that would provide a minimum level of comfort to workers in their old age. Instead the Social Security Administration (SSA), while admitting that workers need 70 percent of their former wages (actually they need more), acknowledges that the system provides the average workers with only 42 percent. Call it social poverty instead of Social Security.

The administrators, rationalizing, claim that Social Security is only one leg of a three-legged stool, a leg that is splintered and in danger of collapse. The other two legs are pension plans – which 60 percent of all workers (or 82 million) do not have, and savings and investment. Just try on the average wage to save enough for meaningful investment income. So the average workers don't have a stool to sit on!

Puppet statisticians present elaborate tables to prove that the SSA trust fund will run out of money 30 years from now. Such long-range forecasting is just statistical game playing. Their pretension of projecting for 75 years is pure snake oil. Anarchic

capitalism can't even project a five-year budget.

But even by their calculations, the money pours into the system so strongly that they project the present \$500 billion in the trust fund will multiply six times to \$3 trillion by 2019. Wouldn't it be sensible to assume that with such a prospect we should wait and see if problems develop after 20 years? And further, they have an alternate set of calculations that is just as valid as the one they emphasize. This assumption shows that the fund will never decline but will soar to \$82 trillion – that's \$82 million million – by 2070, 166 times the present level!

The current assault on Social Security has these aims:

- To reduce benefits and raise taxes on workers, freeing the surplus for tax cuts on the rich;
- To invest at least 40 percent of the trust fund in the stock market instead of in Treasury securities, as the present law dictates. The AFL-CIO is willing to go along with this. The long bull market is bound to be followed by a major bear market – the sharp declines during a recent week give a foretaste. The fund manipulators want to use the workers' Social Security money to prop up the overpriced market a little longer before the workers' money is all lost when the market collapses;
- To reduce the rate of increase in the cost-of-living index so that Social Security benefits, which are tied to that index, fall further and further behind the real cost of living;
- And most drastic, in whole or in part, to privatize the SSA – that is, to make each worker responsible for his or her stake in it. Even the low-wage Arkansas poultry workers would have hordes of stock brokers, bankers and other swindlers descend on them – without their being able to judge what is good and what is bad.

MAKE SOCIAL SECURITY SECURE ■ The Communist Party recommends the following program, designed to set Social Security, not on a spindly leg of a non-existent stool, but on a firm base for meeting workers' needs:

- Make the Social Security trust fund the mini-

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mum guaranteed source of benefits, with whatever is needed above the trust fund to come from general revenues;

- Double Social Security benefits;
- Restore retirement at full pension at age 65 instead of 67; workers in heavy or dangerous jobs, at 55;
- Increase, instead of decreasing, the rate of rise in the consumer price index to more fully reflect real living-cost growth;
- Maintain investment of the trust fund as at present, in Treasury securities. Similar prospects should apply to the Disability Trust Fund.

How can the improved benefits be financed?

- At present only the first \$63,000 of salaries are subject to Social Security tax. Executives with million dollar salaries are taxed only on the \$63,000, so they are tax exempt for the most part. All salaries and other income of the rich should be taxed for the Social Security fund;

- Double employers' contribution to Social Security;

- Slash 90 percent of the military budget and 100 percent of CIA funding and use as much of those funds as needed for the SSA.

There's hardly any need to emphasize that this program should be fought for in every local union, senior citizen and community organization.

THE MEDICARE SCARE ■ The immediate target for anti-people legislators and their bosses is Medicare. This program was enacted in the 1960s, along with Civil Rights laws, in an effort to ward off mass struggles against the Vietnam War.

But Medicare has been shot as full of holes as a machine gun victim. In 1960, before Medicare, the elderly spent 11 percent of their income on health care. Now, over and above Medicare, they have to spend 18 percent of their income on health care. That's outrageous!

There's a special trust fund for hospital charges. That fund really will run out soon, because hospitals raise prices so rapidly. Now \$118 billion per year, or 65 percent of all Medicare outlays went to hospitals,

with their rich profit margins. Medicare payments for hospital services are limited to what's in the trust fund, so the proposal is to "save it" by increasing taxes on workers and retirees, and by sharply curbing benefits by making medical care more and more like an assembly line: in and out of the hospital after only half the time necessary for a cure; in and out of doctors' offices in 15-minute time slots.

Then there's an additional aim: to force people to buy "medigap insurance" to cover expenses not paid by Medicare. What a racket! Prudential, which has one-third of this business, raised its fees 23 percent in the last two years, as did Blue Cross Blue Shield and others.

Another objective is to propel people into HMOs, which are rapidly taking over more and more doctors' practices. The HMOs are favored in Medicare payments so people are left with little option but to join. But through HMOs, patients are limited to part-time doctors, second-rate drugs, and have to pay profit margins of 15-25 percent to the HMOs.

SAVING MEDICARE ■ Some proposals to deal with this problem are:

- Make Medicare obligations absolute, over and above trust funds;

- Extend Medicare to include dental care and the cost of medicines;

- Strictly regulate and reduce prices paid to all providers of medical services;

- And further, nationalize the entire health industry. Coordinate it with a national health insurance act, which Bill Clinton promised but never delivered.

And, looking further ahead, it would be possible to eliminate all workers' and retirees' payments for Social Security and Medicare by raising taxes on the rich and cutting the bloated military budget.

Let's get to it, propagandizing and agitating for the CP program. □

Health-Care in Cuba

Don Sloan

On my way to Havana's José Martí International Airport this past President's Day, I was delving into my own thoughts as to how I would begin my report on the state of the Cuban health care system. Feeling my frustration, I spotted a billboard that blared a message that said it all and solved my problem: *200 millones de niños en el mundo duermen en las calles... ninguno de ellos es Cubano.* (Two hundred million children in the world sleep in the streets, and not one of them is Cuban).

One would think that my many trips to that Marxist island nation in the Caribbean would no longer reveal any dramatic changes. After all, a watched pot never boils. But health care in Cuba may be the exception that proves that adage to be true. Health care, despite its competition from education and housing on the priority list of the Fidel Castro Ruz government, still gets its hefty share of the budget. When the going gets tough, as it often does these days, Fidel often reminds his people of what happened to the eastern bloc nations after the fall of socialism a scant five years or so ago. Every demographic rating has been telltale. Russia and its former bloc are showing the painful signs of sharp rises in their infant mortality rate; cholera, tuberculosis and coliform diarrheas that were for the most part eliminated after 70 years of socialized medicine are on the rise. The Cuban people have heard this message often and they are taking a lesson from history. They simply take heed and then tighten their belts one more notch.

The statistics are there for all to see. The UN, through UNICEF, has finally settled on a single demograph that is convincingly demonstrative of a nation's health care status – and even more – its general wellbeing. The Under-Five-Mortality-Rate (UFMR), the number per 1000 children born that are alive at age five, is uncomplicated and straightforward. Birth rates and death rates are the most accurate and accessible. This rate has now replaced the former standards: those alive after 30 days, those alive after 24 hours of life, and those deaths from

any cause during a state of pregnancy. UNICEF pointed out that these were all associated with class differences and restrictions on hi-tech, and were devoid of social conditions for a long enough period of time. They did not any longer reflect the true state of the health of a country. The icing on the cake came when the under-five-mortality-rate matched, nation for nation, and in direct proportion, one other statistic of significance, the rate of literacy. The higher the rate the higher level of illiteracy.

The 1997 UNICEF *Report of the State of the World's Children* listing is not surprising. Niger is the only country above a 300 UFMR, and the next eleven, above 200, are in sub-Saharan Africa with the exception of Afghanistan. Of the first 47 nations with a rate of over 100, meaning that one-tenth of all children born are dead from all causes by age five – a tragic and ugly situation – 37 are from sub-Saharan Africa. A rate of 25 is considered the mark of success in this area, and was finally reached by the Soviet Union in 1987, 70 years after their revolution and socialized medicine. The 1997 UNICEF report has the Russian Federation now at 30 and climbing.

On the other end of the scale, the enviable one, are the nations between five and ten that include, as expected, Scandinavia, Switzerland, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Canada. The USA, reflecting our two-tier society, stands at ten (Black morbidity in the USA is twice that of white). The rates for Latin America are as telling. Haiti is at 124, Guatemala at 67 and Nicaragua at 60, for example. On the positive side, Belarus has reached 20 and Jamaica is 16; Costa Rica, known for its health care priority, is 13. Cuba, truly the health pearl of the Caribbean, has steadily improved its rating since the 1993 crisis and is now rated at ten. The thirty-plus years of socialist control also reveal a similar success in ridding the country of illiteracy – nearly 100 percent of Cubans can read and write.

UNICEF went further. It also researched and analyzed the rate of low-birth-weight infants, an older but somewhat reflective statistic, often used in the developed world as a measure of prenatal care availability. Cuba places among the best in the entire world, developed or otherwise. Access to

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fresh and portable water is also a UNICEF barometer. The best, for example, at 100 percent, are Hong Kong and Switzerland, but only 50 to 65 percent for sub-Saharan Africa. Cuba now rings in at 96 percent, with 100 percent being a goal for the end of this year.

These achievements have come about by no sheer accident but rather after long years of struggle, sacrifice and commitment. For the first decade or more of the revolutionary government's dedication to change, education and health care became the two prerogatives, with housing a close third. The results of that commitment are there for all the world to see. Major housing developments have sprung up throughout the island and more are planned. Yet there is much to be done in that area, with many Cubans forced into substandard quarters, and many of the private homes in great need of major repair and rehab. The American blockade has taken a great toll in this area of need.

EFFECT OF BLOCKADE □ On the other hand, as Fidel has reminded the people of Cuba and the world at large, despite the harshness of the blockade that has denied them ready access to technology, medicines, facilities and personnel, the infant mortality rate continues to fall, and last year, as Fidel once promised, every woman gave birth to her baby in a proper hospital setting under the care of a trained obstetrician, and every Cuban child is in school.

The blockade's draconian effects were clearly dramatized in the worst days of the Cuban economic crisis, in the immediate wake of the fall of the USSR and the eastern European socialist nations, with which Cuba did most of its trade. However, with that loss of a ready source of oil, natural gas, and other means of energy, no hospital or health care facility ever suffered the scheduled partial blackouts thrust upon most of the Cuban residential neighborhoods.

Due to the blockade a lack of readily available and convertible currency accounted for a decrease in supply of vital drugs and vaccines. Deaths from TB and other infectious diseases inched upward during the five perilous years from 1989 to 1993. Mortalities from pneumonia and other respiratory diseases nearly doubled and those from asthma, heart diseases and cancers moved upward in like fashion. It was obvious that this was held to a minimum only because of the strong base that was the health care delivery system prior to the 1989 crisis, and that

despite it all, health care remained such a high priority.

The turnabout came in an equally dramatic fashion. As new commerce agreements took hold with the rest of the world, as China and Cuba entered into major trade pacts that brought much needed medical and consumer supplies to the island, and as alternative forms of medicine, such as the use of plants and herbs, succeeded, the proverbial worm turned. The statistics are already indicating considerable benefits.

Especially exemplary of the low child-death rate attainment is the devotion shown by the Ministry of Health to the women of Cuba. During a recent workshop course at the prestigious Raymon Gonzalez Coro Maternity Hospital in downtown Havana, I proposed they undertake a training course for nurse midwives to assist the medical staff in the care of pregnant women, not only through their labor and delivery but throughout the entire prenatal period as well. This has become in vogue in many of the major obstetrics centers in the United States and in many of the centers in eastern and western Europe, especially entwined with various classes in the so-called natural childbirth techniques. My plan was soundly rejected out of hand. I thought at first that I had a sympathetic ear of the then director of obstetric services, their now emeritus professor Celestino Lajonchere.

Doctoro Lajonchere took a deep breath as he searched for the proper English to explain his denial. "With us," he began, "for the present time and in the foreseeable future, this is a question of policy and philosophy." He went on to explain that they were taking a page from Fidel's book, in that during the revolutionary campaign that overthrew the yoke of the Batista regime, Fidel once made the promise that with the success of the revolution, not only the privileged but every Cuban baby would be born under the care of a specialty-trained obstetrician and in an appropriate hospital setting. "We would not want to let the people think we had gone back on that pledge," Lajonchere said.

The care of women, especially during the process of giving birth has rightly always seemed to have a priority in the health care needs since the revolution. When the four primary-care specialties were established, along with internal medicine, pediatrics, and dentistry, obstetrics and gynecology took their rightful place. It soon became obvious that the state of pregnancy was emotionally and

physically so unique a time in the life cycle of a woman. There was an immediate respect shown for those patients who in reality were two, not one. The time-honored axiom that the unborn demanded special attention was being obeyed. Obstetrics has also always taught that the first 24 hours of life are the most precarious and require special attention. Thus, when the blockade's most egregious effects struck home, astute vigilance was paid in dealing with the entire process. For those few years before the turnaround, the strains that did not allow for optimal nutrition and vitamins resulted in a decline of that lowering of the under-five-mortality-rate.

It was this same decline in general nutrition that in 1992 caused an epidemic of optic neuritis (an inflammatory or degenerative lesion of a nerve) that affected, some quite seriously, over 50,000 Cubans, a condition now well under control.

OVERCOMING SPECIAL PERIOD ■ Foods, vitamins, and proper medications alone are not solely responsible for these changes. There are other advances as well. For example, prenatal visits, a benchmark for adequate care, are carefully monitored by teams of "social workers" whose responsibility it is to assure such quality of care. Home-care toiletry and basic facilities are investigated and are parts of teaching classes. Even clothing and laundry facilities are a part of the program provided pregnant women.

For example, one anecdote tells of a meeting of the World Health Organization (WHO) in Washington a few short years ago, that was attended by a Cuban delegation led by their then-director of outpatient services, Cosme Ordonez. When each of the visiting professors of obstetrics stood up to report to the group on the reasons preferred for any advancements and improvements at home, Doctor Ordonez took his turn at the podium. "Shoes," he said, in giving a one-word explanation for Cuba's success in lowering dramatically its infant mortality rate. He explained to the wondering audience that it was noted that all too many Cuban women were walking about in bare feet, and thus became infested with the intestinal worms, parasites, and other bacteria that lived in the streets and gutters. Shoes, he said proudly, accounted for an immediate and dramatic drop in infections, infections that led to, in domino fashion, a myriad of other systemic problems. He reminded his colleagues of the time when, a century before,

Ignaz Semmelweis urged his fellow doctors to wash their hands before patient care and changed the face of medicine forever.

The William Soler Pediatric Hospital, named for the 14-year-old who fought side by side with Fidel, Che, and Cienfuegos until his death in battle is another indication of what is happening in the Cuban health care system. It is now computerized in a state-of-the-art fashion. Thanks to many activists in the Cuban movement, especially to the latest successes of the Pastors for Peace led by the Reverend Lucius Walker - a national hero in today's Cuba - the hospital is "on line" and in readiness for the 21st century. The hospital's pediatric surgical teams are performing intricate cardiac surgery on newborns with great success. Infants with cardiac anomalies and other surgically-treatable illnesses are readily received by well-trained doctor-nurse-lab teams, schooled in the leading medical centers throughout the world.

As expected, finances never come into play. Babies are accepted from impoverished Third World countries on a *pro bono* basis. Indeed, Cuba's internationalism runs deep. One story is illustrative: It seems that Cuba had been offered thousands of tons of coffee from Angola as some form of payment for the aid Cuba had tendered the Angolan revolutionary forces during their years of armed struggle. Coffee was at its highest price in Cuba at the time and the offer was a welcome one. Fidel however, refused, much to the chagrin of the Cuban citizenry. He told the Cubans that as "bad off as we are, Angola is having a more difficult time and one does not take payment from those poorer than you."

Another example of Cuba's state-of-the-art health care is its advances in heart surgery. University center medical teams last year completed a third case of cardio-pulmonary transplants, with several day survivals, an accomplishment that matched up to the best services elsewhere in the industrialized world.

There has also been continued progress in the field of dermatology, where acne, benign tumors and vitiligo (a skin disorder manifested by smooth white spots on various parts of the body), have been successfully managed. The vitiligo treatments researched in Cuba have been copied the world over.

Research continues in the area of virology and infectious diseases. Great strides have been made in the control of meningitis B, hepatitis, and other con-

ditions that still kill even in the developed world. Ordinary measles, a viral childhood disease that killed 30 children in the U.S. last year, has been eliminated in Cuba, according to the latest WHO report, and Cuba has also been declared the world's first polio-free nation for new cases.

The obligatory confinement policy practiced since 1985 for Cuba's near 1500 HIV cases in Angola returnees has since been abandoned. Today, only the ten percent with clinical AIDS have largely remained in the sanatoria on a voluntary basis.

LEAVING NO STONE UNTURNED ▣ With regard to healthcare the government has not left one stone unturned. When it was revealed that several of the developed nations, including the United States, denied funding and facilities to the shark-cartilage research teams that were experimenting with its use in cancer control and even cure, Cuba's Public Health Ministry, jumped at the opportunity. Not having the resources of the U.S. or the others, Fidel's offer was somewhat more modest, but, as the saying goes, better than nothing. Lab accommodations, personnel, and some financial aids were arranged in the suburbs of Havana. There were some positive results during the first three years of that study that were sufficient to continue the project. The world's medical community is awaiting the results that are being prepared for the medical literature.

Cuba's health proficiency has become publicized in ways that have even had the advertising world of Madison Avenue sit up and take notice. The advent of tourism has brought about bold changes in Cuba's economy, in that the influx of hard currency has given it a buying power never before seen, since the revolution. Havanatur, Cubanacan and other tourist agencies have incorporated health care on a hard sell basis. Touring packages are available to the world market that include sightseeing, a stay at any of the island's glorious beach sites and keys, a tour guide's pilgrimage through historical points, and essential medical treatment or even elective or otherwise needed surgery. The polyclinic, Cira Garcia, in the heart of Havana's fashionable Miramar district has specific facilities, with a fluent English-speaking medical staff geared to handle the tourist trade's needs. They are doing a brisk business.

The International Neurological Restoration Center, in Havana's well-located Playa district, is devoted

completely to the field of neurorestoration, with expertise in Parkinsonism, Alzheimer's and aging, MS, epilepsy, post-trauma, and any and all other diseases of the neurological system.

These remarkable facilities and the skilled personnel to match, have been the basis for many exchange agreements made between Cuba and the rest of the world. Cuba's present Minister of Health, Carlos Dotres, has made these plans a mainstay of Cuba's economic outreach to the world's tourist trade.

Finally, the Tarara experiment is phasing out after several years of work. A converted children's campground on the outskirts of Havana, Tarara became the center for the care of over 15,000 children from the USSR in the wake of the Chernobyl tragedy. These infants and teens, along with about 2500 mothers, were managed for a wide range of illnesses from radiologic contamination. The Soviet Union and then the Russian Federation were responsible for the air transport, but the Cuban Ministry of Health and the Cuban people picked up the complete tab for all medical care given.

FAMILY HEALTH CARE ▣ On a more conspicuous level and therefore much more pressing to the patient population, the major change in the Cuban health care system has been its rather abrupt switch in the mid '80s from a strict polyclinic system that was the crux of the plan in general, to what is now called a family health care schema. The original polyclinic, underway in full by the early '70s, used the formation of satellite service units throughout the island, based on geography and population density. Medical graduates were assigned to serve these units. When more intensive care was called for, the patients were referred on to the hospital units of the various specialties, based on need.

This was the arrangement that became the prototype for much of the world at large, and Cuba's plan was under much scrutiny. The international medical community sat back and watched, having already witnessed the trials at health care delivery by the Mao government in China during the '50s. It was obvious, of course, that the differences in size and population alone made the two countries exempt from comparison. Delivering health care in a country of ten million in a tropical climate and to nearly a billion people with a geography that was so different negated all correlations.

Progress in Cuba was stark. Medical centers, medical colleges and universities, nursing schools, blood banks and the ancillary labs sprung up like weeds in the most remote sections of the island. In areas only accessible by either horse or mule trains or special four-wheel chain-driven vehicles, two types of facilities were planned for and constructed during the first stages of the revolution – schools, hospitals and the polyclinics. Where school construction became impractical the polyclinics were not spared. Medical care was delivered to those isolated regions in the mountain sectors. The evidence was outside of the statistic sheets. A healthy Cuban population roamed the streets, albeit without sidewalks and curbs, and there were smiles on the faces of healthy Cuban children. My billboard slogan was based on fact, not hope or prediction.

That was not the end of the Cuban health plan story, not by a long shot. Within a few years, by the early '80s, discontent surfaced. There was unrest, especially by the prenatal group, as they would make their visits to an outpatient polyclinic and then, when time came for labor and delivery, would be transferred to the hospital unit in their district but under the care of a new physician, new to them. The patients spoke out through their Committees for Defense of the Revolution (CDR), their version of a civilian governing board. Julio Tejas, the then-Minister of Health, easily had Fidel's ear.

Changes were put into effect. Starting with obstetrics, but then spreading to all areas of primary care, the doctor in the polyclinic system became the patient's doctor and became totally responsible for continuous care for the patient. Thus the name change to family doctor instead of polyclinic. Once there was that rapport established between doctor and patient it was maintained throughout. Now, when a woman went into labor and was to be transported to an obstetric site at the hospital, the family doctor went along to lend support and to aid in her care. The same held for any hospital need, for male and female alike. What had always been considered a hallmark of good care in the developed world – continuity of care – was being established here. That is the system now in effect in most of Cuba, with those areas not yet converted soon to be.

The success, although with much yet to be done, of the Cuban health care system, despite the American blockade that denies them medical supplies,

medicines and medical machinery at the right price and supply, is even told in the world almanacs published in the USA for all to read – a life expectancy of 74 for males, 78 for females; a thirteen birth rate and seven death rate per 1000 people and a hospital bed per 225 people. These statistics are a shock to the rest of the Third World, mired in the throes on colonialism and exploitation and always in a two-tier societal system. And there is one number that is near optimal in Cuba – and is Cuban alone. One doctor per 230 people (the U.S. ratio is one per 400). No western nation does better, none. Only Israel comes even close.

THE PATIENT'S RIGHT ■ One incident that vividly tells much of what has happened to Cuba these past 35 years. It seems an elderly farmer from the Sierra Maestra mountain village of Cacocum suffered a heart attack and was taken by helicopter to the Havana cardiac center at Hermanos Almejeiras after stabilization. Shortly, the chief cardiac physician entered his room. "Who is he?" the patient asked with eyes opened wide in disbelief. "The head doctor" was the reply.

"No, no" said the patient. "He is Roberto Barnardo, from Cacocum. What is he doing here?"

"He is el jefe de servicio de cardiologia and will care for you."

It seems that the old farmer from Cacocum could just not believe or imagine that a poor peasant boy from his mountain village could ever grow up to have the education and prestige needed to be a doctor, much less a specialist. "No kid from my village gets to be a doctor." He said, "Get me a real doctor." His fears were not assuaged by the logic of the revolution. A doctor from another treatment room and from another town was called to serve the patient.

Cuba, as far and as long as it has traveled, has yet a long, long way to go. Severe shortages in antibiotics, dental equipment and supplies, surgical paraphernalia and other basic needs, demand the inventiveness, ingenuity, and resourcefulness of a motivated people, just to keep the ship afloat much the way they keep their 1950s vintage autos from the States on the road and their US-made elevators reaching the top floors. Socialism is a great motivator. The Cuban people seem to be able survivors and they are driven by their verve and their leadership. □

Global Imperialism, Culture and the Arts

Norman Goldberg

The word "globalization" is in common usage today. It is regularly voiced on television, heard on radio, written about in newspapers, magazines and books. We have globalization worshippers, economists, bankers, and politicians including the president of the United States. They see in globalization, in the global village, in the global marketplace, a better life for all — meaning themselves.

Former Secretary of Labor Robert Reich frequently urged American workers to gear up for the golden future. He asserted that if workers were fully trained to master the new technology they would all find better jobs and enjoy the good life. This may all be off the subject, but it is worth noting that if, say 75 million people were trained to become proficient at the new technology, it would result in such an overabundance of skilled labor that most of them would probably be unemployed. The problem is not in the shortage of skills, but in the shortage of jobs.

Our concern here is with culture and art, and how they are affected by globalized economics, science and technology. Marxism teaches that economics is the determinant of society. It shapes politics, education, philosophy, religion, science, language and art.

The argument that culture and art are derivative from the economic base of society is often denied by scholars, including some who consider themselves Marxists. They hold that the complexities of modern life, the proliferation of specialization in labor and the professions, have led to a partition and a separation between cultural consciousness and economic life, or put another way, that art and aesthetics are autonomous from economics.

The difficulty in establishing the connection of culture and art with the material base does not mean that it doesn't exist. The very notion that anything in society is organically independent is false, contradicting the dialectics of materialism and Marxism itself. To paraphrase Marx, the sum total of the relations of production, constitutes the economic structure of society on which rises a legal and political superstructure, and to which correspond definite

forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life (economics) conditions the social, political and intellectual life process in general.

The revolutionary changes in science and technology have escalated the division of labor. Specialization has reached extreme degrees of segmentation. Education and knowledge have become increasingly fragmented to serve today's production and service economy. Training for work is more intensive, while the focus of work keeps narrowing. In one field alone, engineering, there are more than 140 categories of specialization, compared to 12 some 40 years ago.

The intensification of specialization has created a virtuosity in miniscule knowledge, practice and consciousness. Theory itself has become a compartmentalized intellectual craft, and it is said with irony (and truth) that the United States has produced an army of Werner Von Brauns but not one Albert Einstein.

GLOBAL CAPITAL □ The penetration of foreign territories and markets by imperialism in the post-World War II period led to takeovers of enterprises, exploitation of low-wage labor and natural resources, the setting up of foreign-owned plants and the economic domination over much of Latin America, Asia, Africa, parts of Europe and the Middle East. Transnational corporations exercise control of more than \$5 trillion in foreign capital today.

Ultimately, this transnational capital, separated from its national soil, operating like an autonomous entity, becomes a new form of capital. It floats over national boundaries, investing here, divesting there, operating without national restraints, beholden to its own interests only. It becomes capitalism without a clear national face. This form of globalism has become the greatest problem for the working class of all countries. A full and comprehensive study of this is still to be made. One thing is clear. Globalized capitalism has reached its endpoint. It has nowhere else to go and it has become terminal.

The spread of global transnational capitalism has brought about a torrent of ideological and cul-

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tural deformation to most countries in the world. By means of mass electronic and print media, film and the other popular and fine arts, corporate mind control is greater than ever. Monopoly domination of the major news services, together with ownership of the largest arts and entertainment establishments, is virtually worldwide. The biggest international news services, UPI, AP, Reuters, Murdoch and Agence France, who produce three-quarters of the world's news in the form of mass lies to a mass market, are not independents, but units for sale in the mania of international media mergers.

TELEVISION ▣ The three leading U.S. television networks, NBC, CBS and ABC are owned by giant international monopoly corporations, and their transmission power can deliver lies to more than 100 countries at once. Mass lies to a mass market.. This doesn't mean that the smaller regional television stations are independently owned. Most of them are the property of oil companies, food companies, insurance companies, investment cartels, movie syndicates, real estate firms and hotel chains. And when many of these predators are themselves owned by bigger predators, some of whom are part of still bigger predators, one has to wonder who owns whom or what.

Public television, increasingly cut off from government and foundation support has turned to the corporate sector for backing. In return, it has had to soften its progressive political voice and give more air time to pseudo-liberal, neo-conservative and right-wing messengers with reactionary messages. Soft commercials are regularly featured on public television at the same time that it asks for listener financial support. It features fraudulent political debates between weak liberals and reactionaries, completely censoring out progressive and forthright liberals, left-populists, socialists and of course, Communists.

There are better programs on public television to appeal to a more selective audience, but essentially, we are watching corporate-influenced television wearing a public disguise.

The extreme reactionaries in and out of Congress want to drive public television off the air, but the more "enlightened" right-wingers like William F. Buckley think differently. If they could control this medium, they would have a polished outlet to spread their views and affect a more discerning audience. Politics is the message and art is the messenger.

Television is the prime means of communication

and indoctrination to the people of the world who are illustrated on Wall Street and Madison Avenue presentation charts, not as people but as digits in a spherical market. It is estimated that three billion sets of eyes have access to Western television in 150 countries on five continents around the world. Capitalism's world networks reach these countries regularly with a steady flood of overt and covert propaganda messages, advertising, ideological, cultural and political contamination.

People in New Zealand watch *NYPD*, *Law and Order*, *Seinfeld*, *The Single Guy* and other such shows. Liberia has a couch potato club on the Internet. The chattering voices of David Letterman, Regis Philbin, Jenny Jones and Rosie O'Donnell are dubbed in German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Chinese and other languages. The same commercials for baby diapers and skin rashes fill the screens from Manhattan to Madagascar. The dilution of national cultures extends to the distortion of national languages. In India, the rising middle class, many appendages to the computer and the Internet, speak a hybrid tongue, a mix of techno-English and Indian.

THE MOVIES ▣ The breakup of the Hollywood film studio monopoly, caused by the growth of television and its international syndication, has led to a multitude of independent film companies who have tried to buck the tide by producing cinema free of formula or establishment influence. Some, like Oliver Stone, John Sayles, Tran Anh Hung, Spike Lee, Barbara Koppel and Robert Redford have gone that route with varying degrees of success. Inevitably, they are boxed in by the globalized film structure, the exhibitors, distributors, theatre owners, banks and investors who censor any material they deem to be controversial, unfavorable to the interests of foreign governments and a threat to profit.

The independents are forced to make compromises as they fight to retain their integrity. Many have given in and joined the parade for commercial success. Promotional gimmickry is rampant, with film festivals held in almost every major city, on every continent, to whet the public appetite. It is a worldwide campaign to shovel mush down the throats of the public. When was the last time a film was made that had a working-class theme? Films like *Norma Rae*, *Country*, *The River* and *Matewan* would be rejected for the global market today. After Warren Beatty felt the heat from Hollywood for his film *Reds*, he was silenced, apparently for good.

Newspapers have been acquired by corporate and financial syndicates, as have books and magazines, with kitsch writing ground out for mass circulation in supermarkets and variety stores. So-called novels by Judith Krantz, Danielle Steele, Sidney Sheldon and Barbara Bradford Taylor are published in more than 30 languages for international distribution. Novels can be produced by computer, by improvising and mixing a conglomeration of pre-programmed plots and scenarios to achieve the new bestseller. Isaac Asimov, a capable science fiction author, was in such demand that he had to satisfy his publishers by using mass novel production methods. He loaded his computer with a stockpile base of literary formulas and was able to churn out novel after novel, as many as one a week. It is said that Asimov could work on five novels at one time by computer. Quite a "creative" accomplishment. Daniel Defoe, the author of *Robinson Crusoe* and *Moll Flanders*, wrote about 150 novels in his lifetime of 70 years. Today, a third-rate computer whiz could beat that in two years or less.

GIVING THE PEOPLE WHAT THEY WANT ■ The elder statesman of book publishing, Alfred A. Knopf, long retired, bemoaned the state of literature as an art, which has degenerated into a production and printing-for-profit industry, with the writer functioning as a production worker. A publisher of fiction recently said on a television talk show that he and other executives were not responsible for the trash that was being sold. "We give our readers what they want," he proclaimed. "If they wanted other types of books, better books, we would be happy to oblige them," he said. This is a basic lie, a coverup lie of publishers, TV executives, film producers and all the powers that are in the arts and entertainment business.

Do the people really determine what they want? Does a farmer in Chile really decide that he wants a particular brand of fertilizer manufactured in Chicago? This is an absurdity that was long ago created by the advertising industry. Look at any product – a film, a play, a car or a pair of shoes. The advertising agency, together with sales and promotion organizations, crank up the big push to popularize the product and create a desire for it. All sorts of enticements are used to fabricate a mass want. This mass want becomes a base upon which new wants are stimulated. This was demonstrated more than 40 years ago by corporate psychologists like Ernst

Dichter.

Giving the people what they want by psychological seduction, and then saying that this is what they want, is playing in circles for the benefit of capitalism, in this case, cultural capitalism. The people have wants and needs. Both are not the same. Under modern capitalism, one is manipulative and the other is necessary. The health industry claims that the public "wants" a choice of private insurance coverage, when what they need is universal free health care.

THE SOUND OF MUSIC ■ Music has suffered the same effects of accelerated commercialism as have its sister arts. The original characteristic of music as an art form is inherently democratic. It has its roots in social life, in labor and daily living. Music evokes a spirit of joy, contentment, contemplation and militant arousal. It appeals to personal and group participation more than any other art.

However, music under dollar control has been diluted of its social and class character. It is stacked with sounds and words for novelty, shock effect and instant gratification. Rock groups are sent to the far corners of the earth to do a musical sell job, complete with banalities and "pseudo-meaning" to millions of young people who are hungry for any relief they can get from an alienated social life.

Politically progressive and radical performers like Bruce Springsteen and a number of Black rock and rap groups stick close to a class-based line in their music, but the pressures against them are subtle and severe. The traditions of Leadbelly, Woody Guthrie and John Handcox inspire many to continue along a progressive and left path. The prime need is for the establishment of a working-class audience around the spectrum of labor culture, supported by the AFL-CIO.

Music has been programmed into the global marketplace, accompanied by an avalanche of merchandising and promotional hyperbole. The three tenors fly around the world hitting the high C's, to stimulate the sale of CDs, tapes, photos, books, calendars, caps, T-shirts, dolls, undergarments and other folderol. Pavarotti, Carreras and Domingo ham up their deliveries, keeping their eyes on the financial super-take. This is a global enterprise whose total is in the billions.

The managements of symphony orchestras, opera houses and ballet companies downsize their operations, squeezing out more for less, which has

led to labor unrest such as in the strike of the Philadelphia Orchestra. Tapes, CDs and other reproductions of musical performances are shipped to outlets around the world under cover, with sales and profits hidden from the performers, as the business of music has descended to the business of crime.

THEATER ■ It is similar in the theatre. Once the most advanced and socially realistic of the arts, theatre has been turned into a world traveling circus of show biz glitz to entertain those with \$200 to spend on themselves for a night out. *Sunset Boulevard*, *Barrymore*, *Ragtime*, *Jekyll & Hyde*, *Phantom*, *Les Misérables* and *Victor Victoria* strut their stuff in about 50 cities around the world on any night. Globalized theatre is another multi-billion dollar venture whose mission is to rake in coin with stage smartness that says nothing.

Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and *All My Sons* can make it in some local theatres, but hardly on the global circuit. It would be the same with the plays of Lillian Hellman and Lorraine Hansberry. As a senior official of the Schubert organization once put it, "Theatre must be classy without touching class."

Painting and the visual arts are completely globalized. International wheeling and dealing in the visual arts has created a \$100 billion a year industry. On Wall Street and in the other financial centers of the capitalist world, the big investment houses employ art experts who advise their clients on the savvy of buying and selling art for profit, buying in futures, dumping paintings to cause a wave of selling at low prices, then buying them back and raising prices, at times for more than 300 percent of what they were sold for. Last year the publication *Art News* listed the world's 100 leading buyers of paintings. It was a who's who of the super-millionaires and billionaires whose names appear on the financial pages of leading newspapers.

Art as a commodity for money and aesthetic indoctrination has dominated American life for 50 years, acting like a poison to our social sensitivities. In his book *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, published by the University of Chicago Press in 1983, author Serge Guilbaut reveals how abstract expressionism and non-objective modernism were used in the 1950s by the Cold War ideologues to destroy realism, especially social realism as a means of political enlightenment through art. Social realism was the most dramatic school of painting and drawing in the years before the Cold War, a period

of working-class ideology and action. It was a period of Communist Party guidance, and therefore seen as a threat to the objectives of the USA in its opposition to the Soviet Union. Abstraction was felt to be the ideal way to rid art of its Marxist face. Modernism and avant-gardism were mobilized in a crusade to implant an art that transcended social concerns and was obsessed by its inner significance. Guilbaut punctured a 30-year fraud which earned him the wrath of the vested interests in this lucrative international industry.

Unintelligibility and incoherence in art has spawned an inner world of privatized aesthetics that has affected person-to-person rational communication. Words have become blurred and have lost their rational meaning. As an example, here is a short comment extracted from an art review in the February 10th issue of *The New Yorker* magazine. It concerned an exhibition of paintings by Agnes Martin, who created giant canvases filled with horizontal stripes in creamy white and baby blue colors. The reviewer concluded with this erudite observation: "The restraint promotes tranquility, but it's hard to decide if you are looking at something chastely spiritual or numbingly tasteful."

The intensified monopolization and commercialism of culture and art on a world scale is a grave threat to the interests of the working people everywhere. It has served to anesthetize class consciousness and immobilize the will for political action. The aim of bourgeois propaganda is to identify the interests of the working class and the broad masses of the people with the interests of the capitalist class, and thereby foster the illusion of classless national unity under the familiar banners on "freedom," "democracy," "human rights," and "self-realization."

Fine art and popular art appear as two separate entities, each with its own set of aesthetics. Under contemporary conditions, they both serve the same purpose in that they offer an outlet for emotional escape. This is generally recognized where it concerns the popular arts (TV, film, radio, rock, tapes, etc.), but not so in the fine arts (symphonic music, literature, poetry, painting, etc.) Here, it is claimed that emotional satisfaction is achieved by appreciating the higher dimensions of human creation, something outside the boundaries of "crass popularism." There certainly may be distinctions between the fine and the popular here, but the underlying aim of art and entertainment under bourgeois conditions is to induce social acceptance of things as they are.

Worship of individuality, uniqueness and the pursuit of so-called inner truth has acted as a soporific that has dulled artists' social vision for decades. The inner world is a bourgeois-induced illusion, and Marxism shows it to be a reflection of the outer world where real truth is to be found. Art is a form of reflection. It reflects life as we experience it or know it to be, and it reflects it creatively, revealing underlying truths in its special way. To reflect social reality, art must be realistic in its vision and accomplish that vision by the best means possible.

MARXISM & ART ■ The Marxist dimension of art is realistic. It champions realism as the most potent force inherent in art. But Marxism champions realism as the underlying philosophy of art, not its technical means of execution. In literary history, realism in content was often accomplished by fantasy in form, such as in the epics of *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* by Rabelais. In both works, the hollowness of papistry, scholasticism and feudalism are severely scrutinized. In both works, we see the rising bourgeoisie in conflict with the standards and the morality of feudalism. The old order presumed to stand by God, while the new order worshiped money. It is a clash of two negative forces, one representing a higher stage of economic development, the other decomposing under its own dead weight. *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel* are written in free fantasy style to disclose an historically realist vision.

In Spain, Cervantes wrote his realist works in fantasy form. *Don Quixote*, *The Travails of Persilles* and *Sigismunda* are examples. Later in history, realism took on moral colors as in the tragedies of Shakespeare and Marlowe. In the 18th century, realism became concerned with historic movement. Historic realism typified the novels of Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, Sterne, Smollett, Swift and later, Scott. In Germany, realism took on philosophical tones, as in the works of Goethe and Lessing.

Socially conscious realism spotlights hidden truths in life and creates a higher dimension in art. In our century, socially conscious realism understands the capitalist world as class divided, and its method is not just to describe or duplicate. It portrays and analyzes, dissects and generalizes. It is an art that is partisan to the working class, the nationally oppressed and the people generally. Paul Robeson, Richard Wright, Langston Hughes, Lorraine Hansberry, Jacob Lawrence, Ollie Harrington, Marian Anderson and many, many others embodied the

spirit of African America in their respective arts. And so did hundreds like Mark Blitzstein, Dorothy Parker, Orson Welles, Muriel Rukeyser, Meridel Le Seuer and Jack Conroy in theirs.

It is worth repeating that realism is not merely a style of artistic expression or a static representation of life with frozen methods, but a socially conscious and dynamic interpretation of the world. In his book *Art & Revolution*, the Mexican painter David Alfaro Siqueiros stated:

Some artists have been led by an idea of realism which was too superficial to exclude all the elements of fantasy. The realist imagines because he needs greater objectivity; his fantasy attempts to foresee things which he may have to deal with. Leonardo Da Vinci painted or drew his fantasies which were based on certain scientific principles. The progress of physics and biology allow us to produce more far-reaching fantasies, and we must neither reject nor ignore this possibility. This 'future possibility,' to coin a term, is both constructive and of evident utility in political action.

Siqueiros was urging artists to widen their scope of expression by the use of imagination, fantasy and by new technological means. Imagination, fantasy and technology are the means of art and not the ends, as they are with non-realists.

The realist dimension in art is broad, as broad as life itself. The communicative power of art, that is, its language, is also broad. Like any language, the language of art changes and grows, but to convey its message, it must speak coherently so as to reach the large mass of the people at its highest level of comprehension. Bourgeois non-realist art has fabricated a flood of forms and devices, creating a Tower of Babel of non-communication. The socially conscious realist artist who wishes to use new forms and devices faces a difficulty in mastering them. All forms and devices are part of the language of art, but they must be understood. When they fail, art fails.

The international distribution of television, film music, books, magazines and other cultural products of imperialism cannot prevent the social and political unrest that is surfacing in Mexico, Peru, Zaire, Russia, India, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia and elsewhere. Imperialist cultural products are intended to pacify the misery caused by imperialism itself. The products are not the cure; they are the disease. Imperialist culture has a more lasting appeal to the middle class it creates, but they are a small minority and cannot be a secure base for transnational capi-

talism.

The capitalist system, by its very nature, creates class divisions and conflicts. Any notion that we have overcome the class struggle and have entered the "post-socialist" age of peace and democracy based on middle-class values is ludicrous. Capitalism guarantees that the class struggle will continue to the end. Culture and art in the service of capitalism on one side of the street creates a culture and art against capitalism on the other side.

Tens of thousands of cultural workers, writers, filmmakers, singers, musicians, dancers, painters, sculptors, actors, directors and other artists, have been courageously striving to develop an alternative artistic voice, independent of ruling-class control. Many work with community organizations, trade unions, religious institutions and some carry on alone. With economic and social conditions worsening and class battles rising, the possibilities exist that many of these thousands of cultural workers will come together as a people's art force, who in alliance with organized labor, Black, white, and Brown men, women, youth and millions more, will form a front against global capitalism and imperialism. There will be a link-up and an international bonding of the working peoples in the class struggles to come. This is not wishful thinking. It is on the horizon.

The true history and the philosophical substance of art has yet to be learned, but most particularly, the power of Marxism as the guide has to be learned. Bourgeois educators in culture and art have willfully misstated the meaning of Marxism here, distorting it into a theory and practice concerned only with the economic and political interests of

workers, making of it a narrow utilitarian doctrine, and assuming for themselves the mantle of representatives and defenders of art and humanity's cultural traditions. Bourgeois cultural educators wrap themselves around the flag of ultra-personal artistic freedom as the high point of modern civilization. It is tempting to paraphrase Dr. Samuel Johnson's famous statement on patriotism: "Ultra-personal artistic freedom is the last refuge of scoundrels."

To put artistic talent in service to the working class is a difficult challenge to many. It requires a deep understanding and feeling for those who work, both as individuals and as members of a class. Only then can art come through with truth and conviction. On television, in theatre, literature and painting the worker is mostly absent, or when shown, is depicted schematically, vulgarized or treated as a novelty or a joke. A fully formed working class art calls for a break with all the manifestations of bourgeois prejudice.

Class consciousness turns art into a weapon of struggle. In this respect, social realism is fundamentally political. By the same token, class-based art education is also political. The task for the artist and the educator is to learn from the people first. Otherwise, the value of Marxism can be diluted and put in danger, becoming one-sided and itself elitist, a noticeable fault in the outlook of a number of good people who think of themselves as Marxist artists or critics.

Finally, as Marx put it: "Philosophers have in many ways explained the world. The point however is to change it." In that respect we might say: Artists have in many ways created an image of the world. The point however is to create a new world. □

Hall, continued from page 2

entire progressive legacy of the past, all that which is positive in human achievement. He stressed that the workers take up and represent the interests of all oppressed and suffering humanity. This is part of working-class ideology.

Another of Marx's fundamental ideas is that it is precisely through the pursuit of its own class interest, organizing itself for itself, that the liberation of all humanity would be achieved.

OUR WORKING-CLASS SCIENCE ■ Just as there are laws of nature and natural science, so there are laws

of society, of social development and the social science of Marxism-Leninism, which includes the law of class struggle and the law of profits.

Like the mastery of any science, the science of the working class does not come to most workers spontaneously, as a result of struggle. However, it is easier for workers to understand and adopt these concepts and the ideology because the ideas are related to the exploitation they experience as workers.

Our ideology is a system of thought. It gives us a unique way of looking at everything in life. And the role of the working class and the class struggle is the very foundation stone of our Marxist-Leninist, working-class ideology. □

Public Education Today

George Fishman

In the post-election period the trajectory of labor and people's mass struggle is on the rise. The march by 20,000 Pennsylvania union workers against the privatization of state-owned liquor stores, hospitals and public schools sets the tone. The decision by the Connecticut Supreme Court in the *Sheff-Bermude v. O'Neill* suit ordering the equalization of public schools through regionalization shows what is possible.

Labor's outreach and alliance with racially and nationally oppressed people is being strengthened. This atmosphere is favorable for building broad mass movements locally and nationally, not only to defeat the corporate, far-right anti-labor, racist offensive, but to move forward to "dramatic improvements" in daily living on all fronts. Communist Party National Chairman Gus Hall, in his January report to the National Committee, related these developments to the CPUSA and the broad left as "a moment when we can play a special role in the lives and struggles of our class and people."

To do this means raising the ante and going on the offensive for labor and the people. For the cause of equal, quality public education, it means grasping the key link of massive federal support and funding of public schools nationally. This must mean special equalizing support to inner cities and rural areas, the racially and nationally oppressed and poor working-class communities so that quality education truly exists for all, and the educational nightmare is eliminated and we can be finally rid of dirty old school buildings, overcrowded classes, obsolete textbooks, shortages of supplies, extracurricular cut-backs, meager school lunches, hungry children, and underpaid school staffs.

Yet, the present reality is that school deterioration and segregation gallop ahead. Efforts to arrest this deterioration have been important but insufficient. Schools are crumbling.

Based on direct visits to schools throughout the country from April to December 1994, the General Accounting Office (GAO) of the U.S. Congress

reports that one-third of the nation's public schools need repairs or replacement. This affects 14,000,000 students from mainly low-income families and inner cities. The report indicated that 60 percent – you read right, 60 percent – of schools reported at least one major building feature in disrepair. Some of the actual situations reported read like Jonathan Kozol's book *Savage Inequalities* (1991). For example:

In a New Orleans elementary school, termites "ate the books on the library shelves as well as the shelves themselves." In Montgomery County, Alabama an elementary school ceiling weakened by leaking water collapsed; in a junior high school "raw sewage backed up on the lawn." In a Washington, D.C. junior high school, water damage from an old boiler system has caused so much wall deterioration that an entire wing has been condemned.

"A New York City high school built around the turn of the century is overcrowded with 580 students, far exceeding the building's 400 student capacity. The building has no vents or blowers ... the windows cannot be opened."

In Ramona, California an elementary school "is composed entirely of portable buildings." In Raymond, Washington an elementary school built of wood in 1925 is still being used, even though it is characterized as a fire trap. In a Chicago high school

not only are floors buckling, so much tile is loose that students cannot walk in all parts of the school. The stairs ... have been cited for safety violations. An outside door has been chained for three years to prevent students from falling on broken outside steps. Peeling paint has been cited as a fire hazard... some rooms (have) no heat while others are too warm... Leaks in the science lab prevent the class from doing experiments.

The root cause of the deterioration – underfunding – was frankly acknowledged by school officials. "Some district officials," the GAO reported, "told us that a major factor in the declining physical condition ... has been decisions by school districts to defer vital maintenance and repair expenditures from year to year due to lack of funds."

The GAO estimates that only \$112 billion is

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needed for school building repairs or replacement of the nation's schools. President Clinton, in words, has recognized the primary responsibility of the federal government for reversing and transforming school deterioration. This is important. However his proposal of \$5 billion over four years for plant rehabilitation is sheer tokenism.

NEED FOR MASSIVE FEDERAL FUNDING ■ More substantial is the Martinez federal public jobs and infrastructure rebuilding bill calling for \$250 billion over five years, with 10 percent school set-asides and inner-city priorities. The Martinez public jobs bill raises the struggle for equal quality, integrated bilingual public education to the federal level and advances the demand for massive federal funding.

The need for massive federal funding of equal, quality public education is aggravated by pending increases in school enrollment which is expected to be \$51.7 million this year and \$54.6 million by 2006. Over six thousand new schools, besides replacements for existing schools, must be built in the next ten years.

With related teacher training, which should carry free tuition and affirmative action as a national priority, the inescapable costs soar to figures far beyond the capacity of states or private sources to handle. The situation cries out for massive federal funding. In fact the federal share of the nation's educational expenditures had been ridiculously low. According to a GAO report for 1992-1993 the states spent \$113 billion for education or 45.6 percent of national expenditures. Local governments spent \$118 billion, or 47.4 percent of the total. The federal government spent only \$17 billion or 6.9 percent. The federal educational expenditure was only about 2 percent of the federal budget compared to about 50 percent for military spending and about 25 percent for corporate welfare. *The money is there.*

The immediate halving of the unnecessary handouts to the military-corporate complex, the stiff taxing of the transnational corporate billionaires who pay little or no taxes, and the elimination of corporate welfare would easily cover major costs of education nationally, public jobs and job training, national health care and lots more. The fact that the federal government has the constitutional power to enact progressive tax policies adds fuel to the demand for massive federal expenditures to expand public education, entitlements and social programs.

The AFL-CIO has been in the forefront in

demanding greatly expanded federal expenditures for public education. As early as 1971 the AFL-CIO, at its 9th Convention, called for federal funding of one-third "of the nation's total educational expenditures," that is massive federal support, without which the educational crisis cannot be conquered. In its pamphlet, *Labor, Champion of Public Education* (1986) the AFL-CIO made the crucial need for massive federal funding of public education eloquently clear. It said:

The AFL-CIO is committed to a program of full federal partnership in the financing of education at all levels from prekindergarten programs through adult education. Labor supports a massive national effort to provide quality education for all children and young people wherever they may live, whatever their race or national background, whatever their family income. Only through such efforts can we realize our goals of providing equal opportunities for Americans to acquire the necessary tools for a better life.

Clearly, only the federal government, reinforced by a mass labor-oppressed people's coalition along with effective independent labor-led political action, can bring about equalization of funding between states and eliminate racial segregation and discrimination within states. Only then can national standards, not only of opportunity but of accomplishment, become a reality.

Massive federal funding of public education is needed not only for the immediate emergency, but for the long-range goals of quality education for the entire population. It must contribute to the development of the whole child, starting in the early years of childhood.

Yet millions of children in the U.S. – disproportionately in racially and nationally oppressed and poor working-class communities – are being deprived of vital education in the formative years. Again the GAO reports that more than one-third – 2.8 million – of U.S. children aged three and four were from low-income families in 1990, a growth of 17 percent since 1980. Furthermore it says, "this trend is continuing." The need is great for expanded public early childhood centers to provide educational preparation, health care and nutrition to all children. Private for-profit early child care reaches only a small percentage of children and is inferior to public programs. State programs are held back by inadequate funding. Solution to this crisis of early child-

hood deprivation and racism demands expanded federal funding of early childhood centers as part of a massively expanded funding of equal, quality public education overall. While in the "Educate America Act," the U.S. Congress stipulated the goal that "by the year 2000 all children in America will start school ready to learn," like the "full employment" legislation it has not implemented this act. Federal early childhood and proven Head Start programs reach only a small percentage of children.

On the issue of massive federal public funding of education, the corporate "friends of education" stand exposed. When it comes to federal support for public education, massive or not, the big corporations are bitterly opposed. They recognize that they run the risk of being taxed for such programs by a federal government that has the power to rightly shift the tax burden on to their opulent shoulders. Also, they see correctly that massive federal funding will slam the door shut on their privatizing plans. The privatizers thrive on public school deterioration, which they bear responsibility for in the first place. The privatizers see school deterioration as an opening for finishing public education and putting across such schemes as school vouchers, and get their foot in the door through charter schools when they are not part of public education, and do not recognize school worker unions and gains in teach-

ing/learning conditions.

New Jersey GOP Governor Whitman calls for ending course requirements in public schools and Connecticut's Republican Governor Rowland calls for cuts in appropriations for public and higher education. The best answer to the would-be privatizers and profiteers is a stepped-up fight for and achievement of massive federal funding for equal, quality, desegregated and integrated, bilingual public education for all.

This demand reinforces the demand of public responsibility by the federal, as well as the state and city governments for the welfare of all the people. Upholding federal responsibility against the big corporations who oppose it only when it benefits working people, and against the ultra right and fascist militia forces who would destroy it, is essential for dealing with plant closings, supporting affirmative action, rescuing needed welfare programs, and for saving, improving, expanding and democratizing public education.

Positions taken by the CPUSA and its School Workers Commission should sharpen and fortify the demand for massive federal support and build united mass political struggle to bring it about. □

Winebrenner, continued from page 7

union, but win the strike. With their ballots on April 2, steelworkers sent a loud message to Wheeling-Pitt "We will not go back through the gates on our knees. We are well led and determined to take what is rightfully ours. We are smarter than you are; we can build solidarity and unity and we can win." USWA local union president, Dennis Brubaker describes the situation at Wheeling-Pitt as most difficult, a fire-barrel strike where the most exciting thing pickets do is throw wood onto warming fires. An ideological struggle is the most demanding a union can face. Scabbing is still a card that Wheeling-Pitt has yet to play, but their ability to camouflage and defend their wretched system of exploitation has taken a big hit.

All through the strike the Communist Party has done its job. The key contribution is an article by Chairman, Gus Hall, which appeared in the March 8 edition of the *People's Weekly World* which put this monumental struggle into context and onto a winning plane. Over 4000 copies of that bombshell were delivered directly to the region and tens of thousands more to trade unionists and organizations throughout the country.

Wheeling-Pitt steelworkers, their families, their union and communities are heroes. For too long, the working-class standard of living has been slashed and burned by the corporate drive to maximize profit. For too long, the right-wing corporate voices have dominated and drowned out the voices of humanity. For too long workers have been threatened, intimidated and pushed around. At WP, steelworkers have drawn a conclusion, our future is ours only if we fight for it. □

WHO FINANCED HITLER?

Permit me to add another damning fact to Phil Bonosky's splendid exposure of U.S. corporations' intimate role in the financing of Hitler's rearmament in violation of the Versailles Treaty.

A New York lawyer attended a gathering which was addressed by John Foster Dulles, a corporation lawyer who had just returned from Nazi Germany shortly before the attack on England and the invasion of France. Dulles at the time was senior partner of the firm of Sullivan & Cromwell, later to become Eisenhower's Secretary of State.

The lawyer at this gathering told me that Dulles proudly reported that the German firm I.G. Farben, which had made the largest donation to Hitler for German rearmament, had entrusted to him a bundle of stock representing a majority holding of I.G. Farben. Clearly the stock was being sent to the United States for safekeeping in anticipation of the expected outbreak of war.

Dulles, with the precious bundle, stopped off in Paris. That night he went to the theater. Upon return to his hotel suite, he carefully looked around and was satisfied that he detected the signs that the French security had searched his rooms.

He told his audience that foreseeing this, he had kept the bundle on his person. My friend was not impressed with Dulles' concern for I.G. Farben's securities. What impressed him and me was Dulles' bland admission that he had served as I.G. Farben's, i.e., Hitler's messenger boy.

Lement Harris

POWER OF THE PEOPLE

Early in the 1970s, a young Mexican American couple studying drama at UCLA in Los Angeles, invited me to accompany them for a presentation of the movie, *Salt of the Earth*, to a Chicano forum in San Diego, California.

The woman had written a short thesis on Mexi-

can American women, designed to encourage young Chicanos to take a stand in the struggles against poverty and discrimination, as well as against machismo. Most of their best sources of information of women activists was the film, *Salt of the Earth*; Ema Tennyauca, an organizer of pecan workers in Texas (1930s) and Julia Moreno, an organizer for the agriculture and packinghouse worker under UCAPAWA, a CIO formation. Julia had helped organize the union from Florida to California. She was also a community activist and organizer around the city of Los Angeles, until she was driven into exile during the anti-Communist drives of the McCarthy period.

The names of those young people escape my memory, but at the time of our trip they were very concerned about the raging war in Vietnam. The U.S. armed forces had sponsored one of their national exhibitions of military weaponry at Irvine College in Orange County. The young couple had gone to see the exhibition and became very concerned. In fact, at the time of our trip they had become convinced that Vietnam would not win this war.

The young man was doing the driving so the women took charge of the conversation, explaining in full detail the monstrosity of the military hardware which they had seen. No doubt, she had studied art because her description of the weaponry was vivid in detail. Because of her vivid description and detail, she spoke for most of the trip on the way to San Diego. Finally, after about an hour or so, she noticed I had said nothing. Then she exclaimed: "I have been doing all the talking and you have said nothing, not a word has come out of your mouth. I am going to stop talking but I would like your opinion. What do you think? Do you think it is possible the Vietnamese will win the war? After seeing this exhibition I have lost hope. I have been a supporter. I wish I could say they will win but after this I don't know, I rather see it's impossible. What do you think?"

I said: "I don't doubt anything you've told me, but there is one very important part lacking in your

analysis." She sat up straight and asked, "What is that?" "The power of the people" I replied. "You see the Vietnamese Government has its people behind them, that is why this war has stretched out so long. I remember the propaganda at the beginning of the war. It was that the war would be over in three weeks. It didn't happen and now it's been years and we see no end. That of itself should demonstrate to us that the Vietnamese are fully behind their government. We, the American forces are the invaders. For the Vietnamese it is a war of liberation. They will fight to their death in order to keep "out" the Americans. They will fight us as they fought the French. Secondly, the anti-war movement within our country is now growing by leaps. I see it every week here in Los Angeles."

"Yes, you're right," said the young man, "we've been participating in those demonstrations, but this exhibition that we just saw makes it almost impossible to believe that the Vietnamese have a chance at winning."

"Yes, I understand what you are saying, but I also believe they will not use them because at this point in the game it is too late. It will be counter productive to use them. It will be as counter productive as World War II was to Hitler's Germany. I have full confidence the Vietnamese are going to win this war."

The conversation took place perhaps about eighteen months before the end of the war. Too bad I lost contact with these people. It would be beneficial to talk to them once again to see how they are doing and exchange ideas. I would like to invite them to join the Communist Party, USA. I would ask them to subscribe to *Political Affairs*. I would like to explain in the best way I could that people should never lose hope; how we can still change our country around, cut the military budget and provide jobs for everyone; how political independence stands on its own feet. I believe we can still build the people's power that pulled the country out of the depression; that pulled us through the 15-month strike depicted by *Salt of the Earth*; that built the old CIO and its left-led unions such as UCA-PAWA; that helped build the coalition that defeated Hitler's fascism and helped the Vietnamese win their war of liberation.

In fact the coalition of left-progressive-liberal elements of American society have won many, many battles and we can win many more. Together we just delivered a stunning setback to the extreme

right wing within our society. They will attempt to recover - we should remain ever alert and see to it they never recover.

We need a tighter organization, and to accomplish that we need more knowledge of good reading materials such as *Political Affairs* and the *People's Weekly World*.

Finally, it was my Marxist understanding, the knowledge I derive from this knowledge, plus my experiences in everyday practice that provided the answer of assurance that I was able to pass on to my friends on that trip between Los Angeles and San Diego, California. The struggle, and it is a struggle for such knowledge, is never ending simply because the changes in society are never ending. Thus the need to keep up a daily diet of knowledge. Subscribe to *Political Affairs* - do it now!

Lorenzo Torrez

THANKS FOR PA

Our society has operated on a shoestring budget since its inception almost two years ago.

Because of limited resources, the efforts of the first year were spent on establishing a working executive and fulfilling legal/administrative requirements. In the second year our main activity was to participate with a coalition of NGOs on a committee that considered broad aspects of good governance in the run-up to the presidential and general elections held this November.

This year is going to be all about membership. As our subscription fees are modest paying the subscription for your magazine would cripple our budget. Therefore I would like to thank you formally for the free issues. It is an important contribution to our emerging organization.

Malele Dodia
The Socialist Caucus
Zambia

The Coming Conflict with China, Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro. N.Y. Knopf, 1997, 245 pp.

Business Week on March 3, 1997 told its readers that "the hot new book inside the beltway" in Washington D.C. is *The Coming Conflict with China*. The fiercely anti-Communist *New York Times* columnist Abe Rosenthal has praised this book extravagantly. That this book, which sketches a scenario for war with the planet's largest nation, has become so popular among certain ruling class circles is a dangerous signal that we ignore at our own peril.

A few years ago another book entitled *The Coming War with Japan* was receiving similar attention. These hyped tomes should indicate to us that, just as the primary wars of U.S. imperialism over the past half century have been in Asia, Korea and Vietnam in the first place – the most populous continent continues to be a particular obsession of Washington.

Still, the current drumbeat of opposition to Beijing is a relatively recent development. The authors argue that during the Cold War, Beijing was useful in building a "worldwide anti-Soviet bloc." (p. 170) They suggest that Beijing was essential in aiding the U.S. wage war against the regime of Najibullah in Afghanistan, but now with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, this "alliance of necessity" with China is no longer helpful. (p. 3, 38)

Though it has not received sufficient attention in the bourgeois press, tensions between Beijing and Washington have been flaring of late. In March 1996 the U.S. "dispatched not one but two aircraft carrier groups" to the Taiwan Straits "in a show of force specifically aimed at China." This, the authors say, was "the largest military face-off in the Pacific since the end of World War II..." (p. 6) Shortly after that, according to the authors, "there was even a sinister admonition from an unnamed Chinese official about nuclear missiles targeted on Los Angeles." (p. 7)

This book is notably concerned with the Chinese military. The authors allege that an "increasing number of top weapons scientists and technicians of the former Soviet Union" are now "working for

China." How many? "Ten thousand" is their estimate. (p. 68)

This is not their only complaint about Beijing. They are upset that "Chinese (press) coverage of the United States" is "full of stories about human rights violations (of Mexican immigrants, for example), of social disintegration, poverty among Blacks and Hispanics, high divorce rates, the burning of Black churches in the South, and drug use." (p. 37)

They also seem concerned about the idea that "within a few years, China will be the largest economy in the world..." and, consequently, will be in a more advantageous position to challenge U.S. imperialism.

Thus, there is little question that these authors and those elites that support them would like to launch a new Cold War with Beijing as the target.

However, this is easier said than done. During the Beijing/Washington "alliance of necessity," U.S. transnational corporations invested significantly in the Chinese economy. This includes influential corporations like Boeing, which has competed assiduously with its European competitor Airbus and is selling airplanes worth billions to Beijing. Billionaire Bill Gates of Microsoft has accused his government of "interference in [the] internal affairs" of China and alleged that "it's a little strange to try to tie free trade" to human rights. As a result, the authors charge that the lure of investments and contracts has "transformed several Fortune 500 companies into a formidable New China Lobby" that is quite hostile to a chill in Beijing/Washington relations. (p. 10)

Henry Kissinger, former U.S. Secretary of State, is assailed as well because of his reluctance to endorse the new Cold War. He too, they say,

stands to profit... by the very policies he urges the government to adopt. Kissinger's company, Kissinger Associates, represents many American corporations seeking to do business in China, and who pay Kissinger large sums of money at least in part because of his unparalleled access to China's most powerful figures. (p. 118)

Indeed, according to the authors, similar

charges can be leveled at a bevy of former high ranking U.S. officials, including Alexander Haig, Lawrence Eagleburger, Brent Scowcroft, Cyrus Vance, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and William Rogers, to name a few.

This is not the only problem, the authors say, in building an anti-Beijing front. Winston Lord, one of the key architects of U.S. policy in Asia, has observed that "one of our biggest problems in China is that our friends in Europe and Japan hold our coats while we take on the Chinese, and they gobble up the contracts." (p. 110)

Of late, tensions between France and the U.S. have escalated, not least over the fate of NATO, Washington's policy in the Middle East and Paris' perception of its influence eroding in certain parts of Africa. This, along with an inclination among many French progressives to resist alliances with U.S. imperialism, makes problematic the plan to enlist the European Union in a new Cold War.

The key policy recommendation made in this book is for the U.S. to acquiesce to a major military buildup in Japan in order to counter China. The authors point to the "joint security declaration" of April 1996 between the U.S. and Japan, and the July 1996 decision by the Pentagon "to supply the Japan Defense Agency with early warning data from spy satellites, that is, early warning of a missile attack" as evidence of a warming military relationship between Tokyo and Washington that is aimed at Beijing. (p. 182-3)

Yet, the authors concede that there are limits to cooperation between the U.S. and Japan. Many in Tokyo recognize that it was not so long ago that those same forces in Washington who are now trying to recruit them to confront Beijing were speaking of a "coming war with Japan." Ruefully the authors concede that

many elements of Japan's dominant bureaucratic and corporate interests will probably resist a revived alliance explicitly aimed at balancing China because it will threaten the profits Japan can make in China. There is also resistance from the general public which has a collective dread of the disasters that unbridled militarism once brought to Japan. (p. 184)

Though the authors do not define it as such, there are clear recent signs that China and Japan are improving diplomatic relations. (p. 172-3) According to other analysts, Washington's new concern

with China is a factor in pushing the U.S. to improve relations with both Vietnam and North Korea.

Thus, despite the opinion held by many - including many progressive forces - that the U.S. is the "sole remaining superpower" that can impose its diktat anywhere it chooses, reality itself instructs us differently. The international community has resisted staunchly the anti-Cuban Helms-Burton legislation and has pressured Washington to adopt more evenhanded posture in the Middle East. Nor does it appear that Washington's erstwhile "allies" are enthusiastic about following the U.S. into the abyss of a new Cold War.

Still, a "coming conflict with China" could be a disaster for the entire planet - and that includes the peoples of the U.S. - and if it is to be averted, a clear-eyed analysis of this complex new international situation is needed, along with deft organizing. □

Gerald Horne

The Young Paul Robeson, by Lloyd L. Brown, Westview Press, 1997

This book is not so much a biography of Robeson as it is a testimony. It's not the book which for many years we had been expecting from Lloyd Brown. But, in its own way, in its largely uncritical view of Robeson's early life, and as testimony to Robeson's struggle to achieve distinction it provides us with a unique look into a man's soul, his times, and one must not forget, into Brown's own biographical history.

No two men were better suited to each other than Robeson and Brown. Although I characterize this biography as "uncritical," as "testimony," I do this not to imply that Brown had a sycophantic relationship to Robeson, but that he identified so closely with Robeson, that in a sense, this biography of Robeson is also Brown's autobiography. Robeson needed a friend, an interpreter, a secretary, and could have gotten an adequate one presumably by putting an ad in the newspaper. But he needed something specially more than you could advertise for and which Brown brought to him: he needed someone who could meet him on

his own ideological level, share his political beliefs, whose commitments were rooted in the same soil as his own. As a Communist for many years, as author of the novel *Iron City* recently reissued, and as editor of *Masses and Mainstream*, Brown's preparation for working with Robeson was thorough. Racial identity wasn't enough, there had to be class identity. Robeson had to know, for instance, that when he was out of town, ideologically speaking, he could trust Brown to take care of the store.

Only someone who could not only share Robeson's views, but represent them faithfully, who could exchange opinions and develop ideas that were Robeson's ultimately, but to which Brown necessarily made a critical contribution, could have co-authored *Here I Stand*, which was Robeson's basic political statement, a profound estimate of the times, a setting down of principles implied in the very title. (I myself read the MMs of this book at its early stage and can speak at first hand on how it was done).

They thought as one. This identity of views is what distinguishes Brown's book on Robeson from the others, especially, which was the view of an alien, a stranger, one who had come to spy out the land. Needless to say, all those other versions of Robeson's life, whether they were intended to "help" his reputation by modifying his views to make them more acceptable to the establishment, or further, to scandalize his name, they come out as a distortion in one direction or another. In the end, an "uncritical" version of his life which looks on it with almost the same respect, if not awe, that one looks on the Grand Canyon or the Himalayas comes closer to the truth. (As a matter of fact there is, or was, a mountain named after him in the USSR).

He was a remarkable man; we "shall not look upon his like again," though, quite beyond rhetoric, it's strictly pertinent to say that "his like," in many various ways, reproduces itself in the course of historic struggle and he knew it.

Robeson was born in Princeton, New Jersey, April 9, 1898. His father, Rev. William Drew Robeson had been born in slavery – so close are we to those barbaric times! His mother, Maria Louisa, died when Robeson was only six, and it was his father – along with his brothers and sisters – who brought him up. And the times. One must include the times as having a decisive influence in Robeson's growing

up and in maturing him.

In reviewing his life one doesn't set out to compose a list of slights and hurts and insults – all of which he experienced at one time or another, to one degree or another. But Robeson was blessed with a naturally positive disposition, a basic belief instilled by his father and family, in himself and his "goodness," and he was big – nor was this as happenstance as it might have been – he was not only physically big but so too was his nature. It's impossible to connect anything petty, malicious, vindictive to him, which is not to say he didn't know how to hate. But he had no time, no inclination to settle scores with the merely vicious.

He didn't start out realizing that he could sing and act. What he wanted most to be was an athlete. And an athlete he certainly became, excelling in football, baseball, basketball, often being the difference between winning or losing. It was as an athlete that he first gained public notice, fame, in fact. It was for "dear old Rutgers" that he contributed his great talent, helping to win national championships, but "dear old Rutgers" suffered from sudden blindness when it came to openly acknowledging who their greatest athlete was. (It took years for Rutgers to recover its sight and finally recognize that nameless football star of theirs who placed them to national prominence).

Equal to his prowess on the gridiron was Robeson's prowess in the classroom and particularly on the debating team. There he stood out, not for any iconoclastic or socially critical assault on the status quo, but on the contrary, for the eloquence with which he, for instance, defended it – a case in point being the position of the government in World War I. At most he put forward the hope that the "democracy" for which the war was allegedly fought might be extended domestically to all the people. Thus, still a boy in his teens or barely out of them, is as far as he went critically. He still believed that the best way to fight for his people was to set good examples, to gain respect. And indeed, he seemed to be well on the road to proving the truth of that belief in his own life. As the first and often the only Black man in his field, whether it was sports or scholarship, he was given a measure of respect, even praise, and indeed acknowledgment. As a student in linguistics, he became fluent in several languages.

A time would come when he found no satisfaction in that. Eventually he would be very

explicit about refusing to allow his personal success to be used as an excuse for denying justice to his people – to his people and to his class – for Robeson was always class conscious, understood the struggle for national liberation as intertwined with the struggle for the emancipation of all the exploited. He was a Marxist, a Communist which he never denied though many of his “well-wishers” have.

Robeson’s “journey” followed the political contours of our rocky era. Like so many of his generation, his political awakening was speeded up by the Spanish Civil War – more correctly, the war of fascist intervention. He sang to the American and other International Brigadiers at the front lines, and that would be only an early instance of the many other “front lines” at which his rich voice rang out, celebrating Kevin Barry, Joe Hill or John Henry. At Peekskill, in the McCarthy ’50s, in upper New York State where his concert was attacked by the local fascists (aided and abetted by the police), those who came to listen threw a human barricade around him, daring the American Legion plug-uglies to attack; they didn’t. They attacked the crowd on their way home.

Robeson’s political development paralleled his generation’s. Not “naturally” combative, nor aggressive, his pride in himself as a man and an African American, his hunger for truth, his passion for justice led him out of the genteel world of the artist-performer and onto the bricks – onto the barricades. Typical of his generation’s experiences and conclusions from his experiences, Robeson, not a worker – indeed, he became a lawyer, though a non-functioning one – grasped the implications of the rise of the working class in the ’30s, manifested most dramatically in the CIO, made the connection between art and struggle, saw the consummation of those struggles in a socialist America. Again, like his generation, socialism was no pie-in-the-sky proposition. A model already existed in the USSR where the working class had made a successful revolution and were proving to the world that socialism was a practical matter well within the ability of ordinary workers to achieve and (as the war would prove) to defend. The success of the USSR was a very important consideration in his – as in his generation’s view of the present and the future. There is little doubt, knowing how he thought, that he would have strongly objected to

Gorbachev’s betrayal (though of course, one can only speculate).

He died after a decade or so in retirement. Speculation about his views was rife, as the renegades of the world dreamed and schemed of adding Robeson’s name to their by-now long list of deserters, and though he normally refrained from answering both praise and slander, he was moved enough by these latest speculations to tell an audience in Carnegie Hall gathered there to celebrate his 75th birthday that “I am the same Paul dedicated as ever to the worldwide cause of humanity for freedom, peace and brotherhood...”

In that voice, so familiar to the whole world, there was no doubt as to where Robeson, who at one time stood like the mountain that would be named after him, immovable among the political storms of his era, stood on the crucial issues of the day. To the bullies, renegades, easy sliders, men whose principles could be adjusted to every situation; to the cowards, whiners, defeatists; to the nimble-footed opportunists who never missed a chance, his life is an answer. It stands as a monument, as a reproach, as a refutation, as proof. His memory is a national treasure, and if the America of the future is to have something to look upon with pride it will be – and is – this man’s example. He is as he is; nothing can dilute him.

Lloyd Brown’s narrative ends with Robeson’s graduation from Rutgers and Columbia University. However, in an “Afterword” he does fill in some of the gaps in Robeson’s life that should have been the core of a full-scale biography. Otherwise the glimpses we get of the young Robeson are fascinating, even if sometimes, especially in detailed accounts of football games, a bit more is made of his athletic career than we need to know, though, Robeson being who he was, even his football games made a difference in American life.

This is a heartwarming book. That it is this in a period of unprecedented cynicism and cultural corruption is a tribute not only to Robeson, but to Brown as well who possessed the pureness of heart to respond to this great man and to understand. □

Phillip Bonosky

SEOUL

The recent massive strikes against the government's sneak attack, anti-labor law surpassed \$2 billion in lost industrial production while losses on the export front rose to \$350 million. The strike began December 26 and ended in mid-January. The law, aimed at busting unions, allowed companies to lay off workers at will and to work them up to 56 hours a week "to protect firms from bankruptcy."

Meanwhile, South Korea's trade deficit last year came to \$20.4 billion, double the 1995 figure and its total foreign debt reached \$92.6 billion by June 1996, up from \$78.4 billion in 1995.

EDINBURGH

The March 1st weekend saw over 20,000 protesters brave rain and gale-force winds, to demonstrate their support for the call of the Scottish Trade Union Council for maximum unity against the wide-ranging public sector cuts enforced on local governments by the national government.

Over 10,000 jobs have already been lost over the past year and another 10,000 are threatened. Taking part in the demonstration were trade unions, trade councils, community organizations, Labor Party members and Communists. Support was pledged for the 25,000 council workers in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Midlothian and West Dumbartonshire who were preparing to go on strike.

TOKYO

A coalition of unions, small enterprise owners, women and youth filled the visitor's hall in the House of Representatives on February 9 to present a petition to the Diet, signed by 8,350,000 people demanding that there be no consumption tax rate increase. The signature drive continues.

HAVANA

Cuban President Fidel Castro accused the United States of using the anti-drug "certification" process as an excuse to intervene in the internal affairs of other countries. He said that the United States has sent troops to countries which have asked for them and countries which have not. But now they have invented a new method for intervening. Castro said that unilateral classification is a shameful mechanism coming from the U.S. which is the world's major producer of marijuana. The United States government recently "decertified" nine countries including Afghanistan, Burma, Iran, Nigeria, Syria and Colombia.

MAPUTO

More than 300 activists from non-governmental organizations gathered here on February 25 for an international conference to build support for an international treaty to ban land mines, to be signed in Ottawa in December. Mozambique's president, Joaquim Chissano, told the conference, "We appeal to the producing countries to stop the manufacture, transport, sale and use of mines. We support this movement with all our vigor and look forward to the total eradication of mines from the planet."

LONDON

Addressing the annual meeting of the Labor Action for Peace, Tony Benn, left-wing Labor MP, warned that the European Union is leading to a common defense policy and a Euro-bomb. He said that the "United Nations is being pushed aside by the U.S.-dominated North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which still exists as an instrument of expansion into eastern Europe with the ultimate aim of containing and dominating Russia."

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Making Fascism Fashionable

Mas'ud Zavarzadeh

The retirement of David Brinkley as the commentator on ABC's talk show *This Week with David Brinkley*, and the subsequent lowering of George Will's profile on that show, signal the arrival of a new era in television political analysis. The Brinkley-Will brand of conservative commentary has become rather embarrassing. They speak the old languages of the Cold War and show how out of touch they are with the emerging global capitalism and its post-national politics so important to big business. Their commentary is mired in nostalgia for a dying nationalist capitalism and its fading nation-state.

The TV networks are now scrambling to find fresh voices that are tuned to the new globalization of capital and can defend the interests of transnational big business in hipper, more cosmopolitan tones. They are looking (to paraphrase one network executive) for young, smart, image-savvy political analysts who can cut against the nationalist conservative clichés of Brinkley-Will-Novak.

In Laura Ingraham – the new analyst on the CBS's *Weekend News* who also has a spot on Microsoft-NBC's worldwide MSNBC – the networks have found the new postmodern political commentator for the post-Cold War. She is not simply another "far-rite" (as her Porsche vanity-plate proclaimed) conservative. She is a postmodern analyst whose "fresh voice" is the voice of transnational postmodern fascism. Like her Italian counterparts (the "post-fascists"), she packages fascism as a transnational ideology with wit, humor, irony and an image-savviness for mass consumption. She makes postmodern fascism look cutting-edge – a hip politics.

Unlike the "nationalist" phase of fascism which was the outcome of the crisis of monopoly capital in "nation-states" (Italy and Germany in particular), postmodern fascism is a transnational phenomenon that, it is true, finds local expression (the militias in the U.S., the National Front in France, Neo-Nazism in Germany, ultranationalism in Russia, for exam-

ple), but it no longer has distinct national boundaries and, like transnational capital itself, it "travels" across the geographical borders of nation-states. The "Internet" in fact has provided an interactive transnational space of convergence for postmodern fascism.

RULING CLASS IDEOLOGY ▣ The class basis of postmodern fascism continues to be, for the most part, through the petty bourgeoisie, because the material base of that class's daily life is now, more than ever before, being eroded by the globalization of capital. This makes postmodern fascism look like merely the "spontaneous" politics of the petty bourgeoisie. In fact, however, postmodern fascism is the ideology of the ruling class, which uses the discontent of the petty bourgeoisie as a vehicle for advancing its economic interests.

The main component of postmodern fascism is vastly different from that of nationalist fascism. National fascism was, above all, a chauvinistic movement. Chauvinism becomes a secondary feature of neofascism. This makes it more clear that chauvinism has always been a thin ideological veneer on fascism to hide its real allegiance to capitalism and not to any particular country. In today's fascism, it is the protection of the "free market" all over the world that is held to be the highest priority. Also, postmodern fascism is not an overtly terrorist movement: this is not the fascism carried through the agency of jackboots and storm troopers, but instead carried through the agency of Nike sneakers and the media.

The emergence of a postmodern fascist trend, among other things, points up the fact that the ruling class – under the current crisis of capitalism with its jettisoning of the social safety net, its brutal "downsizing" not just of "line workers" but of petty-bourgeois middle managers, and its headlong rush to amass ever greater pools of capital – can no longer use the ruse of "democracy" (the idea that it is self-evidently true that individuals are "free" today under capitalism) to legitimize its exploitation of the working class and must, once again under these conditions, deflect attention from the "free-

Mas'ud Zavarzadeh is a contributor to *Political Affairs*.

dom" of individuals and argue that the essence of freedom and human happiness is basically "free trade."

FEARLESS DEFENSE OF BIG BUSINESS ▣ Ingraham's commentary is aggressively postmodern, irreverent and – unlike the old modernist fascism – post-national. Her main interest is in a foreign policy that protects transnational business. She believes that the model for U.S. foreign policy should be one based on the "desire to promote democracy abroad." But "democracy aboard" is a code word, in her commentary, for the free market. She is, therefore, upset about the lack of trade balance between the U.S. and China and wants human rights issues to be used as a lever to correct that imbalance by opening up more of the Chinese market to U.S. business. Similarly Milosevic's regime in Serbia, which is still based on state supervision of business, should be replaced by a "pro-democratic" government that accepts the free market and offers favorable business terms for foreign capitalists.

Her defense of transnational business avoids the old nationalist fascist "argument" against "liberalism." Instead, like other postmodern fascists steeped in the culture of MTV, she bypasses "argument" and simply presents her audience with an image, an ironic play of wit. When she showed up for a lunch interview with David Shribman of *The Boston Globe*, she wore a full-length fur which, she assured him, was made from "baby squealing foxes." In one image she condenses her case for big business, her contempt for animal rights, and her ironic pleasure in the individual rewards of capitalism. And she does this fearlessly (in John McLaughlin's word on whose show, *The McLaughlin Group*, she also appears).

"Fearlessness" is the trademark of all fascist militaristic aggressions against the people's democracy. Ingraham's postmodern fascism is born out of the current crisis of U.S. capitalism. Like other postmodern fascists, Ingraham persuades the petty bourgeoisie that its economic hardship is caused not by the exploitation of workers, which has resulted in the rising profits of transnational business, but by liberal cultural policies, which favor the working class, the poor, African-Americans and women. More specifically, her commentaries manipulate the fears of the middle class in order to attack liberal social policies that, she says, support homosexuality, abortion, secular school curriculum, feminism, wel-

fare mothers and a whole host of other things that scare middle-class whites. She has, for example, called the Gay Students Association at Dartmouth, where she was an undergraduate, "cheerleaders for latent campus sodomites." However, for her the main beneficiaries of shameful liberalism, which robs people of their rights of free competition (by affirmative action, for example), are labor unions.

AN ANTI-LABOR AGENDA ▣ For Ingraham unions have become the symbol of liberal and anti-business regulations that restrict free enterprise and limit individual freedom and prosperity. Ingraham thinks, like another postmodern fascist, Arianna Huffington, that we should abandon social programs that provide a safety net (because they increase taxes on big business) and substitute for them "compassion" and "moral responsibility."

In the guise of debating cultural issues, Ingraham's comments alienate people from working-class movements and thus weaken the unions. Weakened unions leave transnational big business free to increase its exploitation of workers all over the world – from sweatshops making designer clothes in New York to child laborers in Bangladesh making soccer balls and carpets for Western consumers.

What is just as dangerous as Ingraham's postmodern fascism is the way in which she is received by the media. Her views are being accommodated and made familiar not just by entertainment magazines like *Vanity Fair* but by the "serious" media, notably *60 Minutes* and the *New York Times*. For instance, the *New York Times*, which put her on the cover of its *Sunday Magazine*, has treated her postmodern fascism as the charming views of an outspoken, bold and hip performance artist and not as the dangerous political ideology that it is. Her anti-gay comments, for example, are not seen by the media as an ingredient of fascism but as an ironic performance since, after all, her own brother is gay.

By personalizing her views and representing her politics as pure style and image, the media has taken her fascist views as a refreshing new voice. Network executives argue that such a hot new voice should be heard as part of a larger pluralism of voices on TV. But this is, of course, a very selective pluralism: when was the last time network executives allowed a socialist voice to be heard as a part of a pluralist commentary?

Ingraham's views, far from being "personal" and eccentric expressions of a hip postmodern con-

servative, are symptoms of a new transnational fascism marked by the increasing violence of big business against workers: layoffs and outsourcing to maximize profits; the rise of militias in the U.S. and ethnic cleansing abroad; the trafficking in child prostitution and slave labor, and more and more

sweatshops – whether in U.S. cities or in free trade zones. Ingraham's postmodern fascism is the symptom of the latest crisis of transnational capitalism. One should look beyond its slick veneer and fight it on all fronts. □

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MANAGUA

With unemployment estimated at 52 percent and 760 percent of the people living in poverty, President Arnaldo Aleman has announced the dismissal of 13,000 public sector workers. The "justification" for this inhuman irrational decision is the intense pressure of international imperialist lending institutions for restructuring in Nicaragua.

CYPRUS

In the December municipal elections, 18 of 24 elected mayors in the free areas of Cyprus were candidates of the democratic progressive forces of AKEL-Left-New Forces (AKEL-EDEK) and the united Democrats. AKEL is the Communist Party of Cyprus. AKEL-EDEK increased its overall vote and won seven seats. The leadership of AKEL hailed the results as "a major victory for our Party and its coalition policies."

BEIJING

China's output of steel reached 100 million tons in 1996 giving it first place in the world. In 1949 at the time of the Chinese revolution, output was 7.6 million tons. China can now supply 88 percent of the steel need for its national economy. The Gross Domestic Product is expected to grow by about 10 percent in 1997.

PRAGUE

The union of teachers and school workers, second largest union in the country staged rolling one-day strikes beginning at the end of January in support of an 18.9 percent pay rise. The basic pay of teachers makes them one the lowest paid in the

Czech Republic

RAHULNA

Workers in the second largest port and industrial city of Bangladesh called a general strike in early February to demand reopening of closed down factories and against privatization. As a result of pressure from the world Bank and International Monetary Fund, the government carries out a "structural readjustment policy" resulting in 5000 factory closures and more than 3 million workers thrown out of work.

KETAKYUSHO

In the first major local assembly election this year, all ten candidates of the Japanese Communist Party were elected. The JCP received 16 percent of the total vote compared to 12 percent four years ago. The JCP is now the second largest party in the city assembly.

HAVANA

Cuban President Fidel Castro accused the United States of using the anti-drug "certification" process as an excuse to intervene in the internal affairs of other countries. He said that the United States has sent troops to countries which have asked for them and countries which have not. But now they have invented a new method for intervening. Castro said that unilateral classification is a shameful mechanism coming from the U.S. which is the world's major producer of marijuana. The United States government recently "decertified" nine countries including Afghanistan, Burma, Iran, Nigeria, Syria and Colombia.

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