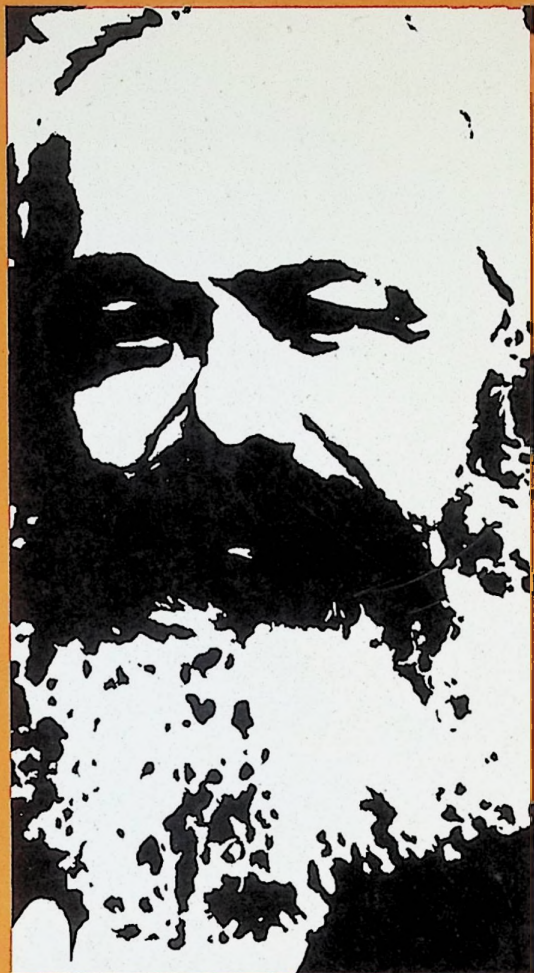


# political affairs

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March 1985 \$1



**Monopoly and Culture**  
MICHAEL PARENTI

**For a People's Culture**  
ANGELA DAVIS

**Culture Under Full Socialism**  
HENRIK BOROVIK

Phillip Bonosky • Elton Fax  
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*from the conference on—*

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# An Introduction

The battle of ideas, according to a basic postulate of Marxism, is a part of the battle of classes. The various arts, the electronic and printed media of mass communication, are powerful expressions of this battle of ideas.

And this battle doesn't stand still; it develops in the context of a constantly changing technological, political, economic and ideological climate. The ruling class applies new technology as intensively to eliminate the ideas of its opponents from public debate as it does to eliminate workers from production. It seeks as assiduously to launch devastating propaganda blows at its opponents as it does to develop the capability to launch weapons of mass destruction against socialist countries.

The technique of capitalist class propaganda is constantly being refined. Radio, television, newspapers; fiction and documentary; painting, song and theater—all the media and forms of social consciousness are being honed and developed—not to promote truth, but to inculcate in people ideas which glorify capitalism, justify its objectives and exclude even the consideration of alternative policies, much less an alternative social system.

As capital becomes more concentrated, so does control of ideological production.

The 1984 elections demonstrated on how large a scale and with what sophistication these powerful media can be harnessed in the service of reaction. It was symbolic of how the ruling class uses the arts that the chief spokesperson for reaction was a professional actor. It is also indicative of how little monopoly capital cares for culture, outside its own narrow propaganda aims, that the Reagan Administration is savaging support for creative arts, dismembering public broadcasting and portraying non-union labor of performers as the "all American ideal."

The critical danger of a nuclear holocaust;

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

the realities of imperialist aggression, class exploitation and domination, unemployment and racism; and the propagation of antihuman values to justify these ugly realities present a challenge to all working-class and progressive forces.

The challenge is to tear the mask of benevolence off the class forces which threaten humanity's very existence.

The challenge is to surmount prejudices and forge unity among the people's forces.

The challenge is to present ideals which galvanize the forces of progress; to make palpable the possibilities for victories in the present situation.

The challenge is to master all the media of communication for the good of the working class and people.

This is a tall order, but it is one which history teaches can and must be accomplished.

It was to further such objectives that *Political Affairs* sponsored a conference on "Marxism and the Arts" in December 1984. The main papers and discussion from the conference are presented here. (The conference also included an art exhibition and a varied and imaginative presentation by performing artists.)

In over four years, the Reagan Administration has not produced a single agreement on arms control, economic cooperation or cultural exchange with the Soviet Union. Rather, it has erected a thicket of missiles pointed at the heart of socialism. The way for the deployment of these missiles has been cleared by the launching of volleys of anti-Soviet inventions and distortions. We were therefore particularly pleased to have the participation of a distinguished representative of Soviet culture. His paper, like his presence, demonstrated how much mutual benefit there can be from international cooperation of Marxist and all other peaceful forces.

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# 1 Monopoly Capital panel 1 And Culture

MICHAEL PARENTI

*A distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of a natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic or philosophic—in short, ideological forms in which [people] become conscious of this conflict and fight it out.*  
—Karl Marx

It goes without saying that the *raison d'être* of capitalism is to accumulate capital. Capitalism's purpose is not to create jobs; in fact, capitalists are constantly devising ways to eliminate jobs in order to cut labor costs. Nor is its purpose to build communities, for capitalists will build or destroy communities as investment opportunities dictate. Nor is capitalism dedicated to protecting the family or other such traditional institutions, for no system in human history has been more relentless in battering down ancient practices. Nor is capitalism intent upon protecting the environment on behalf of generations yet to come, for corporations will treat the environment like a septic tank in order to cut production costs and maximize profits without regard for future generations. Nor can we say that capitalists are committed to economic efficiency and rational production, since they regularly pass on their hidden inefficiencies and diseconomies to the public in the form of overpricing, pollution, unemployment, social dislocation, harmful products and personal injury; and, as the military budget shows, they actually court waste and duplication if it brings fatter profits.

No, capitalism has no loyalty to anything but its own process of capital accumulation, no loyalty to anything but itself. Nor could it be otherwise if one wished to survive as a capitalist, for the first law of the market is to make a

profit from other people's labor or go out of business. Private profitability rather than social need is the determining condition of capitalist investment.

It was not always so. There were and still are precapitalist subsistence societies (not to mention modern socialist ones) in which social need rather than private greed is the major determinant of production and distribution.<sup>1</sup> With the advent of advanced horticultural and industrial societies, however, large-scale organizations evolve for the production of wealth. With that come organizations for the *protection* of wealth, starting with the bands of armed men whom Engels saw as the essence of the state. Instead of private efforts being mobilized for collective interests, collective efforts are increasingly mobilized on behalf of private interests.<sup>2</sup>

It may come as a surprise to discover that throughout most of the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, leading bourgeois political theorists and philosophers understood and openly stated, as did Adam Smith in 1776, that civil authority "is in reality instituted for the defense of the rich against the poor, or of those who have some property against those who have none at all."<sup>3</sup> As class differences become more pronounced, Smith observed, so does the need for a state: "The acquisition of valuable and extensive property . . . necessarily requires the establishment of civil government."<sup>4</sup> And as the scope and concentration of modern capitalist society widens so does the state—from principality to confederation to nation to an international network of counterinsurgency client states—in order to protect the expropriators from the expropriated and make the world safe for capital accumulation.

Today knowledge of this relationship between wealth, class and state is suppressed like a dirty secret, or it is dismissed by officials, pub-

Michael Parenti is the author of *Power and the Powerless and Democracy for the Few*.

licists, academics and other guardians of the capitalist system as just so much Marxist-Leninist ideological mouthing. The accepted posture is to minimize or deny entirely the linkages between capitalist economic power and a supposedly democratic state, between private wealth and public authority. But those of us who are less enamored with the existing system can see that the power of money prevails over the needs of the people and that the existing state can no more be neutral toward, and independent of, those who control the wealth of the nation than can other institutions of society.

These other institutions are what I want to concentrate on for the remainder of this article. The state power of the ruling class never stands alone. As Napoleon once said, you can do anything with bayonets except sit on them. A class which relies solely on the state's bayonets to maintain its rule is never secure. So behind the state is a whole supporting network of doctrines, values, myths and institutions that are not normally thought of as political. The state, as Gramsci noted, is "only the outer ditch behind which there [stands] a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks."<sup>5</sup> These supportive institutions help create the ideology that transforms a ruling class interest into a "general interest," justifying existing class relations as the only natural and workable ones, the preferred and optimal, if not perfect, societal arrangements. So the capitalist class controls society's cultural institutions and ideational production as well as its labor, land and natural resources. Along with monopoly capital we have monopoly culture.

Those persons who believe the United States is a "pluralistic" society resist the notion of a ruling-class monopoly culture. They see cultural institutions as standing outside the political arena, independent of business power and the state. Indeed, they see culture itself as something distinctly separate from politics. They make much about keeping the arts, sciences, foundations, schools, colleges, professions, churches and media free of the taint of political ideologies so that these institutions might not be deprived of their purity and independence. Since the pluralists believe that Big

Business is just one of many interests in the political arena and does not dominate the state, they can not imagine that business dominates civil society and cultural life.

A closer look at reality, however, shows that cultural institutions such as the media, publishing houses, recreational and entertainment enterprises and most hospitals are not merely influenced by business ideology but are themselves Big Business, components of large profit-making corporate conglomerates. Furthermore, nonprofit cultural institutions like schools, museums, scientific and research associations, foundations and universities are ruled very much like the profit-making ones—by boards of directors (or trustees or regents), drawn mostly from the business class or those in the pay of that class. These boards have final say over the institution's system of rewards and punishments, its budget and personnel, its investments and purposes. They exercise power either by occupying the top positions or hiring and firing those who do. Their power to change the institution's management if it does not perform as they desire is what gives them control.<sup>6</sup>

The boards of directors exercise authority not by popular demand or consensus but by *state* charter. Incorporated by the state, they can call upon the courts and the police to enforce their decisions against the competing claims of staff, clients or other constituents. These boards are non-elected, self-selected, self-perpetuating ruling coteries of affluent persons who are answerable to no one but themselves. They are checked by no internal electoral system, no opposition parties, no obligation to report to the rank and file or win support and confirmation from any of the people whose lives they affect with their decisions. As one observer put it: "When the state acts to protect their authority, it does so through the property system; that is, it recognizes the corporation as the private property of some determinate group of men and it protects their right to do, within legal limits, what they please with their property."<sup>7</sup> Yet, institutions so ruled are said to be the mainstay of "democratic pluralism."

In a word, the cultural order is not independent of the business system. Nor are cultural in-

stitutions independent of each other, being owned outright or directly controlled by the more active members of the business class in what amounts to a system of interlocking and often interchanging directorates.

We know of more than one business leader who not only presides over a bank or corporation but has served as a cabinet member in Washington, is a regent of a large university, a trustee of a civic art center, and at one time or another a member of the board of a major newspaper, a church, a foundation, or a television network.

This confluence of the moneyed class with state and culture developed most markedly during the latter part of the nineteenth century as capitalism came to full maturity and capitalists swiftly moved to achieve a cultural hegemony to shore up their economic dominance. As one historian describes it:

In short order the railroad presidents, copper barons, the big dry-goods merchants and the steelmasters became Senators, ruling in the highest councils of the national government . . . but they also became in even greater number lay leaders of churches, trustees of universities, partners or owners of newspapers or press services and figures of fashionable, cultured society. And through all these channels they labored to advance their policies and principles.<sup>8</sup>

With command over organizational structure, personnel and budget comes command over the practices and content of the institution. Those who call the tune may not be able to exercise perfect control over every note that is played but individuals who stray too far from the score, who create too much cacaphony, eventually find themselves without pay or position. Along with the punishments there are the rewards for compliance—the grants, prizes, funds, fellowships, commissioned studies, honorary awards, special programs, promotions, top appointments, conference invitations, fat lecture fees, junkets and other such enticements. Today more than ever, through its influence over the state, the owning class is able to funnel public funds into nonbusiness associations that serve business needs.

Let us consider some specific cultural areas. Among the institutions enjoying an undeserved reputation for autonomy and democracy are the schools and universities. But a number of studies show that American public schools regularly indoctrinate their pupils into dominant class values and conformist attitudes, suppressing information and opinions that might be offensive to capitalist ideology. Grade school and high school students learn of the need to “fight Communism,” and are exposed to a sanitized rendition of American history and an idealized version of American political and economic institutions. They are taught loyalty to a “free enterprise system” that is, in turn, associated with freedom, democracy, God, the flag and “the American Way of Life.” In addition, “our schools are cluttered with militaristic indoctrination created by the Pentagon and with conservative propaganda produced by giant corporations—all made available free, or at nominal cost, and all masquerading as pedagogically proper teaching material.”<sup>9</sup> American history and civics textbooks are likely to reflect an ideological perspective identical to the one fostered by government and corporate elites.<sup>10</sup> Teachers who have the temerity to introduce politically radical criticisms of American institutions often face loss of jobs.

The constraints of capitalist ideological orthodoxy operate also at the university and graduate levels. With the growth of modern capitalism the university evolved from a clergy-dominated institution concentrating on classical education and theology to one that served industry’s growing need for managers, scientists, engineers, lawyers and agronomists. Through the early decades of the twentieth century, the business class tightened its hold over the colleges, using tax-free foundations and state and federal money to build modern universities and professional schools. Government now provides universities with large sums, and universities provide business with a wide range of services and trained personnel, and have substantial investments in big corporations. “University academics and State and Defense Department specialists have been no strangers to

one another," one observer writes in what must be considered an understatement.<sup>11</sup>

In fact, the Pentagon alone funds about two-thirds of all basic scientific research and development in the United States. The Pentagon also spends many millions each year on what it designates as "social science research." Whether it is a question of improving military recruitment campaigns, lobbying techniques, or counterinsurgency, or of making the tax burden less visible, consumers more responsive, or factory workers, inner-city residents and Third World villagers more compliant, teams of social scientists have been there with bright and often ruthless ideas, never defining new goals or challenging the class interests of their patrons but trying to develop ways of reaching and justifying the objectives desired by the political-economic elites who pay so well for their talents. Their task has not been to change the world but to help those in power to control it.

The university's dependence on rich foundations, corporations and government has affected the substance of its academic research and curriculum. Yet most of the recipients of this bounty maintain that they are independent, self-directed scholars who have not been bought by anyone. Their remarkable ability to remain free of the hand that feeds them is matched only by those members of Congress who claim a similarly miraculous independence of the moneyed interests that lavishly contribute to their campaign coffers.

The "free and independent" colleges and universities of the United States do not govern themselves. As already noted, most institutions of higher education, like most other institutions, are run by boards of trustees drawn almost entirely from the business community. The trustees of Columbia University, to cite a typical example, are mostly real estate magnates, bankers and directors of such corporations as Lockheed, Consolidated Edison, IBM and CBS. Lacking any special training in the field of higher education, trustees nevertheless exercise authority over capital funding and budget; the hiring and firing and promotion of faculty; the formation and abolition of academic departments, study programs, courses and cur-

riculum; tuition and student fees; commencement speakers, guest lecturers, degrees, awards and just about any other decision including, if need be, the name of the school football team. (When the student body at Stanford University voted in the late 1960s to name their football team the Robber Barons in recognition of how the founder, Leland Stanford, had made his millions, the trustees suppressed the vote and themselves chose a less unsettling team name.)

Among the cultural institutions that are great pretenders to impartiality and autonomy are the law and the law profession. In the early days of the Republic, leaders of the bar often saw themselves as sentinels preserving civil order from popular insurgency and mob rule. Upon becoming a professor of law at Harvard in 1829, Joseph Story announced that the lawyer's most "glorified and not infrequently perilous" duty was to guard the "sacred rights of property" from the "rapacity" of the majority. The lawyer and the law were the "solitary citadel" that stood between property and property redistribution.<sup>12</sup> Today, lawyers have learned to be more circumspect in their expressions of devotion to the propertied class and more inclined to talk about "justice for all." But law schools continue to reflect the biases of the owning class they serve. Corporate law, tax law, contract law and property law are the prestige areas. The ground rules in these courses are drawn from 19th century laissez-faire capitalism, with passing recognition given to the need for limited government regulation to rectify certain "abuses." Judicial outcomes are presented as products of "legal reasoning" rather than responses to political and economic forces. Attention is on individual rights and procedures, not on substantive social justice between classes, races and sexes.<sup>13</sup>

Realty law is studied from the viewpoint of the landlord rather than from the needs of the tenant. Corporate law is seen from the perspective of the firm rather than from the human rights of the worker and consumer. Rights of big creditors are afforded careful attention while legal problems of ordinary debtors are generally ignored. Lawyers are more likely to work for industrial polluters than for ecologists, since



that's where the money is. They will be employed to get agricultural subsidies for the rich, not food stamps for the poor; lobbying for the banks, not small depositors; for highway builders, not displaced residents; for the rich man's tax privileges, not the wage earner's tax reform.

Generally speaking, the schools of law, medicine and academic scholarship train students to discard their initial outrage regarding injustice and privilege. Students learn that such concerns are "naive," "not professional" and "not relevant" to what they are learning, and that they must consider the larger picture, avoiding "simplistic" radical muckraking and at the same time confine their efforts to the narrow serviceable questions of their trade. In this way one is more likely to survive professionally and attain the preferred positions and lifelong rewards of the profession.

Medicine is another realm of our "pluralistic" culture that both supports and is supported by capitalist values and interests. Medical associations, hospitals and medical schools regulate the health market by fixing prices, limiting the supply of doctors and punishing physicians who might charge less or advocate less lucrative ways of bringing treatment to the public. A special vocabulary is used to disguise the fact that doctors are, for the most part, self-enriching, petty bourgeois entrepreneurs who run businesses ("practices") and have customers ("patients") to whom they sell a service ("treatment") at stunningly high prices ("fees"), using restrictive state laws to restrain trade and create a monopoly market ("licensing to protect scientific standards") and thus ensure high incomes for the physicians. Because of these restrictive laws, people in many states are forbidden to choose alternative forms of treatment such as osteopathy, homeopathy and naturopathy. Attempts by physicians to bar competing treatments date back to the early 19th century, when doctors who sought monopoly control struggled against a public that resisted—not without good reason—the "fearsome and futile" methods of bleeding, blistering, purging, burning with mercury and poisoning with arsenic.<sup>14</sup>

Today it's not much improved. The drugs that doctors rely so heavily upon are themselves

expensive and often useless or unsafe. According to a Senate subcommittee, about 30,000 people die each year from adverse reactions to medical drugs, most of which are marketed for quick profits by drug companies without adequate testing for efficacy and safety.<sup>15</sup>

Over the last few decades, responding to the public outcry for decent health care, government has subsidized private hospitals with many billions of dollars, allowing almost unlimited payments for health services and capital expenditures, and a massive increase in health industry profits, without any great improvement in health. Within the past few decades medicine has become a major capitalist industry in its own right, the second largest in the United States. Yet, in keeping with the way capitalism does things, 25 million Americans lack health insurance; public hospitals that service the poor are closing down; 40 per cent of infants and toddlers are not fully vaccinated; and the elderly spend as large a part of their income on health care as before the passage of Medicare.<sup>16</sup>

Health industry profits have grown, even during the recent recessions, to the point where health programs for employees have become a major cost of production for corporations, inducing a reaction by government and business against the medical capitalists who are cutting into the profits of the rest of the capitalist class. So federal and state governments are moving toward paying fixed and limited sums per illness, regardless of the amount of care extended. Now hospitals will profit by providing less service to each patient instead of loading on the (often unnecessary and useless) tests and treatments. Profits will still be sumptuous, but more in line with the rest of industry, and more people will be without adequate care.<sup>17</sup>

The pluralists also believe we have a free and independent press in the United States. In truth, the news media are giant profit-making conglomerates, owned and controlled by powerful banks and rich, conservative individuals. The reporters and editors who work for them learn to see the world with much the same blinders as owners, advertisers, corporate heads and White House and Pentagon officials. Newspaper, television and radio reporters think

twice before delving into sensitive areas. They worry about having their copy cut and rewritten, and about being removed from choice assignments, passed over for promotion or fired. The consequence of this kind of control is that "coverage is limited and certain questions never get asked," according to a writer for the *Chicago Tribune*.<sup>18</sup> The business-owned news media portray the U.S. role throughout the world as essentially benign and providential, a bulwark against Communist "aggression," a view that is left unchallenged and largely unexamined, gaining certainty through decades of repetition.

Media representatives insist they are "objective" and "neutral" in the way they present the news, although they rarely, if ever, define these terms. In practice, objectivity means framing stories about Indochina, Central America and Eastern Europe from a State Department perspective. Objectivity means heating up or cooling down the cold war as ruling elites might want. Objectivity means ignoring or denying the accomplishments of socialist economies and the human services in socialist societies, and dwelling upon their presumed "failure" and impending collapse. Objectivity means defining American defense needs as might the Joint Chiefs of Staff and saying not a word about U.S. imperialism. Objectivity means reporting about "yellow rain," "Soviet terrorism," Nicaragua, El Salvador and the invasion of Grenada in a way the cold warriors want. Objectivity means reporting strikes as the bosses see them, talking about workers' "demands" and management's "offers," dwelling on how costly the strike will be for the economy, without a word about the costs to workers and their families. Objectivity means ignoring 50,000 people marching in Washington, D.C., to protest U.S. intervention in Central America, but sending a multitude of press people to cover a 12-person Nazi-Klan rally in Arlington, Virginia. Objectivity means saying anything you want, presenting reality in any way, so long as it is within the parameters of the capitalist ideology.<sup>19</sup>

The news media aside, the supposedly nonpolitical entertainment media also present the world according to capitalism. With a few notable exceptions, films with progressive, pro-

labor, pro-peace, pro-socialist, anti-imperialist content are consigned to oblivion or to limited showings before small, select audiences. In contrast, over the years television and Hollywood have inundated the mass public with cold-war films about the Red Menace at home and abroad, along with cop shows, spy films, situation comedies, soap operas, quiz shows and advertisements that offer up mindboggling portions of violence, brutality, racism, sexism, crudity, crass consumerism, cynicism, authoritarianism, militarism, jingoism and other values so functional to modern capitalism.

Mass-entertainment capitalism has expropriated a great deal of the social and artistic activities that were once the people's culture. Capitalism moves into all areas of experience, recreating all things in its own image, influencing not only the way people work but the way they create, play and consume. The storytelling arts have given way to the canned dramas of Hollywood and television. Folk music and homespun song fests give way to a relatively few high-priced performers playing before mass audiences who pay to listen or who purchase the tapes and recordings. What now passes for "entertainment" is a product controlled by a handful of corporate executives, promoters, distributors, agents and "stars."

The image we have of the artist as an independent purveyor of creative culture may be as misleading as the one we have of the scientist. What is referred to as the "art world" is not a thing apart from the art market; the latter is heavily influenced by a small number of monied persons like Huntington Hartford, J. Paul Getty, Nelson Rockefeller and Joseph Hirshorn, who have treated art works not as part of the communal treasure but as objects of pecuniary investment and personal acquisition. They have financed the museums and major galleries, the publishing houses that print art books, the expensive art magazines, the hired critics, the university art endowments and the art schools and centers. As trustees, publishers, patrons and speculators, the rich exercise an influence over the means of artistic production and distribution, setting political limits to artistic expression. Artists who move beyond the ac-

ceptable boundaries run the risk of not being shown. Art with radical political content is labeled "propaganda" by those who control the art market.<sup>20</sup> All of Socialist Realism, both the brilliant and the mediocre, is *by definition* not art, since it is socialist. While professing to keep art free of politics ("art for art's sake"), the gatekeepers impose their own politically motivated definition of what is and is not art. The art they buy, sell, show and have reviewed is formalistic, privatized and detached from real events. Even when realistic in form it is usually devoid of social content and political commentary. Modernist "nonobjective" art, Abstract Expressionism, is described by Norman Goldberg as "highly personal, unrealistic and sufficiently ambiguous to stimulate a broad range of aesthetic interpretations. It had the attraction of dissidence and yet it was apolitical."<sup>21</sup>

**L**abor unions are an institution that show how difficult it is to function in this society without either becoming an auxiliary to or a victim of capitalism. A number of prominent union leaders, from Samuel Gompers to Lane Kirkland, have been pro-capitalist, hostile toward Leftist parties, superpatriotic, intolerant of internal dissent and often suspicious of rank-and-file militancy—enough to leave many people convinced that unions are worthless, corrupt, coopted organizations that are actually harmful to workers' interests. A closer look tells us that, whatever their deficiencies, unions often take progressive stances on a wide range of critical issues and have won some real democratic gains for workers. To the extent working people have any mass democratic organization which provides them with opportunities for fightback and collective action, and some protection from the relentless oppression of management, it is the labor union. Unions are the major countervailing class power pitted against the process of capital accumulation. Our "pluralistic" capitalist society does not easily tolerate this kind of pluralism. For this reason, business and government treat unions differently from all the social institutions previously discussed, attacking rather than subsidizing them.

Union busting today is a major industry, with more than a thousand firms doing a \$500 million yearly business teaching companies how to prevent workers from organizing and how to break existing unions. Unions are severely constrained by right-to-work laws and legal restrictions on strikes, boycotts and organizing activities. The result is that unions are declining in membership and losing more and more National Labor Relations elections.<sup>22</sup>

**L**et me sum up some of things said so far. What we face is not only a capitalist economic system but an entire capitalist social and cultural order. Capitalists exercise cultural hegemony by direct ownership of the means of mental production and production of services, by occupying positions of institutional command as trustees and directors, as patrons and contributors, and by procuring public funds to subsidize private institutions. While their cultural hegemony bolsters their state power, they also use their state power to finance and expand their cultural hegemony. This cultural dominance serves several valuable functions:

- First, as with the media, entertainment and health industries, cultural institutions are a major source of capital accumulation. Capitalists are involved in them because they make money from them.

- Second, capitalists support and direct institutions such as universities, professional schools and research centers because they provide the kind of specialized services and trained personnel that business does not want to pay for itself. When capitalists realized they needed literate, punctual and compliant machinists, they then favored public schools. When they needed lawyers, engineers and managers, they approved of professional and technical schools. The substantial public funds used to sustain these institutions represent an indirect subsidy to the capital accumulation process.

- Third, most important of all, these institutions are crucial instruments of ideological and class control, socializing people into attitudes and dedications that are functional to, and supportive of, the existing system, while suppressing information and perspectives that

are not. The goal is to maintain class oppression while muting class struggle.

● Fourth, not only through propaganda and socialization but also through "good works," or the appearance of such, do capitalists achieve legitimacy and hegemony. As if by magic, the ruthless industrialist becomes the generous philanthropist; the expropriator becomes "a leader of society," a trustee of our social and cultural needs. To appreciate American audiences Mobil Corporation is better known as the sponsor of "Masterpiece Theater" than as the heartless exploiter of oil workers in the Middle East and elsewhere. Cornell, Johns Hopkins, Clark, Duke, Vanderbilt, Tulane and Stanford are no longer robber barons but prestigious universities. And Carnegie is remembered not for the workers he starved but for his Hall, his Endowment and his Institute. The primary goal of capitalist cultural dominance is not to provide us with nice concerts and museums but to give capitalism's exploitative reality a providential appearance so that people learn not only to accept, but admire and appreciate, the leadership and stewardship of the owning class. Indeed, have we not heard working people say: "More for the rich means more for the rest of us because they create the jobs we need" and, of course, they "do a lot of other good things for society."

In fact, they do perform some good works. Some of their policies do have beneficial spin-offs. This brings us back to Gramsci's brilliant insights about how hegemony works to induce the people to consent in their own oppression. Gramsci noted that the capitalist class achieves hegemony not only by propagating the right values, attitudes and beliefs but by actually performing vital social functions that have diffuse benefits. Railroads and highways may enrich the magnates, but they also provide transportation for much of the public. Private hospitals are for profits not for people, but people who can afford them do get treated. The law is a class instrument, but it must also to some degree be concerned with public safety. So with just about every cultural and social function: the ruling class must act affirmatively on behalf of public interests some of the time—at least in those situ-

ations where private profits can be made while servicing public needs. If the ruling class fails to do so, Gramsci notes, its legitimacy will decline, its cultural and national hegemony will falter and its power will shrink back to its police and military capacity, leaving it with a more overtly repressive but ultimately less secure rule.<sup>23</sup>

What has been said so far should remind us (in the unlikely event we need reminding) that the struggle ahead will be long and difficult. But change and progressive victories are not impossible. The ruling class rules, but not quite in the way it wants. Its socializing agencies do not work with perfect effect—or else this essay could not have been written nor read and understood. There is just so much cover rulers can give to their injustices and just so many substantive concessions they can make. And the concessions become points of vulnerability. The law is an instrument of class control but an imperfect one, for successful struggles have been fought to defeat retrogressive laws and pass progressive ones that are socially desirable and the basis for further struggles. The media are propaganda machines for the owning class but to maintain their credibility they must give some attention to the realities people experience; they must deal with questions like: Why are my taxes so high? Why are people losing their jobs? Why is the river so polluted? Why are we in Vietnam (Lebanon, El Salvador, Nicaragua)? The media's need to deal with such things—however haphazardly and insufficiently—is what leads conservatives to the conclusion that the media are infected with "liberal" biases.

The ruling class must forever contend with the democratic forces of working people, women, Afro-Americans, Latinos and other oppressed minorities. Ruling-class culture is predominantly a white, male domain which denies the existence of other cultural forms. (We might recall how social scientists like Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, in the first edition of their book, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, could assert that American Blacks were devoid of any real culture of their own. Because the dominant culture took no note of the contribu-

tions of Afro-Americans and their struggles for recognition in the arts and sciences, in entertainment, music, medicine, education, politics and law, and in the labor and peace movements, white social scientists did not know about such things; and what they didn't know about, they assumed did not exist. Thus their perceptions are often racist despite their conscious claims to the contrary.) The struggles of particularly oppressed groups such as Afro-Americans, can become a catalyst for change throughout the society, as we saw in the late 1950s and through the 1960s when the civil rights movement strengthened the civil liberties struggle and then helped galvanize the anti-war movement, from which, in turn, emerged a long dormant feminist movement.

To maintain its legitimacy and popular acceptance, the ruling class must maintain democratic appearances and to do that it must not only lie, distort and try to hide its oppressions and unjust privileges, but must occasionally give in to popular demands, giving a little in order to keep a lot. In time, the legitimating ideology becomes a two-edged sword. Bourgeois hypocrisies about "democracy" and "fair play" are more than just the tribute vice pays to virtue. Such standards put limitations on ruling-class oppression once the public takes them seriously and fights for them.

Legitimacy cuts both ways also in cultural institutions. The danger with calling a bureaucratic hierarchical university an "independent democratic institution" is that students and faculty might take the assertion seriously and demand the right to ideological diversity, self-governance, and an end to university complicity with the Pentagon. We can observe the two-edged quality most dramatically today in one of the oldest of legitimating institutions—one I haven't discussed—the Church. Nothing

is more revealing of the imperfect and contradictory nature of hegemonic control than an anti-Communist Pope racing frenetically about the globe trying to drag his priests away from the class struggles of the impoverished while simultaneously presenting himself as a champion of the poor.

In sum, capitalist monopoly culture, like monopoly capitalist economy, suffers—shall we say—from internal contradictions. It can invent and control just so much of reality. Its socialization is imperfect and sometimes self-defeating. Like any monopoly, it can not rest perfectly secure because it does not serve the people and is dedicated to the ultimately impossible task of trying to prevent history from happening. Its legitimating deceptions are soft spots of vulnerability, through which democratic forces can sometimes press for greater gains.

An understanding of monopoly culture shows us how difficult it is to fight capitalism on its own turf, but if I may paraphrase Lenin, sometimes that's the only turf available and we must use every platform we can get. At the same time we must continue to create alternatives to monopoly culture—alternative scholarship, radio, newspapers, schools and art. But such a "counterculture" must be grounded in an alternative politics and political party so that it confronts rather than evades the realities of class struggle and avoids devolving into cultural exotica and inner migration. It is easier to shock the bourgeoisie with cultural deviance than to defeat it with revolutionary political and cultural organization.

The struggle for state power is a struggle also to win back the entire cultural and social life of the people, so that someday we can say: This land is our land, and so too is this art and science, this learning and healing, this prayer and song, this peace and happiness. □

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5. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, Quinton Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (eds.), International Publishers, New York, 1971, p. 171. The goal of the owning class, as Marx and Engels put it earlier, is to present "a particular interest as general or 'the general interest' as ruling." See *The German Ideol-*

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  15. Bernard Winter, M.D., "Health Care: The Problem is Profits," *Progressive*, October 1977, p. 16.
  16. David Himmelstein and Steffie Woolhandler, "Medicine as Industry," *Monthly Review*, April 1984, pp. 13-25.
  17. *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.
  18. *Inventing Reality*, Michael Parenti, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1985, chapter three.
  19. A fuller exposition of these points can be found in *ibid.*
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  21. Norman Goldberg, "The State of the Arts," *Political Affairs*, August-September 1984, p. 17; also *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, Serge Guilbaut, University of Chicago Press, 1983.
  22. Sidney Lens, "Disorganized Labor," *Nation*, February 24, 1979.
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## PAMELA MINCEY

Michael Parenti said, "supportive institutions help create the ideology that transforms a ruling class interest into a general interest . . . so the capitalist class controls society's cultural institutions and ideational production, as well as its labor, land and natural resources." Further, "the capitalists exercise cultural hegemony by direct ownership of the means of mental production."

United Press International is one of those "cultural institutions." A UPI release carries President Reagan's announcement (December 7, 1984) about the South African government releasing its "dissidents." Said Reagan:

I have received word that the South African government has released the 11 prisoners, including a very prominent labor leader . . . this is the result of three weeks of work that we have put in, in what I told you was quiet diplomacy, and today it bore fruit and today they were released . . . I don't think we're being too bold in taking credit for it.

Subsequently, White House spokesman Larry Speakes said that the release proved the value of the U.S.'s "constructive engagement," the policy of quiet diplomacy which rationalizes U.S. support for South Africa's apartheid government.

There was no mention, of course, of the protests that took place in Washington, D.C., or in New York City, no mention of the thousands of people who were arrested at the picket sites. We see here how, through the mass media, public perception of reality is changed to fit the game plan of the Reagan Administration.

In an article in *Freedomways* magazine, ("Who Owns the Press?", Fourth Quarter 1982) John Devine formulated the conditions which determine the "mindset" of newspapers (and commercial news media in general) this way:

The two-headedness of newspaper publishing—editorial and commercial—creates a dichotomy that is constantly resolved on the side of the commercial. "What are we," it was asked, "a journal of news and opinion or business enterprise?" And the winner is business.

To defend the status quo, monopolization of the mass media is a must. And it is an evermore-solid fact. Looking specifically at newspapers, recent years have witnessed a rapid concentration in the hands of Big Business publishers. They have the means—the millions of dollars—

with which to gobble up independent papers, while other papers, large and small, are allowed to fold. Witness what happened to the *Philadelphia Bulletin* and the *Washington Star*.

These Big Business publishers include Walter H. Annenberg and the seven Annenberg sisters who own Triangle Productions, *Racing Form* and *TV Guide*. Their estimated worth is \$800 million. The Hearst family income is derived as follows: Ralph Apperson Hearst heads up the Hearst Family Trust; William Randolph Hearst, Jr. and David Whitmore get their bucks from the *San Francisco Examiner*; George Randolph Hearst, Jr. and Phoebe Hearst Cooke get theirs from the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*.

Looking at the electronic media, we find that the Metromedia network is owned by John Werner Kluge. Although smaller than ABC, NBC and CBS, this network's net profits are more than those of ABC and CBS combined. They are also larger than RCA, which owns, among other things, NBC. Listed among Metromedia's subsidiaries are seven television stations, seven AM radio stations, seven FM radio stations, the Harlem Globetrotters and the Ice Capades. This is an amalgamation of several different cultural forms under a single capitalist umbrella.

In order to increase profits and consolidate their hold of the airwaves, some big businessmen are challenging the Federal Communication Commission's (FCC) seven-station rule, which prohibits any one person or enterprise from owning more than seven communication outlets in a given medium. Elimination of this rule would further restrict access to air time and reduce the airing of views contrary to the editorial policies of a handful of station owners.

It is in the interest of the ruling class to divide and conquer, to keep the masses of people ignorant, mystified and, ultimately, powerless. Hence a strike is covered from the perspective of the struck business, not from that of the workers who walk off the job. How many times have we heard on the radio or television or read in newspapers about how children suffer during teachers' strikes? Invariably, the blame is placed on the teachers rather than the city administration or school board, who are portrayed as representing the interests of the public and the schoolchildren. How children suffer because their classes are overcrowded, their schools understaffed and underere-

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Pamela Mincey is cultural editor of the *Daily World*.

quipped receives limited, if any, attention.

It serves Big Business's purposes to portray Black, Hispanic and other racially oppressed people as rapists, murderers, unfit mothers and lunatics. The mass media's emphasis on presenting racially and nationally oppressed people in this light creates a public atmosphere in which the policies of racial oppression are justified.

A recent example of this was coverage by the mass media in New York of the Eleanor Bumpers case. Mrs. Bumpers was an arthritic, 300-pound, 67-year old Black woman. She was killed by a shotgun blast by a police emergency services team, who had been called in to evict her from her apartment. The coverage which followed showed considerable "understanding" for the police who killed her. It did not truly examine the role of the police, city administration or her landlord in the events leading to her murder.

The tragic rape-murder of Carolyn Eisenberg, an Ivy League student, which occurred about the same time, received top headlines for days. It was given twice the coverage of the Bumpers case. Clearly, the race and class of the victim, as well as the victimizer, strongly influenced how the press handled these stories. This kind of racism is practiced daily in both print and electronic media.

We can also see it in the way entertainment is reviewed. We are subtly manipulated into accepting what the bourgeois press says is art. Neighborhood theaters, dance companies and artists are ignored, until, miraculously, an exception is hailed as "in." Suddenly it receives a lot of press and is approved for funding by various arts councils. But art that has something to say is systematically written off as "propaganda" because it challenges its viewers to question the world they live in. I think of the Diego Rivera mural, commissioned by Nelson Rockefeller, that was summarily destroyed at his command. Why? Rivera's painting graphically depicted the exploitation of man by man with Lenin and socialism portrayed in an overall theme of salvation from the wage slavery imposed by capitalism.

As John Devine states,

Freedom of the press does not, as generations of youth have been schooled to believe, describe and exalt a free flow of information, of viewpoints and service to the ideals of political democracy. Rather, the concept was created to unfetter the process by which the businessmen, who own the presses, market information and ideas for profit.

There obviously must be alternatives to this morass of Big Business thuggery for profit and

mind control. There are forms of non-commercial media, like national public radio, which has had to fight against the corporate moguls who want it to become a profit-making enterprise, and who want to do away with programs that encourage people to hear and weigh alternative views.

Whatever its merits, we have to examine critically the sponsorship and control of public broadcasting. *Ominous Politics* (Hill and Wang, New York, 1984), a book about the ultra-Right's insinuation into the fiber and fabric of U.S. life, said about PBS sponsorship,

Business support for public television rose sixfold between 1973 and 1980. Oil companies, like Mobil, paid in full or in part for 72% of primetime PBS shows in a sample week in 1981, causing some to suggest the network be renamed the Petroleum Broadcasting Service.

Small publishing houses, which encourage workers, farmers and women to write, struggle to stay on their feet. There are also independent filmmakers, some of them of top quality.

We also have the *Daily World*, which in its own way attempts to provide its readers with a cultural balance. We point out the bad and the good that comes out of Hollywood; reflect the poetry and songs of people from coast to coast chronicling their hardships and joys; and we provide an arena for debate. We bring news about cultural life in the socialist countries. We also try to reflect and promote what the bourgeois media ignores in culture—what's progressive in theatre, film and literature.

Michael Parenti alluded earlier to the question of cultural workers who labor in the mass media. In most cases, they did not become writers, artists, actors or musicians merely to eat. One can't assume that they are wedded to the ideas of capitalism. We needn't look too far to establish that. Artists lend their talents to progressive causes like peace, voter registration, dumping Reagan and against apartheid. To cite one instance, actress Tyne Daly of "Cagney and Lacy" is donating the residuals from the airing of that television program in South Africa to the anti-apartheid struggle. The Newspaper Guild joined the picketlines at the South African mission in Washington D.C.

Because there is a struggle against capitalism's consequences and a search for answers by millions of working people; because progressive artists and singers, writers, playwrights and other creative workers seek to mirror this reality in their work, there is hope on the cultural horizon. □



## NORMAN MARKOWITZ

"The minority," one of the most famous men of the twentieth century wrote to another, "the ruling class at present, has the schools and press, usually the Church as well, under its thumb. This enables it to organize and sway the emotions of the masses and to make its tool of them." I often ask my classes to guess the author of these statements. Marx? Engels? Lenin? When they discover that these were the words of Albert Einstein, writing to Sigmund Freud in 1932, they take pause. If Einstein said such things, they might be true.

Although bourgeois scholars would scoff at such notions—in fact, they've developed large academies to scoff at them—many journalists, artists, scholars and professional workers of all kinds who work for the institutions and cultural enterprises of capitalism are well aware of their fundamental truth, in contrast to the reigning myths of freedom and pluralism, and of a free and open market of ideas where producers pull themselves up by their intellectual and creative bootstraps.

But these myths retain enormous power. The cultural institutions of capitalism create the illusions of freedom and independence and personal responsibility: If you can't get a book or article published, or a film or TV show produced, it's your fault, because the market is free and open and you just haven't learned how to play it.

In reality the major cultural institutions and media, like the means of production, are controlled by the capitalist class, use the same forms of organization through which the capitalist class directs general business enterprises, and produce ideology on the same principles of market manipulation that are used to sell automobiles and perfumes. For the individual working in such institutions, the system might be categorized as competitive conformity. You fight with your peers ruthlessly to get credit for producing the TV show, book, scholarly article, or piece of music or art that the higherups expect.

Monopoly capitalist relations of production at the foundations of society give rise to a monopoly capitalist cultural superstructure, as Michael Parenti has brilliantly shown in his paper. While there are progressive enclaves, room for maneuvering, within this cultural superstructure at specific his-

torical moments, due to the advance of mass progressive forces, the dominant culture, which reflects and transmits the interests of the dominant class, operates always to buy off and moderate its serious critics; to divide and weaken peoples' movements; to purge and blacklist even its most moderate critics; and to advance a militarist, chauvinist, essentially narcissistic outlook in everything from TV news to Rock'n Roll Music.

Thus, Michael Parenti's use of Antonio Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony is at the center of our understanding of culture under monopoly capitalism. The capitalists do, as Parenti notes, use their power over culture to fortify their power over the state and mystify the effects of their ownership of the means of production and their exploitation of the labor of the working class.

In the U.S., capitalist culture hides its exploitative character in the same way capitalism hides its domination over labor—through a myth structure. Capitalist media deny the distinction between formal and effective freedom made by Karl Marx. The "political freedom" to choose between what group or party of the exploiting classes will govern you in the interests of the exploiting classes, becomes on television the "cultural freedom" to choose between Johnny Carson and reruns; Dan Rather and John Chancellor; Mark Hammer's brand of sleazy sexism and the sex and glamor soap opera of *Berringers*.

In the media, there are, of course, enclaves of less stringent capitalist control (particularly in National Public Radio, PBS and, to a lesser extent and for the moment, Cable Services). But the structure and organization of mainstream media—television, commercial radio and the movies—serve to thwart the ideals of bourgeois democracy, of an educated citizenry, by treating citizens as consumers, and juvenile consumers at that. Thus, most "sit-coms" and television humor is aimed at 12-year olds. It often reflects hostility and aggression against family members and friends, and is accompanied by laugh tracks to help elicit the proper "behavioral" response from viewers. Most crime detective shows now feature wild car chases, and, as in the past, stereotyped muscle men and sexpots to keep viewers from listening much to the dialogue, the plot, or the characters. Game shows distribute money, classy consumer goods, and sometimes dates and mates. They provide a ritualized setting for people to publicly make fools of

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Norman Markowitz, professor of history at Rutgers University, is at work on a history of U.S. films.

themselves chasing these objectives. Indeed, game shows have become a metaphor for life under monopoly capitalism as people run around in a maze to accumulate "prizes."

Talk shows provide "conversation" that short-circuits serious conversation and caricatures friendship. They portray discussion between people as manipulation, and in the talk-variety shows, titillation. Finally, the "production values" of the commercials, the color, music and special effects, represent a much higher level of investment and technical expertise than the programs, and are the basis of network profits.

The television ratings or polls in the U.S. are usually taken more seriously and are more influential in bringing about the rise and fall of stars than are national elections in changing politics. Indeed, Neilson may be the highest expression of "political democracy" in the U.S.

The news programs usually reflect ruling-class positions in the form of headline commentaries and imperialist and CIA propaganda on foreign policy questions. The news producer produces something out of an old Errol Flynn movie about Afghan "freedom fighters"; or markets the latest "KGB" foreign intrigue story, or the umpteenth portrayal of Soviet citizens as sad people in

baggy pants braving life without supermarkets. That Soviet people are "drab" in dress is such an article of faith of capitalist propaganda that U.S. newsmen in the USSR occasionally react to well-dressed people on the streets with a sense of shock and wonder.

The news producer who challenges the conventional wisdom gets pushed to the periphery, ends up—if he is lucky—with PBS, or, again if he is lucky, as a university professor.

Culture under capitalism, in conclusion, educates ruling circles as to how to maintain the domination of capital over labor. It essentially seeks to condition the working-class majority think and act like selfish, frightened juveniles, responding to crude forms of stimulation.

The struggle against monopoly culture; for the expansion of public media; for the access of progressive forces to mass media; for the creation of new popular cultural forms and the infusion of existing forms (news, entertainment) with content that will enable people to think critically and analytically and appreciate and demand quality is inseparable from the struggle to advance the labor movement and all other forms of people's movements in the struggle for socialism and democratic rights. □

# 2 For a People's Culture

panel

ANGELA DAVIS

In 1951, Paul Robeson made the following declaration at a Conference for Equal Rights for Negroes in the Arts, Sciences and Professions:

There are despoilers abroad in our land, akin to those who attempted to throttle our Republic at its birth. Despoilers who would have kept my beloved people in unending serfdom, a powerful few who blessed Hitler as he destroyed a large segment of a great people . . .

All [the] millions of the world stand agast at the sight and the name of *America*—but they love *us*; they look to *usto* help create a world where we can all live in peace and friendship, where we can exchange the excellences of our various arts and crafts, the manifold wonders of our mutual scientific creations, a world where we can rejoice at the unleashed power of our innermost selves, of the potential of great masses of people. To them we are the real America. Let us remember that.

And let us learn how to bring to the great masses of the American people *our* culture and *our* art. For in the end, what are we talking about when we talk about American culture today? We are talking about a culture that is restricted to the very, very few. How many workers ever get to the theatre? I was in concerts for 20 years, subscription concerts, the two thousand seats gone before any Negro in the community, any worker, could even hear about a seat . . . Only by going into the trade unions and singing on the streets and on the picket lines and in the struggles for the freedom of our people—only in this way could the workers of this land hear me. (*Paul Robeson Speaks*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1971, p. 303.)

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Angela Davis is a teacher and author on women's studies, art and philosophy. She cochairs the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression and was Communist Party vice-presidential candidate in 1984.

Three decades later, the problem formulated by Paul Robeson remains one of the fundamental tasks encountered by contemporary progressive artists and political activists: How do we acknowledge and communicate to the masses of people in our country the great body of work that constitutes our popular cultural legacy? There is an enormous, vibrant tradition of people's art in the United States, one which parallels the tradition of militant labor struggles, the struggles of Afro-Americans, women and peace activists. At this moment in our history, as we witness a fraudulent attempt to proclaim an ultra-Right mandate in the wake of Ronald Reagan's re-election, it is essential to explore that tradition, to understand it, reclaim it and glean from it the cultural nourishment we will be needing as we prepare a political and cultural counteroffensive during the coming era. We urgently need an ever expanding people's art movement capable of awakening a deep collective need and desire to militantly challenge the anti-working-class, racist, sexist and pro-war thrust of the corporate monopolies who have authored Reagan's political scenario.

Art is a form of social consciousness, as Marx and Engels long ago observed. It is a special form of social consciousness which can potentially awaken an urge in those who are affected by it to transform creatively the dehumanizing realities surrounding them. Art can function as a sensitizer and a catalyst, propelling people in the direction of involvement in organized movements striving for radical social change. Art is special because of how it can influence the feelings as well as the knowledge of an individual. Christopher Caldwell, the British Communist who wrote extensively on aesthetics, once defined the function of art as the socializing of the human instincts and the education of human emotions:

Emotion, in all its vivid coloring, is the creation of ages of culture acting on the blind unfeeling instincts. All art, all education, all day-to-day social experience, draw it out . . . and direct and shape its myriad phenomena.

Art that reflects the interests of the most advanced social class of a particular era can be a profoundly effective process of education, assisting people to learn about their society and about the intensely social character of their own individual internal lives. Ultimately it can propel people in the direction of social, economic and political liberation. While not all progressive art need concern itself with overtly political problems—indeed a love song can be progressive if it incorporates a sensitivity toward the lives of working-class women and men—we are especially concerned here with explicit socio-political meanings in art as we explore the general question of the role art can play in hastening progressive political victories.

The evolution of Afro-American culture reveals an intimate, even inextricable bond between art and the struggle for Black liberation and thus holds important lessons for those who are interested in establishing stronger bridges between art and people's movements today. Among the numerous art forms historically practiced in the Afro-American community, music has played the most vital catalytic role in awakening collective consciousness of the need to strengthen the battle for freedom. During the era of slavery, Africans suffered under a conscious strategy of cultural genocide, which proscribed the practice of virtually all African customs except the forging of musical rhythms to accompany work and the creation of a music to appropriate, affirm and indeed to transform the slaves' new religion of Christianity. If slaves were permitted to sing as they toiled in the fields and at their religious meetings on Sunday, it was because the slaveocracy failed to grasp the social function of music in general, and in particular, the central functionality of music in West African society. As a result, Black people were able to establish through their music the basis of an aesthetic community of resistance, which in turn would

encourage and nurture a political community of active struggle for freedom. This aesthetic and political community has extended from Harriet Tubman's and Nat Turner's spirituals to Bessie Smith's "Poor Man's Blues" and Billie Holiday's "Strange Fruit" on to Max Roach's "Freedom Suite" and even to the progressive raps on the popular music scene of the 1980s.

Within the context of the history of the United States, the Afro-American spiritual can be viewed as a prototypical people's art. Through its creation, Black people were able to forge a language of struggle which remained impenetrable by the slaveholders. If the slaveocracy attempted to establish absolute authority over the slaves' individual and communal lives, the spirituals remained both evidence and cause of an autonomous political consciousness that emerged among them. These songs formed a complex language which both incorporated and called forth a deep yearning for freedom. When the slaves sang, "Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel and Why Not Every Man?", they utilized religious themes to symbolize their own concrete predicament and their own worldly desire to be free. When they sang "Sampson Tore the Building Down," they were making symbolic reference to their desire to see the oppressive edifice of slavery come crashing down.

If I had my way,  
O Lordy, Lordy,  
If I had my way;  
If I had my way,  
I would tear this building down

Oftentimes the religious music of the slaves served specific concrete purposes with respect to the underground railroad and in the organization of antislavery insurrections. The lyrics of "Follow the Drinking Gourd," for example, provided a map of one section of the underground railroad, and "Steal Away to Jesus" was a coded song rallying together those engaged in the organization of Nat Turner's rebellion. But even when the spirituals were not necessarily linked to specific actions in the struggle for liberation, by and large they served to shape, epistemologically and psychologically, the consciousness of the masses of Black people, guaranteeing that

the fires of freedom would burn within them during the most intense period of the challenge to slavery.

As Sidney Finkelstein pointed out,

The anti-slavery struggle was the core of the struggle for democracy, so spirituals embodied in their music and poetry the affirmation of an unbreakable demand for freedom. (*How Music Expresses Ideas*, International Publishers, New York, 1971, p. 118.)

Thus, the spirituals have directly influenced the music of numerous progressive struggles in the history of the United States. Many songs of the labor movement and peace movement have their origins in the religious music of the slaves and the many "freedom songs" of the Civil Rights Movement were spirituals whose lyrics were sometimes slightly altered in order to reflect the realities of that struggle.

Even the Blues, frequently dismissed as a musical form focusing on trivial aspects of sexual love, bear a clear relationship to Black people's striving for freedom. In the words of James Cone,

For many people, a blues song is about sex or a lonely woman longing for her rambling man. However, the blues are more than that. To be sure, the blues involve sex and what that means for human bodily expression, but on a much deeper level . . . the blues express a black perspective on the incongruity of life and the attempt to achieve meaning in a situation fraught with contradictions. As Aunt Molly Jackson of Kentucky put it: "The blues are made by working people . . . when they have a lot of problems to solve about their work, when their wages are low and they don't know which way to turn and what to do."

And indeed, Bessie Smith, the Empress of the Blues, reached the apex of her career when she composed, recorded and performed a song transmitting an uncamouflaged political message, entitled "Poor Man's Blues." This song evoked the exploitation and manipulation of working people by the wealthy, portraying the rich as parasites accumulating their wealth and

fighting their wars with the labor of the poor.

Another pinnacle in the evolution of Afro-American music was Billie Holiday's incorporation of the political anti-lynching song, "Strange Fruit," into her regular repertoire. Thousands of people, throughout Lady Day's career, were compelled to confront the most brutal realities of Southern racism, even as they sought to escape the problems of everyday life through music and alcoholic potions and the ambiance of smoke-filled nightclubs. Undoubtedly some went on to actively participate in the anti-lynching movement of that era.

That Billie Holiday recorded "Strange Fruit" in 1939 was no accident. Neither was the fact that the lyrics of this song were composed by progressive poet Lewis Allan, who was associated with activist struggles of the 1930s. The thirties remain the most exciting and exuberant period in the evolution of American cultural history. The process of developing a mature people's art movement today must necessarily involve a serious examination of the achievements of that era. As Philip Bonosky pointed out in a 1959 *Political Affairs* article entitled "The Thirties in American Culture,"

There is every reason in the world why official reaction should want the thirties to be forgotten as if they never existed. For that period remains a watershed in the American democratic tradition. It is a period which will continue to serve both the present and the future as a reminder and as an example of how an aroused people, led and spurred on by the working class, can change the entire complexion of the culture of a nation. (*PA*, Jan. 1959.)

Bourgeois ideologists have consequently attempted to

. . . misrepresent and burn out of the consciousness of the American people, and first of all the artists and intellectuals, the fact that the making of a people's culture once did exist in the United States and was inspired, to a large degree, by the working class, often led, and largely influenced, by the Communist Party. (*Ibid.*)

Answering the fraudulent criticism leveled against the Communist Party which charges that it "belittles and vulgarizes the role of culture," Bonosky argued that no other political party in the entire history of this country had ever manifested such serious concern for art. The Communist Party was involved, for example, in the 1935 Call for an American Writers Congress—which claimed Langston Hughes, Theodore Dreiser, Richard Wright and Erskine Caldwell among its signers. As a result of the work of the Communist Party and other progressive forces, artists won the right to work as artists in projects under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration. What the WPA artists accomplished was an unprecedented achievement in the history of the United States: art was brought to the people on a truly massive scale. Art could no longer be confined to the private domain, monopolized by those who could afford to purchase it and by those whose class background made galleries, museums, theatres and concert halls routinely accessible. For the first time, American art became public art. This meant, for example, that working class people utilizing the services of the post office could simultaneously appreciate the public murals painted there. Sculpture, music and theatre were among the other arts directly taken to the people during that era. Moreover, to quote Bonosky once more, when these programs were threatened with dissolution,

. . . it was the Communist Party that struggled so heroically to save the art projects and with them of course the theory that art was responsible to the people of which these projects were the living embodiment. For the first time in American history artists and writers walked picket lines in the name of and in the defense of the right of artists to be artists. (Ibid.)

The radical approach to art and culture inspired by the Communist Party and other Left forces during the Great Depression not only involved the forging of an art that was publicly accessible to the masses. Much of the art of that period was people's art in the sense that artists learned how to pay attention to the material and emotional lives of working people in America in

the process of working out the content of their aesthetic creations. Meridel LeSeuer explored the lives of working people in her literature as Woody Guthrie composed songs about their lives and struggles. This emerging people's art was therefore a challenge to the dominant bourgeois culture. Artists not only felt compelled to defend their right to communicate the real pains, joys and aspirations of the working class through their art, but many went on to become activists in the labor struggles and in the fight for the rights of the unemployed and especially of Black people. In the process, of course, new artists were summoned up from the ranks of these struggles.

**B**ourgeois aesthetics has always sought to situate art in a transcendent realm, beyond ideology, beyond socio-economic realities, and certainly beyond the class struggle. In an infinite variety of ways, art has been represented as the pure subjective product of individual creativity. Lenin's 1905 article on "Party Organization and Party Literature" challenged this vision of art and developed the principle of partisanship in art and literature—a principle with which many progressive artists of the thirties were, at least implicitly, in agreement. Lenin made it absolutely clear that in insisting that aesthetic creations be partisan, he was not advocating the dictatorship of the Party over art and literature.

There is no question that literature is least of all subject to mechanical adjustment or leveling to the rule of the majority over the minority. There is no question either that in this field greater scope must undoubtedly be allowed for personal initiative, individual inclination, thought and fantasy, form and content.

He pointed out, however, that the bourgeois demand for abstract subjective freedom in art was actually a stifling of the freedom of creativity. Literature and art, he said, must be free not only from police censorship,

. . .but from capital, from careerism, and . . . bourgeois anarchist individualism. Partisan literature and art will be truly free, because it will further the freedom of millions of people.

What are the current prospects for the further expansion of an art which is not afraid to declare its partisan relationship to people's struggles for economic, racial and sexual equality? It is not only necessary to acknowledge and defend the cultural legacy that has been transmitted to us over the decades, we must also be in a position to recognize the broad as well as subtle hints of progressive developments in popular art forms today. Over the last several years, for example, such partisan films as "Testament," "Silkwood" and "Missing" have emerged as beacons of light amidst the routine mediocrity, sexism, violent and generally anti-human values characterizing most products of the Hollywood cinema industry.

To consider another art form, the superstars of popular musical culture today are Michael Jackson and Prince, both of whom are unquestionably musical geniuses, but they have distorted the Black music tradition by brilliantly developing its form while ignoring its content of struggle and freedom. Nonetheless, there is illumination to be found in contemporary Black music in the works of such artists as Stevie Wonder and Gil Scott Herron, who have acknowledged the legacy of Black music in form and content alike. Their individual creations have awakened in their audiences a true sense of the dignity of human freedom.

Stevie Wonder's tune "Happy Birthday" touched the hearts of hundreds of thousands of young people, mobilizing them in support of the movement to declare Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday a national holiday. When Reagan was forced to sign the bill enacting that law, despite his openly articulated opposition, we witnessed a demonstration of the power wielded by the masses which prevailed over the most intransigent official racist opposition this country has known in many years.

Gil Scott Herron's immensely popular song, "B-Movie," released shortly after Reagan was elected to his first term, mobilized strong anti-Reagan sentiments in young Black public opinion. The song-poem exposed, in particular, the effort of the Reagan propagandists to declare that he had received a "mandate" from the people.

The first thing I want to say is "mandate"  
my ass

Because it seems as though we've been  
convinced

That 26% of the registered voters  
Not even 26% of the American people  
But 26% of the registered voters  
Form a mandate or a landslide . . .

But, oh yeah, I remember . . .

I remember what I said about Reagan

Acted like an actor/ Hollyweird

Acted like a liberal

Acted like General Franco

When he acted like governor of California

Then he acted like a Republican

Then he acted like somebody was going  
to vote for him for president

And now we act like 26% of the registered  
voters

Is actually a mandate

We're all actors in this, I suppose

Bruce Springsteen's recent album, entitled "Born in the USA," was recently lauded by Reagan, who praised "the message of hope in the songs . . . of New Jersey's own Bruce Springsteen" as he campaigned in that state for the presidency. (*People's World*, Dec. 1, 1984—Paul Rossman, "A Workingclass Hero is Something to Be".) However, Reagan's aides more than likely simply assumed that Springsteen's red, white and blue album cover indicated acceptance of the fraudulent patriotism promoted by the Reagan Administration. Two days after Reagan's remark, Springsteen introduced a song entitled "Johnny 99" by saying, "I don't think the president was listening to this one," going on to sing about a desperate, debt-ridden, unemployed autoworker who landed on death row after killing someone in the course of a robbery. Another one of his songs, "My Hometown," is about the devastation wrought by plant shutdowns:

Now Mainstreet's whitewashed windows  
and vacant stores

Seems like there aint nobody wants to come  
down here no more

They're closing down the textile mill across  
the railroad tracks

Foreman says, these jobs are going, boys,  
and they ain't coming back

To your hometown . . .

A new genre of music with roots in the age-old tradition of story telling has been very much in vogue among young people during the eighties. Rap music clearly reflects the daily lives of working-class people, particularly urban Afro-American and Latino youth. Many of its songs reveal an explicit socio-political dimension as is the case with "White Lines" by Grand Master Flash and the Furious Five.

Pay your taxes and people getting fired  
Depend on welfare, the rich getting hired  
President Reagan, prices going up  
Crime, murder rate is just too much  
People get in and vote  
We gotta do something quick  
We gotta do something fast  
The way it's going, the world won't last  
We got atomic bombs and nuclear  
plants. . .  
We gotta sit, we gotta talk, we gotta  
compromise  
We gotta get together, make the world  
realize.

This concern with the dangers of a possible nuclear holocaust is becoming more and more prevalent among young people today. A rap tune popularized by Harry Belafonte's recent film "Beat Street" contains the following warning:

A newspaper burns in the sand  
And the headlines say man the story's bad  
Extra extra read all the bad news  
On the war or peace  
That everybody would lose  
The rise and fall of the last great empire  
The sound of the whole world caught on fire  
The ruthless struggle the desperate gamble  
The games that left the whole world in  
shambles  
The cheats the lies the alibis  
And the foolish attempt to conquer the skies  
Lost in space and what is it worth  
The president just forgot about earth  
Spending all time billions and maybe even  
trillions  
Because the weapons ran in the zillions . . .  
A fight for power a nuclear shower  
The people shout out in the darkest hour  
It's sights unseen and voices unheard  
And finally the bomb gets the last word . . .  
. . . We've got to suffer when things get

rougher

And that's the reason why we've got to get  
tougher  
So learn from the past and work for  
the future  
Don't be a slave to no computer  
Cause the children of man inherits the  
land  
And the future of the world is in your  
hands

Although numerous other examples of progressive popular music today could be proposed, it would be a gross misconstruction of the music industry to argue that such songs are representative of what the youth of today are encountering over the airwaves and in the record stores. Most of the popular musical culture that greets young people of the eighties has been rigorously molded by the demands of the capitalist marketplace, which measures its products in accordance with their cash value. While progressive messages sometimes manage to slip through its net, by and large the musical culture it advances promotes reified sexuality, crass individualism and often violent, sexist, anti-working-class values. Many talented musicians ultimately destroy their artistic potential as a result of creating music which conforms to what is deemed saleable by the market. As Marx pointed out long ago in *Theories of Surplus Value*, "capitalist production is hostile to certain branches of spiritual production, namely poetry and art."

We can not expect mass popular art to reveal stronger and more effective progressive tendencies unless there is a further development of an art movement which is philosophically and organizationally allied with people's struggles. And, indeed, over the last several years—particularly since the initial election of Ronald Reagan—conscious political art has begun to flourish. The importance of the Chicago Peace Museum, for example, should not be underestimated. Neither should the development of the national movement, Artists Call Against Intervention in Central America. This mobilization, which spread to 25 cities across the country, came as a response to an appeal from the Sandinista Cultural Workers' Association:



May it go down in the history of humanity that one day during the twentieth century, in the face of the gigantic aggression that one of the smallest countries of the world, Nicaragua, was about to suffer, artists and intellectuals of different nationalities and generations raised along with us the banner of fraternity, in order to prevent our total destruction. (*Artists Call*, San Francisco, 1984.)

In San Francisco alone, over 200 artists participated in three major exhibitions. Funds collected nationwide by this movement were donated to the Association of Cultural Workers in Nicaragua, the University of El Salvador, a labor union in El Salvador and to Guatemalan refugees. Another artists' movement in solidarity with Central America which has recently emerged in the San Francisco Bay Area calls itself PLACA, which means to make a mark, to leave a sign. They recently dedicated an entire street of murals which speak out against U.S. intervention in Central America. In their manifesto, the artists and muralists proclaim:

PLACA members do not ally themselves with this Administration's policy that has created death and war and despair, and that threatens more lives daily. We aim to demonstrate in visual/environmental terms, our solidarity, our respect, for the people of Central America.

A cultural movement similar to Artists Call has developed in opposition to the racist and fascist policies of the South African government. This past October was declared Art Against Apartheid Month. Exhibitions and cultural events were held throughout the New York City area and in cities in other parts of the country. These events were explicitly tied to the campaign to free Nelson Mandela and all political prisoners in South Africa and Namibia. At the San Francisco Art Institute, an organization of artists opposed to apartheid is in the process of preparing a month-long festival in the spring of 1985 designed to promote awareness about the need to intensify the solidarity struggle with the people of South Africa.

One of the most exciting progressive cultural developments is the song movement, whose roots run deep in the historical struggles of the

United States and which is presently building bridges through music between the labor movement, the Afro-American movement, the solidarity struggles with Central America and South Africa, the women's movement and the peace movement. Recently, in the San Francisco Bay Area, a coalition of musicians and other cultural workers convened a conference and festival called Music for Peace and Liberation. Workshop presenters included folk singer Guy Caravan as well as jazz pianist Masary Watkins and saxophonist John Handy. In these workshops, such issues were explored as: the role of music in workers' struggles such as support work for the Phelps Dodge strikers and for the Coors beer boycott; the extension of the cultural boycott of South Africa; and special tasks confronting progressive musicians, such as the development of independent recording efforts. The overall goal of the conference/festival was the compilation of a People's Directory of Cultural Workers and the consolidation of concrete ties between progressive musicians and existing organized movements.

As a result of the influence of such politically committed musicians as Holly Near and Sweet Honey in the Rock, the women's music movement is acquiring an increasingly strong presence within the song movement. Bernice Johnson Reagon of Sweet Honey in the Rock has published articles and delivered speeches exhorting the women's music movement to enter into association with working-class struggles, anti-racist movements, peace struggles and solidarity work. Certainly Sweet Honey's songs reflect the coalition politics about which Bernice Reagon talks. They sing, for example, about occupational health hazards in "More Than A Paycheck," enumerating asbestosis, silicosis, brown lung and black lung disease. They sing about the Civil Rights leader Fannie Lou Hamer, the murdered South African activist Steven Biko, and in numerous songs they emphasize the need for all people to join the fight to prevent the outbreak of a nuclear war. Through Sisterfire, the annual women's music festival in which Sweet Honey has been instrumental, there is an attempt to actualize the concept of coalition politics through cultural vehi-

cles. In its last manifesto, *Sisterfire* was described as

a salutation to all women, working people, minorities and the poor who stand fast against dehumanizing political and economic systems.

Moreover,

Culture, in its most valid form, expresses a mass or popular character. It must not be defined and perpetuated by an elite few for the benefit of a few. Culture must, of necessity, reflect and chart humanity's attempt to live in harmony with itself and nature . . . We are building bridges between the women's movement and other movements for progressive social change. We are playing with fire, and we want nothing less from this event than to set loose the creative, fierce and awesome energies in all of you.

Holly Near, who has been associated all along not only with the women's music movement, but with many other people's struggles, continues to encourage musicians to reach out to the peace movement, the solidarity movement and the labor movement. Just recently she and Ronnie Gilbert went on a "Dump Reagan" tour which took them to 25 cities and during which they sang to over 25,000 people. Another exemplary action in the bridge building effort undertaken by many in the women's music movement is the recent song written by Betsy Rose for the Mel King for Mayor campaign in Boston. The title of the song is: "We May Have Come Here On Different Ships, But We're In The Same Boat Now."

Communists have played important roles in the development of the song movement. The Ad Hoc Singers, for example, who first came together during the 1980 presidential campaign, have brought to the movement songs which deepen the class consciousness of those who experience them. Their "People Before Profits," introduced during the first anti-Reagan campaign, is a virtual anthem of people's struggles.

What is perhaps most important about the Ad Hoc Singers is that they bring to the song movement a dimension of concrete, activist experience in these struggles.

And, indeed, if we can anticipate the further expansion of people's culture today, it will be a direct function of the expansion, deepening and growing influence of mass movements. Progressive and revolutionary art is inconceivable outside of the context of political movements for radical change. If bold new art forms emerged with the Russian Revolution, the Cuban Revolution and more recently the Sandinista and Grenada Revolutions, then we can be certain that if we accomplish the task before us today of strengthening and uniting our mass movements, our cultural life will flourish. Cultural workers must thus be concerned not only with the creation of progressive art, but must be actively involved in the organization of people's political movements. An exemplary relationship between art and struggle has been at the very core of the journal *Freedomways*—not only does it serve as a vehicle for the dissemination of progressive Black literature, but it actively participates in the political struggles of Afro-Americans and their allies.

If cultural workers utilize their talents on an ever increasing scale to accomplish the task of awakening and sensitizing people to the need for a mass challenge to Reaganism, the prospects for strengthening and further uniting the anti-Reagan movement, bringing together labor, Afro-Americans, women and peace activists will greatly increase. As that movement wins victories, existing artists will draw inspiration from the creative energy of this process and new artists will emerge as a result. If we are able to set this dynamic in motion, we will begin to move securely in the direction of economic, racial and sexual emancipation, indeed, ultimately, socialism, and we will be able to anticipate the eventual elimination of the threat of nuclear war. □

## JUAN FLORES

Thank you for inviting me. It's a rather thankless task to follow a presentation like Angela's. I only want to make a few points which will emphasize some of the things which she said.

Though I'm not going to focus specifically on the Puerto Rican case, many of the things Angela said in relation to Afro-American cultural history apply also to Puerto Ricans, and there are also interesting and important variations on it. One parallel is in Jesus Colon's book, *A Puerto Rican in New York*. Many of you might have known Jesus, or at least know his book.

One of the most memorable stories is called "José"; it's about a friend of Jesus, a musician. Jesus was a musician, by the way, apart from being a million other things. They used to play together. Jesus relates how his friend José would always be making up songs, and how Jesus would work with him on the creation of these songs. They were really good songs, Jesus thought, although you would never hear them on the juke box or the radio.

One day he was walking down the street, passing a record store, and heard a song that he had heard before. He thought, "Wait a minute" and stopped and listened. "Yeah," he said, "that's José's song." He went in and got the record, but it didn't say anything about José on the record jacket. He brought the record back home and played it for José. "Isn't that your song?" he asked, and José said, "Yeah, it is."

"How come your name isn't on it? How much money did you make?" Jose replied, "I didn't make anything. I didn't even know it was recorded."

It's a beautiful little story which shows the rip-off, the expropriation of popular culture, which happens every day. Every day this capital, this product, this material which is produced by the people, is taken, stolen by the bourgeoisie and re-fabricated and sold back to us at exorbitant prices. That process, the commercialization process, is the cultural equivalent of the exploitation of the working class, and is the necessary accompaniment of the process of economic exploitation.

In the same story Jesus relates how he and José would perform these songs at parties of

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Juan Flores, associate professor of sociology at Queens College, works with the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College.

Puerto Rican people—immigrants in Connecticut, New Jersey and here in New York. It was a contribution to that powerful association of colonial people here in the hostile environment of the United States. Jesus is very sensitive to the way in which the corporate bourgeoisie controls and dominates the cultural experience of the masses.

There are three points which would perhaps be relevant to add to what Angela said. One is the problem of what we call mass culture, that is, the culture that comes through "the tube." This is the culture that's packaged by the bourgeoisie and fed to the people. It is called "mass culture," as though it were the culture of the masses, the culture the masses want. In most discussions of popular culture among American sociologists, anthropologists and theorists it is assumed that mass culture *is* popular culture. It's only when you experience the actual lives of people in the country that you realize that a sharp distinction needs to be made between them. What is fed to us is not popular culture. It's not the same as a culture of artistic expression that derives from the people—the kinds of things Angela was focussing on.

In fact it's the tension, the interplay, the interaction between the two that brings out the real artistic and cultural dynamic of our time. We have to focus on and understand that difference, that interplay and relationship between the two. By doing so we'll understand that the hegemony of "mass culture," the manipulation, the levelling of the culture of society is not a total process. There is a differential reception of the packaged commercial culture, according to the different contexts and different positions of people in society. The manipulation is geared to bring everybody into accord with the bourgeois approach to life. But we see time and again that people take these products and redo them, re-elaborate them to lend them a different meaning. We have to be sensitive to that, to be aware that just because we see Donald Duck it doesn't mean that somebody is automatically manipulated by the Disney empire. That figure of Donald Duck can recur in a different situation and have a very different meaning than was intended by the people who perpetrated it in the first place. There are many examples of this process.

And it is a very active process, in spite of the fact that this mass culture, this commercialized culture, gives us good reason to get depressed. As came out in this morning's presentations, we

shouldn't give up. We shouldn't treat people, including ourselves, and especially the working class, as passive, inert, static. We the people are active, we're constantly responding. The constant process of re-elaboration and differential reception of mass culture is a very important one. If you go to other countries, you will see how much exported U.S. imperialist culture there is, but also how it is being taken and turned around by many people.

A closer example is subway graffiti. They are basically fed by the commercials on TV, by comic books and so forth. But on the subway trains, they don't mean the same thing any more. The little roaches in the "Black Flag" ads on TV are devices to promote a product. But when those roaches come back again on the subway they mean something very different. The Black Flag cans on the subway trains mean something very different than was intended in the commercially packaged culture.

This is a point we should be aware of in trying to gain a sense of where we go, where we find a source of cultural resistance. We don't have to look only for pure manifestations on the part of people who are politically conscious. We have to begin to decipher it, to find resistance even within the very bedrock of the commercial culture itself.

Another point I want to make is that there is a tendency for popular culture to be commercialized. When I say popular culture, I mean culture that comes from the people, culture that's created by the people, ourselves, by the working class and oppressed people. The tendency is for that culture to be taken, co-opted, distorted, twisted, torn from its original context, made to serve the purposes of a foreign and hostile class. But it would be a serious error, again, to think of that process as uniform and complete and satisfactory to the class that's undertaking it.

We see that process even, for example, in rap music, which Angela referred to. I agree that rap music is a very important phenomenon in contemporary musical experience. But much of rap music has been commercialized, has been packaged. A lot of what you hear on the latest disks are completely distorted versions of what rap music was in its origins. That started with Blondie's hit tune "Rapture," which may be familiar to you, where rap content is trivialized. But as the lyrics that Angela presented make very clear, the words of rap music are laden with political and social content.

So even though rap music is being commercialized, distorted, that doesn't mean the tradition stops or that the people don't continue to develop and build on that tradition.

The same thing can be seen in the cooptation of the blues, rhythm and blues, in the so-called rock'n'roll revolution in the middle '50s. The style of rhythm and blues was ripped off and transformed by the large record corporations who profited from it and by others who had an economic interest in it. But that doesn't mean that rhythm and blues people and the bluesmen stopped singing, stopped creating, stopped producing songs. In fact, if you look back, say, at Muddy Waters' compositions, you recognize that many of his songs were being composed at the same time as the big rock'n'roll hits. Muddy Waters was supposed to belong to an earlier generation because he was a real bluesman, but he was composing in the very same years that Elvis Presley was taking rhythm and blues and transforming it. It's important to see that traditions of popular culture go on and resist the process of assimilation and cooptation on the part of bourgeois culture.

The final point I want to make has to do with where to look for sources of revolutionary or popular culture of resistance. Where does it come from, where is it based in this society? Angela made it very clear that popular culture is really based in resistance to oppression and the struggle of the people. Struggle has a history and people involved can refer to that history. It's present in struggles for national liberation. Within the working class there are experiences of people from different national and ethnic cultural backgrounds. I think these traditions, these histories of cultural particularity, are the most important basis for popular culture.

Popular culture is not created by the people in the abstract, in a "pure" sense, divorced from the specific contexts of collective experience, but rather, as is true of Afro-American, as is true of Puerto Rican culture, on the basis of a collective history of struggle. This is the basis for the continuity, the persistence of popular culture.

Such culture resists the categorizations that are present in Western capitalist culture. For example, young Puerto Rican poets are really developing language that is not English, not Spanish, neither one nor the other. It's both. The cultural purists, including some people on the so-called Left, unfortunately condemn this as "bastardi-

zing" language, ruining language—"You've got to be able to master English and master Spanish." And that is true. But the fact is, our people speak a mix of the two. People move from one language to the other. Not just individuals, but communities of people that are oppressed. It is one of the forms of resistance to oppression to say, "I'm not going to limit myself to one language." This poetry expresses what is finest, what is heroic, what is beautiful about the Puerto Rican experience in the United States.

There is a tendency for oppressed groups to come together that is breaking open the atmosphere of cultural life in the United States today. The merging of rap music, graffiti and break dancing is but one of the many exciting cultural experiences of our day. It is a manifestation of the convergence of oppressed groups. This confluence of Black and Puerto Rican cultural expression is not what has been traditionally called "assimilation to American life," but a rich instance and anticipation of working-class solidarity. □

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## MARK ROGOVIN

I want to be brief and to complement Angela's statement. What issues have we raised at this conference, why have we raised them, why build a conference around them, and why respond to those questions? For me, the "why" is easy to answer. The critical issues of today are the reasons why; the potential end of civilization is the reason why. It is a struggle for peace and freedom, for democracy. It is not like fifty years ago or fifteen or five years ago. We are living in a time of emergency. It is in part the same old issues to be worked on, but we must approach them with a sense of emergency.

The artists are allied in their desire to communicate with other-artists and the public through a myriad of cultural organizations, publications and productions. The list ranges from a national organization most of us have not heard of—Pablo Neruda Cultural Center—to Political Art Documentation and Distribution; Artists' Call (working around Central American issues); Artists for Nuclear Disarmament; Artists against Apartheid; Symphonies for Survival; happenings in Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, and many other major cities; Museo del Barrio; Studio Museums and dozens of other similar institutions; SPARC for Muralists in Los Angeles and numerous newsletters, newspapers and so on.

The last named is a 40-page, illustrated national muralists' newsletter which reports on the over 20 thousand murals created in the United States since Chicago's Wall of Respect was painted

in 1967. And it tells how muralists here and in Nicaragua paint in solidarity with that struggle for democracy.

A center which I cofounded in 1981, the Chicago Peace Museum, is dedicated to promoting peace through the arts. As a joke, I say the means by which we communicate is everything but the lecture. Dance, theatre, films, song, etc. But, lest I get attacked, we need *all* the means of communication.

The Peace Museum has a dramatic physical plant, and has housed fourteen major exhibitions, with tens of thousands of visitors annually. With a full-time staff of six, we feature exhibitions from around the world, and we've curated exhibitions from Bonn, West Germany, to Anchorage, Alaska; from Dartmouth College to a neighborhood church foyer. Exhibits on themes ranging from "The Unforgettable Fire," drawings by the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic blasts; an exhibition called "Give Peace A Chance," a show concentrating on the peace songs and peace campaigns of leading rock and folk musicians—from Woody Guthrie to a group we should know more about called U-2.

The U-2 show opened with a festival in the street outside the museum, where about three thousand people gathered for six hours of live entertainment. We knew it was going to be a success when at nine in the morning the first person showed up and asked where the line to get in started.

The next day was Monday when, normally for Chicago, major cultural institutions are closed. Of course we followed custom and were closed.

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Mark Rogovin is an artist and muralist and a co-founder of the Chicago Peace Museum and the Public Arts Workshop.

There came a pounding on the front door; the security guard went to it and a voice outside said, "We've got to get in." The guard said, "I'm sorry, we're closed on Mondays."

The pounding came back and I thought, "I'd better handle this one." I opened the door and there stood three women. I said, "Look—it says right here, we're open only Tuesdays through Sundays. Come back."

They said, "We've come from Liverpool and we've just got to see John's guitar." So I figured, "What the hell." They came in, laid flowers at the base of Lennon's guitar, cried for half an hour and went back to Liverpool.

I just visited one of our shows that's on the road called "Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.—Peacemaker"—attended by thousands, including 150 busloads of Chicago students. It's traveling around the U.S. and has booked a full schedule through half of 1986.

One more story on the "Give Peace a Chance" show. We have little or no money for advertising. A number of stations through PSA—Public Service Announcements—give us a break. One of them, a TV station, said that Yoko Ono had agreed to work with the Peace Museum and to lend us many items from her and John's archives. Three minutes after this flash we got a call from a 28-year-old carpenter. He said, "I'm a Lennon fan and I'll do anything you ask." It took me a moment to realize what he was suggesting. To make a long story short, he and his buddy worked 40 hours a week for 12 weeks, supervising 40 volunteers as well, after their regular jobs, to construct a most beautiful exhibition space.

For me the last three years have been most exciting. They posed and pose important and diffi-

cult questions for us all. How do we present professional progressive exhibitions? How do we speak in a way to engage and not turn off our public? How do we feature "heavy-duty" political issues in terms that the general public can understand? How can we move our audiences to action? How can we stabilize our institutions financially? How can we keep them alive and growing? How can they be broadened? How can we guarantee a long life for them—but won't it be a great day when they are no longer needed?

In my moments left I want to suggest that the way to gather artists and involve them in work for the public good is well known. It is the critical social issues, projects that shape the future and the current vital campaigns, that attract and engage the artists.

For your consideration, I pose only a few of the upcoming events that can serve as catalysts for organization. May 8, 1985, V-E Day, the 40th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany. Upcoming: the 40th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. Upcoming: 4 Days in April (19th-21st) a national peace demonstration in Washington; 40th anniversary (August) of the atom bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; May 1, 1986: the 100th anniversary of the Haymarket massacre.

This last mentioned should be a catalyst to launch folks in all fields of work to begin to organize. To build a big and broad complex of interested individuals and organizations; to plan for months of public education with exhibitions and lectures of all sorts; poetry readings, film, songs and more—all these to coincide with what will be an international celebration.

I posed many questions—the answers will be found as we dig deeper into the next stage. □

# 3 Culture Under Full Socialism

panel

HENRY BOROVIK

*Political Affairs* has done me a great honor by inviting me to speak about the role of culture and art in a society of developed socialism. You will understand that it is impossible to speak about such a huge topic in all its significant aspects. I will deal with only some particular aspects of the topic.

I am particularly pleased to do so shortly after the Plenary Session of the Union of Writers of the USSR which celebrated the Union's fiftieth anniversary.

The anniversary session was attended by representatives of all my country's professional associations—the Union of Film Makers, the Union of Artists, the Union of Architects, the Union of Composers, the Union of Journalists and representatives of the theatrical societies existing in each republic. Clearly, it prompted many to look back, in their mind's eye, upon the Soviet cultural record, to take stock of it and, above all, to project our priorities for the years to come.

That was the subject of the rousing and profound speech made at the Plenary Session by Konstantin Chernenko, general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

The very fact of the top Party and government leaders attending the session and Chernenko's speech speak of the great attention the Party and the people are devoting to creative intellectuals.

That is how it has always been. The foundations for the relationship between literature and the Communist Party and, in a larger sense, between the area of cultural activity and that of Party work in the community were laid by the great Lenin in his work "Party Organization and Party Literature," written exactly 79 years ago.

The role of Soviet culture in society is not, of course, measured by red-letter dates. Its tremendous influence on the intellectual advance of a socialist society has been demonstrated by the whole of its history.

I can not enumerate the fine works created by Soviet workers in the cultural field and in the arts—that would take too much time to do. But if I mention at least a few names, such as Maxim Gorky, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Mikhail Sholokhov, Nikolai Ostrovsky, Konstantin Fedin, Alexander Fadeyev, Boris Pasternak, Vsevolod Vishnevsky, Sergei Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin, Alexander Dovzhenko, Stanislavsky, Meyerhold, Vakhtangov, Shostakovich, Prokofiev, Galina Ulanova, Igor Moiseyev, I think that will be enough to remind you of the amplitude and achievement of Soviet literature and art, and of the extent of their influence on the world's cultural process.

I could name talented and substantive works of recent years which have been exciting for the Soviet people, and which are provoking thought and argument.

There were many nationalities which before the October Revolution did not have even an alphabet. Now, for instance, in Kirghizia we have one of the most talented authors in the world, Chingiz Aitmatov. Those of us who have read his books know his ability and his creativeness. I mention only Aitmatov not because he is the only one, but just to save time.

Now that means that our Soviet literature, our Soviet art, and the world storehouse of classics today have the works which will survive their time and tell posterity about it.

Each genuine work of art has too many facets to see at once. But we in a socialist society believe that the most accurate standard of reference by which to judge the success of literature and art in general is the actual extent of the im-

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Henry Borovik is a playwright, editor of the Soviet magazine *Theatre* and a secretary of the Soviet Writer Union.

pact they have on molding the people's ideological and moral image.

I think this standard of reference is applicable not only to socialist literature and socialist art, but to the art and culture of the world as a whole. Using it as an instrument of judgement—and this is the only right and proper instrument—I must say that in this sense Soviet literature and Soviet culture in general are something that stand apart. For, on the one hand, Soviet culture embodies the intellectual wealth of new socialist civilization. On the other, it has produced an unmatched effect on the creation of this socialist civilization itself, on the creation of the type of human being to match the new type of society.

**I**do not think anybody in this audience would claim that literature and art are outside politics. We Communists have the firm conviction that all creative work, including "apolitical" creativity, is linked up, in one way or another, with politics. One can not say that this truth has been accepted for what it is right away. But the record of history has proved it to be axiomatic, and the First Congress of the Union of Writers of the USSR, held half a century ago, made a great contribution towards getting it accepted in principle.

You know that a great writer, Alexei Maximovich Gorky, was one of the pioneers of socialist culture. It was he, with a wide-ranging approach in Lenin's style, who treated the place of literature in a socialist society, its role in bringing up the new type of man and the civic duty of a writer, an artist or any other worker in the arts for that matter. The main point of his speech at the Congress, which we still remember very well, was that the writer must learn to make active use of the great right that socialism has granted him—the right to be directly involved in the process of building a new way of life, to be a strict judge of all hidebound conservatism that has outlived itself, and to establish, with his art, true humanism and the great ideals of socialism.

We do not mean at all that the literature and the art of the new, socialist type emerged in

a wilderness, on the ruins of mankind's preceding cultural property (although there were some hotheads at one time who called for discarding everything that had been created by humankind in the field of culture and art because "it has been created by representatives of the dominant classes," and for starting it all from scratch). No. Our socialist literature and art have grown up on the groundwork laid by advanced Russian literature, the democratic culture of all the peoples of our country, and the world's classical heritage.

The Writers' Congress produced a new type of organization to bring the men and women of letters together. It brought the Communist idea of partisanship and organization into the realm of literature. That helped literature to become what Lenin had predicted it would become—really free and openly wedded to the working people. I speak of the form of organization of writers not only because I myself belong to such an association but also because this form, which time has proved to be quite viable, has subsequently been accepted by workers in the other arts in our country.

It is an interesting point to recall that two-thirds of the delegates to that first Writers Congress were of working-class or peasant origin. In other words, that was the first generation of our Soviet intellectuals, showing them to be a generation of a new type of intellectuals who had come to occupy a fitting place in our society. The intelligentsia has long since ceased to be a smattering of educated people and has become a great contingent of working people, a member of the great alliance of workers, peasants and intellectuals. Its influence on the common cause of upgrading the socialism that has been built in the USSR has been growing from year to year, making itself felt, first and foremost, on social consciousness and on the intellectual and cultural life of the community. That is so, above all, at a time when our socialist society is setting itself objectives which require a new level of social consciousness to realize.

It is these new objectives that our society has to work to attain today, as it has reached the frontiers of full-grown socialism.



Our Party is now busy redrafting its Program to produce one to guide our work for decades. This Program will reflect the experience of the masses built up for the last quarter of a century. Now, experience shows that before getting down to building communism as such, we shall have to pass through a historically determined, sustained period of developed socialism which our country has just entered. That means we shall have to resolve a set of major and complex problems relating to the opening phase of the communist order of society.

It is difficult to overestimate the role of people in science and culture and their endeavors to raise the consciousness of the masses, to remold social consciousness so that it will take in the new ideas advanced by the Party and decisively discard timeworn, backward views.

That does not mean that Soviet culture and art should only sing the praises of socialist society.

Literature, cinema and theatre will continue to deal with complicated and contradictory phenomena of life, of which there are many. In defining the essence of conflict in drama, an outstanding Soviet dramatist said frankly: "Drama begins where disorder exists." Disorder, contradictions and grave problems are natural and unavoidable in our developing society; they influence the destinies of people in one way or another and are the sources of moral conflicts. Though these contradictions are not of an antagonistic nature, it takes no small effort, high principles and even considerable civic courage to overcome them.

For the sake of what does the writer demonstrate this courage? For the sake of what does he often venture on serious polemics to stick up for his point of view? I think for the sake of fulfilling his mission as artist, that is, to urge society as a whole and every individual to take a sterner view of himself, always to help him take an active stand, become a staunch champion of our common cause of building communism.

Now I come to the main point, which explains the most important place that culture occupies in this country. We are building a new society, the newness of which is reflected not

only in new social and economic relations but in a new psychology.

In other words, I am speaking of the shaping of human beings with new habits and new instincts of goodness instead of the instincts of gain, competition, individualism, egoism and the like which have been cultivated for ages by class society.

Romain Rolland once said that the best works of Soviet writers—which actually means of all cultural workers—are the men and women of socialist society.

That is why people in culture enjoy special love and respect in the Soviet Union.

We know cases (we have not far to go to find them) when writers in some countries are looked upon as businessmen, no more and no less, who make money sitting at their typewriters. We know cases when the private life of a popular artist or writer arouses far greater interest, fanned by newspapers and television, than his or her professional activity. They are looked upon only as entertainers.

This doesn't mean we think there is no true and great art, democratic art, in capitalist societies. On the contrary. But if you look through the history of art in capitalist society, you will find that the greatest names of that culture are in some way connected with the democratic movement. And the best creations of artists in capitalist society have appeared, as a rule, in the process of struggle against capitalist society and not in struggle for capitalist society. This is certainly axiomatic.

I can give you a small example. I just returned from Leipzig, a city famous, among other things, as the host of the international documentary film festival. We saw there the American film "The Good Fight" about the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in the Spanish Civil War. It is a marvelous movie and it won the first prize in Leipzig. I am happy to have been a member of the jury and to have had a part in making the award.

The attitude towards writers and artists in a socialist state is quite different. They are, to a great extent, people who express the innermost feelings of the people, who create and reflect

their ideological and moral image.

Nothing can replace literature and art in the noble work of molding the new man and woman; their role in creating new social mores and feelings and their capacity to influence the minds and hearts of people is invaluable.

**W**e can not say that in this area we have fully achieved the desired results. In spite of the fact that our country has long since become a land of hundred per cent literacy (since the first years of the Revolution); in spite of the fact that there now exists compulsory ten-year education (formally equal to the U.S. high school); in spite of the fact that instruction is carried on in all the languages of our multi-ethnic country, which means that everyone is familiar with the fundamentals of science and culture, we have to admit that we sometimes come across people who lag in emotional and psychological development and who are lacking in the culture of feelings.

That is why we would like the peoples' introduction to artistic culture and their aesthetic education to produce more effective and lasting results.

Well knowing that we have to prepare people for it from childhood, we are currently carrying out an education reform to enhance the influence of literature and art on molding the individual. We believe that today the ideological and moral development and the cultural development of the emerging generation should receive no less attention than instruction in the fundamentals of science.

We believe that the creation of literature and art for children is one of the most significant achievements of our culture in this respect. These include special publishers of children's books: "Malysh" publishers that issue books for pre-school children and others who print books for junior and senior students. Practically every big town in the country has a Youth Theater, which is a center of the moral and artistic education of the younger generation. Our best writers have always written for youngsters. Among them are Arkady Gaidar, Samuil Marshak, Korney Chukovsky, Sergei Mikhalkov, Anatoly

Alexin, Yevgeny Nosov and many, many others. There is a musical theatre, the only one of its kind in the world, in Moscow. It is actually an opera theatre for children. A most important aspect of perfecting developed socialism in modern conditions is to create conditions throughout the country under which every person has the opportunity for harmonious, comprehensive development. That is determined by objective needs and the present level of the development of our society.

High culture should not merely exist next to human beings, but should form an organic part of their life and habits, becoming an increasingly active factor in transforming their outlook on work, creating healthy relations at work places, promoting physical development; i.e., it should become a tangible ideological and aesthetic environment enabling all people to spend their free time in accordance with their inclinations and interests.

Much is being done towards that end. For instance, in the five years between 1978 and 1983 the Soviet Union built about 2,700 clubs, including 1,225 in rural areas; 2,528 libraries; 848 museums; 38 professional theatres; organized 139 music groups, and so on. Today we have a total of 620 theatres, 1,170 concert organizations and music ensembles, 102 circuses, 137,500 cultural clubs, 132,000 public libraries, 151,000 film projectors and so forth.

The noticeably higher level of education and general culture of the people places new demands on the cultural services for the population. In the twenty years from 1960 to 1980 theater attendance increased by 32 per cent, concerts by 45 per cent, circus attendance doubled and the number of people going to art museums increased four times. Cultural demands are increasing rapidly in connection with the development of television, with 90 per cent of the population in the USSR having the possibility of watching television. (You should keep in mind the huge geographical extent of our country.)

We have more than 6,000 professional theatres of various kinds and we have tens of thousands of what we call "people's theatres,"

which are semiprofessional. Those of you who have been in the Soviet Union know that the average price for a movie is 30 to 50 kopecks (50-70 cents). The average price of a theatre ticket is one ruble (\$1.20). Even in the Bolshoi Theatre, the best seats are not more than three rubles and fifty kopecks. These prices have not changed for decades. Certainly, this does create some problems. For example, symphony orchestras and opera houses must be donated by the government, and we are very proud that this is the case.

Byelorussia, one of our fifteen Soviet republics, is ahead of such a developed capitalist country as France in the number of theater and museum attendances for every one thousand of the population.

The West usually says that Soviet writers can not touch allegedly forbidden themes in art and literature. They speak of the stringent censorship in the country.

Well, we do have censorship, but it is a censorship of a very special kind. It is, above all, a sense of responsibility of writers and artists towards the people and society. It is not for nothing people say that talent and a sense of responsibility are inseparable.

We also have another type of censorship which I am going to speak about quite frankly. We have laws adopted on the initiative of the people. For instance, there is a law that prohibits the propaganda of war in any form—oral or written. If some madman—a writer or actor, politician or scientist—were to call for a nuclear strike against the United States or any other country, he would be arrested. The same goes for anyone who decided to show the need for a demonstration nuclear shot against some country, in the press, over the radio or in the streets, or who declared that a third world war would benefit mankind. If that is called censorship, then we are proud of it.

We have a law that forbids racial discrimination in deed, in the press, in art and so on. The propaganda of hatred for other nationalities is forbidden. For instance, in our country it is impossible for a magazine to have on its cover a

bloodthirsty bear which would symbolize, say, the American people. I remember something like that in *Time* magazine this summer symbolizing some other country. If that is called censorship, then we are proud of it.

We also have a law that prohibits pornography in literature, theater, films and television. In this respect we carry on the deeply-rooted traditions of Russian culture in which true love has always elevated human beings and has been portrayed in literature and art with the greatest tactfulness. If that is called censorship, then we are proud of it.

That is not just our formal observance of the law, though that, too, is necessary in any society. It is in fact our own understanding of the mission of art and literature, our duty to society, our sense of responsibility towards society and our great wish that our works should serve to elevate and improve people throughout the world.

How much untruth we have heard about our culture in general and about individual cultural personalities in particular. For example, it is asserted that socialism is "intolerant" of freedom of expression, that the CPSU blocks the way for artistic quest and demands "uniformity" in literature and art.

But this has been said for 67 years now. And although it is impossible to get used to a lie, one can teach oneself not to wonder at it.

And we don't wonder.

Our Party's guidance of literature in no way resembles petty tutelage over people in creative work. Creation is creation just because it is free. And although instances probably occur when the subject of a work has been prompted by someone, most often that "someone" is life itself.

I know that our remarkable writer Alexander Fadeyev was once asked during the war if he would interest himself in the heroic story of young people who during the temporary occupation of the city of Krasnodon by the nazis had set up an underground organization and fought against the occupiers there. Fadeyev was carried away by the theme, and he wrote a really beautiful book, called *The Young Guard*, which

has done very much for the upbringing of our youth. But no one, of course, could have forced Fadeyev to write it if the theme had not interested him, had not absorbed him entirely.

Is it possible to say that someone "forced" Sholokhov to pen *And Quiet Flows the Don*! Or the poet Alexandr Mezhirov to compose his poem "Communists, Forward"! Or Boris Polevoi to produce his *Story of a Real Man*! Or Konstantin Simonov to write a poem which everybody in the Soviet Union knows by heart, "Wait for Me"! Certainly not!

However, freedom of expression is not a privilege for the "select." Our society cherishes talent and regards it as a highly valuable possession. But can a person, whoever this may be, be free from the requirements of society, from its laws, binding on all? We didn't make the revolution to tolerate a person who will laud the capitalist way of life and denigrate the moral and political foundations of socialism while simultaneously expecting benefits and recognition from that society. This is not and will not be the case.

There can be no two opinions about that.

This does not at all mean that fame and recognition in our country go to the cultural workers who just cold-heartedly eulogize our great cause and our humanistic ideas. Nothing of the kind. No one needs a mere repetition of elementary truths. We believe that badly written books, badly composed operas and badly produced television and films not only impair the taste of millions, but also discredit the themes and ideas which their authors try to treat. Thus, we combat dullness and facelessness in art persistently and uncompromisingly.

**A** great deal is being done by our art and literature on the eve of a significant date for all mankind—the 40th anniversary of the Great Victory over Hitlerite fascism.

In the Western bourgeois press we quite often read allegations that the Soviet Union has kept alive the memory of the war with a purpose—either to obtain "political advantages" or to "militarize the spirit" of the people. Both these assertions are flagrant lies. To us the war, which cost us 20 million dead, destroyed a third of our economy and left tens of millions of peo-

ple without shelter, is an unhealed wound, a bleeding experience and a great impetus to the most active struggle for peace.

The workers of Soviet culture and art play an important part in this struggle for peace, meeting the aspirations of the Soviet people.

Socialist culture, reflecting the essence of the socialist system, is directed against war, against a possible nuclear apocalypse. It can not be different, either as a whole or by individual exceptions.

This is why Soviet creative intellectuals are so active in the struggle for peace. The anxious question put fifty years ago by Maxim Gorky "With whom are you, people of culture?" not only has not lost its pertinence, but, moreover, has now become especially vital and requires an answer from each artist.

Some oversimplistically understand this question, thinking that it comes down merely to a choice between the USSR and the USA and between the socialist and capitalist ways of life.

But this is not so today. Today it is a question of choosing between the life and death of our civilization. And a definite answer is required here: Either you are with those who are preparing war, or with those who reject the adventurist policy of imperialism and are working for peaceful coexistence and for disarmament.

There is no position of silence here, because silence permits imperialism to carry on its dangerous course without hindrance.

As a literary man, I attach serious meaning to words, and when I hear such word combinations as "third world war," or "limited nuclear war," or "protracted nuclear war," or "demonstration nuclear strike"; when I hear speculation on how the world should be "arranged after a third world war," I always think that our times run fast while we reflexively use old words, which do not reflect in today's world the meanings which they earlier expressed.

The time has probably come when we should contemplate issuing a new explanatory political dictionary which people now need so much to understand world events.

For example, in the phrase "world after war" not a single word has the usual meaning: neither the word "world," nor the word "war,"

nor the word "after." Because if we bear in mind nuclear war, then it is high time to transfer this word—war—from the letter "w" to the letter "s" and to translate and interpret it as suicide. There will be no world then, and even the very word "after" won't be there, either.

It is very necessary to compile a dictionary of modern political language!

Fyodor Dostoyevsky, a great classic writer of Russian literature, is known to have remarked that if mankind were summoned to the Last Judgement, it, mankind, would only have to produce the book by Cervantes, *Don Quixote*, in its justification, and all the human errors would be forgiven, and all the sins would be absolved.

As you see, this Russian writer justified all human sins not by the fact that mankind had invented gunpowder, braces, the bicycle, convenient trousers or umbrellas against rain, although all this is necessary and fine. He justified people for the human ability to love, do good, dream of justice and fight for it, laugh and weep over the joys and misfortunes of the Great Hidalgo and be naive and trustful. In a word, this involves morality, conscience, culture, art and literature—these highest manifestations of the human spirit—the mission of which is to make men and women more elevated, purer, nobler and kinder.

But if we do imagine such a hypothetical situation of a Last Judgement, at the Supreme Court to which mankind is summoned, then, apart from defense lawyers for the human race, there would also be prosecutors, and they, of course, would be able to present to the "high court" an enormous volume of printed pages, magnetic video tape and acetate film which would show that art and literature had been used not only for the elevation of man's soul, but also to lie to him, to sell fear to him, to instil hate and corrupt him.

And all these masses of criminal art are but an output for gain, for gold—the Yellow Devil, the Golden Calf—and also for doing away, at last, with the "infection of Communism."

I do not want to say that our literature and art, our press, television, radio, cinema and the-

ater, hold an indifferent position in the battle of ideas. We are adherents to the ideas of Communism, their supporters, and we are doing everything to prove to people the excellence of these ideas. But we have never, either in propaganda or in works of art, debased ourselves by fostering hatred toward specific peoples.

Even in the years of the Second World War, of the most terrible war against Hitler Germany, we did not identify Hitlerism with the German people, though in those years, I shall say bluntly, it was sometimes very difficult not to do that.

We have many problems, many unsolved tasks. This is understandable, for we are building a new society and taking unexplored paths. But if the highest judge—human spirit, human genius—asks us what our main distinction from the world of capitalism is, I think we could answer very simply: "We have never extracted profits, material or political, from the misfortune, the sorrow of others. We have never made money out of fear, out of hatred, out of chauvinism, out of blood."

The use of culture against mankind; the use of such a tool as art to foment hate; the use of a sheet of paper, movie or TV screen or the stage to sell fear, to propagandize for armaments and war—all these are crimes against humanity.

The money going for the creation of this kind of works should be designated a military budget item. But then, this may be just the way most of them are financed. Such films, such telecasts and such books ought to be classified as strategic weapons for the mass perversion of human morality.

If we are to speak of the danger of the threat of destruction for mankind, then next to the danger of war and the arms race leading to it I would place on the pedestal of shame these instruments for the poisoning of the human conscience.

To save the environment is a correct and timely slogan.

But no less timely is the slogan, "Save the human soul from the global, all-embracing lie of the mass media of information, propaganda and mass culture that are em-

ployed selling fear and hatred of human beings."

We all know such terms as sanction, embargo, ultimatum. We have become accustomed to these words, especially we in the Soviet Union, because, beginning from 1917, we have always lived under one blockade or another. Sanctions have always been applied to us—economic, political, transport and the like. There has always been something that was not sold to us, something that was not bought from us. But if one fine day people of the world agreed not to buy lies, not to buy the fear and hatred that are being offered them from the pages of books, from television and movie screens and from theater stages, a good job of enormous importance would have been done.

How much easier it would become to breathe in the world!

I propose this in earnest. I think that the workers of culture, art and literature can declare such a fine blockade against falsehood, fear and hatred if they act together.

To put up a barrier to lies, to expose them, to cut short calumnies and slander. To reveal the true meaning of words that delude people. Is not this the task of a writer? Is not this the task of a cultural figure?

Of course, many writers and people of art dream of creating for eternity, correctly thinking that only time, only eternity can check the full depth and talent of a particular work.

But, probably, in the test for eternity of a particular work, a question must be put to the author, to the worker of culture, art and literature: What have you done *today* in order to save our "tomorrow"? Because without this there can be neither time, nor eternity, nor our past, nor our future. Art, the world, mankind itself may disappear.

Some refer to the absolute truth of the words of the great Russian poet Pushkin that

serving the Muses does not bear any fuss. But it is equally true that serving the Muses does not bear a cold, calm, complacent heart. Serving the Muses does not bear a lust for gain and irresponsibility to the society in which you live.

The world is becoming more crowded, the planet smaller. Many notions have changed. In the past one could gallop for even three months from a God-forsaken place, reaching no frontier at all. Now a lethal missile covers more distance within minutes. The sky and stars were eternally a source of inspiration for poets and lovers. Now there are those who would turn space into a base for nuclear weapons, into a source of death.

Centuries ago a few mistakes by power-endowed people could provide the playwright with a theme for a merry vaudeville. Now there are more and more people in the world each of whose errors may cause the tragedy, the end of all mankind.

The world has shifted to a different genre of life.

We Soviet cultural workers believe that each artist, before undertaking the realization of a new conception, must clearly imagine what place his or her work will occupy in the struggle going on in the world.

I am not arguing for a single theme. Each people must live a healthy, full life. Each people needs a literature and an art which make it laugh and weep and rejoice and be sad; call it to deep reflection and give it recreation and entertainment.

Nonetheless, before descending into the "Hades of a new book," each artist must clearly realize why, for what—what place the new work will occupy in the eternal struggle of genuine culture, genuine art for the elevation of the human spirit, for the improvement of mankind.

At any rate, this is how we Soviet cultural workers think. □

## ELTON FAX

Following Henry Borovik is not easy; he handles our language far better than many of us. The best I can do in his language is to say "thank you" and "please," but that's better than so many things that are said in English about the Soviet Union.

In my youth, I recall distinctly, many of the older people in my home town used to drag kids with them to church. Not necessarily exclusively on Sunday, but many times during the week they went to special meetings called "experience meetings" to "testify," which meant to recount experiences which, for the most part, were rather harsh. And then they would testify to the group assembled that their faith was still intact and they were still very much in the fight. I have come to testify. Sometimes, by the way, people who rose to testify were not members of the church itself. But they were certainly free, as I am, to come to testify. So I am here to testify that much of what Henry Borovik has said I myself have seen and experienced on several trips to the Soviet Union.

I want to comment on the point which Henry Borovik has mentioned that two-thirds of the writers attending the first Soviet Writers Congress 50 years ago were of peasant stock. I happened to be in on the tail end of that congress, missing the first part because I simply couldn't get to Moscow any sooner. I have met many Soviet writers over these years in a number of the Soviet Republics, and I can tell you from conversations with them that I have recorded in my books that a goodly number of them are from peasant stock. Three come to mind. I want to mention them.

I recall distinctly the woman writer Tushan Essanova from the republic of Turkmenistan. Tushan Essanova was born after the Revolution and grew up on a collective farm. She told me that at the age of nine she began to write poetry and that some of her poems were published in the local paper. At the age of twenty one, she said, "I wrote a play, 'Daughter of a Millionaire,' describing my life as a girl growing up on a collective farm." The title is revealing, for it says a great deal about what she thought of her experiences as a girl growing up under collective farming. She told me that today all of her work centers upon the Turkmenia that she knows best, the Turkmenia of her time. She told me also that her daughter has gone a little

farther in a certain branch of study than she has: her daughter speaks and teaches the English language at the university. But, she said, "I can do something my daughter can't do. I have learned to fly a plane. I am the first Turkmenian woman to do so. And I've done this because I am convinced, and I say this in my writings, that woman's place in Turkmenia and elsewhere is far beyond that little spot that was reserved for my female forebears in the yurt or the nomadic hut in which many of them grew up."

Another writer I recall distinctly was a man from Tajikistan. I didn't meet him in Tajikistan, although I went there later. I was in Yarmela for several days rest after a strenuous trip through Central Asia gathering material. There I was introduced to this man, then in his early sixties.

He first asked why I was interested in writing about the peoples of Soviet Central Asia. I told him that I was interested, first of all, because they were people and I had come to the point in my development where I could relate my experiences to the experiences of other human beings, experiences that were similar. I told him that a few years prior to that, my wife and I had worked in a home for neglected children; that we had seen, first hand, what a society such as ours can do to families and to children. Most of the children with whom we worked were not Black or Puerto Rican—they were white children. I told him that I had lived in Mexico and that I had been able to relate my experiences to the poor people of Mexico. Further, I had traveled in Central and South America and in the French West Indies. Again, I could relate. So coming to Central Asia was simply an extension of what I had sought in my relations with people elsewhere.

He warmed up immediately and proceeded to tell me his story. Like so many other writers, he had started as a poor peasant boy; had been discovered by accident by the great Ini, the great modern writer of Tajikistan, and from that point proceeded to write about his own people and the Republic that they represent.

But I think the most dramatic story came to me from a Khirgiz writer. We have been reminded of Chingiz Aitmatov. I'm not referring to Chingiz at this moment, though we know each other and, like everybody else, I'm a great admirer of his talent. The man I refer to is older than Chingiz. In fact I was attracted to him because he is a year

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Elton Fax is a prominent artist, lecturer and writer. His latest book is *Elyuchin*.

older than I am; he was born 1908.

He said to me at the time we met:

I want you to know something of my early life. Neither of my illiterate parents had ever heard of a book. When I was nine years old, my father died and my mother was, by custom, sold to another man. I, at nine years old, was put out to work as a shepherd boy for wealthy sheep owners and I stayed with that work until I was sixteen.

The revolution had come. And at sixteen, I had my first opportunity to learn to read and write. From that point on I was obsessed with the idea of knowing and I went on to study further at Tashkent, later Moscow. I began to write poems, but none was published before the nineteen thirties.

As luck would have it, I was admitted to the Writers Union in 1934. A most unusual happening, for I had not yet published a body of work, but somewhere along the line someone felt that I had potential and I was admitted.

I'll never forget it because that was the year of the First Congress and Maxim Gorky was present and one of my prized possessions is the citation that Gorky handed me. I felt that it was incumbent on me to prove that I was worthy of the confidence so I proceeded to work and study and to improve the quality of my work.

Which he must have done because today he is the holder of the Order of Lenin. He fought at the front in World War II, was wounded, was decorated for that. He said, "But the greatest honors that I cherish are those that have come to me through my literary efforts."

We often hear and read the charge in the United States that there is a monotonous uniformity in Soviet art. I will not speak of writing now; I'll go to another medium, to painting, to sculpture. Anyone who has ever been to Ashkabad knows that in front of the Karl Marx Library stands a rather magnificently executed, metal abstract culture, rising several meters from the ground. I was so amazed at seeing it that I immediately whipped out a camera and took several pictures, the best of which is reproduced in my book *Hashar*.

I've been in the studios of artists in practically every Republic. I have seen and know their work as being as individual as people are everywhere. I recall distinctly the impression that I received in the Museum of Modern Art in Yerevan in Armenia. Though many of my fellow countrymen might not like my saying so, I found the Museum of Modern Art in Yerevan far more exciting than our Museum of Modern Art here in New York. That,

of course, is truly personal, for all of us have our feelings about these things. But the abstract paintings hanging along with figurative works may come as a surprise to many who know Soviet art exclusively through our press.

Yet another item I want to comment upon—literature and art for children in the Soviet Union. I used to illustrate children's books, which is one reason I was so happy I could get to see the children's library in Yerevan. The full name of it is the Children's Library of the Republic of Armenia. They call it the palace of children's books and, indeed, I have never been in a library more beautifully appointed or intelligently arranged.

After looking over the facilities for children from nursery or kindergarden age right on up through high school, I was taken to a floor where an international room was open for inspection. Three librarians were there to greet us: one an expert in German, one in French and the other in English. These Armenian women were also fully articulate in their own language as well as Russian. I was amazed to find two books by colleagues of mine who live in Brooklyn, Leo and Dianne Dillon. (They are the first two artists I have known who can work on the same painting and still live to talk about it.). I also saw a book by a Black woman, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*.

At the end of the visit the librarian, Mrs. Simonian, told me, "This library is a gift of the state to the children of Armenia and it was given during the period we observed the International Year of the Child."

I thought to myself, "I can't recall that any such thing was done in my country for children, particularly minority children or even so-called majority children." For actually Armenia is a small Republic of the Soviet Union and some people may regard them as a "minority" within the Soviet Union. If you'll indulge me for just a few moments, I want to read about this in my last book:

A people who cares so much about their children are a people who care a great deal about their country and its future. For their children are their country's future. Does it seem reasonable to nourish and cultivate one's future in anticipation of subjecting it to destruction? How can any nation sanely build for the future while plotting a destructive war at the same time? Such a crazy course makes little or no sense, especially among these people, who know the most intimate horrors of war so dreadfully well. I for one give them full credit for having better sense. □



## PHILLIP BONOSKY

The need to communicate with Soviet socialism is vitally important in the struggle for peace. It is not an act of generosity to the Soviets. It is necessary for our own survival.

One must always remember that the first victims of Nazi anti-Sovietism were the German people. The first victims of American anti-Sovietism are the American people.

Culture is the voice, the face, the soul of a people. It was not difficult for Lt. William Calley, of My Lai infamy, to freely kill Vietnamese villagers because "he did not feel as if he was killing humans but rather they were an enemy with which one could not speak or reason," as his defense attorney pointed out. Calley had been trained in the same school which taught the key operators of the Nixon era that all you need to know in this democracy to persuade citizens to act the right way is to "Get the people by the balls, and their hearts and minds will follow." (*Pentagon Papers*, Vol. 2, Beacon Press, p. 529.)

We knew exactly what Spanish fascism meant to Spain when we learned that the fascists had shot Garcia Lorca, Spain's greatest poet; just as we knew what Pinochet had in mind for Chile when he murdered Victor Jara and stilled his songs. When the Nazis created a bonfire of the best of Western literature it didn't surprise us to hear Goebbels soon after say, "When I hear the word 'culture' I reach for my gun."

When a young Nazi officer visited Picasso's studio in occupied France during the war, and saw the just-completed canvas of "Guernica," he asked Picasso, "Did you do that?"

"No," Picasso answered, "you did."

Later when a reporter asked Picasso whether the Nazis had shot any of his friends, he answered, "Everybody the Nazis shot was my friend."

And when he died, the *Daily World* received a telegram from the Republican periodical, *Monday*, which read—and I quote from memory—"At last Picasso is a good Red."

Everyone the Reaganites curse are our friends. They include the old Black woman who was shot for being late with her rent as well as the victims of Reaganism in Grenada, Nicaragua and El Salvador. They include Moscow, too.

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Phillip Bonosky, a frequent contributor to *PA*, is a journalist and novelist.

We must make it hard for the Lt. Calleys of our times to kill people who, in their barbaric eyes, couldn't be "reasoned" with. We must put faces on their intended victims, give them human voices, bring them into our living rooms, share their joys and griefs. We must know intimately what Reagan wants to bomb. We must make it clear that it is not an "evil empire" that he wants to eliminate from the face of the earth, but the memory of Tolstoy, Gogol, Gorky, Turgenev, and to reduce the Bolshoi to rubble.

It is no news to anyone here that cultural workers in this country are not taken seriously. They don't represent a moral force. In fact, successful and well-paid writers or artists who come out on platforms and make critical statements on this or that aspect of public policy are looked on quite honestly by others very much as Truman Capote (God rest his soul)—a boy, by the way, who, in his own words, "has to hustle"—looked upon Vanessa Redgrave some years ago after she made a public statement opposing American forces in Vietnam. He said:

She goes to America and picks up a couple hundred thousand dollars boring us to death in "Camelot" and then she has the goddamned nerve to say only a Viet Cong victory is going to give us peace. Well, I wish she'd give us back all the money she made off us.

And then, apparently, she could speak freely!

Nobody in America, with the exception of people in this room—and others not yet fully aware of their own beliefs—demands of our writers (as Borovik demands of Soviet writers) that their works should pursue "the mission of art and literature," that they reflect "our duty to society," and show "our sense of responsibility toward society and our great wish that works should serve to elevate and improve men."

What society? What responsibility? "Improve and elevate" what man? At most, American writers—and only the very best of them—ask of their work, or the work of others, "Is it true?" But even those who ask "Is it true?" follow right after, almost in the same breath, "Will it sell?"

Does the truth sell? And if, by some lucky combination of happy coincidences, it sold yesterday, will it sell tomorrow?

There is a real gap existing between the two cultures—not one imposed only by the Cold War,

though the Cold War has immensely aggravated it. Borovik himself indicated the difficulty that exists in bridging that gap when he analyzed the phrase, "third world war." That is a political difficulty, and he asked for a dictionary to explain why such words, so easily accepted here in America, make no sense in the Soviet Union.

But this difficulty extends to art as well. It exists not only with the malicious, the Cold Warriors, but with honest people as well.

For what seems hard for Americans to accept, even to grasp, is that a truly different, authentic, new culture exists in the socialist world, and that it is precisely socialist, and in this instance, precisely Soviet. It is hard for Americans to grasp the fact that this new culture plays a profound role in influencing and shaping the consciousness of millions upon millions of people in a certain direction. Most Americans flatter themselves that all they need to know about Soviet culture is that it is imposed upon the people from without, arbitrarily, by will of an arbitrary force in society, the Communist Party. Such a culture, in their eyes, created under such auspices, can not really be said to exist, it can not be of real value to humanity at large in its struggle to attain full human consciousness.

They point to the very phrases that Borovik used at the beginning of his speech—"the great attention the Party and the people are devoting to creative individuals," "the foundations for the relationship between literature and the Communist Party," "the impact [of art and literature] on molding the people's ideology and moral image." All this is a far cry from the guidelines issued to our intellectuals by our government that the people's minds and hearts will follow a tight grip on where they feel most tender!

But what sincere people bridle at—and it will take more than one speech to change their minds—is the idea expressed by Borovik that there can be a creative relationship between art and politics, between art and a political party—a political party in a country where people know only of the Republican and Democratic Parties, and more and

more of them want less and less of both! And the Communist Party—what is the Communist Party to them?

How explain to them the role which the Communist Party of Lenin played in the liberation of Russia's millions from the most dreadful oppression? How explain to them that its party was no party they have ever encountered before? No Communist Party is. That it was something different in a real way in man's experience, in the experience of the oppressed certainly? How explain that Lenin's party expressed the *essence* of Russia's suppressed hopes and dreams, and made them real? That that party came out of Russia as organically as the color of your eyes came out of the genes of your parents?

So what can we say that's useful about the problems here? I think the first thing we have to recognize before we can hope to get anywhere on the problem of understanding Soviet culture is to understand that it really exists. It exists on its own terms. It does not wait, hat in hand, for Western approval.

It rose on a socialist base, which is not our base. It absorbed the best of the past and the best of the present but it absorbed them in a socialist content. Socialism is an ocean which surrounds, nurtures and feeds its people spiritually in a socialist way—but now that is the way of life itself. As Gromyko noted in another context a short while ago—"Socialism," he said, "doesn't ask for a place in history. It *is* history."

Whether we like it or not, whether we choose to or not, the truth is that no culture is—today, right now!—factually outside of the great struggle of our times. Let us suppose for a moment that there was a man writing *War and Peace*. Let us suppose there another man writing *Moby Dick*. One writing *Leaves of Grass*. And another *Farewell to Arms*. Or a painter standing before his "Guernica." And let us suppose the house they were writing in and standing in was in the Japanese city of Hiroshima. And let us suppose that it was the morning of August 6, 1945. □

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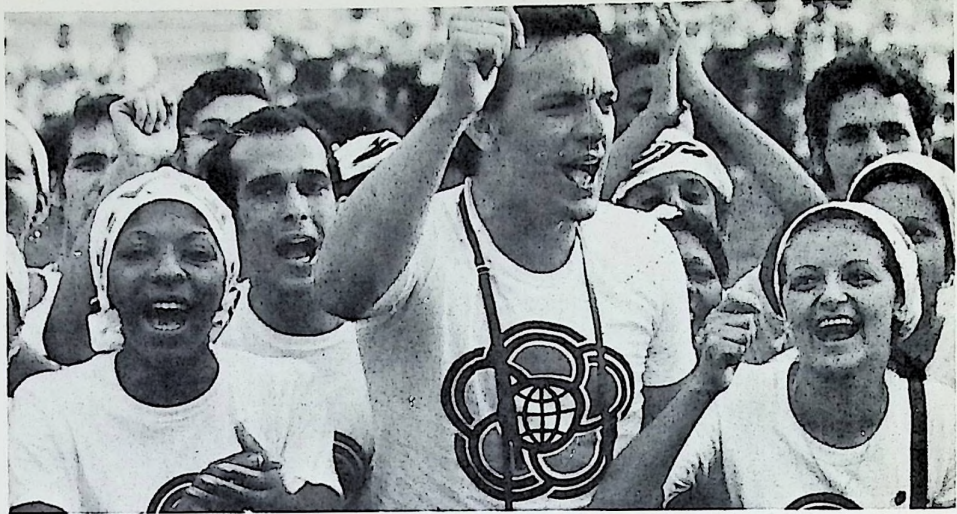
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