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CRIME AND VIOLENCE

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Crime & Violence: A Class Question

Gus Hall

We live in a society dominated by many forms of violence. We experience it everywhere – on the streets of our neighborhoods, in our homes, our schools, our subways and highways. In one way or another we are all victims of this violent capitalist culture. If we are lucky, we experience it only secondhand.

Every moment of every day we are subjected to different kinds of violence – on TV and radio news, in newspapers, magazines and books, in movies and videos. Daily, hourly, we are force-fed stories about crime and violence happening everywhere, one more grisly than the other: stories about gang wars and drug wars, drive-by shootings, mass murders, homicides, suicides, serial murders, rapes and kidnappings.

Then there are the countless other crimes that include domestic violence, battered women and child abuse that will never make the headlines, but are causing fear and anger in cities and towns.

In spite of the shocking statistics about crimes involving guns, in spite of all the talk about restricting guns, and despite some half-baked efforts such as exchanging guns for toys and cash, the gun business is booming. There are nearly as many guns in our country as people. In 1992, with the population at 255 million, there were 211 million guns in the United States, in the hands of all kinds of people, from teenagers to grandmothers.

The National Rifle Association is one of the most powerful lobbies in the U.S., which even President Clinton went out of his way to support with a photo-opportunity showing him heading for the woods with his NRA duck-hunting pal. From their standpoint, and they exert a tremendous influence on the government, guns are OK if you're a hunter or if you're rich, but not for everyone else.

BLAMING THE VICTIMS ■ There is a national debate now raging in our country about the crime wave and the gun epidemic. Writers, news anchors, politicians and the "authorities" in general are putting the

blame on crack, gangs, poor schools, teenage pregnancies, television violence and the "breakdown of the family." For example, New York Senator Moynihan, the infamous "benign neglect" advocate, once again blamed "the teenage mothers who are having all those illegitimate babies" who grow up to be "unstable and violent."

Racist stereotypes, codewords and themes are either injected subtly or blatantly into practically every discussion of crime in talk shows, on TV news and in speeches. One of the worst examples was Clinton's racist diatribe on crime in Memphis last November. Perhaps for the first time in our history we had a racist president go public, on nationwide TV, using almost every racist stereotype and concept of inferiority that puts the blame on the victims of poverty and racism – that if they would only "pull themselves up by the bootstraps" and put an end to "crime in their own communities" (read: "Black-on-Black" violence) things would get better.

What can be more criminal, or violent, than a president using the bully pulpit to feed the flames of racism and racist violence that is rampant across our land? This is official racism that says crime and violence are confined to Black and other minority communities. This is part of the effort to criminalize racially and nationally oppressed people with the evil, supremacist ideology that drugs, crime and violence and all anti-social behavior are caused by the inherited characteristics of "inferior" people.

Doesn't this racism in the White House give the green light to every racist bigot and Ku Kluxer around the country, as well as give the nod to police brutality as official policy? Doesn't it reinforce all the racist stereotypes that already permeate our country?

The issue of crime has long been used to promote racism and perpetuate racist ideology. But in the recent period, even in the last several months, this effort has been stepped up dramatically. Particularly in dealing with the recent massacre of commuters on the Long Island Railroad in New York, fanning the flames of racism has become a serious problem. For example, TV reporters went to Garden City, the neighborhood where some of the victims lived, and in answering a reporter's question about

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the senselessness of the attack, the wife of a victim cried out, "We don't just kill Black people. My family didn't kill any Black people. Why did that Black man shoot my husband. Why?" Reporters conducted and reported dozens of such inflammatory interviews. This is an example of how the issue of crime is being twisted to promote racism.

Of course, we must never justify or condone such violence – in fact we must always condemn wanton mass murder, or any murder. But we must, at the same time, search for the causes and circumstances in our society that contribute to the insane taking of human life. It is not enough to say it is insane, though it is insanity, at least temporary, that pushes a human being to commit inhuman atrocities.

A SYSTEM RUN AMOK ■ There is a high level of awareness of the crime and violence in our society, today especially. What seems to elude most people are the causes of this seemingly incomprehensible and senseless violence. That is because the few who own and control everything in our society have a great stake in making it look as if we are simply a society with a large number of violent individuals who have abandoned their "family values," their "religious guiding principles," their "duty and obligations to society."

Thus it is said that in order to protect law-abiding citizens, the authorities must tighten the laws and law enforcement, increase police presence, build more and bigger prisons, sweep the homeless, jobless and poor into the nightmarish shelter systems and mental institutions. Ironically, many who advocate such measures also want to throw people off the welfare rolls and into the streets, and ultimately into those same shelters and prisons.

Communists start from the premise that it is the capitalist system – U.S. imperialism particularly – that is the epitome, the essence, the basic cause of crime and violence in our country and in the world.

Surely the *ultimate*, most anti-human violence is made in the USA – that is the development, production and use of nuclear weapons to annihilate entire cities of innocent men, women and children. The Cold War, the policy of nuclear superiority, the arms race, the vision of the United States as the only superpower in a new world order – these are once again menacing the world with the threat of nuclear annihilation. And this time it is without the restraining counterforce of the Soviet Union.

The simple truth is that we live under the most

violent and criminal social system in history. It is not the people, but the socioeconomic system that has run amok. In this effort to salvage itself and maintain its profits by tightening the screws on working people, the poor, the racially and nationally oppressed, the system and its biggest beneficiaries are committing the most violent of crimes and abuses.

To guarantee this, monopoly capital maintains a vast army and a national network of penal and criminal control systems, backed up by the force of law, with fully armed, anti-people police departments. It uses the FBI, the national guard and other enforcement agencies to keep the people under surveillance and control.

There are huge think-tank institutions, like the Brookings Institute and the Heritage Foundation, paid by the government and big corporations to come up with schemes to diffuse the militancy of the working class, to derail class struggle trade unionism, to destroy the unions and prevent the development of anti-corporate, class consciousness.

Racism is the weapon of choice of the ruling class. It spares no expense and uses every form of brutality and violence to keep the working class divided. The ruling class has no use for such human characteristics as social conscience, sense of responsibility, morality and ethics – no sense of what is right and wrong, good and evil. Unity – Black, Brown, white working-class unity – is feared more than almost anything else by corporate America. It uses every form of coercion, manipulation and violence to keep the working class from coming together to fight its common enemy.

A CLASS QUESTION ■ There are two main classes in our society. And, from that standpoint, there are essentially two kinds of crime. First there is the officially sanctioned criminality of corporate America and its state-monopoly government. This includes organized crime, the FBI and CIA, as well as racist, anti-Semitic hate groups backed and tolerated by corporate America to promote and provoke racism, division and animosity between peoples.

Ruling class crime and violence also includes systemic corruption in business and government, the principle of profit-making at any cost, the dog-eat-dog ethic that is elevated to a virtue by the apologists for capitalism. It includes the millions of people thrown out of their homes and their jobs, lives destroyed, kids with no future, and so on. What could be more violent, what could be more

criminal from a human standpoint?

Then there are the crimes in the workplace: daily injuries and deaths that corporate America could prevent with simple safety measures but won't – unless forced to by the unions – because that would reduce their profits. How many workers have been killed and maimed as a result of this inhuman corporate greed?

There is the manufacture and use of nuclear weapons, "smart bombs," anti-personnel devices, chemical warfare, etc. – where violence itself becomes big business and generates huge profits. That is ruling class crime and violence.

Then there are the crimes of a relative few working-class and poor people who for one reason or another run afoul of the bourgeois legal system. Sadly, the crimes of ordinary people are usually committed against each other. Of course, within this there are different gradations of crime and violence. There are the extreme, senselessly violent crimes of a few depraved, de-classed and mentally unbalanced individuals. But these are blown up to create the impression that working people in general, and especially Black and other oppressed people, are the main perpetrators of criminal and violent behavior. This is not so.

It should be noted that when working people, especially through their unions, challenge laws that are unjust and anti-worker, when they strike and protest, the bourgeois criminal-legal system is swift, severe and cruel. No one knows this better from experience than the Communist Party, the labor movement and other people's movements.

Viewed from the standpoint of classes in society, crime and violence in America takes on very different contours from what we are shown on TV. Isn't the threat to eliminate life-support systems for the poor, and entitlements in general, a form of criminal violence against human beings? Shouldn't we consider homelessness and unemployment and poverty and hunger and lack of health care violent crimes against the people? Isn't it violence when 40 million Americans have no health care and the rest of us stand to be victims of Clinton's plan for health care monopolization and privatization? Shouldn't we consider the revelations about the Clintons' illegal financial deals that cost the taxpayers millions a promotion for criminal corruption?

Why were so many not even shocked when they learned the revelations that our government agencies, hospitals and institutions had been callously

conducting radiation experiments on the most vulnerable people in our country – elderly people, retarded children, the terminally ill, pregnant women, soldiers, prisoners and young people, especially racially and nationally oppressed, without their knowledge or consent? Some of the Dr. Strangeloves responsible for these horrendous acts rationalize their crimes on the basis of the Cold War against the Soviet Union, under the principle of "anything goes" to win the arms race and gain nuclear superiority over the "evil empire" to destroy socialism. Some say they would even do it again. Do not these bestial crimes of human experimentation bring to mind the unspeakable horrors of Nazism, when every act of crime and violence and brutality was justified on the basis of racial supremacy and bringing the world under the iron heel of fascism, to defeat socialism?

Most recently, the supposedly "post-Cold-War" Pentagon got the billions it was pushing for to produce an automatic armageddon satellite "brain" system to allow these Strangeloves to fight a protracted nuclear war, even after the country itself has been destroyed!

Our elected president and government have the responsibility to meet people's needs, to compensate people for their suffering. If government doesn't serve people, what good is it? A government that abdicates this responsibility, and callously continues to allow the quality of life to get worse and worse without lifting a finger, is committing a crime of the worst kind.

A PARTICULARLY U.S. PROBLEM □ Crime and violence in the United States is a *unique* problem. Of course there are killings and other crimes of violence elsewhere, but the depth and scope do not compare to that of the United States.

To seek the root causes we have to ask: what is there about our society that provokes, promotes and perpetuates criminal behavior? Is there something about our society that brings out the very worst in people when it comes to dealing with problems? For example, isn't it true that we live in a society in which the huge, impersonal and all-powerful corporations can throw people out of work, out of their homes and onto the streets, onto welfare, into jails – with no reason other than making greater profits? So what does that say to people about how they should deal with their own problems?

This is closely related to the question of alienation. Alienation is common to all capitalist soci-

eties, but like crime and violence it has some unique features in the United States. It is the deepest kind of alienation in our country. It is a form of extreme separation and withdrawal not only from work but from other human beings.

The description one hears so often to describe alleged murderers is that they are "loners." For reasons usually outside their control, some people become totally alienated and therefore alone. Hopelessness and anger turns people inward, into brooding loners and therefore potential perpetrators of violence – against themselves and others. Especially in the absence of a clear focus on the true enemy – the monopoly capitalist system – this anger can easily be turned in the wrong direction. In this sense, the U.S. ruling class' massive and thorough campaign to obliterate class and socialist consciousness, to distort and rob from the people an understanding of Marxist-Leninist science, is part of its culpability for the crime and violence in our society.

In our society the alienation gap is not only economic – it is cultural gap, which gives alienation a special character. Our culture does not unify us. Most of our culture is anti-worker, anti-people, anti-human and racist. It is based on crude, rugged, dog-eat-dog individualism. People are supposed to deal with each other and their world the way the cowboys did (at least in the popular mythology) on the Wild West frontier – including the use of guns as a way of handling problems.

This credo of "everyone for themselves" and "devil take the hindmost" lives in the films and legends of the glorified wild west – especially in the violence, racism and genocide perpetrated against the Native American Indian peoples. The poverty-ridden reservations, where whole peoples have had their way of life systematically destroyed, are a terrible testament to the extreme criminality, violence and racism of the capitalist system.

GAPING GAP BETWEEN RICH & POOR ■ There are certain features of capitalist society that make people want to vent their rage against society and those they see as their oppressors. For example, the widening gap between rich and the poor – it is the widest in the world. There is no other country with such a large sector of the very rich and a larger section of poor and very poor.

Especially because of this huge gap, hopelessness and despair about the future are a greater problem here than anywhere else in the world. Hopeless-

ness lays the basis for terrible anger and frustration, and thus for deviations from what is considered socially acceptable and normal behavior. There are large numbers of people who see no future for themselves in this society. This is especially so for African-American, Mexican-American, Puerto Rican and all racially and nationally oppressed peoples. It is true for those millions suffering in the ghettos, barrios, reservations and Appalachias of our country. Racism – economic and environmental – is destroying their lives.

The youth see no future. For many of our young people, operating within the system is a dead end. Many see drugs, gangs and anti-social behavior as a way to get revenge at a system that treats them as expendable.

LOW CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS ■ The working class in our country generally has a low level of class consciousness – this is another of our unique features, unfortunately. This fact plays a most negative role in preventing people from coming together to fight for common interests, in a common cause against their common enemy. In the United States, class consciousness has been low and slow throughout our history.

Class consciousness serves to bring people together. It can and does change human nature; it is an indispensable step in the development of revolutionary and socialist consciousness. It is first and foremost a sense of class unity, of class oneness.

It is class conscious workers who are the best fighters against racism and for equality because they understand that class unity is essential to win, and that there can be no class unity without a struggle against the racism that divides us. In a country like the U.S., with such a large and diverse working class, class consciousness should and can play a bigger role than any other country in the world.

Thus, at this moment when our system is so widely exposed, when so many are spontaneously becoming anti-corporate and anti-government, we should help them turn their frustration and anger outward toward the system, against the corporate ruling class that exploits and oppresses us all. This is a time of startling exposes and revelations about big business and government, and there is a widespread and growing revulsion against the capitalist system. It is a time of great opportunities to speed up the development of class consciousness.

JOBS, JOBS, JOBS ■ Thus, it is clear that a real analysis of crime and violence must be put into the framework of U.S. capitalism and class warfare against the people. It is impossible to understand what's going on unless we look at everything through the prism of class, of the working class and the class struggle. It follows that there can be no solutions to the problems of crime, violence and brutality without an approach to reversing the economic destruction of people's livelihoods, families, communities, even whole cities. This must include an attack on the economic and environmental racism that is decimating the lives of 80 million racially and nationally oppressed people. The lack of jobs, of work, means instability, fear, anger and terrible frustration for people.

The real cause of most anti-social behavior is lack of jobs. Wherever there is severe unemployment and poverty, there is crime, drugs and violence. Despite this, the great majority of working people, including unemployed, do not commit crimes. But we cannot speak about crime without connecting it to unemployment and poverty.

Crime, like joblessness, is a national disease. When people, any people, lose hope, when poverty and despair is the only view of the future, crime, drugs and violence are the results.

Clinton's answer to this problem – more prison sentences, more jails, more street sweeps, more police on the streets, more executions – should come as no surprise, for Clinton has been backtracking, retreating and caving in on every positive campaign promise he ever made. Yet calls for more extreme punishment for crimes of violence will go nowhere toward actually solving the problem.

Take, for example, New York Governor Mario Cuomo's "three strikes and you're out" proposal, the concept of putting a three-time offender in jail for life. Cuomo put this out at the same time he is calling for tax giveaways to the rich and real estate interests, and uttered not a word about a jobs program. The Governor also has had nothing to say about the total corruption of the police who have an official policy of crime and violence against the people and their communities. The relatively new policy of having states send youthful offenders to "boot camps," where they are often beaten and abused, also moves in the wrong direction. A jobs for youth program is the only step that will begin to solve the problem.

Clinton's anti-crime bill will further restrict democratic rights – an approach that fits in with a policy of moving toward capitalism without entitle-

ments. The bill would make some 50 new categories of crime punishable by the death penalty, teenage defendants (13-17) would be tried as adults, new and bigger prisons would be built across the country and thousands more police put on the streets. Fittingly, it is in his determination to fight for this bill that Clinton has uttered his most viciously racist diatribes, such as his speech in Memphis.

There is great danger in Clinton's, and corporate America's, callous approach to this question. A crisis situation of such proportions is bound to break down the social fabric of any society. That is precisely what the corporate, ruling rich is doing to our country. And the government takes absolutely no responsibility to force the corporations to cease and desist downsizing, privatizing and closing down America. On the contrary, the government promotes it with schemes like NAFTA and GATT, which are disasters for the workers of all countries involved.

Working-class people know they have been betrayed and abandoned by Clinton and corporate America. They are losing confidence and trust in government. The American people have come to expect crime and corruption at the highest levels – especially on Wall Street and Capitol Hill. They don't listen to nor believe the ruling powers that be, nor do they bother to vote in their majority. They have no confidence in the Democratic or Republican Parties, in American politics in general. They believe that politicians and their votes are bought and paid for with dirty money. It will take independent politics, a new people's party of labor and workers – Black, Brown and white – to rebuild people's trust and confidence in government.

The working class is more and more challenging the corporate policies that force the people to bear the burden of bailing out capitalism. Millions of Americans have reached the turning point where they are no longer willing to bail capitalism out, and they are ready to consider new, bolder, more radical, more basic ways out of the mess we're in.

We all know that to solve a problem you have to take the money from where it's at. That means the corporations, the rich and the military. With the hundreds of billions of surplus wealth, we can undertake huge projects to rebuild America and create millions of jobs. To achieve this will require a united working class in struggle – Black, Brown and white.

The fight for jobs and equality must be seen as

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Jobs Not Jails

Jarvis Tyner

The growing problem of crime and violence in our country has reached epidemic proportions, as have demands that the government find real solutions. It is a serious problem indeed. There were over 14 million crimes committed in the U.S. in 1992. While 12 million of these were crimes of property, 1.9 million were violent crimes, including 1.1 million aggravated assaults and 22,760 murders.

Over the past decade the number of violent crimes has grown dramatically. There are over 200 million guns in the hands of civilian Americans. The odds of getting murdered in the U.S. are 1 in 12,000 – which is high by any standard. The streets are not safe. Even children are carrying guns and many of the innocent victims of violence are children and the elderly. Some senior citizens dare not venture out of doors at night.

The growth of crime is one of the most dramatic examples of the general decay of U.S. capitalism. While our government goes around the world boasting of a “stable,” “democratic” and “free” technologically-advanced society, the tragic presence of so many guns and drugs and the accompanying crime and violence show that our country is facing a deep social and political crisis. We are a nation that is technologically advanced but moving backward in terms of social relations and stability. The country is headed for greater chaos and suffering if the problem of crime and violence is not addressed in an honest, humane and democratic way.

SICKNESS OR SYMPTOM? ■ Over the last decade there has been a massive campaign around the crime issue. The mass media has spared no effort in sensationalizing this issue. Listening to the evening news is like reading a police rap sheet. The sensationalized journalism of the cheap supermarket tabloids is becoming the dominant style of U.S. journalism – it is news designed to promote hysteria and panic. It is also designed to promote racism, male supremacy and other anti-working class sentiments so as to rationalize repressive policies and sow

greater division among the people. It is news designed to lower the confidence among the masses in humanity, and thereby promote hopelessness and powerlessness.

While the problem is very serious, and must be addressed, the U.S. ruling class has been projecting it as the central issue confronting the country. Many voters in the last elections said that crime is their main concern. This issue has to be carefully considered for it can divide and confuse more than any other. Clearly the answer does not lie in simple calls to “get tough.” It is necessary to understand the real source of the problem and act in a way that does not further victimize those already victimized.

Crime presents a danger to society, but it must be understood as a symptom of much bigger ailments.

A NATION IN CRISIS ■ Our nation is experiencing a prolonged, deep-going structural and systemic crisis of its capitalist system. This is the main sickness which must be addressed if crime and violence are to be seriously reduced.

At the same time that there has been a growth in the number of wealthy Americans over the past two decades, the most dramatic growth has been in the number of people living in poverty. Since 1970, 14 million have joined the ranks of the poor. We are a nation where even by modest count, 37 million people live in poverty – one out of every six persons.

Over 20 million are unemployed and underemployed. Our country now has millions of people who have never had a steady job. These are the long-term unemployed, including the homeless and the millions who are hungry and without health care. With the closing down of many basic industrial plants in the '70s and '80s and the downsizing of major corporations in the '90s, millions of working people have been locked out of better-paying jobs and reduced to permanent unemployment and underemployment. For most working people there is no job security. There is a major decline in the standard of living of the entire working class. Most families need two or more wage earners to make ends meet today.

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ECONOMIC RACISM ■ Hit hardest of all are the racially oppressed, the African American, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Asian and Pacific Island and Native American working people. They are victims of economic racism.

The pro-corporate, racist policies of big business and government have led to a situation where the racially and nationally oppressed experience more than double the unemployment and poverty rates of white people: Forty percent of African Americans and Latinos now live in poverty. And linked to the growth in extreme poverty is the resurgence of super segregation.

The crisis is particularly sharp for African American and Latino youth who are confined to the hard life in the cities – a life of drugs, bad housing, underfunded schools, few recreation facilities and no jobs. These are youth whose unemployment rates range from 60 to 80 percent. Many have never worked, and if there is no basic change in the economy and the political situation, most have no future.

At the bottom of this crisis lies the historic decline of U.S. capitalism. This situation has created many hopeless and desperate people who see no honest way of surviving. Feeling that society has abandoned them, too many have concluded, "Why not abandon society?"

Because of the systemic crisis, despite the ups and downs in the business cycle, the economy has been going qualitatively downward. We now have a national emergency of the most urgent kind requiring government action to provide jobs and massive funding to rebuild cities and meet human needs. But the policy has been building jails instead of providing jobs. This situation is a breeding ground for unstable family life, drug addiction, street crime and many other serious problems. The crisis of capitalism is also breeding extreme greed, corruption and thievery in government and industry. This is part of the crime problem as well.

Along with economic conditions, the factor that has driven crime figures drastically up over the past decade has been the massive growth of drug abuse. Sixty-two percent of all street crime is drug-related; most random shootings and "drive-by" killings of innocent victims are related to the drug trade.

The drug epidemic has grown so severe because in fact the government's policy is *not* to stop it. In fact, the government is part of the problem – it has allowed the massive importation of narcotics and other drugs. This can be seen in the Iran-contra con-

spiracy and in many new reports that show the CIA has for years been working with drug smugglers, and is even importing drugs itself.

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT AND POLICE ■ On the community level, local police practice a policy called "selective enforcement" – which is really a form of drug legalization. Selective enforcement has been the chief law-enforcement tactic on the nation's streets. This is true especially in low-income Black and Brown communities.

Selective enforcement allows drugs to be sold openly; it is responsible for the streets being turned into war zones where people in hundreds of communities dare not go outside for fear of being caught in the crossfire. Any 12-year old can tell you where drugs are being sold. Certainly the police know, yet they allow it to go on and only periodically arrest the pushers. The government's complicity can also be seen in the many examples of direct involvement by local police in dealing drugs and shaking down dealers. The authorities not only know where drugs are coming from and are being sold – they are part of the process.

The drug problem did not start in the ghettos and barrios, contrary to what is said in the media. The importation and distribution of drugs goes all the way up to the high councils of the CIA, the White House and the military.

African American and Latino youth who are the prime victims of the drug epidemic are being arrested and jailed more than any other group. The prisons are full to the point of overflowing. We live in a society where millions of youth – in a special way African American youth – are tragically cast aside, oppressed and neglected, then imprisoned and criminalized. It is the shame of our nation that, by a wide margin, there are more African American youth in jail or under the jurisdiction of the courts than are in college. This is a basic failure of the U.S. capitalist system.

However there are other types of crime that scant attention is paid to. White-collar crimes cost the nation billions of dollars annually and cause massive human suffering because the dollars stolen could be spent to benefit the people. One example is the S&L bailout – a multi-billion-dollar scandal that cost the American people dearly.

Studies show that crime – not to mention drug use – are also high amongst the upper-middle class and the rich. In fact, one study showed that the

amount of money embezzled from banks was 6,000 times the amount robbed from banks. If one were to add up the amount of money lost because the rich, who are the biggest tax cheaters, are not paying their share of taxes, including wealthy bankers laundering drug money, the sum comes to hundreds of billions in cost to society.

In addition, the federal government is guilty of political crimes, like crimes against the cities. Over the past decade, 50 percent of the aid to cities has been cut – at a time when corruption in government has risen to an all-time high. There is no major city that is not in financial straights. Almost every state faces cutbacks and retrenchment as they try to avoid bankruptcy.

To this can be added the cost in human suffering and death caused by long-term unemployment, homelessness and hunger, and the fact that the denial of health care to 37 million is cause for a shorter life span and higher mortality rates. These are crimes too – crimes rooted in capitalist greed, racism and anti-working-class policies of government and big business. They are of a political and social character but are crimes nonetheless.

These are all reasons why crime is growing and will continue to grow unless the basic ailments of our society are addressed.

ANTI-CRIME HYSTERIA ■ Rather than addressing the social and economic roots of crime, drugs and violence, the government, over the past decade especially, continues to put its emphasis on more cops, increased police brutality, more prisons, longer sentences and expanding the death penalty.

The mass media, government and most capitalist politicians are creating a hysteria – mainly a racist hysteria – about crime. This was most clearly revealed with the Willie Horton ads that the Republicans used in the 1988 elections. This policy continues under Clinton.

Typically the reason given for the rise in crime is that America has become too lenient on criminals. The view is often expressed that “criminals are getting away with crimes, and if arrested are given too short a sentence.” It is argued that the absence of the death penalty and lenient sentencing have made committing crimes less risky. Similarly, it is alleged that the police are outgunned.

Ignored by these views are the economic roots of crime. This school of thought, which is dominant in government, media and industry, is based on the

notion that there is nothing basically wrong with the economic system but that there is something wrong with the American people. The victims of poverty and drugs are blamed rather than trying to eliminate the real causes.

CRIME, RACISM AND MALE SUPREMACY ■ Linking crime with race and gender is the most prominent form of this anti-people line of argument. Such ideas were very prominent in Pat Buchanan’s “family values” speech at the 1992 Republican Convention and the campaign rhetoric of ex-Vice President Dan Quayle during the presidential campaign.

Part of the move to the right by the Clinton Administration and other Democrats can be seen precisely around these issues. President Clinton’s speeches in Memphis and Los Angeles (November ‘93) to promote his anti-crime bill had much of the same message as Quayle and Buchanan. In fact, Clinton has recently been promoting the right-wing “family values” issue openly, while heaping praise on the likes of Dan Quayle.

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan has built his career around attacking female-headed households, especially African American, as the prime causes of crime and violence. He insists that poverty is not the reason for crime. In a recent article in the Winter 1993-94 issue of the *American Educator*, the magazine of the American Federation of Teachers, he states in quoting from a 1965 article he wrote:

A community that allows a large number of young men to grow up in broken families, dominated by women, never acquiring any stable relationship to male authority, never acquiring any set of rational expectations about the future – that community asks for and gets chaos.

Former New York City Mayor Edward Koch has for a long time put most of his political energy into attacking non-whites. He has consistently raised the question of “Black and minority crime.” In his column which appeared in the *New York Daily News* (November 16, 1993), he hailed the Memphis and Los Angeles speeches of Clinton as a breakthrough because Clinton was willing to attack “minority crime.” Koch felt that the “dam of political correctness has been broken” and now one can discuss the question without being called a racist. To identify the African American people with crime, according to Koch, is to honestly deal with the problem. In a bare-faced defense of racist oppression and injustice

Koch put it this way: "... [the] lack of personal responsibility is the single most important factor contributing to escalating minority crime rather than white racism in all its manifestations."

A widespread example of this approach is the chorus of blame directed at rap artists for crime and violence among youth. Whether or not one agrees with the content of the music, blaming the rappers takes the government and the corporations off the hook. It is the highly profitable record companies who are the main promoters, and beneficiaries – making millions upon millions by promoting violence.

CLINTON'S RACISM ■ In his Memphis speech, President Clinton, while grossly misusing the legacy of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., promoted the same ultra-right approach to crime – blame the victim. He took this old racist notion to new heights when he stated, "unless we do something about crime and violence and drugs that are ravaging the community, we will not be able to repair this country." In short, crime committed by African American youth can be blamed for holding back the whole country.

When it comes to solutions, the President takes capitalism off the hook, as well as his administration and previous administrations. As he sees it, "Sometimes, all of the answers have to come from the values and the stirrings and the voices that speak to us from within [the Black community]." He went on to suggest that the problem cannot be solved by the government because it is based on the breakdown of the family. In Los Angeles, he made the same kind of speech, only this time aimed at the Mexican American community. Instead of King he misused the legacy of labor leader César Chávez.

These speeches by the President did real damage to race relations in our country. They were blatant attempts to cover up racism with the crime issue. To connect crime with race and not to social conditions is on its face an act of racism. These speeches were really an attack against everything that Martin Luther King and César Chávez stood for. They were a defense of poverty, racism, genocide, police brutality and inequality.

Crime is committed by all races and nationalities. African Americans are arrested more often, but this is primarily a result of the racist, discriminatory nature of the U.S. court system. Again the horrible social conditions under which people are forced to live is what must be addressed, not race.

To argue that "Black crime" is a separate category

is a thoroughly racist, anti-people notion, as is the concept that crime is high because there are too many female-headed households. The notion that the absence of men has left too many families weak and unable to keep children from a life of drugs, crime, and teen pregnancy is to cover up discrimination against women and racism against non-whites. To say that gender, genetics or biology is the link to criminal behavior is to promote gross racism and inequality. In each case, it is blaming the victim and letting the true culprit off the hook.

Alarming, the country is in the midst of a major racist campaign. Terms like "Black crime," "Black-on-Black crime," and the code word "inner-city crime" are more and more prominent in the news. It is as if there is crime of a Black variety that is worse than any other. However crime is no less painful, harmful, vicious or costly if the criminal is white or Black, blue collar or white collar.

In the media there is an attempt to convince people that the worst criminals and the worst crimes are those committed by minorities – especially young male urban African Americans. Yet when due account is taken of social and economic conditions and the opportunity to commit crime, the level of crime among all races is about the same. This is true all over the world. In the Calabria Region of Italy, where unemployment is 30 percent, the murder rate is 15 times that of the U.S. In the 1930s, during the dust bowl crisis, the state of Oklahoma led the entire nation in bank robberies committed mostly by destitute white farmers who had lost their farms.

Despite this, historically and currently, Black people are disproportionately arrested, subjected to police brutality, convicted and jailed. Indeed, it has been said that the discrimination in the criminal justice system is so great that Black young men are becoming an endangered species.

NEW 'ANTI-CRIME' BILL ■ So far, all of the proposals to deal with this issue have been mainly aimed at attacking poor people. The new federal anti-crime bill now being considered by the House and Senate represent a new danger in this regard.

The Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1993 (S. 1488/Hr. 3131), now before Congress and being strongly pushed by the Administration and supported by majorities in both the House and Senate, is no solution. It moves in a dangerous direction.

This bill is being pushed through Congress

based on anti-crime sentiment and racist hysteria. This bill will drastically erode democratic rights for most Americans, yet most of its features have not been subject to real public scrutiny and debate. Its main failure is that it does not attack the real causes of this problem. Because it doesn't go after the root causes, it will not result in greater public safety.

It will lead to harsher police methods, and the expansion of the death penalty will include up to 50 new offenses. It will force state and local governments to impose harsher mandatory sentencing. It will put 13-17 year-olds into adult courts, which includes making them subject to the death penalty. It will hire 100,000 more cops, build 15 new maximum security prisons and provide marine-style boot camps for youth.

It will cost taxpayers \$22.5 billion, which will come from massive layoffs and cutbacks in federal services. With all of the harsher sentencing and newly expanded criteria for crimes, the present prison population – which already doubled during the 1980s – will likely double again as a result of this bill.

This bill would actually shift money from housing and urban development into prisons, indicating how the administration plans to "solve" the housing problem. When considered in light of Clinton's pledge to arbitrarily throw people off welfare, a picture emerges of an administration that actually plans to force new hundreds of thousands into extreme destitution and ultimately prison – in order to contain their dissatisfaction, anger and rebellion.

JOBS NOT JAILS ■ Like NAFTA, this bill is strongly supported by big business. They see it as necessary for maintaining control over the victims of poverty and unemployment in an era where they want to eliminate entitlements.

Basically, the anti-crime bill is designed to control poor folks and curb possible political rebellion. It is not designed to stop crime – it's designed to stop the people. It is first and foremost an attack on the rights of the unemployed and underemployed, primarily aimed at the ghettos and barrios, at the victims of economic racism. The thinking that motivates this kind of draconian legislative assault on democratic rights is racist and anti-working class. It's basically a defense of U.S. capitalism on the decline. And it shows that Clinton is continuing the same thinking and policies of the capitalist class that Reagan and Bush promoted.

It's important to understand that despite the fact

that organized crime is behind much of the importation and the distribution of drugs, the proposed anti-crime legislation is not aimed at them at all. This shows that the ruling class has no intention of really attacking crime. There is a conscious racial, anti-working-class political bias behind the entire effort.

It is necessary to fight against this bill and demand instead that the government come up with a serious program that attacks the root causes of crime. Unless there is a strong protest from the people, this bill will be made into law in the early part of this year.

A MONUMENTAL FAILURE ■ While in 1992 the people voted to defeat George Bush and his policies, the new crime bill is actually old wine in a new bottle. During the Reagan-Bush administrations, record numbers were arrested and imprisoned. The demand for prison space could not keep up with the rate of convictions. And the '80s brought a new phenomenon: prisons for profit. Privately owned and run prisons is now one of America's biggest growth industries. Lucrative profits are being made in this industry, over the misery of so many. And there are even different levels of prison accommodations based on one's ability to pay – a new level of class differentiation in the prison system: horrible medieval-type prisons for the poor and country club prisons for the rich.

During the 1980s, African Americans and Latinos were jailed at unprecedented rates. Under the cover of these policies, the government criminalized hundreds of thousands, especially non-white youth. The United States has achieved the dubious distinction of being the number-one nation on the earth when it comes to incarcerating its own population. By 1990 the inmate population, according to the ACLU study, *Americans Behind Bars: One Year Later*, had reached 1,139,803, which is a rate of 455 per 100,000 population – considerably higher than apartheid South Africa which is the second jailer-nation on earth with 311 per 100,000 population.

For African American men, the rate is 3,370 per 100,000, which is ten times the overall U.S. rate and five times the rate for African males in South Africa. While the South African figures have gone down from 1989, the U.S. overall rate of incarceration increased by 6.8 percent. With the U.S. population at 250 million, by the end of the Reagan era 1 out of every 220 persons in the U.S. were in jail and 2,600 people were on death row. For African American

men that's 1 out of every 28. The Reagan-Bush years were one of the worst periods of racist repression in U.S. history.

If measured by its impact on lowering crime and violence – which after all was the stated intent – this policy was a monumental failure. According to recent studies, even after doubling the number of people put in prison, the crime rate only dropped slightly and may actually have increased by 7 percent.

It is argued that the country cannot afford a federal jobs bill because the “money is not there.” However, incarceration presently costs the federal, state and local governments \$20.3 billion a year. The absurdity and senselessness of this waste is mindboggling: it costs about \$40,000 a year to send a youth to prison but only \$20,000 to send them to college.

The use of the death penalty has not worked either. Murder rates in states with the death penalty are usually slightly higher than in non-death penalty states. Reducing crime by increasing incarceration and through capital punishment has been a costly failure.

An increase in the prison population, use of mandatory sentencing, the death penalty, more cops with more lethal weapons and less rights for the people will lead us in the direction of a police state and do further harm to safety and democratic rights. Based on the present policies, with more police there will be more police brutality. Communities, especially inner-city communities need real protection but that's not what they get – bitter experience shows they get more repression.

This will all negatively affect thousands of working-class people, their families and their communities. And it won't work. Any anti crime bill that does not have a strong massive job creation component is no anti-crime bill at all.

A JOB: A CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT ■ Rather than eliminating entitlements, what is needed is a federal jobs bill to rebuild the country and create millions of jobs. Offering free treatment to the massive numbers of drug-addicted people and taking dangerous weapons out of the hands of the population is the way to reduce crime. Safe streets are possible only with less access to firearms and greater economic security of the working class.

A job should be a constitutional right. It should be guaranteed by the government. When the private sector fails to provide the needed jobs, the government should be required to provide them. Rather

than cutting back on government services and aid to the cities, the government should tax the rich and cut the military budget to provide funding to meet those vital human needs. Rather than throwing people off of welfare into starvation and homelessness, more welfare should be provided until a decent good-paying job can be created. “Jobs or income” needs to be the birthright of every American.

Rather than boot camps, what is needed is more money for education and massive job creation with union wages and affirmative action, and training. Rather than jailing people addicted to drugs, there needs to be a massive effort to set up free drug rehabilitation facilities all across the country. In a city like New York with 500,000 hard-core drug addicts, there are only 50,000 rehab spots available. Clearly this must change.

A STAKE IN SOCIETY ■ When so many have been pushed into long-term joblessness and the depths of poverty, it is understandable that some would reach the point of despair, the sense of being defeated, without any hope. Lacking the necessary experience of work, many develop total alienation from family, friends and, of course, from society as a whole. When you add the ingredients of drug addiction, police brutality and racism, that alienation can take on a dangerous dimension. Many have been pushed to the limits of despair as a result of the crisis of capitalism and turn to crime and violence.

Some will argue that many have been so dehumanized that a job won't be enough to bring them back. In some cases that is true. But every person must be fought for. We must keep in mind that this situation can be reversed. Most poor people are not criminal. Most youth who live in severe poverty do not turn to crime and drugs.

People are looking for real solutions. Many of them can be won to struggle and indeed can be changed through struggle. The overwhelming majority want to work and want to do the right thing. They have not lost all hope and can be won to a healthy, contributing relationship to society. Instead of pacification they need higher levels of class consciousness.

The first thing needed is to reverse the policies of government that are responsible for putting millions of young people, especially African American and Latino youth, into such horrible circumstances. Providing jobs is the first step in the many steps needed to bring hundreds of thousands out of

despair. Health care is needed, counseling, sports and recreation – experiences that foster a healthy outlook toward one's fellow human beings.

Ironically, those who demonstrate total alienation actually reflect in a stark way the attitudes of the corporate world: complete selfishness, total greed, not caring who you hurt as long as you get what you want. These are considered "virtuous" in the dog-eat-dog business world. Anything to make a buck is an accurate motto of big business. These ideas didn't start with the drug pusher on the street corner, they started in the corporate suites and are alive and prominent in the media and on Wall Street today. There must be a total fight against such ideas, including exposing their source in the capitalist system, if we are to win.

HOW TO WIN ■ After NAFTA and the many other rebuffs to the people's agenda, it's clear now that Clinton, left on his own, will not deliver progressive change. It is therefore necessary to build a multi-racial grassroots movement, of working people first and foremost, that can force change. And that is what the Communist Party USA is working for. We have a long history of participating in the building of such movements.

It is our view that there is a new militancy in the ranks of labor, and that there is a new level of unity of labor and the racially oppressed. There is renewed militancy in the ranks of the racially oppressed and those desiring peace and equality. Among all progressive forces there is a greater willingness to build independent politics, including third-party movements, and to support candidates who are ready to fight for jobs and equality.

Our starting point is that there is a way out. Taxing the rich and slashing the military budgets are among the most popular slogans of our day. The

goal of the the Communist Party program is to bring these slogans to life. Our program would provide an additional one trillion dollars per year to finance people's needs while reducing the tax burden on the majority. It would do more than provide the conditions for lowering crime drastically. It would upgrade the national spirit and social and cultural well-being of the people. It would provide the means for greater unity of all races and nationalities. It would make the streets safer and homes more livable for the people – working people in the first place.

This program is based on affirmative action, which means it would make a special effort where the problem is especially critical, in regards to the victims of discrimination. We are for a special effort to uplift those especially held back: African Americans, Latinos, other racially oppressed, and women.

Our country needs a different approach that protects people from crime but also gets more to the causes of crime, an approach that provides a humane and democratic solution. It must be a solution that rejects police state methods, that will unite the people across racial lines and move our country forward, not backward.

The death penalty does not deter crime and is only applied to poor people. What we need is not more prisons but more schools, free and accessible drug-treatment facilities, more recreation and health centers, decent housing for all and a guaranteed future for the youth. What is needed are tough laws against discrimination and racism and a commitment to provide for children and families, assuring a more stable home life. What is need is a government, and a political-economic system based on the principle of putting people before profits.

And ultimately, what is needed is Bill of Rights socialism here in our country. If not today then tomorrow. □

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an emergency. Until the economic crisis is eased, all kinds of crime and all kinds of violence will continue and even intensify. And we should build this fight for another, related reason: there is nothing about capitalism that promotes humaneness, oneness, kindness; fighting back, unity in struggle, brings people together and unites them in a common bond of struggle.

Ultimately, the long-term solution has to be a

direct, revolutionary challenge to the capitalist system itself. Because lasting solutions cannot be found within a system in crisis, socialism will inevitably be seen as the only rational, viable, humane way to end class exploitation and oppression.

Crime and violence, inhumanity, competition and dog-eat-dog individualism will be replaced by collectivity, cooperation, trust, oneness, internationalism, humanity and the full flowering of everyone's potential. To achieve this wonderful future for humanity, the violent, criminal capitalist system will have to be replaced by a truly humane socialist system. □

The Cult of Violence in America

Phillip Bonosky

The current furor over violence on TV (also in the movies and video games for children) is part of a longer phase that has been going on, practically non-stop, for the last 21 years ever since the Surgeon General issued what was supposed to be a definitive study of the subject in 1975. Before and after, more than 1,000 separate studies by various organizations, including the National Institute of Mental Health, have been made, and more are in the making.

Proposals for banning violence in all media have ranged from outright legal prohibition to voluntary censorship. Primary blame for violence in the mass entertainment field has also ranged from "helpless" resignation to the irrepressible "public appetite for gore" to the "erosion of values and the disintegration of families." At different times, Ma and Pa have been blamed, also the schools, the church and "evil companions."

More learnedly, at least one professor counsels that "... violence is as much a part of each of us as it is of our society," and advises further "it is not the time now to echo the grand vision of human perfectibility and historical progression."¹ Accept violence as a given biological and social fact and adjust to it – now, though they don't say it, that "communism is dead."

In April, 1967, the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. publicly charged that the U.S. was "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world," referring to the then-raging Vietnam war. The Government Kerner Report (issued by the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence) published at about the same time, agreed with King, if only inferentially.

In his introduction to the Walker Report, dealing with the "violent confrontation of demonstrators and police in the parks and streets of Chicago" in 1968, Max Frankel wrote:

We are known for our violence, we Americans. The creative violence with which we haul down the good for

what we fancy is better. The cruel violence with which we have treated red men, and Black. The intoxicating violence of our music and art. The absurd violence of our speech, even our jokes. And now we've come violently to disagree about the nature of our violence in Vietnam or Dallas or Watts or Hiroshima.²

Since the Surgeon General declared that violence on TV had a direct influence on teenagers, this phenomenon has risen not fallen, and violence among youth (inspiring President Clinton in his crime bill, to try 13-year olds as adults, with possible death sentences) has similarly grown. Homicides by youth have precipitately increased as the age at which they commit them keeps dropping. "From 1968 to 1991, the homicide rate among those 14 to 24 rose by 62 percent. It jumped 124 percent among those 14 to 17."³

Increasingly many have drawn a direct connection between the two causing a storm of protest from parents and others that have echoed in the halls of Congress and over the airways. The television industry has fought the implications tooth and nail, crying that to curb the volume of violence on TV by legislation would mean to install government censorship, or "turn the vast wasteland into the dull wasteland." The industry recently "compromised" adopting self-imposed guidelines for limiting the violence and offering new ratings for this season's shows.

But the problem is not limited to youth and TV-inspired violence. Indeed, some 247 million Americans possess more than 200 million guns: 62 million shotguns, 73 million rifles and 66 million handguns. And they use them – not only against deer and rabbits but against each other: some 30,000 shoot each other to death every year, among them at least 300 children under 16. This is 40 times higher than in Scotland, England, Wales, Japan and the Netherlands. The United States is "the most heavily armed nation on earth."⁴

In fact, the country is at war with itself today and it has been for generations. Writes Richard Hofstadter and Michael Wallace in their *American Violence, A Documentary History* back in 1970:

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An incomplete tally of firearm fatalities shows that we have suffered in the 20th Century over 750,000 deaths, embracing over 265,000 homicides, over 330,000 suicides, and over 139,000 accidents. The grand total of 750,000 is considerably more than all the battle fatalities ... suffered by American forces in all our wars combined.

Violence has always been a means openly used to terrorize, subdue and silence dissidents, particularly working-class dissidents, African Americans and Native American Indians. "The United States has had the bloodiest and most violent labor history of any industrial nation in the world," according to the conservative historians, Philip Taft and Philip Ross. "And yet," wrote Hofstadter and Wilson:

there is nothing new in our violence, only in our sudden awareness of it. The 1960s marked only another peak moment in a long and crowded history.... Shirked by our historians, the subject has been repressed in the national consciousness. We have been victims of what members of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence have called an "historical amnesia."

This "amnesia" managed to shove out of sight and consciousness the fact that workers and oppressed peoples in American history has been abused at some time and to one extent or another:

It (violence) has been unleashed against abolitionists, Catholics, radicals, workers and labor organizers, Negroes, Orientals, and other ethnic or racial or ideological minorities, and has been used ostensibly to protect the American, the Southern, the White Protestant, or simply the established middle-class way of life and morals.⁵

Lynchings were the most open, brutal and organized form of violent oppression. Aimed first of all at African Americans, they were not confined to them. From 1882 to 1903, more lynchings took place across the land (including in the North) than official executions for capital crimes. Lynchings were not the spontaneous actions of blood-crazed mobs:

Vigilante groups were rarely led by rowdies or thugs. Indeed ... such organizations often drew their leaders from the top levels of local society, sometimes from prominent merchants and able young men on the make,

and that their following came largely from the middle class. They were organized, after all, to defend property as they saw it, and to maintain order....⁶

They were not thugs drawn from the dregs of society; rather, by 1890, "four ex-vigilantes were serving in the Senate, ... (and) two Presidents (Jackson and Theodore Roosevelt), five Senators, eight Congressmen, and a considerable number of writers," either supported or personally took part in vigilante terror.⁷ President Harding cheerfully admitted membership in the KKK even when he was President. Indeed, up through the 1920s, at least two million Americans were KKK members, and Texas even sent one as a Senator to Washington. The Klan actively attacked Jews, Catholics, African Americans, labor organizers, foreigners and "loose women."

Thus, violence was and remains a weapon of those who rule, who rule *by* it. In fact, violence is so necessary to their power and to maintaining power, that all talk of criticizing or ending the cult of violence in art (TV, movies, etc.) without fundamentally restructuring society reeks of naiveté.

It's not exactly true that violence is as American as apple pie. The use of violence against the American people is hallowed by time but is not a true expression of the American character, and certainly not of the working class, African Americans or any other minorities, who have always historically been the *victims* of violence. The furor over violence in TV and films concerns the working class very directly, for it is their children who are the first victims of the cult of violence. Because this is so – and, from the point of view of the ruling class, desirably so – is why all the "crusades" to end violence in mass culture, if left up to the conscience of media industry executives, are doomed.

It's naive to believe that "everybody" is opposed to the prevalence of violence on TV, as it is naive to believe that corporate America is opposed to unemployment (its "ideal" is at least 8 percent *permanent* unemployed), or pornography – now a billion-dollar business – or to the spread of drugs as long as (like in China before the revolution) widespread drug-taking remained such a powerful factor in keeping rebellion defused and possible rebels glassy-eyed and impotent.

To be sincerely opposed to the use of violence, if carried into the realm of politics, would mean taking

out of the hands of imperialism its strongest weapon. According to the Brookings Institute, America used violence – or the threat of violence – some 286 times between 1945 and 1982 in pursuing foreign policy objectives. This does not include the later bombing of Libya, taking over Grenada, attacking Panama, Nicaragua, Iraq, and most recently Somalia (with plans being considered to attack Yugoslavia).

America has hundreds of military installations at strategic points all over the world. It continues to brandish atomic bombs – and nobody doubts that if, in the eyes of the ruling class, there seems to be reason to use them that anything exists on earth or in heaven that would stay their hand. At best “peace,” the end of the Cold War, resulted not in the significant reduction of the armed forces commensurate with a peace-pursuing policy, but only in its “streamlining” – in the formation of a mercenary “army” of hit men who are available for dirty work anywhere in the world at a moment’s notice.

Still there is not yet a mass movement powerful enough to disarm the main purveyors of violence and instead the worried public is treated to pious editorials and Sunday morning sermons inveighing against TV and movie violence, and especially violence in those programs seen by children. For example:

A University of Utah pathologist, Dr. Victor B. Cline, took an inventory of 37 general release films showing recently in Salt Lake City market and came up with this content breakdown: there were 59 murders, 89 justified homicides, 76 attempted murders, 11 massacres, six bombings, three assault cases....⁸

An official of the National Parents Teachers Association at the same time noted that by the time the average U.S. child is 14, it has witnessed and been part of 11,000 murders on TV. “The effects of this daily barrage of brutality include the child’s loss of sensitivity, and a growth of apathy and hardening to human suffering,” Mrs. Jean Bye, an official of the Association, noted.

In 1972, the Surgeon General’s Report, based on weeks of Congressional hearings and consisting of five volumes of testimony and a 137-page summary, concluded that there was a one-to-one relationship – of cause and effect – between violence on TV and violence in children. But it hedged this

judgment by adding that only children who are already “prone” – or preconditioned – to aggression are possibly directly influenced by TV violence, and only in some “environmental contexts,” which is code language for Black, working-class, and poor people.

The report stirred some editorial ripples, a few faint *mea culpas* from big shots in the industry, some promises of reform and a decade later, in 1983, the National Institute of Mental Health reported finding a strong link “between television violence and violence in children.” Already known at least a decade earlier, the “rediscovery” was offered as something new. Another report noted that the TV networks still averaged a constant of six violent acts per hour on prime time for adults. For children on Saturday mornings, TV provided 27 acts of violence per hour – brought to 27 in case they missed it the first 26 times.

In defense, TV corporate heads always kept demanding that critics show them the “smoking gun” – prove to their satisfaction that seeing a violent act on TV immediately propelled Sunday School model children to run out and cut down grandma with an ax. They pointed out, learnedly, that there was more violence in Grimm’s fairy tales, and yet children on the whole did not grow up to be killers.

But even this plea for the “smoking gun” was a sham. For in fact enough “smoking guns” were produced to stir some shreds of conscience if conscience there was. In 1980, a 15-year-old boy was arrested for killing his parents and sister because he had saturated himself with Rambo movies and had absorbed the killer creed. One day (in 1973) in Boston, six youths forced a 24-year-old woman to soak herself with gasoline and then they threw a match on her. Just the Sunday before, TV had shown them in a film, *Fuzz*, exactly how to do it – on derelicts who were equated to human garbage. The film “was made with the cooperation of the police department,” according to Reuters.

Two examples of a direct link between movies, TV and effect on children:

In one, several teenagers died or were gravely injured when they were struck by vehicles while lying in the center of roads, imitating a scene from a new movie about college football, *The Program*. In the second, a toddler died in a house fire set by a 5-year old who, his mother charged, was imitating the MTV cartoon series “Beavis

and Butt-head" on which a character frequently plays with matches.⁹

Despite this, the volume of violence on TV continued to be overwhelming. *The New York Times*, in an editorial, while deploring in its pursed-lip prose "the steady diet of gore and violence on television," could only "hope" that the flood of violence might be dammed somewhat when advertisers could be persuaded that violence no longer sold their products. Virtue would be reached through their pocket-books....

But corporate television heard nothing but the cash register and the Neilson ratings, and these moral arbiters of all that is good and beautiful kept telling them that violence (*cum* "sex") had amazing power to *sell*. Sell anything – from soap chips to the presidency.

Nevertheless, apparently against all the odds, TV announced at the end of the '70s that it would heed the avalanche of criticism heaped on it. But by now we knew the formula, already tried out and found successful in Hollywood more than a generation earlier. The *New York Times* would announce "that next season" violence would be soft-pedaled. "They (the TV moguls) did agree that the violence issue is dead."¹⁰

Had the millennium finally arrived? Not so fast. "It looks," the same paper noted, "as if sex is taking the place of violence."

Sex? When had it been absent? But now its appearance had a twist to it. By "sex" was not meant old-fashioned romantic sex, but something exotic and kinkier. In a relatively short time, for example, incest has jumped from talk shows to a full 90 minutes on NBC News' *Weekend*.¹¹

And, later, "gimmicks," always in the cloak of "scientific inquiry," or "moral outrage" would be incest, rape, ritual murder, masochism, indecent exposure, reincarnation, exorcism, psychic phenomena, and on and on, rifling the case histories of Kraft-Ebbing, Freud, Jung, Stekel, Reich, et. al. with a resurrected De Sade reigning over all.

In large measure, the cult of violence in television carried over from film. Indeed, for years, as almost its major tradition, Hollywood has glorified the criminal – the gangster. (Its very first full-length movie – 1903 – was the *Great Train Robbery*.)

Not daring to depict the true heroes and heroines of America, which would have included people like Eugene Debs, Mother Jones, William Z.

Foster, Frederick Douglass and the innumerable rank-and-file heroes of the working class, it met the people's hunger for some expression of resistance to monopoly and the onslaught of the Robber Barons by transferring the people's virtues of courage, resistance and generosity to the lone bank robber; like Pretty Boy Floyd, who, provoked by the sheriff (as the Woody Guthrie song puts it) speaking "vulgar words of language" to his wife killed the sheriff for that and lived by robbing banks, leaving a "thousand dollar bill" underneath his napkin at the table of a friendly but poor farmer who fed him. Pretty Boy Floyd was not one of those who'll "drive a family from their home," robbing you "with a fountain pen." If he robbed, it was out of necessity, and robbed banks *who robbed you with a pen*....

Needless to say, such populist heroes were not featured in their true terms in Hollywood, which tapped the subjective (and often objective) hatred of the people for the banks (capitalism) by dwelling on the derring-do and ignoring or vulgarizing the social reasons for their exploits. (Most bank robbers of the '30s were victims of the Depression.) Between 1912 and 1976, Hollywood made 582 full-length films, devoted in whole or in part to the theme of crime and gangsterism. (It has made many more since.)¹²

A stranger consulting the movies alone, would have to conclude that the American most admired was – not George Washington or Abe Lincoln – but Al Capone, if the number of movies devoted to his life is any guide. And no wonder. Far from the Pretty Boy Floyd type, Capone expressed not the aim of the working class (no matter how distorted) but, for the grace of God, he could have been J.P. Morgan himself: "I make my money by supplying a public demand.... The only difference between us [and the respectable public] is that I sell and they buy." He also warned that "we must keep the worker away from red literature and red ruses, we must see that his mind remains healthy" – not a word of which President Clinton would argue with.¹³

Hollywood, as usual, had managed to put its hands on a genuine social phenomenon and twist it to its own purposes – opposite to the truth.

When the production of gangster films reached a crescendo in the middle '30s, it aroused such a storm of protest in the public prints, pulpits, even Congress, that Hollywood had to respond – and it responded with a formula that became institution-

alized and thus typical of how it handled reform subsequently. If previously Hollywood glorified the gangster, making a hero of him, now it "reformed" by unmistakably labeling him as villain but transforming his skills and abilities to the police, to the G-man. The mayhem went on as before. Only now the "heroes" were the police. Whether "hero" or "villain," however, almost every notable actor of the 1930s made his mark as an exponent of violence as a way to settle problems – James Cagney, Humphrey Bogart, Edward G. Robinson, Paul Muni ...

The only concession to indignation Hollywood devised was to institute a system of rating, supposedly to serve as a guide to parents (otherwise cited as the culprit for crimes of their children), neatly transferring the moral burden to them, the parents, in the guise of maintaining freedom of expression for "artists." Freed of responsibility by the rating system, Hollywood and TV increased the volume of violence, rape and mayhem, killing several birds with one stone: enjoying "free expression" beyond the wildest dreams of their predecessors, being highly paid for it, and being relieved of any social responsibility for their crimes – for crimes they were.

When the gangsters who wrote, acted in and directed these movies were asked to justify themselves, they had a ready answer. Not only were these movies "what the people wanted" but they were drawn from life – from military life, for instance – which had the tacit sanction of the government, as the trial of Lt. William Calley, Jr., the real-life Rambo, amply illustrated. (Calley would be "tried" but never convicted of murdering "in excess of 22" – but actually in excess of 300 Vietnamese villagers.)

This cult of violence generated by TV and movies was bound, sooner or later to have an effect on politics – and it did during the turbulent sixties. It infected students in the 1960s, who took their ideological inspiration from works like Franz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth*, in which he wrote: "Violence alone, violence committed by the people, violence organized and educated by its leaders, makes it possible for the masses to understand social truths and gives a key to them."

So widespread during the '60s was the acceptance of the use of violence as a political tool that even the *New York Review of Books*, one of the most influential overground magazines among the cultur-

al youth, featured on its cover a diagram giving instructions on how to make a Molotov cocktail. Many of the "underground" papers, of which there were over 400, also ran articles showing how dynamite could be purchased and used to make bombs. Indeed the Weatherman group boasted that they not only "advocated" force and violence but they actually practiced it, as they noted in the 1975 Summer issue of their periodical, *Osawatomie*:

The Weather underground organization is responsible for 25 armed actions against the enemy. Eight of these were bombings directed against imperialist war and in support of the people of Indochina. This includes the attack on the Pentagon in 1972 and on the State Department in 1975. Ten actions were directed against the repressive apparatus: courts, prisons, police, and in support of Black liberation.

There's more than a whiff of Pol Pot and "Red Brigade" in this, and other statements of the Weatherman faction, pointing to the general root of this attitude in petty-bourgeois, anarchist sources. Needless to say, the Communist Party USA, which had shortly before been indicted and found "guilty" under the Smith Act of "teaching and advocating" the necessity for force and violence, was adamantly against this policy and these ideas, as it was against a similar manifestation among some African American youth as expressed by the leaders of the Black Panther Party.

In polemics with Huey Newton, then head of the Black Panthers, a member of the Central Committee of the CPUSA, William L. Patterson, after calling the emergence of the Black Panther Party "unique in the annals of the magnificent battles Black liberation fighters have waged in the USA," and congratulating the leadership on "moving into the arena of organized political struggle," chided them at the same time for advocating armed struggle – as being unreal, noting that it was dangerous to say that the United States was "already in the throes of fascist terror." He added that to say so was "generalizing their own experience" and he advocated that the Black Panther Party work for a "broad liberation front, including all forces opposed to racism and the genocidal policies and practices of American imperialism..."¹⁴

To this Huey Newton replied in *The Black Panther* (Sept. 17, 1970):

Does he (Patterson) propose that Blacks wait for white labor to lead the liberation struggle at a time when white labor subjectively views itself as a beneficiary of capitalism? Labor unions are presently the stooges of the capitalist warmongers. The Black Panther Party picked up the gun ... because in this way we could most clearly communicate to the Black community the necessity of picking up the gun to gain liberation and freedom....

Although they were hardly aware of it, this provided the FBI with the perfect conditions for destroying the Black Panther Party from within. According to a *New York Times* dispatch (May 9, 1976):

The Federal Bureau of Investigation carried out secret, nationwide efforts to "destroy" the Black Panthers, including attempts to stir bloody "gang warfare" between the Panthers and other groups and to create factional strife within the party.... The bureau's efforts contributed to a climate of violence in which four Black Panthers were shot to death in internal battles.

Interestingly enough, the same attempt of the FBI to destroy the Communist Party in a ploy dubbed Hoodwink, hoping to embroil the Mafia in gun battles with Communist Party members, failed miserably for the simple reason that the Communist Party on principle does not resort to guns to gain political ends – not because they are pacifists, but because such a tactic is self-defeating and indeed counterproductive. The Communists believed and believe that the liberation of the workers is the work of the workers alone (primarily), not of heroes, not by puches, not by insurrections independent of a mass movement. In any case, to resort to arms against an enemy that is infinitely better armed than oneself is not "revolutionary," or even just plain suicide, but comes closer to complicity in murder.

So much for the violence attributed to the oppressed who were labeled, falsely, as the source of evil and violence in the modern world.

But the search for a scapegoat goes on. The culprit changes with the times, starting with the Biblical curse that "we are born sinners," making born criminals of children, who had to be "tamed" with the rod or risk being "spoiled" (in practice, working-class children got the rod, middle and upper-class children didn't), up through the many theories of education which, while allowing workers just

enough education so that they could do their jobs, were still calculated to keep them in ignorance of their own class interests. And as is well known workers were provided with drugs and alcohol in abundance in order to be "tamed" lest they become aware of those interests.

In this assignment to corrupt the people, a new and preeminent place is given to the organs of mass culture – the movies and TV, and to some extent, popular music. It is a social crime of enormous dimensions, but necessary. If the U.S. is to fulfill its assumed role of arbiter of the "new world order," it must train a people who will accept the aims of imperialism – which is what it is – and be willing to back them up. It must cultivate and drench the minds of the people with the idea that aggression is "natural," that it is "macho," instinctive with the sexual urge, indeed identical with it: to rape is to assert, to kill women and children – particularly if they are dark-skinned – is to prove supreme mastery over "the enemy."

It is absolutely crucial to those who shape public opinion in this country that the use of force and violence to settle personal and social differences be kept open as an acceptable option. The massacre of men, women and children of the religious sect of Branch Davidians by the FBI at Waco, Texas in 1993 was perpetrated by men trained by and drenched in the concept that force decides all. Killing women and children who had been stereotyped as religious fanatics by the media (apparently infants too) was no more than an up-to-date version of trapping and shooting down "mad dog gangsters" like Dillinger in the '30s – who had already been transformed into a dangerous beast by the publicity-mad FBI head J. Edgar Hoover.

In the Waco instance, though a battery of psychologists, social workers, etc. were consulted, Attorney General Janet Reno only heard the "force-is-right" voice – which had behind it the power of the state, already proven in the massacres in Panama, Iraq and so on. Killing American women and children also proved to be no obstacle to the use of indiscriminate firepower, the use of "smart bombs" and technological know-how. As for Janet Reno, she was only acting in the tradition set by a former Attorney General, Homer Cummings, who ordered the FBI in the case of Dillinger and others to "shoot to kill – then count to ten."¹⁵

Life must be held cheap and social life must be maintained at a squalid and violent level – that this

indeed be life itself – so that there is no regret at losing it. It must be shown over and over that the arguments of reason can always be refuted with a sock to the jaw or a bullet in the groin. Constantly goaded with problems for which there seem to be no solutions, the people are kept in a state of angry frustration, which is relieved, if it's relieved at all, with periodic outbursts of violence usually directed against themselves or at random at strangers. It's not pretty, yes. The streets aren't safe, true. But much better *that* than a working class awake and organized, ready and capable of assuming state power.

The present furor over "violence" on TV is doomed in advance – as it's intended to be. Some cosmetic alterations may indeed come forth, but one should not be too sanguine. When all *three* major TV networks *simultaneously* put on dramas based on the squalid affair of a teenaged prostitute Amy Fisher, commanding literally an audience of many millions – even the Second Coming of Christ couldn't get such attention – then hopes for meaningful reform have very little prospects. There will be no reform. Only razzle-dazzle.

With the traditional guardians of morality either neutralized, or, like the Catholic Church, themselves caught up in a moral web, the responsibility for literally saving our children falls on the shoulders of those whose children are most at risk – the working class, first of all, with the Communist Party assuming its proper role of leader.

One of the most dramatic cases of moral failure, and in fact, defection – abandoning their duty to the people – has been the plight of many intellectuals both here and abroad. Not only have they shown a lack of courage. They have been imprisoned by various fraudulent and even corrupt theories of human behavior, the nature and role of society, and, now, the very meaning of socialism itself. The so-called "collapse" of communism has on the one hand effectively ideologically disarmed thousands of intellectuals, including many anti-Communists as well, whose notions of history and society have collapsed along with the collapse of the USSR, plunging them into depression and pessimism. And on the other hand it's vindicated the champions of social irrationalism and mysticism who scorned consciousness and mocked the historic struggle of the world's working class to trans-

form the world according to a humane and rational plan. They hail the victory of Greed, Power and Hate as defining human beings and their inter-relationships.

The issue of violence *per se* is a red herring. The real issue goes to the very heart of our times: who will win, the people or imperialism? Will the people be able to preserve their humanity – their basic democratic view of themselves and the world – or will they allow themselves to be reshaped into instruments of imperial power, reducing themselves to the significance of their alimentary canals as "consumers," and consumers only – of animals whose motivating force is to "Kill! Kill! Kill!"?

"Within hours," reads a news dispatch,

of President Clinton's highly publicized speech here [Hollywood] imploring entertainment industry leaders to curb depictions of murder and mayhem in movies and television, a number of studio executives who praised Mr. Clinton for what they called his inspiring words were in a bidding war for a movie script in which 11 people were killed in the first seven pages.¹⁶

And Clinton himself, the "inspirer" of death in Somalia, contemplates further deaths in Yugoslavia, and perhaps North Korea in due course. What's a little TV violence to *him*? □

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Lessons from the '93 New York Elections

John Bachtell

The ruling class mass media is interpreting the recent defeat of New York City Mayor David Dinkins and other Democratic Party candidates across the country as a swing to the right by the people. They are saying that African American and white voters are being motivated differently by the issues and are hopelessly polarized.

However a deeper look from a working-class perspective leads to far different conclusions. While the election defeats were setbacks, there is a new trend unfolding among the electorate and people. It is not a shift to the right, but anger and disgust with two-party politics-as-usual which they see as so much fiddling while the fires of economic and social crisis burn ever hotter. Anger and confusion are fed by the Clinton administration's shift to the right and the inability of the Democratic Party to offer real solutions to the economic crisis.

Only within this framework can we make a sober analysis of the factors that led to the Dinkins defeat. This includes an assessment of the extent of the influence of racism. Only then can we draw the proper lessons for the working class and people's movements in the struggles ahead.

The elections indicate a deepening crisis of the Democratic and Republican Parties. People, especially working people, want change and they want it now, regardless of which party is in office.

The election results are a warning to the Democratic Party, which ironically benefited from voter outrage in 1992: continue on the present pro-corporate, anti-labor course and more defeats loom on the electoral horizon. This includes the re-election campaign of Governor Cuomo whose popularity is at its lowest point and continuing to decline. It also bears on the 1996 presidential election.

In New York City this was reflected in the substantial dissatisfaction with the solutions to the city's crisis offered by both candidates. Less than one-half the respondents in a pre-election poll had confidence that either candidate would be able to deal with the city's problems.

Elizabeth Kolbert noted in the *New York Times* (Nov. 17, 1993):

The results clearly fit within a larger pattern that political scientists have been plotting for the last few years. Americans, who had been historically indulgent toward incumbents, have become increasingly unwilling to give them the benefit of the doubt – or second terms.

This sentiment was also reflected in the victory of the "term limitations" proposition initiated by the right-wing Conservative Party and funded by Ron Lauder of the Estee Lauder fortune. Unfortunately it played on very real sentiments for change, and many honest people were swept up in the fever of "throw the bums out." Term limitations will not replace the need for genuine democratic electoral reform.

Only 57.2 percent of registered voters went to the polls. Overall only 33 percent of the voting age population voted. Thus Giuliani was elected by 17 percent of the voting age population – hardly a mandate. Seen in this context, people were not voting for a right-wing agenda, but against what they perceived as ineffective policies in dealing with the economic crisis.

The victory of Mark Green as Public Advocate also shows this was no shift to the right by voters. Green, who ran on an anti-corporate platform, was the highest vote-getter of any candidate for citywide office. He received 17,000 more votes than the new mayor.

This was also seen in the reelection of Brooklyn City Councilman Sal Albanese. Albanese is one of the council's most outspoken liberals, and openly campaigned for Dinkins in his largely Italian and Jewish Borough Park district. While his district went overwhelmingly for Giuliani, he was reelected by a large margin. One of the reasons Albanese won is that he has a reputation for fighting for his district, including making sure the potholes are filled and the street lights work.

Giuliani's "coat tails" were non-existent. His running mates, Susan Alter for Public Advocate and Herman Badillo for City Comptroller, went down to defeat.

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These developments more accurately reflect the developing thought patterns of the city's electorate.

ECONOMIC CRISIS SHAPES OUTLOOK ■ Twelve years of Reagan-Bush right-wing Republican rule and the massive layoffs and downsizing in the current economic crisis have had a devastating impact on New York. Over 500,000 jobs have been lost in the state since 1987 and over 300,000 in the city, including many jobs related to the manufacturing and financial sectors. The city's "official" unemployment rate was 10.3 percent in October 1993, way above the official national average of 6.5 percent. Unemployment in the construction industry alone fluctuates around 50 percent.

The economic downturn has had a specially heavy impact on the city's nationally and racially oppressed communities.

New York is the teenage unemployment capital of the country, with a rate of 75 percent for young people in general and over 90 percent for African American and Latino youth.

Over 1.3 million New Yorkers receive some form of public assistance. Hunger and homelessness are widespread and increasing. Homeless people are freezing to death on the streets.

The crisis of the infrastructure is profound and has been sharpened by the 75 percent cut of federal aid during the Reagan-Bush years. Public housing construction is at a low level; over half of the bridges are structurally unsound; the mass transit system is badly in need of rebuilding.

City schools are falling apart in the face of deep funding cuts and have been shaken with asbestos and lead crises. Classrooms are overcrowded. In some schools children are forced to sit on the floor because there are no desks. Books and materials are substandard and in short supply.

This crisis of everyday life has had a tremendous impact on the thinking of working people. There is growing anger over what appears to be never-ending crises and there is growing awareness that the nature of the crisis is long-term.

The crisis has shaped people's attitudes to public officials. Dinkins took office in 1990 in the midst of the crisis and has been held responsible for the growing unemployment and deterioration of city services and infrastructure. In the public mind he was linked to the asbestos and lead crisis in the city schools, long-term problems which had been brewing for decades and which exploded days before

classes were to resume this past fall.

In this regard, over half the electorate said Mayor Dinkins had not had much of an effect on the city's economy and, again, over 50 percent had a negative view of the long term economic outlook for New York City regardless of who was mayor.

The anger and resentment toward the Clinton administration that came out around the NAFTA fight also surfaced during the elections and contributed to the way people voted. The feeling had been growing that Clinton and the Democratic Party had betrayed electoral promises for jobs and were not offering solutions to the multiple crises of the economy, schools, homelessness and rampant racism.

As a result the parade of Clinton administration officials who came to New York empty-handed did not help Dinkins. Against the backdrop of the crisis of the city, their speeches rang hollow. Clinton seemed more interested in campaigning for his health care legislation than electing Dinkins.

Since the President has been in office he is 0 for 6 in major elections. Under his tenure Democrats have now lost two Senate seats, two governorships and the mayoralties of the nation's two largest cities.

A NARROW MARGIN ■ The 1993 mayoral election was nearly a mirror reversal of the 1989 race. Both were decided by approximately 50,000 votes or less. Slight shifts of voting patterns turned the election in favor of Giuliani, resulting in 50.6 percent for Giuliani, and 48.6 percent for Dinkins. The turnout of 1.7 million registered voters, or 57.2 percent, was similar to that of 1989.

Dinkins narrowly won the trade union vote and won the votes of low-income workers by a big majority. Aside from the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) and Social Service Employees Union (SSEU) Local 371, he received virtual total support among the city's trade union movement, starting with the Central Labor Council.

He picked up new endorsements among the construction trades, including unions that had supported Giuliani in 1989. Then, only the electricians locals supported Dinkins. The Sheetmetal Workers International Association Local 28 lent the Dinkins campaign its Queens office as a borough get-out-the-vote headquarters.

By contrast, Giuliani could only boast of the Police Benevolent Association and other uniformed police - hardly part of the trade union movement. In

addition he won the support of the United Firefighters Association.

Dinkins increased his share of the African American vote from 91 percent to 95 percent. However, his support slipped in key areas. Among white voters, Giuliani received 77 percent of the vote, up from 71 percent in 1989, and increased his vote among Latinos from 34 percent to 38 percent.

Dinkins' support among Jewish voters remained nearly the same: 35 percent in 1989 and 33 percent in 1993. This was very significant because of the hysteria campaign pushed by the right wing around the Crown Heights tragedy.

The fact that the Jewish vote did not drop significantly is a testament to significant anti-racist sentiments in the Jewish community. It also reflected the growing alarm about the right-wing danger and the anti-Semitic associations of Giuliani which came to light during the campaign.

Dinkins won the youth vote by 60 to 40 percent.

THE DINKINS ADMINISTRATION ■ The electorate did not see Dinkins as the alternative he represented in 1989 in the crusade to defeat then-mayor Ed Koch. At that time a broad-based, multi-racial, labor-led coalition had developed in the battle against the racist and anti-labor policies of the former administration. Public sentiment turned against Koch in the wake of his outright gifts to the real estate developers and banks, rampant corruption and a wave of police brutality and racist murders.

In 1989, the anti-Koch coalition that had been building for nearly 10 years sought a candidate to give expression to an electoral alternative. The coalition appealed to David Dinkins, then Manhattan Borough President and a figure from establishment Democratic circles, to be that candidate.

Dinkins and the movement that elected him made history when he was elected the city's first African American mayor. There were great expectations about what he would accomplish. And his administration had a number of important achievements. He was a founder of the National Conference of Mayors, a leader of the Save Our Cities march on Washington, DC in 1992, was a leading elected official in the anti-apartheid movement, established affirmative action for minority and women contractors of city services and was a supporter of multicultural studies in the city's schools. He also led the fight for an all-civilian police review board.

During his administration the relations between

the city's various racial and ethnic communities improved and there were fewer racist attacks and police murders.

At the same time there were many illusions among the progressive forces that Dinkins would carry out his campaign promises without mass grassroots mobilization and pressure. Consequently the coalition that put him in office dissolved after the elections.

Without mass pressure from below, a political vacuum was created. It was filled by the big banks and real estate developers. Even before the election in 1989, when it was apparent Dinkins would win, the banks and developers began elbowing the people's coalition aside.

Over the past four years his administration steadily buckled under to big business pressures. Dinkins surrounded himself with many pro-corporate, anti-union administrators, including ex-Koch administration officials like First Deputy Mayor Norman Steisel. They sought to solve the deepening crisis of the city within the framework of monopoly solutions which necessarily meant on the backs of the working people.

Even during the 1993 campaign for example, the administration doled out huge tax abatements to large corporations to keep them headquartered in the city. One of its last acts was to offer tax abatements for developers to build high rise luxury apartment buildings in midtown Manhattan.

The administration came into sharp conflict with the municipal workers unions over layoffs, wages, civil service guidelines and attempts to contract out and privatize city services. It refused to sign legislation that would have made it more difficult for the incoming administration to speed up privatization.

Furthermore, the city's public school teachers worked two years without a contract under the Dinkins administration.

The administration's policies of bulldozing shanties of the homeless, supporting the construction of a Brooklyn incinerator, and cutting money for senior centers similarly created widespread consternation and anger.

Although the challenger was much more extreme in his program on some policy questions, there appeared to be little difference between the two. Both supported elements of privatization of city services, both were for massive layoffs of city workers and putting more police on the streets. In

the absence of organized pressure from below and pushed in a pro-corporate direction by big business, the Dinkins administration failed to grapple with the depth of the crisis effecting the majority of New Yorkers.

Working people were hurting and needed to be directly appealed to. Dinkins never made that appeal. Consequently, the labor and people's movements had no real candidate who expressed working-class issues and demands.

For example, stung by their confrontation with him, SSEU Local 371 and the UFT, who had endorsed Dinkins in 1989 and were among the most active on his behalf, felt betrayed and made no endorsement this time. Given their role in the previous campaign, their action was a substantial blow.

The unity and enthusiasm of the coalition of labor, the African American, Latino and other communities that had elected Dinkins in 1989 was severely eroded. The spirit of a crusade to defeat reaction was missing. Many grassroots organizations and activists remained on the sidelines.

A STEALTH CANDIDATE ■ In order to run a winning Republican campaign in a city in which Democrats outnumber Republicans five to one, Giuliani had to employ tactics that divided the electorate and masked his right-wing policies. He had to tap into people's anger at the Democrats and disappointment with the Dinkins administration.

To obscure these tactics, the Giuliani campaign dusted off and adopted the "fusion" label first employed by Fiorello La Guardia, who served as the city's mayor from 1934-1945. Giuliani sought to draw on the image of La Guardia who fought the corrupt Tammany Hall and was a Roosevelt New Dealer.

Since New York election laws allow a candidate to run on more than one party line, La Guardia ran on both Democratic and Republican tickets. Giuliani, by contrast, got nominations from the Republicans as well as the misnamed Liberal Party which was responsible for wrecking the American Labor Party.

The "fusion" ticket included Democrats Susan Alter for Public Advocate and Herman Badillo for City Comptroller. The selection of Alter from Brooklyn's Jewish community, and Badillo from the city's Puerto Rican community was no accident. It was meant to give registered Democrats an excuse to vote Republican. And it was a calculated ploy to

confine Dinkins' support to the African American community, and if not split off, at least shift enough votes in the Jewish and Puerto Rican communities to win a close election.

In essence the "fusion" ticket was the local reflection of the development of the national coalition of Republicans and right-wing Democrats.

The Republican candidate's handlers sought to mold an image of their man as a tough but honest political moderate who was an uncompromising former prosecutor fighting crime, corruption and bureaucracy. The only way to clean up the city's mess was to elect an "impartial outsider" who could deal decisively with patronage, bureaucracy and corruption. After all, Giuliani consciously created a reputation as a daring U.S. District Attorney who had put organized crime figures and Wall Street inside traders behind bars. Never mind that most of his highly-publicized convictions were later overturned.

At the same time this strategy was a recognition that a right-wing program could not win in a multi-racial, multi-national city such as New York, with strong labor and liberal traditions. The "fusion" label created a stealth campaign that obscured the real politics and forces behind Giuliani.

Lurking behind the "fusion" veneer was a motley coalition. Ruling class forces generally united around Giuliani. This was expressed through the biased coverage of the campaign in the ruling class controlled mass media.

The "fusion" coalition included some of the city's largest real estate developers, law firms, the Manhattan Institute for Social Policy (a right-wing think tank), the Catholic Archdiocese, various Zionist elements and forces around the police.

It also included forces that had been amassed in the right-wing movement to defeat the Rainbow Curriculum and School Chancellor Joseph Fernandez and to stack the local school boards earlier in the year. And it included right-wing forces from Staten Island who spearheaded a referendum on secession.

Politically, Giuliani was no La Guardia. This was a man who stood on the steps of City Hall and egged on a racist, anti-semitic riot by off-duty police in September 1992. He was a corporate insider with connections to the Reagan White House, and a co-conspirator of Oliver North in Irangate.

Giuliani is in the mold of the "new mayors" who are advocates of "reinventing government" and a "management revolution." This is nothing

more than a euphemism for what Communist Party chair Gus Hall has called "capitalism without entitlements," an attack on social programs and massive privatization of public services.

The Republican candidate called for the layoff of 35,000 city workers, a 10 percent across-the-board cut in city services, mass privatization of services including city hospitals as well as JFK and La Guardia airports. He called for reimposition of sweeps of street-level drug dealers and a limit of 90 days for the homeless in the city shelters. He advocated dismantling the police review board and the minority set aside programs in city contracts.

His program has created alarm in the trade union movement and especially the African American and Latino communities.

THE RIGHT WING MOBILIZES ■ Added to the problem that the Dinkins coalition didn't attain the same level of unity as in 1989, the right-wing forces were better organized and more united than previously. The movement to defeat Dinkins had begun to pick up steam over the past year and a half and received a boost with the coalescence of right-wing forces around the re-election of Senator Alphonse D'Amato in the 1992 senatorial elections.

They received a further boost in a struggle to defeat the Rainbow curriculum – multi-cultural studies – being introduced into the city schools. The movement was organized around the Pat Robertson-led Christian Coalition, the Catholic Archdiocese and the ultra-right Conservative Party.

The Christian Coalition ran stealth candidates in 20 of the 32 school districts. They were backed again by the Catholic Archdiocese, which distributed its voter guides in all the parishes. After gaining mixed results, these same forces then turned their racist venom on Dinkins.

At the same time, the movement for Staten Island's secession from New York City gained fresh momentum. This issue was manipulated in a skillful and well-timed manner by the right-wing racist forces to marshal a high voter turnout. Led by Staten Island Borough President Guy Molinari, these forces organized a massive voter registration campaign around the secession movement. Over 20,000 new voters were registered.

The voter registration effort had a racist appeal, arguing that "New York has become a magnet for welfare users" who were being drawn to the city because of liberal "Democratic rule."

However the main concern expressed by the physically isolated Staten Island voters was an accumulation of years of gripes that they were being treated unfairly in relation to other boroughs. For example, there is a \$6 toll to cross the Verrazano Bridge from Staten Island into Brooklyn.

A poll done on reasons why Staten Islanders favored secession showed: "The island isn't treated fairly, 59.3 percent; quality of life will improve, 17.1 percent.... Fifth on the list cited by secession supporters for wanting out was the presence in City Hall of Mayor David N. Dinkins, at 3.6 percent."

Playing on these feelings, Giuliani increased his vote by 20,000 in Staten Island over 1989, nearly half of his victory margin citywide. Since the election, nothing has been heard about the issue of secession.

USING RACISM TO DIVIDE & CONQUER ■ The Giuliani campaign used racism as its main weapon to divide the electorate and win the election. However it was the two parties of big business – the Republicans and the right-wing Democratic Party machine along with the ruling class mass media – that controlled the terrain of the debate in the campaign.

The *New York Times* and *New York Newsday*, who have attempted to cultivate liberal reputations over the years, both endorsed Dinkins. However their coverage was more favorable to his opponent. This included featuring Giuliani more often on front page photos with various constituencies, and printing unfavorable articles about Dinkins.

At the same time the mass media helped cover up the facts about Giuliani's background in relation to Irangate, and his anti-Semitic, racist and anti-working-class views. And they consistently spewed all kinds of racist filth directed against the African American mayor.

Several weeks before the election, the *New York Times Magazine* ran a front cover story on Dinkins entitled, "The Angry Civility of David Dinkins." This was a not-so-subtle suggestion that behind Dinkins' calm exterior resided a "hostile" African American who really hated white people.

Every day the Republican campaign and the mass media, as they have been doing nationally, hammered away at the issue of crime. Thinly veiled appeals to racism were crafted in such a way as to play upon people's very real fears about the state of the economy. They helped to build up a hysteria on crime and gave it a racist, especially anti-African American cast. It became like the old saying, "if you

tell a lie loud enough and often enough, someone is bound to believe it."

The ruling class sees the use of racism as the main means to ram through their new policies of capitalism without entitlements. And the issue of crime was the cover from which they launched their racist drive to unseat Dinkins.

The impression was given that Dinkins was "soft on crime" and allowed young African American criminals to run amok in the city. This campaign was carried out despite the fact that street crime actually decreased under the Dinkins administration.

In addition the Giuliani campaign exploited the issue of alleged "incompetence" of the administration. Every day, Dinkins and Hazel Dukes, director of the city-run Off Track Betting, were said to be "incompetent" city managers. This had a racist connotation since both are African American. The mass media added to this image by portraying Dinkins as a "nice" man who really wasn't tough enough to govern the city.

The media played up the idea that Dinkins was treating the African American community with favoritism, both in terms of cracking down on criminals and generally in services to the Black community. Whenever the Dinkins campaign raised the issue of racism, Dinkins was accused of using the "race card" and of being racist himself.

The Giuliani campaign and the mass media also constantly harped on the Crown Heights tragedy. Crown Heights is a section of Brooklyn in which African American, African Caribbean and Jewish people live. Tensions have long simmered over allocation of limited resources and instances of racism and anti-Semitism, and had been sharpened by the economic crisis. In 1991, an African American child was struck and killed by a car driven by a Hasidic Jew. In the unrest that followed a young rabbinical student was stabbed and killed by a group of Black youth.

The right-wing forces seized on the Crown Heights tragedy and used it as a club against Dinkins. However, a great movement for unity developed in the city that countered this thrust. Consequently over 60 percent of whites approved of the way Dinkins had handled the Crown Heights conflict, saying he had treated both communities equally.

Nevertheless, the mass media revived the issue during the election and kept it on the front burner. They said Dinkins had personally condoned the carrying out of a "pogrom" and held back the police.

This total distortion hit the airwaves constantly and flooded the Jewish community. It became a rallying cry for racist elements and prevented any rational discussion from taking place on anti-Semitism. It prevented Dinkins from building on his vote in the Jewish community.

NO EFFECTIVE ANTI-RACIST RESPONSE ■ In the face of the mass media blitz, and without a candidate independent of the Democratic Party machine running on a working-class platform, the trade union movement, along with the African American and Latino communities, found it difficult to respond effectively.

The working-class and progressive forces were hampered in their effort to project alternatives in a mass way. When they did they were able to have a significant impact on the debate, as for example in disseminating information through trade union activity and in a demonstration organized by AFSCME Local 420 against the Giuliani proposal to privatize the city hospitals. A demonstration of homeless people, organized by Local 1199 Hospital Workers union against the policy of "90 days in the city shelters and out," also had a similar effect.

Yet despite these important initiatives, the influences of ruling class racism undermined the strength and unity of the campaign.

For example, the big business and right-wing concepts on crime were not sufficiently challenged. Both campaigns said there was a need for more police and a "get tough" policy toward criminals. No one mentioned the need for more jobs – the obvious solution to the problem of street crime. Not only did the Democratic Party machine not challenge this framework, but large sections sabotaged the campaign altogether.

These racist pollutants flooded the city daily through the big business mass media. In many predominantly white working-class communities the campaign was marked by a virtual reign of right-wing racist ideological terror. The influences of ruling class racism found some openings because there was insufficient challenge to it by anti-racist forces.

There is an important lesson here. White workers cannot be politically abandoned to the right wing – including the Democratic Party machine. Many white working-class communities have been written off by much of the left and progressive forces and therefore the ability to fight the influences of racism in these communities has been severely weakened.

And yet a significant number of white workers did reject the racist venom and voted for Dinkins. While this is a substantial basis for building an anti-racist movement, it was and is not enough.

The challenge now is to launch an aggressive crusade against racism. Without multi-racial unity, gains in the struggle for jobs, housing and equality will not be made. And without a third party, an independent working-class movement will not have sufficient muscle or a vehicle to carry out this kind of a campaign.

Steps need to be taken to expand the influence of the organized working-class and people's movement in working-class communities on the basis of building united Black-Brown-white movements to organize the victims of the economic crisis – for jobs, education, health care and housing.

Only through organized struggle will the level of consciousness be raised with regard to the role of racism. That will help all workers, especially white workers, understand their class self interest in rejecting it.

Post-election headlines in *New York Newsday* read, "Votes tell tale of two cities," with the sub-head: "Crime is whites' biggest concern; minorities cite racism, the economy." Even liberal publications like the *Village Voice* declared, "A City Divided."

In fact the ruling class policy is to create and maintain a segregated and polarized working class. This idea and practice, with all its consequences, must be laid at the steps of the ruling class and rejected.

There is indeed a profound process of class polarization taking place as a result of the economic crisis. In the absence of a class conscious understanding of this fact, the stage is set for the ruling powers, through racism in particular, to confuse and divide the working class by demagogically playing upon people's fears and frustrations.

While working-class unity was set back in the election as a result of racism, the ruling class idea of "two cities" – one white and the other Black and Puerto Rican – must also be rejected. The historic forces of the class struggle molding a united working class are the long-term dominant trends. It will be the multi-racial, multi-national working class that will be called upon to lead the struggle against the corporate campaign of capitalism without entitlements.

Everyone is concerned about crime and violence because it reaches all communities. But con-

cern over the issue of crime is an expression of a concern over the larger issue of the decline in the city's economy. In addition, the African American and Latino communities are also expressing the anger over the institutionalized racism that is confronted daily.

DEMOCRATIC MACHINE SABOTAGE ■ The deepening crisis of the Democratic Party and its drift to the right was reflected in the treachery and open sabotage of the Dinkins campaign by a significant section of the machine. This included former Mayor Ed Koch, the late Robert Wagner, a liberal, and several city councilpersons who endorsed Giuliani. Entire Democratic Party clubs endorsed Giuliani and many leading Democratic Party politicians, including some liberals, made no endorsement.

Governor Mario Cuomo was most conspicuous in his absence for much of the campaign. This lent credence to the conclusion that Cuomo actually supported the campaign to defeat Dinkins.

It was Cuomo who carefully timed the release of a state report on the Crown Heights tragedy critical of Dinkins before the election. He was also responsible for deciding to put the Staten Island secession proposition on the ballot. There is speculation that Cuomo feared facing Giuliani in his own reelection bid this year.

Additionally, in the crucial last weeks of the election campaign, the city's Campaign Finance Committee fined the Dinkins Campaign Committee \$320,000 for exceeding the legal spending limit. This denied Dinkins critical funds in the last days and gave a one-sided impression since Giuliani had numerous questionable campaign expenses.

But the Republicans also showed their party is in deep crisis. They bought endorsements by paying "consulting fees" of \$10,000 apiece to public figures in the Puerto Rican community. On election day they also employed "street money," as in the more highly publicized case of New Jersey, which was funneled through community agencies to hire homeless and unemployed people as poll watchers. Some of those employed said they were hired to help intimidate voters and keep the turnout low.

These examples reflect the fact that the Democratic and Republican Party machines rely less on political commitment and more on payoffs and patronage to win support. The corruption and decay of the two parties continues to deepen.

In addition there were many questions about

voter fraud. Over 40,000 paper ballots were cast by voters whose credentials were challenged at the polls. And over 1,500 paper ballots were discovered in unopened boxes in the Board of Elections' Manhattan borough office. These questions are quietly being brushed under the rug.

In most areas in the city, especially where the campaign was being sabotaged, it was not the Democratic Party machine who ran the Dinkins campaign. It was the politically independent forces of labor, the African American and the Latino communities, seniors and others who formed the campaign's backbone. The labor movement provided finances, printing facilities, phone banking and foot soldiers for getting out the vote.

The Communist Party joined in the effort to build up an anti-Giuliani coalition by helping establish independent neighborhood coalitions for Dinkins that were active in voter registration, mass public rallies, postering, literature drops and other work.

The Communist Party also played a role in alerting the public to the right-wing danger posed by the Giuliani campaign. The Party issued "Danger: The Anti-People Program of Rudolph Giuliani." Over 32,000 copies were distributed, half in predominantly white communities. Party members were also very active among seniors in gathering support for Dinkins. The Party's Upper West Side club held a mass public meeting, "Defeating Giuliani and the Right Danger."

The defeat of Dinkins and the sabotage by a section of the Democratic Party has heightened sentiment for political independence and a third party alternative in New York. There is renewed interest in building Labor Party Advocates, and exploring the potential for ballot status for the Rainbow Coalition and the New Coalition Party. There will likely be more labor, African American, Latino, Communist and other left candidates in the next elections.

NEW ADMINISTRATION ■ Mayor Giuliani now faces the true test. Will his administration govern as it conducted its campaign - using racism to impose right-wing pro-corporate solutions to the crisis of the city? Some signs already indicate he is heading down just such a path.

Should Giuliani ignore political realities he does so at his own peril. There is a large base of opposition to his electoral program among organized labor as well as the African American and Latino communities. He must deal with Democrats Green and

Alan Hevesi, the new city comptroller, a Democratic-controlled City Council and State Assembly and a Democratic governor.

Perhaps this is why the new Mayor has sought to form a coalition or "fusion" administration made up of Democrats, Republicans and Liberals. After the election, he backed off from some of his worst campaign proposals. He pledged to keep the all-civilian police review board for at least another year and the minority set-aside program for city contracts.

However, during his inauguration the most visible impression left to viewers was that of the VIP section behind Giuliani as he delivered his inaugural address. There were practically no African Americans, Latinos or Asian Americans among the guests. Among his four deputy mayors there are no African Americans and only one Puerto Rican.

In his speech the new mayor warmly embraced ex-Mayor Koch and said, "As we step into the future, the indomitable spirit of La Guardia will infuse our city. The common sense approach of Ed Koch will echo again." This racist echo brings sour notes to the common-sense ears of many.

Giuliani has already engaged in a sharply confrontational relationship with the African American community over a police raid of a Harlem mosque that resulted in a physical brawl. In addition the new administration has abolished the community affairs offices that serve the African American, Caribbean, Latino and Asian communities. He has raised the possibility of challenging the consent decree establishing the right to shelter for the city's homeless. The Metropolitan Transit Authority is conducting a campaign to stop the homeless from asking for money on the subway trains.

The most obvious flaws of his campaign have emerged early in his administration. All this has not been lost on the public who are especially sensitive to these questions in a multi-racial city like New York.

These concerns were best expressed by Costa Matsias, a resident of Queens who remarked on *Newsday*, "I think people voted for a mayor and they ended up with a marshal. He took all the Blacks out and put in whites, 90 percent. It's people from outside government. His own people. He's not willing to work with others." And among the VIPs were many Democrats. Whether they also betray labor and form a political alliance against the working people of New York is yet to be seen.

Continued on page 41

U.S. Imperialism – Enemy of Peace

Jim West

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European socialist countries has increased the danger of war.

Week after week the evidence mounts up: Somalia, Yugoslavia, armed conflicts among some nations in the former USSR, threats of military intervention against Haiti and North Korea, and such hostility against Cuba that the stink of war is in the air. Few indeed, are the countries that escape the stern, covetous eye of the rapacious imperialist American eagle.

Secretary of State Warren Christopher said it out right: "No other nation possesses our military might, economic strength and moral authority.... Multilateralism ... is warranted only when it serves the central purpose of American foreign policy: to protect American interests."¹

The propaganda mills along the Potomac have relentlessly hammered home what these "interests" are supposed to be, so that millions of unemployed and homeless are informed along with the elite corps of corporate wealth: American interests are inseparable from the so-called free market. It is this, they say, that is the essence of democracy, and it is the destiny of the United States to bring its blessings to all nations.

In plain language, this means nothing must stand in the way of those interests; everything must be bent to serve "American interests." That goes for the U.N., IMF, GATT, World Bank, etc. For Washington, these international institutions are instruments for policies to advance U.S. monopoly-transnational interests.

National Security advisor Anthony Lake has said that countries which refuse this made-in-America path of development are "backlash states" and that the U.S.:

... must seek to isolate them diplomatically, militarily, economically and technologically.... When the action of such states directly threatens our people, our forces, or our vital interests, we clearly must be prepared to strike

back decisively and unilaterally.²

Do as we want, or else!

U.S. imperialism went into the First World War as a debtor nation and came out a creditor under the slogan, "Make the World Safe for Democracy." It then went on to displace England as the Number One imperialist power at the time. U.S. imperialism has always masked its goals of world domination with democratic demagogy, and through the years the truth has taken a terrific beating by U.S. foreign policy. Cynical demagogy has figured prominently – witness "peacemakers" and "peacekeepers" as names for weapons of mass destruction.

Today, standing at the top of the heap, it sees the world as its very own apple. With a straight face Lake proclaimed, "Ultimately, the world trusts our leadership ... in part, because it witnesses our humanitarian deeds."³ The expansionist foreign policies of Reagan and Bush, now carried out more vigorously under the Clinton Administration, are cynically designated "aggressive humanitarianism."

The idea that humanitarianism can be used as a cover under which reactionary, predatory aims are promoted received its "trial run" in the international arena at the end of the First World War when the Herbert Hoover Commission sent humanitarian aid into the newly established Soviet Republics as a cover for carrying on counter-revolutionary subversion against socialism. Somalia today can stand as the symbol of such U.S. aid – a food packet impaled on a bayonet.

WHERE'S HUMANITARIANISM AT HOME? ■ It matters little to the plotters of U.S. foreign policy that some twelve million workers forced into unemployment or part-time work, three million homeless, thirty-nine million living below the poverty line, those affected by rampant crime, racism and drug abuse, etc., all stand as living and dying testimonials to the humanitarianism of U.S. imperialism. This is the same imperialism that is primarily responsible for the abject poverty, underdevelopment and repression in much of the Western hemisphere and in

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many countries of Africa and Asia.

If the policies of Washington were truly motivated by concern for human beings, billions of dollars could be released to wipe out hunger, joblessness and homelessness. The demise of the Soviet Union and its so-called military threat removes even the pretext for spending untold billions for armaments, Star Wars, anti-Soviet intrigue and spying. Any viewer of TV Westerns, whether six-year old or sixty, knows that if the "bad guys" leave town or are no longer around for whatever reason, you put away the guns and go back to normal, peaceful pursuits.

Where, then, is the peace dividend? When the conversion? What about disarmament? Why are millions of U.S. armed forces still deployed all over the world? For more than 40 years the engines of U.S. government have been fueled by the "Soviet threat." Now that fiction is gone, a new fuel and direction are needed. There is a frantic search for new threats to keep the old engine going.

So it is not surprising to learn that the Pentagon is creating a bunch of new secretaries to deal with possible new "threats." Some months ago the *New York Times* reported that the Pentagon now has secretaries for "Economic and Environment Security," for "Democracy and Human Rights," for "Nuclear Security and Counter Proliferation."⁴ Further, said the *Times*, "Barely a week goes by that some segment of the military isn't sponsoring a seminar on new global challenges, from Islamic fundamentalists to narco-terrorism - something, anything to replace the Red Menace."⁵

By the alchemy of State Department-Pentagonese, conversion is turned upside down. Instead of conversion from military means to peacetime production, we have conversion to military means for the social problems created by capitalism. Force and repression is the new formula for eliminating social problems. The image of the U.S. in the world has become that of the bully or policeman.

The burgeoning use of force in the streets of our country can be traced for its stimulus and inspiration to the policies of the U.S. government since the end of World War II. This includes, among other things: building more jails and shutting down jobs and schools; the growth of police violence and brutality; the steep rise in violent crime; the growth of racism; regressive, repressive legislative and administrative measures; the continued operation by the Pentagon of the School of

the Americas that trains death squad members, terrorists and military dictators for Central and South America.

When U.S. imperialism swoops down on small and dependent countries with its humanitarian, civilizing missions, it is not on a short-term lease. The U.S. maintains a substantial military presence of some size for as long as it deems necessary; that is to say, as long as possible. Witness Guantanamo, Panama, Grenada, South Korea, the Persian Gulf, and even some large countries as in Europe and Asia. The aim is nothing less than dominance over conquered territory.

HOW NAFTA FITS IN ■ In another step toward world dominance the Clinton Administration energetically pushed NAFTA. The immediate thrust is Mexico and Central America, but let no one be fooled - it applies as well to Canada, not as an equal or a junior partner, so much as another source of still bigger profits for the U.S. transnational corporations and banks. It would be a mistake to believe that NAFTA-like policies are directed only at small and dependent countries.

The appetite of big business for ever-expanding profits is not easily sated. Chief among the aggressive, hard-hitting champions of NAFTA was the Business Roundtable, consisting of chief executive officers of 200 big monopoly corporations. One of them, Lee A. Iaccoca, said, "The Japanese and the Europeans think NAFTA is a bad deal. Why? Because it's good for us and bad for them." He was completely in step with Clinton who invoked the danger of Japan making a deal with Mexico if NAFTA failed to clear Congress. In other words, corporate wealth sees Japan and a German-led Europe as the looming threats in place of the "Red Menace." That this is seriously considered by U.S. policy makers is clear from a number of studies by think tanks on the shape of the "post-Cold-War World."

One such study, *The Highest Stakes*, published by the Berkeley Roundtable on the International Economy, sees a three-cornered world, as do many other economists: the USA, Japan and a Europe dominated by Germany. It examines the strengths and weakness of each in the competition-rivalry among them. (As in practically all these think-tank analyses, the class struggle and the working class are absent).

In an Epilogue summing up the findings of this more than 200-page study, the authors' final words are:

We are not arguing that Japan and Europe are about to cut their defense ties with the United States. Rather, the costs of altering their security or foreign policy strategies have been tremendously reduced, whereas the costs of maintaining American autonomy have significantly increased. In the Gulf War, Japan and Germany followed Washington's lead with varying degrees of boldness and alacrity. Nothing would necessarily persuade or induce them to follow in a future conflict if their aims differ from those of the United States.

Indeed, quite the reverse is possible; for reasons of financial need or technological dependence the United States might be induced to follow their lead when that was not in American interests. As we said at the outset, America needs to act not from a belief that we are and can remain dominant, but from an understanding of how we can be effective in circumstances in which we no longer are.⁶

As the knowledge sinks in that the world dominance of the U.S. faces strong challenges from formidable opponents, the more will the thinking expressed by Christopher and Lake (above) come to the fore as the determining element in U.S. foreign policy.

Behind all the glowing, upbeat media accounts of rising economic barometers, the specter of a looming globe-girdling economic collapse haunts the corporate board rooms in the world of private profit. History shows that capitalism invariably resorts to war to overcome economic crises and difficulties. This is a factor that helps explain the great reluctance and opposition to peacetime conversion to drastically reduce military spending and get rid of all weapons of mass destruction. This is a source of resistance the peace movement still has to contend with.

It is of prime importance that Communist Party chairman Gus Hall's timely admonition to all who are concerned with defending peace be taken seriously:

We must not forget that the elimination of the Soviet Union as a nuclear power counterweight, a brake on U.S. imperialism, has given monopoly capital a free hand to play its deadly nuclear game with world peace at stake. The negative change in the world balance of forces has made our planet a more dangerous place.⁷

It should be remembered that a primary reason

for dropping the atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki was to be an intimidating warning to the Soviet Union – the ally of the U.S. which bore the brunt of the war against the Axis powers. If Washington could use atomic weapons as a warning against an ally on the grounds that it might be a future enemy, what is to stop it from using nuclear weapons against North Korea or Yugoslavia with a dual purpose, including as a reminder-warning to Japan and Germany?

That is why the demand for a nuclear-free world is central to the struggle for peace – for complete and total nuclear and biological weapons disarmament.

NUCLEAR BLACKMAIL □ It is the policy of nuclear blackmail against North Korea, to force it to abandon socialism, that explains the scornful rejection by the U.S. of repeated North Korean proposals for peaceful negotiations to work out differences between the two parts of Korea and the United States. Removing from South Korea the nearly 40,000 U.S. troops armed with nuclear and chemical weapons would do more than anything else to facilitate a peaceful resolution of differences, and a peaceful unification of the peninsula. More, it would remove a flash point for igniting a general war. This is a matter requiring consistent, unrelenting action to bring about the removal of the incendiary presence of U.S. armed forces and armaments from the Korean peninsula.

Similarly, the continued blockade of Cuba by the world's biggest possessor of nuclear weapons, the one which maintains a military base on Cuban soil, is a chief obstacle to peaceful resolution of differences between the U.S. and Cuba, and the restoration of normal relations between them. It is this state of affairs which transforms the Caribbean area into another flash point for military conflict. For all who are concerned with waging the fight for peace, the demand that the Clinton Administration end the blockade, vacate Guantanamo and reestablish normal relations with Cuba is an urgent duty that cannot be shirked.

Anthony Lake may believe that the rest of the world trusts U.S. leadership, but he can't sell that hokum to the people of Somalia, Yugoslavia and elsewhere where the people are demonstrating in various ways that U.S. armed forces are not welcome. Least of all do they want U.S. military supervision over the settlement of national or ethnic dif-

ferences among themselves.

The peoples of the world don't need and don't want U.S. tutelage in how to live and be governed. They prefer to be left alone to solve their problems in their own way, and not be encumbered with a U.S. presence which deprives them of self-determination. They want to decide what kind of outside help they need and how to obtain it. The return home of all U.S. armed forces would go a long way to calming the world situation, reducing tensions and promoting peaceful solutions to conflicts.

The peace protestations by successive U.S. administrations have had a false ring ever since the Korean War. Today, with the non-existence of a "red threat" and U.S. claims to world leadership of a new world order, the sham and hollowness of U.S. peace pretensions stand more clearly exposed than ever. The absence of any meaningful conversion program, the continued military super-spending (a large part of which is still earmarked to the Cold War - believe it!), as well as the belligerent nature of U.S. foreign policy pronouncements ill-disguised by demagoguery prove it beyond doubt.

These are all vulnerable points in the armor of U.S. imperialism for peace, labor, environmental, equal rights advocates to target in on. It should be far less difficult than in the past to be crystal clear on who is the enemy of peace, where is the chief source of the war danger. One is reminded of the clever little comic strip character, Pogo, who uttered the memorable words, "We have met the enemy and it is us" - us, of course, meaning U.S. imperialism and the corporate interests it represents.

A peace movement - and for that matter any labor and people's movement which hammers away at the predatory, aggressive, anti-independence role of our imperialism everywhere in the world - is a winning movement which will earn the thanks of the people of the U.S. and the world. Such movements will truly represent the interests of the American people.

In the all-out attack of the AFL-CIO against NAFTA, the working classes and peoples of the United States, Canada and Mexico saw a historic, significant struggle against one's own imperialism. That fight went a long way to building confidence in the labor movement, confidence in and understanding of the capacity of the working class to win, and confidence in the working-class struggle for peace. The anti-NAFTA fight was itself a way of waging peace, as well as an expression of interna-

tional solidarity of the working classes of the three countries.

The struggle against the exploitative, racist and war-making policies of U.S. imperialism is a broad platform to be shared by the peace, labor, African American, Latino, women's, environmental and other movements in their common struggle for a better world.

NATIONALITIES POLICY IN FORMER USSR ■ Not the least of the falsehoods and deceptions spawned by U.S. big business propagandists has been the concept of the Soviet menace, the "Evil Empire." The systematic demonization of the Soviet Union as the enemy of the world was needed to justify the biggest, and most lucrative, arms buildup in history. The Soviet Union no longer exists, but the truth about its existence and its place in history is no less essential today to the successful struggle for peace.

For example, what is the source of the national and ethnic strife in the former Soviet Union today? Is it rooted in Soviet policy or something else?

It is no secret that the Soviet Union fostered a policy of friendship among the republic nations, ethnic groups and people generally of the vast land of Soviets. It was the first country in the world to make affirmative action the foundation of a nationalities policy, taking vigorous measures to raise the all-around standards of life in the less developed, backward regions to the levels of the highest, to establish an equally high quality of life all over the USSR.

To that end, the Soviet Union helped nations and ethnic groups develop written alphabets where none existed before, wiped out illiteracy, introduced advanced education, raised cultural standards, made health care available for all, built industries and trained workers in the outlying republics. For more than half a century there was peace and harmony among the more than 100 nations and national groups of the Soviet Union. Intermarriage was widespread and multi-lingualism increased rapidly.

The basic reason for this is the socialist system of production for the common good and not for private profit. The absence of unemployment, homelessness and hunger facilitated good neighborly relations of cooperation between people - rather than dog-eat-dog competitiveness and rivalry, the hallmarks of capitalism.

Peace and peaceful relations among people is

intrinsic to socialism. This is not to say there were no violations of the principles underlying the above-mentioned achievements of socialism. Despite the basically sound nationalities policy, there were deficiencies in its application and underestimation of how long it would take to overcome Great Russian chauvinism, anti-Semitism and nationalism.

At certain times a catering to nationalism encouraged surviving bourgeois national elements. Among other things, some remnants of the overthrown, defeated exploiter classes kept low profiles for decades and bided their time with the aim of eventually restoring capitalism. Many of the offspring of the former rich landowners and kulaks, having received a good education under Soviet socialism, worked their way into positions of power, preparing for the time when they could undermine socialism and open the way back to capitalism. It was among such that Mikhail Gorbachev, descendent of a rich landowner, found himself more at home than among workers.

Nor should we forget that the CIA and other capitalist spy agencies had their moles and dupes carrying out subversive activity over a long period of time. It took opening the door to capitalism to bring these worms out of the woodwork. The introduction of free-market profiteering, capitalism in embryo, called forth the most aggressive, nationalistic elements and their lust for self-aggrandizement by force, responding to capitalism's tendency toward force and violence.

THE TWO SYSTEMS COMPARED ■ The anti-humanitarian struggle to turn socialism back into capitalism has focused attention in a new way on the contrast between capitalism and socialism. This has a direct bearing on the fight for peace.

In this respect it is worth noting that even Pope John Paul II – widely recognized as having been one of the chief architects of anti-Soviet, anti-socialist plotting with Reagan, the CIA, Brzezinski and their ilk – was compelled in the midst of Polish election campaign to make some seeming "concessions" to socialism's positive achievements. The

Pope demagogically revealed then there are some "good things in Marxist achievement" "seeds of truth in the socialist program" and in Communism "a concern for community" as opposed to "individualistic" capitalism.

Are these words of repentance from a man who devoted his entire career to the defeat of socialism worldwide, one of socialism's chief political and ideological adversaries? No, they are carefully-couched "admissions" opportunistically mouthed during the Parliamentary elections in Poland, which despite the Vatican's efforts, the Communists won because of strong negative reaction of Polish workers to the forced march to capitalism.

To put it in plain language, the basic guideline of capitalism is "dog eat dog and the devil take the hindmost," or, to hell with the many so long as the few can get the the lion's share.

The bottom line for socialism is, "One for all and all for one." This is the bedrock moral principle underpinning its policy of friendship among peoples and nations. Peace to the world. In other words, peace is inherent in socialism; war is inherent in capitalism, and its final form, imperialism. This is not only a matter of theory. Events and life experience have proven it is so.

That is why the Communists are among the front-line fighters and reliable allies in waging the struggle for peace. Recognition and acceptance of this fact can only result in reinvigorating and activating the peace movement, the labor, civil rights, environmental and other movements, stimulating and enhancing their united efforts. □

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7. Gus Hall, "Struggle for a Nuclear Free World," *People's Weekly World*, Dec. 11, 1993.
8. Reported in the *Baltimore Sun*, Nov. 2, 1993.

Comment on the "Class Struggle Today"

Sam Webb's two-part article, "The Class Struggle Today," must be welcomed as an important contribution. I want to say at the outset that, like Webb, I agree completely with the Marxist-Leninist proposition that the class struggle is the motive force of history. The alliance of the working class with the struggles against racism, national oppression and imperialism constitutes the strategic factor in world-historic developments. This is not at issue.

Marxist-Leninist science requires, nonetheless, that the specific forms in which the class struggle develops in U.S. history – a history shaped by slavery, institutionalized racism and the super-exploitation of African American workers – must be grasped and assessed in their full meaning and significance.

In this regard, I believe the article fails to develop fully the relationships between class exploitation and racial and national oppression. Moreover, the organic relationship between the African American question in particular, but the national question in general, to the class struggle is not adequately dealt with.

Comrade Webb is absolutely correct when he says, "At the heart of the struggle for democracy and class unity in our country is the fight against racism and for full equality." He emphasizes this point by citing Marx's formulation that chattel slavery, in "disfiguring a part of the republic," tended to paralyze every "independent movement of the workers." Because of this, Marx concluded, "Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where it in the black is branded." Webb concludes, "And as in Marx's time, so too today, labor in the white skin has a special responsibility to be in the forefront of the struggle against racism and for full equality." Exactly!

However, Webb should have given greater weight to the Marxist proposition concerning labor in the Black and white skin. He does not draw out the main point: that is, while "labor in the white skin has a special responsibility," the deeper and dialectically more significant point is that "labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where it in the Black is branded." Emphasis belongs on the concept *emancipate*. What is significant in Marx's formulation is the mutual emancipation of Black and

white labor. Hence, white labor has a material class interest in the elimination of racial oppression.

Without this emphasis, it is possible to interpret "special responsibility" in ways that could suggest that only African Americans have a material interest in ending racism. Marx's point, applied in the current context, argues for the unbreakable link between the general system of exploitation and the special system of super-exploitation based upon racism. Hence, labor in the white skin cannot emancipate itself from exploitation as long as labor in the Black skin is super-exploited. Without this recognition, to use Marx's concept, the class struggle is paralyzed.

Webb's central point in the section on "Diversity and Difference" is to rebut the charge that Marxists are "class reductionist." He asserts, "Used properly, class relations are pliant, concrete, and reflect real relationships in society. They interact with and leave their imprint on other social relations; help to illuminate the inner multi-layered texture of societies and how they change; and impart a militant revolutionary character to the working-class movement." This way of putting matters is important and essentially correct.

However, in going from this point to formulating his understanding of the relationship of the African American struggle to the class struggle, he says, "To deny the unique role of class relations, it is not enough to say other relations exist or that people have other identities or experience other kinds of oppression." I find two problems here. Webb is right to say that to "deny the unique role of class relations" is to miss the point that class relations "make capitalism what it is" and that "the abolition of exploitation is a precondition for the complete elimination of other forms of oppression." However, if, as Webb posits, "class relations are pliant, concrete, and reflect real relationships in society," it is impossible to speak of class relationships separate and apart from relationships of racial oppression.

While I do not wish "to deny the unique role of class relations," at the level of concrete material relationships of production to acknowledge "the unique role of class relations" is not enough.

Material relationships of production, as Webb says, are "pliant, concrete and reflect real relation-

ships in society." From the standpoint of U.S. capitalism's mode of production, it is not possible to speak of class relationships separate and apart from the racist division of labor and super-exploitation. What I wish to assert, in the strongest terms, is the dialectical interconnections and interpenetrations of class exploitation and racial oppression; a point not fully developed in Webb's article. As such it is not possible to comprehensively understand one without the other.

Moreover, the capitalist mode of production developed in the U.S. based upon this unique and essential relationship. Furthermore, one falls into the trap of "class reductionism" if the dialectic of exploitation and super-exploitation, class and race oppression are not properly understood. In this respect, the structures of class exploitation and super-exploitation and the structures of institutionalized racism are two inseparable aspects of the same historically determined mode of production.

Webb is partially right when he says, "the abolition of exploitation is a precondition for the complete elimination of other forms of oppression." However, what is missing, and what is implicit in Marx's formulation concerning labor in the Black and white skin, is that the struggle to abolish institutionalized racism is a condition for the complete elimination of exploitation, as the complete elimination of exploitation lays the material foundations to abolish institutionalized racism. It was the Socialist Labor Party's failure to recognize this which led to their specific forms of "class reductionism," and ultimate sterility in terms of the fight for full racial equality. The SLP believed that only after defeating exploitation should the white workers concern themselves with racial equality. This remains the position of right-wing social democrats in the labor movement today.

Marx in *Capital* and Du Bois in *Black Reconstruction* placed slavery and exploitation within the context of the capitalist mode of production. As such, class relationships were prefigured from the very beginning by slavery. This understanding takes on added significance in the state monopoly stage of capitalist development. Lenin showed that state monopoly capitalism is not only the highest stage of capitalist development, it is its final stage – as he defined it, *moribund* and stagnant capitalism. It is the stage where the crisis of capitalism becomes systemic and irreversible. Racism and colonialism become even more indispensable to the system of capitalism

than during chattel slavery which occurred during the stage of pre-monopoly capitalism.

Webb is, therefore, correct to point to the \$80 billion of extra profit made annually from the super-exploitation of African American workers. What must be equally emphasized is that though African Americans make up close to 13 percent of the total population they are about 25 percent of the industrial and manufacturing proletariat. They are the most highly proletarianized nationality in the population, as well as the most highly exploited.

Study after study, as well as practical experience, show that African American workers impart a high level of class consciousness to all mass movements they participate in. But more, the long and undiminished battles that African Americans have waged for equality have developed within the African American people's struggles a deeper sense of the systemic nature of both class and racial oppression. Their militant experience, tactical sophistication and class consciousness resonates to all other areas of class and democratic struggles. Because of this, they remain the targets of special repressive treatment by the most reactionary sections of monopoly capital.

Modern-day racism is the ideology of monopoly capital. While slavery disfigured only part of the republic, today racism disfigures the entire nation. This disfigurement is entangled in the systemic and structural crises of capitalism. Therefore, a scientific working-class understanding of race and class at the current stage of capitalist development is crucial to developing proper strategic goals and tactics for uniting struggles, and to developing programs and slogans for the immediate, mid- and long-term.

There is another issue. Webb is correct in understanding that the African American question is a special question, not a separate question. We must, however, go further and ask: A special question of what type? Special questions are those which require special attention and special emphasis. Without such special attention the working class movement is hobbled. Acknowledging this much, however, still does not go far enough and does not fully answer the issue before us. The African American question is a special question, but Party policy and theory has elevated the African American question also as a central question. In my view it has to be argued that the African American question assumes centrality to the class struggle and democracy generally.

The significant point is that the African American people's oppression has played and continues to play a central role in the development of the U.S. capitalist mode of production and the form that class relationships have assumed in the U.S. Also the particular form of U.S. racism and the ideological relationships which it spawns takes on particularly brutal anti-African American form. Moreover, the historic role of the African American people in the struggles against racism and for democracy plays a central part in the building of class unity and class consciousness. In the end, real class consciousness is not possible without rejecting racism in general and anti-African American racism in particular.

Class consciousness and scientific understanding is significantly deepened by recognizing the special intensity and barbarity of the oppression of African Americans, the high proletarian class composition of African Americans, their high level of class and democratic consciousness, and the central role from slavery to the present their oppression has played in the development of the U.S. capitalist mode of production.

On this basis, the Communist Party has argued that it is in the class interest of all workers to defeat this special system of exploitation and oppression. But more, whites are duty bound, in their own class interest, to assume a leading role in this fight. For this reason Black-white unity still assumes a strategic significance to all struggles. And the emancipation of the working class as a whole – Black, Brown, Red, Yellow and white – is not possible without this recognition. What Marx understood at the time of slavery must be grasped in all of its fullness today, that the specific and more intense racism directed at African Americans disfigures the nation and the class struggle.

Indeed, the concept of centrality has become an issue of some controversy in recent years. I, however, reject those concepts of centrality which separate the struggle against racism from the class struggle or which elevate the struggle for equality and against racism above the class struggle, or those which fail to see the working-class dimension of the African American people but only its multi-class character. Yet, controversy is not a reason to abandon concepts and theories, but provides challenges to deepen their meaning under new conditions.

The Marxist treatment of the centrality question is implicit in Marx's political and economic writings on the United States. It was theoretically advanced

in the works of W.E.B. Du Bois, William L. Patterson and Henry Winston. Du Bois brilliantly argued in *The Souls of Black Folk* that the problem of the 20th century is the problem of the color line. Du Bois's point was that the struggles against racial oppression and colonialism were crucial to all emancipatory struggles of the 20th century. He understood very early the modern system of imperialism, and the indispensability of forging an alliance between the working class and oppressed peoples, a conclusion that drew him to Marxism-Leninism and finally into the Communist Party.

Lenin took a similar stance. He would, on the basis of his analysis of imperialism, reformulate Marx and Engels' call of "Workers of the World Unite" to, under conditions of imperialism, "Workers and Oppressed Peoples Unite" – reflecting the unavoidable dialectical link between the struggles against the color line and the class struggle. By 1935, in *Black Reconstruction*, Du Bois scientifically validated the centrality of the African American question in the struggles against slavery and for democracy.

Significantly, however, it was Henry Winston, writing in *Strategy for a Black Agenda* (1973), who insisted, in keeping with the intent of both Lenin and Du Bois, that the solution to the problem of the 20th century was multiracial, multinational class unity, the unity of the working class and the African American people (the labor/African American alliance) and the unity of all racially oppressed and the working class in the struggles for democracy and socialism. Unity in struggle lays the foundations, Winston held, to deepen democracy, advance to an anti-monopoly coalition and government and socialism. For Winston, therefore, solving "the problem of the 20th century" is in the class interest of all workers.

However, by elevating the question of the class interest of white workers to the fore, responsibility and duty are placed within the context of the class struggle. While for white masses the struggle against racism is a moral imperative of the first order, this recognition should not lead to the all-too-common mistake of separating class interest and moral duty. Such a separation has often led to associating success and failures in the fight against racism to individual acts and one's personal convictions and commitments. Such reliance upon proving one's individual "purity" and "commitment" outside of a class commitment, and a commitment to mass struggle, is the primary source of paternalism

and an ultimate retreat from the struggle altogether. In fact, a strong case could be made that paternalism turns the whole struggle against racism on its head.

Winston and Patterson placed the African American question within a Leninist framework. Of particular importance was Claudia Jones's article, "For an End to the Neglect of Negro Women," which connected the centrality issue to the emancipation of Black women. Du Bois's petitioning the U.N. in 1948, charging the U.S. Government with committing crimes against humanity in its treatment of African Americans, elevated the question of centrality to the international arena and the struggle for peace.

Patterson's and Robeson's petition in 1950 to the U.N. charging the U.S. Government with genocide against African Americans furthered the internationalization of the African American question. They too argued that the crimes of U.S. racism constituted a threat to world peace. At the same time the theoretical and tactical approaches developed by Patterson, Robeson, Winston and Du Bois helped to lay the foundations for what became the modern-day civil rights movement. Although Cold War repression has up until recently prevented a full appreciation of their role in giving theoretical and tactical leadership focus to the civil rights movement, scholars such as Gerald Horne, David Levering Lewis, Charles Hamilton and Taylor Branch have uncovered this vital role.

Winston, by the early 1970s, believed that the Party was once again prepared to make a strategic contribution to advancing the struggle for full equality. He sought to theoretically and tactically elevate the anti-imperialist dimension of the African American struggle. He proposed the formation of a broad anti-imperialist movement based in the African American community which would build solidarity with the liberation movements in Africa. As he placed the ideological and organizational form of such a movement, it would be national in form and anti-imperialist in content. The National Anti-Imperialist Movement in Solidarity with African Liberation became the organizational expression of Winston's thinking. The National Anti-Imperialist Movement in Solidarity With African Liberation in December 1975 presented more than 100,000 signatures to the U.N. calling for the expulsion of the South African regime from the U.N. and in support of international sanctions.

Winston's position on Africa generally, and

South Africa in particular, was rooted in the work of Du Bois, Robeson and Patterson in the 1940s, and especially the Council on African Affairs. Moreover, it fell within the context of Du Bois's notion of the central role of Africa to imperialism's world system, and the special role of anti-imperialist solidarity with Africa to the fight against U.S. imperialism. Winston believed that the solidarity of the U.S. working class with super-exploited Black labor in South Africa, in the struggle against apartheid, was another way of building unity of the U.S. working class against racism and the super-exploitation of African American labor in the U.S. This form of anti-imperialist solidarity had a double edge. Also Winston saw South Africa as a special case: a nation where all the imperialist nations concentrated investment to take advantage of its vast resources and cheap labor.

Winston's legacy on this question demands more study and explanation, but it must be understood as a brilliant extension of Leninism under the particular conditions of the U.S., with special reference to the African American struggle, its dialectical links to the class struggle and to the anti-imperialist struggle worldwide. As such, any discussion of the issue of centrality is well served by referencing Winston's contribution.

One last point is useful to understanding this question. That is the issue of ideological relations. Ideological relations are the complex set of contending ideas, philosophies, ideologies, legal theories and so forth that emerge from class relationships. The fight against racism assumes a central place in the struggle to advance the ideology of the working class and democratic ideas generally. It is possible at times of stalemate of the two major classes, or when the ruling class is dominant in most areas, to make important gains in shifting ideological relations to the side of democratic forces and the working class. In this sense, the fight against racism is an important arena. Racism, which is so important to the U.S. ruling class is also its Achilles heel, its weakest point - hence a sharpened fight against racism has the affect of weakening its ideological position and strengthening that of the working class.

Having said all of this, I still believe that, as always, Sam Webb makes an important contribution to defending and extending our Party's class ideological position. □

Tony Monteiro

The Work of Nations: Preparing for 21st Century Capitalism, by Robert Reich, 1992, New York: Random House, 328 pp., \$12 paperback.

Robert Reich offers an interesting subtitle for his latest book, *The Work of Nations*. He calls it "Preparing for 21st Century Capitalism." The book takes on more interest and importance in the context of the 1992 election and the defeat of Bush – today, he is not just a Harvard professor. As Secretary of Labor, he is considered a force within the Clinton Administration. The news media lists Reich as the spokesman for liberal and progressive ideas. Many in the leadership of the trade union movement have seen him as the symbol of a new outlook in Washington, and the leader who will speak for them within this Democratic administration.

What is he – a promoter of new hi-tech 21st century capitalism or a friend of labor? This article will first examine Reich's thought. Then we will look at him as Secretary of Labor and consider whether the politician offers solutions for U.S. workers today.

What will you find in Reich's writings? You won't discover a call for action to right society's wrongs or improve the world. Instead you will be told, essentially, that life in the United States is going to get worse for many – perhaps most – of its people. Furthermore, and this is the main point, there is really nothing to be done about it.

Reich is an academic economist. He is not one of the stars of the academic world, a Samuelson or a Milton Friedman, but he is a very successful and well-paid professor. He is a new member in a long line of apologists for and justifiers of capitalism. Marx called them "vulgar political economists."

As a result, the Secretary of Labor's thinking revolves around two main pillars. The first pillar is that capitalism will last forever; it simply represents the way things are. The second pillar is the defense of a way of life that rewards him and makes him very comfortable. Reich does have a sense of justice, and he likes the idea of improving the lives of working people. But he never contemplates any change that could restructure or revolutionize the society he so handsomely benefits from.

The professor provides an interesting discussion

of the foolishness of trying to help workers by paying off the corporations. He documents the degree to which U.S.-based corporations have spread their production facilities around the world. "In fact, American-owned firms were doing so much abroad, and foreign-owned so much here, that by 1990 American consumers intent on improving the nation's trade balance would have done better to buy a Honda than a Pontiac Le Mans." He believes the government should promote public education and rebuild the infrastructure. He criticizes the Reagan/Bush neglect of public investment in these areas.

However there is a problem. In his heart, he doesn't respect or understand the role of working people in creating wealth, and doesn't understand who really does the "work of nations."

For example, his analysis of our economic life splits society into three groups – categories that conveniently negate the actual class structure of capitalist society. The first of Reich's mythical groups is made up of routine production workers. They do repetitive tasks to produce goods traded in world commerce. This group includes "traditional blue-collar jobs" along with "routine supervisory work performed by low and middle managers." This sector is declining in size, income levels and job prospects. Since virtually anyone can do this work, it is argued, wages will tend to fall to a minimum worldwide scale.

The second contains "in-person service workers." These workers also do repetitive tasks, but these must be done face to face with the consumer. Some examples he gives are "waiters, janitors, cashiers, child-care workers, auto mechanics, and security guards." Their wages will tend to stagnate or fall slowly, since these jobs cannot be shipped overseas.

Finally we have the symbolic analysts. This group carries out "problem-solving, problem-identifying, strategic-brokering activities." Instead of manipulating things they manipulate symbols. This group includes engineers, consultants, planners designers, professors, lawyers. It competes on the world market, but its U.S. members do so on favorable terms, because of – according to Reich – experience, creativity, a fostering environment and economies of scale. This group, says the author, can expect a good life.

There is nothing new in this kind of analysis. It is a typical example of capitalist academic thinking, what Marx called "vulgar economic" thought. But what is wrong with it?

Reich's approach covers up the central point of our economic life – the confrontation between labor and capital. You might ask where are the capitalists here? They are included among the symbolic analysts, while their loot, the profit of exploitation, appears in a laundered form as the "rewards" of "symbolic thought."

The writer sees his book as a description of changes in the U.S. and world economies. He thinks that he is describing how these changes affect the context for people's struggle to improve their lives. However, his arguments in fact portray changes in working people's living conditions as being inevitable, brought on by the scientific and technological revolution rather than increasing exploitation. The effect is to cover up the decay of U.S. capitalism and deny the responsibility of the capitalist class.

Reference to an easier future, one that avoids class conflict, that is "post-industrial," is a recognized trend in bourgeois sociology. Robert Reich draws on and uses many of their ideas. The post-industrialists are important because they like to call on traditional U.S. ideas about progress. They promote concepts like that the United States is the "land of opportunity," and that somehow, life will automatically get better for us all. For example, much of his ideas echo the writings of Daniel Bell, who actually invented the term "post-industrial," and who, 20 years ago, had already presented many of the ideas Reich claims as his own.

Bell's ideas are worth reviewing here in their original form because Reich simply assumes many of Bell's conclusions. Bell's "classic" work, *The Coming of Post-industrial Society*, starts with a simple set of facts: The fraction of U.S. workers in the manufacturing sector of the economy has tended to fall over the last 35 years. The fraction of the work force with formal and technical training has increased dramatically over the last 50 years.

It is clear that both of these facts are related to the scientific and technological revolution (STR) which vastly increases the productivity of labor and requires a more highly trained work force. It is also true that the STR has led to making the development of science itself an important branch of the economy. Does this mean a fundamental change in

the relationship of labor and capital? For Daniel Bell it does. He eventually concludes that:

The decisive social change taking place in our time is the subordination of the economic function to the political order ... In the new society which is now emerging, individual private property is losing its social purpose to control or direct production.

He is saying that, since science is a fundamental aspect of the modern production process, and science develops through the creative work of people, private property – capital – is no longer the decisive force in our economy. Capital has been replaced by science/knowledge as the controlling factor in the economy.

This is exactly the same argument Reich makes. What is wrong with it? Both confuse capital as the physical means of producing goods with capital as a social relationship. For example, Reich has noticed the increase of exploitation in our society, that the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. How does he explain this? It's because poor people aren't getting an education and since they don't have degrees, they don't get good jobs. He doesn't consider that it takes money to get an education, nor does he think of the effect on wages when the number of highly-educated workers increases.

The writer devotes a large part of the book to showing how the structure of the U.S. economy is changing. Better paid industrial jobs are being replaced by de-skilled service jobs and unrewarded personal service such as teaching or nursing. Much of what he sees is the product of political change: the assault upon the trade union movement, shifting employment from city to country, building new industries among unorganized workers. In many cases, simply because the workers in these jobs are underpaid they are seen as unskilled. For example, Reich would consider a daycare worker as an "in-person service worker," while a college professor is a "symbolic analyst." Is the difference here really the difference in the nature of the job, or in the value placed upon raising children in today's U.S. society?

Reich's distance from the issues that confront the people of the U.S. is shown by his position on racism – he doesn't have one – and by considering the impact of his ideas on African Americans and other people of color in the U.S.

For example his splitting of intellectual workers from the rest of the working class leads to under-

valuing the creativity and brain power that is required for any job that is developed through a life in the work force, at all "skill" levels. He, along with the futurists Alvin Toffler and Daniel Bell, is creating an opposition between "creative thinking," "symbolic" activities, and working either with "your hands" and/or through interacting with people.

This sets up a contradiction between intellectual and physical work. Reich's view of "intelligence," or the ability to manipulate symbols, makes it out to be an abstract quality with no real content. This accepts the racist and anti-working class theories of intelligence that are expressed in IQ testing, school tracking and much employment testing. That is not to suggest there are not intellectuals among African Americans and other oppressed peoples - rather that such theories of "intelligence" in fact promote that false notion and too often carry a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Reich sets up a world in which education and theoretical training are the only route to a decent life. Those who don't have this background will deserve their failure. He ignores the fact that U.S. schools are segregated and unequal, and he never considers, nor mentions the impact of his projections on African Americans, Latinos and Asians. Such a line of argument obviously is an obstacle to the struggle for equality.

In a country in which the racially and nationally oppressed are concentrated in industrial and service jobs, he offers to explain why these jobs are underpaid and why the people who hold them are poor. It's because that is the way the world is. By never mentioning racism and discrimination, by ignoring its effect on the U.S. work force, he suggests that inequality of income results from rational economic forces.

His thinking is fundamentally anti-working class. His analysis is based on splitting the working class. It pits intellectual workers, the "symbolic analysts," against other workers. At the same time, he has no appreciation of the creativity of all workers, or the value of their labor. In a sense, for him, the worth of a person's work is reduced to its price.

His understanding of the economy is critically flawed. Much of his thinking sees effects and considers them as causes. He sees that the rich are getting richer and that working people are getting poorer, and he thinks the reason for this is that the value of the workers' labor is falling, while in reality the exploitation of labor has increased. He doesn't see at

all how trade union organization and struggle laid the foundation for increased U.S. living standards in the '40s, '50s, and '60s. In the same way, he doesn't consider that unorganized "symbolic analysts" could be as underpaid as unorganized ditch diggers.

As a defender of capitalism, he will never take any action that hurts big business. A basic fact about the Clinton Administration is that it wants to be seen as pro-worker, as the friend of the people, but it won't fight for the people. For example, the administration goes all out for NAFTA, but barely lifts its hand to back anti-scab legislation. Robert Reich himself calls for an increase in the minimum wage, but only to \$4.50 an hour. Then he wants it indexed to the rate of inflation. How well do you think a family can live on \$4.50 an hour? How much advanced education can it afford for its children? But even this minimal reform has been put off until next year.

What about his role as "friend" of the labor movement? It is increasingly clear - especially after the NAFTA fight - that the Clinton Administration has anything but friendly designs for labor. The question becomes, is the administration buckling in to pressure from the right, or is it just showing its own true colors? The profoundly anti-working class ideas revealed in Reich's book suggest the latter.

It would be very dangerous for unions and their leadership to relax the struggle to defend workers' living conditions. In fact he is not sure whether unions are needed at all. At a recent conference, he stated, "The jury is still out on whether the traditional union is necessary for the new workplace." He has been speaking out on the role of labor, of how we need a better-educated, better-treated work force, yet these policies have run into trouble with big business and other conservatives. Their aim is to continue the assault on the trade union movement, while the Clinton administration offers a "liberal" compromise. "Unions are O.K. where they are, and where they are not it is not clear yet what sort of organization should represent workers," says Reich.

A study of his work shows no understanding of the role of the union movement or collective struggle. Reich's conception of the segmented working class is divisive and dangerous. He shows no understanding of how racism and other forms of discrimination shape the lives of workers. Watch out. This man is no friend or ally. □

Mead Walker

For World Communist Unity

The National Committee of the Communist Party USA sends you warmest regards and best wishes. We note with pleasure the growing influence and prestige of many fraternal parties in a number of countries as well as the emergence of other parties from long, difficult years of underground existence into legality. It is with joy that we hail the revival of a party press in many countries and the jubilee anniversary of many time-tested parties. We rejoice in the vitality and growth of parties whom the bourgeoisie had declared dead only a short time ago.

We are immensely proud of our brothers and sisters in parties throughout the world who remain loyal to the basic principles of our common liberating philosophy, and remain steadfast in the face of tragic setbacks and ruling class repression. We take pride in the militant initiatives of fraternal parties fighting to defend the people's living standards and democratic rights against the rapacious policies and onslaught of the transnational corporations headquartered in the United States and other centers of world capitalism. We share with you a commitment to further develop Marxism-Leninism in a creative and flexible way in this complex and fast-changing contemporary world. Recent developments in the socialist countries and elsewhere reaffirm this fundamental need.

We are also well aware that our own imperialism is creating new dangers to peace, social progress and national independence worldwide. U.S. intervention and interference in Russia, Yugoslavia, Somalia, and Haiti – shrouded in demagogic phrases like “aggressive humanitarian interventionism,” “make the world safe for democracy,” and “extending free markets” – are the most visible and dangerous signs of the aggressive and racist character of the Clinton Administration and U.S. imperialism. U.S. imperialism's appetite for world domination has been further whetted by the collapse of the Soviet Union.

We are mindful, too, of the fact that the countries of socialism, and especially socialist Cuba and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, are still targets of our own imperialism.

We are also aware that the new world economic order leaves entire regions and nations burdened with mountains of debt and drives them into dire poverty. At the same time, the main centers of imperialism, with the assistance of supranational, imperialist-dominated institutions like the IMF and the World Bank, drain these countries of their resources and financial reserves.

And, finally, we know that the worldwide economic crisis, spawned by capitalism's inner contradictions and intensified by the restructuring process of the transnational corporations, throws hundreds of millions of people out of work, corrodes democratic rights, and aggravates racism and neo-colonialism. Moreover, it sharpens inter-imperialist rivalry, manifested especially in the formation of competing regional, even hemispheric, economic blocs.

This is, however, but one side of the coin. Coincident with all this is a fresh upsurge in the class and people's struggles. Millions are fighting to curb the aggressive actions of imperialism. Efforts by the transnational corporations to shift the economic crisis onto the shoulders of the people are meeting determined resistance. And the battle to restore socialism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, though difficult, uneven, and protracted, appears to be moving into a new phase.

In all these heroic struggles are found millions of Communists. It is against this background of new dangers and mounting struggles that we appeal for a renewed striving for world Communist unity.

We welcome the regional meetings and international symposia and forums which have taken place recently at the initiative of some parties, and see them as steps forward on the road to a new level of cohesion and unity of Communist and Workers parties. At the same time, we also feel that splendid conferences limited to regions and even international forums on general questions of theory or urgent topics of the day do not match the level of Communist unity that the new global realities make imperative. Given the new political situation which has evolved on a global scale, they fall short of what is now needed.

We hope you share this conviction, even as we

all agree that the forums and conferences have served a constructive purpose and should continue to take place. At the same time, we do not presume to hold a blueprint regarding how to strengthen the unity of our world movement. In fact, it is our hope that this letter will stimulate collective discussion and thinking within our movement along these lines. Some questions which come to our mind are:

What are some of the immediate issues around which common agreement and action could arise? For example, why shouldn't Communist parties everywhere vigorously protest the persecution of and attacks against Communists in Russia and elsewhere?

What are some basic questions that deserve an exchange of views? For example: the tactical and strategic questions in the struggle against the emerging regional imperialist setups in Asia, Europe, and the Americas; the tactical and strategic questions in the struggle against world economic conglomerates; the new problems of countries and peoples fighting for economic development and political independence in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the domination of the global economy by the transnational corporations and banks; the most effective methods to combat the Clinton Administration's "new aggressive humanitarianism;" the nature and causes of the opportunism that eroded

some of the socialist societies; the nature and the roots of the ideological weaknesses which manifested themselves in recent years within our movement.

What form or forms would strengthen the cohesion of the world Communist movement? How can the Communist press and the use of modern communications play a bigger role? What was positive and what was negative about past experience; what lessons should we draw?

As we survey the direction and tempo of events, we believe that time is of the essence. Our appeal, dear comrades, is for an international discussion – in letters, articles, exchange of visits, etc. – directed to the practical questions of the further strengthening of world Communist unity.

To be sure, there are obstacles and difficulties. But they are not so great that they cannot be surmounted and resolved by our collective thoughts and ideas, our mutual exchange of views, and above all, our political will to get the job done. We believe that the future of our parties and socialism, into the next century, depends on what we do now. It is up to all of us, together.

With Communist greetings and best regards,

Gus Hall, Chairman
National Committee, CPUSA

Bachtell continued from page 27

The Giuliani administration faces a \$2.3 billion budget deficit. He has promised to deal with the deficit regardless of the economic pain it will cause. And it seems the only way the administration envisions dealing with the increased pain is with more police repression. The first act of the new Police Commissioner William Bratton will be to clamp down on the jobless youth who clean car windows at street corners for spare change. And Giuliani adamantly defended the police after the Harlem mosque incident and the killing of an African American teenager in Brooklyn.

The ruling class has now embarked on a campaign to establish a new framework for solving the crisis of the city. The framework includes massive privatization, curbing the power and influence of the municipal unions, replacing welfare with "workfare," stepping up police repression and cutting taxes for business and the wealthy.

Giuliani is invoking the memory of Fiorello La

Guardia in developing his new policies. But to really emulate La Guardia, perhaps he should study the late mayor's policies more carefully. He will discover that La Guardia responded to the mass movements of the '30s demanding jobs and relief from the Great Depression. Instead of anti-working class solutions, he helped carry out the Works Project Administration which created thousands of jobs through massive construction of bridges, roads, housing and schools.

The ability to block the right wing forces and move the new administration in an anti-corporate direction depends on how united the working class and people's movements are. The establishment of a broad based, labor-led, multi-racial Save Our City coalition is urgently needed. Greater Black-Brown-white unity will be built on the basis of struggle in realizing a working-class program for jobs with affirmative action, better schools and public services, housing, health care and civilian control of the police. As in La Guardia's day, the working-class movement with the active leadership of the Communist Party, can be decisive. □

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