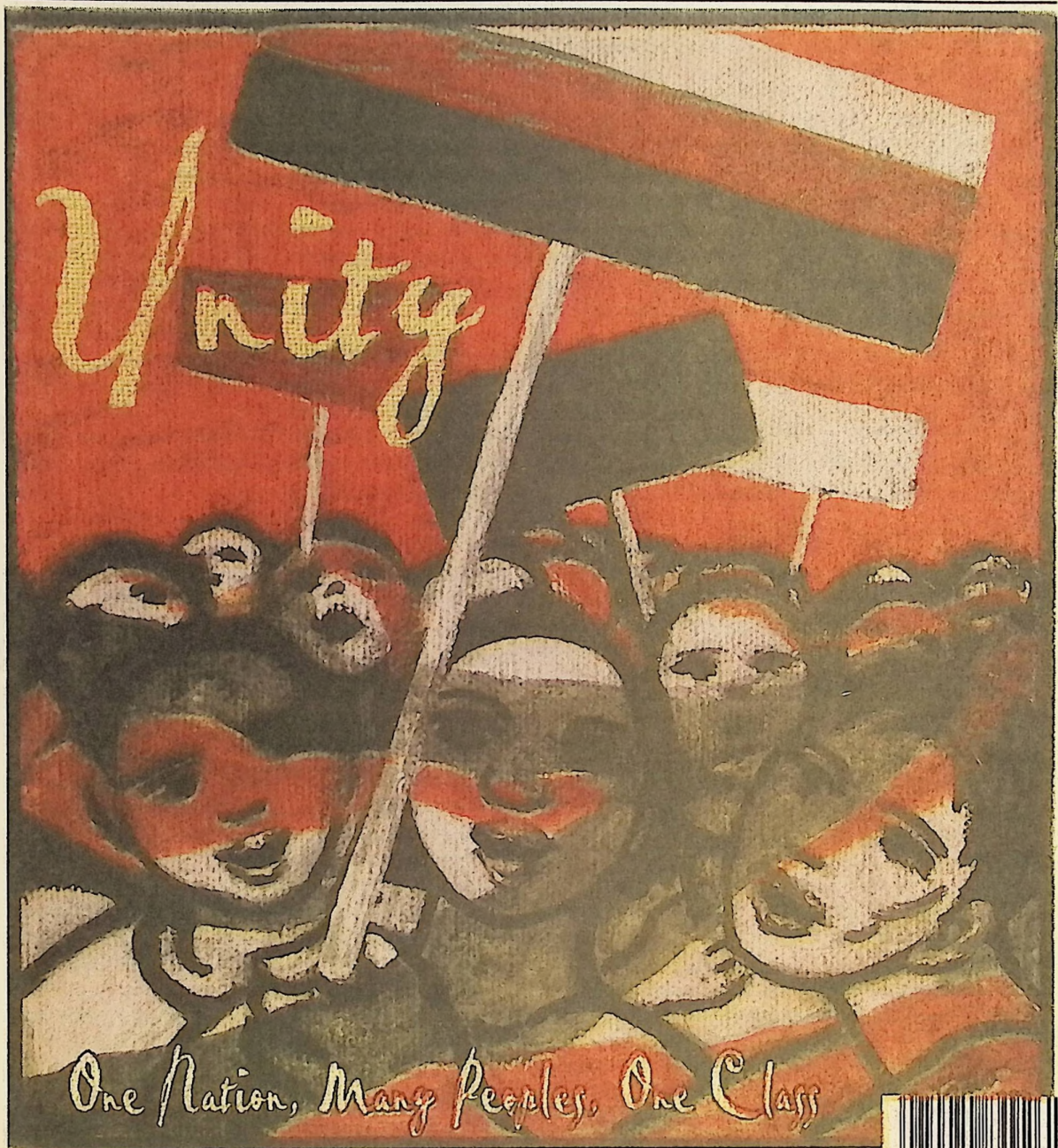


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Building the Communist Party in the Workplace

George Meyers

I think the moment has come when the question of a mass Communist Party has been put on the stage of U.S. history by the objective conditions in our country. Therefore I propose that it has to be the number one point on our agenda today.

Gus Hall

After extensive discussion the proposal quoted above by Comrade Gus Hall was unanimously and enthusiastically adopted at our National Committee meeting. Does this mean conditions are such that a mass Party is about to drop in our laps? Not by a long shot! What it means is that with hard work on our part, building a mass Party is now possible. For our Labor Commission this is a challenge to begin building a mass Party at the point of production – in the shops.

Building the Party in the shops is not the same as recruiting in the communities among the unemployed and people on welfare. We have had excellent results from tabling on the street, E-Mail and phone calls in response to Gus Hall's appearance on TV. Over 100 people a week requesting membership in the Party and the YCL continue to pour in, but among them, relatively few factory workers.

This is additional proof to what we have known all along – that building the Party in the shops is a more complex process that requires different tactics. Consistent distribution of the *PWW* and other Party material at plant gates, union meetings and in working-class communities helps lay the groundwork. However, decisive to recruiting in industry is direct contact – face-to-face discussions. This is a fundamental concept for our comrades in the shops and in full-time union work. As a result of the anti-Communist hysteria created after World War II, many, but not all of our older comrades got away from this key method of recruiting and it is a new concept for many of our recent recruits.

While Big Business animosity toward us contin-

ues unabated, there has been a dramatic shift in thinking in the ranks of the working class as a whole. The lack of confidence in the system to provide steady jobs at decent wages, the loss of hard-won economic and political gains, the continuous decline in living standards, and the ever widening gap between the rich and the working class are all factors contributing to an increase in radicalization and a growing questioning of the capitalist system itself.

This decisive shift at the grass roots has thrust our Party into the very heart of the class struggle in the U.S. A most dramatic expression is found in the trade union movement. The unanimous vote removing the disgraceful anti-Communist clause in the AFL-CIO constitution, the non-exclusion policies in AFL-CIO leadership, and the widespread acceptance of the *People's Weekly World* in the trade unions are all examples of this.

We recently had a number of meetings with steel, auto and Teamsters, building trades and other workers in Ohio and Connecticut. All were active unionists committed to policies of class struggle trade unionism and completely reject such ideas as "labor-management teams."

Of course we discussed work in the trade unions, but primarily we discussed socialism. Every one of these workers gladly accepted copies of the *Communist Manifesto* and at least one other piece of basic Marxist material such as *Wage, Labor and Capital* or *Value, Price and Profit* along with Comrade Hall's latest pamphlet and *Why Join the Communist Party?* by myself. All but two agreed to take into consideration our invitation to join the Party – since that time three have joined.

Such experiences show that face to face discussions with fellow workers about socialism and the Party is the key to building a mass party in the shop.

How to begin is the question for some of us. Well, involvement in everyday struggles is the first step. Along with that many years of experience has shown that the use of the *PWW* is one of the best openers. As a starter we want to suggest that everyone of our shop comrades who are not yet doing so, get a weekly bundle of five copies of the *People's*

George Meyers is chairman of the Labor Commission, CPUSA.

Weekly World and personally give or sell them to people with whom we work at the job and/or in the union, while having a beer, during a social visit, etc. Some comrades are already finding this a very good way to begin discussion on the need of a revolutionary change to socialism. In addition some are using a bundle of 25 copies of the *PWW* with good results.

But we don't want to leave it at that. What role does the *PWW* itself have to play in helping to recruit workers? It already has an excellent reputation as the champion of class struggle trade unionism. But does it deal adequately with the question of the need for a revolutionary transition to socialism? Is it adequate for a revolutionary political party devoted to advancing the cause of socialism?

What we are asking for are ideas on how our already excellent paper can be even more effective. And the paper needs more than suggestions – it needs concrete help from all of us, articles, news stories, analysis of individual struggles from a class angle, letters to the editor and so on. It won't be long until we have to begin thinking about a paper that comes out twice a week.

Besides the paper, what other kinds of tools are we using? We are beginning a mass distribution of Gus Hall's magnificent report to our recent National Committee meeting. We have such pamphlets as *Why Join the Communist Party?* which is proving useful. We should sell, loan or give Gus Hall's classic book *Class Struggle USA*, and William Foster's *Pages from a Worker's Life* to some people. During this 150th anniversary of the *Communist Manifesto*, we should guarantee that every worker possible gets a copy. Betty Smith of International Publishers is getting a lot more printed.

As workers come closer to the Communist Party, they will want to get *Political Affairs*. We also need to distribute such classics as *Left-Wing Communism, An Infantile Disorder* by Lenin. But there is not nearly enough material. That is first of all the responsibility of the National Center to correct.

Some districts have had great success inviting non-Party workers to Labor Commission meetings, open club meetings and even open District Committee meetings. Fund raisers honoring prominent trade union leaders have proven enormously successful.

But there is a lot more that comrades not in the shops can do. That's where industrial concentration comes in. Every member of the Party should be con-

sciously seeking out workers they meet in working-class communities, parent-teacher meetings – any place that workers gather. Here's where the building of grassroots labor-community coalitions around all sorts of issues come in – from organizing the unorganized to saving a hospital or fire house.

Finally, I want to raise the question of discussion groups. That may be a more appropriate description than "classes." Discussion groups involving Party and non-Party workers, from a handful in a particular workplace to city and district-wide discussions for one or two hours on a weekend.

I think we should agree right here to a national labor school. I would propose it be held the second week in September, in the Cleveland area, and for a week. Setting a date now will give some comrades who would like to participate a chance to arrange vacations etc.

As I mentioned earlier, building a mass Party is hard work. It will not happen spontaneously. It takes practical initiative in addition to creative tactics and sound politics.

Some of the initiatives that I just outlined, I hope, will set into motion the process – and I want to emphasize that it is a process – of building the Party among shop workers. Perhaps you have other suggestions to bring our ideology to shop workers and shop workers into our Party – if you do, let's discuss them.

But let's also resolve to conclude this discussion with some specific Party-building initiatives that all of us will struggle to implement. Perhaps not everything we do will bear fruit, but that is to be expected.

The main thing is that we get started, that we take initiatives to build the Party among shop workers. Otherwise we are going to miss a unique opportunity – so unique we would have to go back more than a half century to find a similar moment in which workers thought patterns overlapped in so many ways with out class-based outlook.

If we are able to meet this challenge not only will our Party grow among the main revolutionary force in our society, but the multi-racial, multi-national, male-female working class and its allies will be better able to meet the new economic and political problems at this juncture and in the future. □

An Essay Towards a Party Program for African American Equality

Dee Myles

Editor's Note: The following is a work in progress. It reflects the effort to develop an article that can be the basis of the development of a program concerning the African American people and the fight for freedom and equality today. We invite your input, written or verbal, toward the finalization of this project. A broad collective exchange will ensure that we produce the very best that our Party has to offer on this question.

As our country approaches the 21st century, the African American people continue their long struggle for freedom and equality. This struggle has continued through various stages: the fight against slavery, the fight against peonage, the fight for civil rights and, the fight for human rights. At each of these stages, the struggles of the African American people have contributed to the advancement of democracy in our country overall and have merited the support of the vast majority of the American people. Today, the content of this struggle remains an unresolved question.

Today, even more than in the past, the fight of the African American people for freedom and equality can be formulated, presented, and waged in a manner that can contribute to the realignment of the balance of forces in our country to create the conditions to actually win those goals which have been fought for for so long but never truly realized.

The achievement of freedom and equality for the African American people requires a program which links the struggles of the African American people in general with the struggles of the U.S. working class. The organized core of the U.S. working class is the labor movement. The reality of the relationship between the African American people and the working class is reflected by the fact that except for a very modest fraction of small and medium-sized businessmen and women, the African American people as a whole comprise a very significant portion of the U.S. working class. United, the working class is an undefeatable force that can put an end to today's widespread poverty, hunger,

homelessness, joblessness, institutionalized racism, and judicial injustice. Together this unique force can pave the way for real social progress in our country. Together this indefatigable force is second to none and is truly the only force that can put our country firmly on the path of social change!

The African American people constitute a national question in the United States. All of the African American people are the subjects of oppression not only because of the color of our skin but also because of how we came into being as a people. The formation of the African American people has been molded by various historical processes related to the development of capitalism in this country: African captivity; English enslavement; the social processes influencing the formation and development of the United States as a nation; the denial of full citizenship rights either by law or by fact; and the process of proletarianization. The proletarianization of the African American people coincides with the immersion of the majority of the African American people in the U.S. working class through the massive migration to, and employment in, southern and northern industrial urban centers.

During the most recent period, a significant influence on the African American people has been industry shutdowns, downsizing, and the mass departure of capital. Concurrently, the organized assault of the political right has resulted in a resurgence of blatantly racist policies and practices in science, society, and government. These contemporary processes have had a devastating impact on the standard of living of the U.S. working class as a whole but have created a crisis of horrifying proportions within the African American community in particular. The ideological attempt to relieve the system of capitalism of all blame has been vicious.

In the past, the African American people suffered through indentured servitude, (as did most nonpropertied people regardless of race), slavery, and the system of peonage. The fight against slavery was fought and won through the alliance of the African American people with the burgeoning working class and northern industrialists against the Southern slavocracy. The betrayal of Reconstruction

Dee Myles is a contributor to PA.

by northern industrialists led to the virtual re-enslavement of the African American people through the creation of a peonage system of share cropping and tenant farming in the South. This was codified in the infamous "Black codes" – a series of measures like grandfather clauses, poll taxes, vagrancy laws, literacy tests etc, designed to give legal sanction to the forced suppression of African Americans in the former slave South.

As industry's demand for labor grew, a massive migration of African Americans to industrial urban centers in both the South and the North took place, culminating around 1945. Fully integrated into the U.S. working class, though subjected to racial and national oppression emanating from and enforced by the U.S. ruling class, the African American people began once again to wage battle, this time for the extension of civil rights – the full rights of citizens guaranteed by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights as well as by history and tradition. The working class gave great support to the cause of the African American people and civil rights making their winning possible. This support was dampened only by the penetration of the ruling-class ideology of racism.

RACISM: IDEOLOGY OF RULING CLASS ■ Racism is the ideology of the capitalist class, the ruling class of the U.S. Unflinching in its own class consciousness, the U.S. ruling class seeks to cultivate allegiance to itself across class lines in the white population based on white racial superiority. At the same time, the ideology of racism is used to justify the denial of equality to and the perpetuation of discrimination against African Americans. The propagation and perpetuation of racism serves to disrupt the development of working-class consciousness for both Black and white and weakens the unity between Black and white which affects the relative strength of the whole class in the class struggle. Racism also creates the illusion that social, economic, and political inequality even across racial lines is the effect of inferiority and not an inherent feature of the capitalist system.

In addition, the propagation and perpetuation of racism serve as a downward pull on the quality and condition of life of the working class as a whole. The U.S. working class includes men, women, and children, young and old, who are Black, Brown, Red, Yellow, and white. The U.S. ruling class exploits workers through the extraction of surplus

value which is the product of the workers' unpaid labor. A worker's wages never amount to the full value of work done in a day. Even under socialism, this remains true. Under capitalism, however, that value produced by the unpaid labor of workers is appropriated and hoarded by the capitalist class as profits.

The racial and national oppression of the African American worker, and other nationally oppressed workers, enables the U.S. ruling class to extract even greater profits by paying even lower wages and by confining nationally oppressed workers to the least desirable jobs. A direct result is a lower pay scale for all workers. Even the lesser quality of life of unemployed workers, a disproportionate percentage of whom are racially and nationally oppressed, lowers the wages and quality and condition of life of all workers. If white workers end up being paid less because of racism, discrimination, and unemployment, then it follows that they too are hurt by racism, discrimination, and unemployment. Hence, the concept of white workers economically benefiting from racism and discrimination is a dangerous illusion. The basic interest of white workers is in the fight against racism, discrimination, and unemployment.

BUILDING BLACK, BROWN, WHITE UNITY ■ The U.S. working class is growing increasingly multiracial. All workers Black, Brown and white are affected by racism and have an interest in combatting it. The U.S. working class must fight against the influence of racism which has created deep fissures within it, particularly deepest between Black and white, to lay the basis for genuine unity within its ranks and to frame the conditions for it as a class to come to know itself as the most powerful social force against the dominant ruling class in our society. The process of defeating and destroying the influence of racism is decisive to the working class moving into position to play its historic role of leading the charge for the advancement of social progress within our country. The fight against racism is as important to the working class as a whole as it is to the African American people as a whole. Hence, the pivotal core of working-class unity must be the unity in struggle of Black and white.

Progress has been made in building such unity. The support of the AFL-CIO for affirmative action is an important indication of this. With the existence of over 20 anti-affirmative action ballot initiatives

across the country this election year, the role of the labor movement and the African American people in defeating them will be decisive. Such activity will also strengthen the labor/African American alliance.

The growing multiracial character of the U.S. working class also demands a higher level of Black, Brown, white unity. Racism effects all racially and nationally oppressed peoples. It effects each group differently. To the extent that each recognizes and struggles against the influences of racism greater unity can be forged. The commonality of racist oppression is greater than the differences. Because of this unity between the nationally and racially oppressed in the fight against racism and for social progress is the only way to win victory over our common enemy: the U.S. ruling class and its ideology.

The peoples of Latino descent are of strategic importance to the working class movement in major cities and rural areas throughout the country. The Latino peoples are not only a large and growing segment of the U.S. population in general but of the working class segment of the population in particular. Various nationalities make up the Latino population with the Mexican and Puerto Rican peoples being the largest components. The indices of discrimination: higher rates of unemployment, lower median family income, and higher rates of poverty, are very similar to those which exist for African Americans. In some areas of the country the disunity caused by racism and the oppression of nationalities is as great between Latino and white as between Black and white. The unity of Black, Brown, and white in struggle for social progress is the understructure around which the unity of the working class as a whole must be secured.

AFRICAN AMERICAN WORKERS ■ Social and economic disparity based on class is the overriding feature of our society. When we speak of inequality, we must speak of class inequality in the first place. The true state of affairs is the rich are getting richer while the poor are increasing in number and getting poorer. The exploitation of the working class has intensified, fewer workers produce a greater amount at lower wages, and cutbacks in people-helping programs have made a bad situation worse. It is within this context that the African American question unfolds. The crushing impact of the crisis in the African American community with the added

features of racial and national oppression can be understood best in this milieu.

The overwhelming majority of the U.S. population is working class. One estimate based on 1990 data is that 7.1 percent of the African American and only 13.3 percent of the white population can be categorized as part of the capitalist class.

Before the restructuring of the economy and massive downsizing, a much greater portion of the African American population was a part of the workforce in basic industry: steel, auto, mining etc. But we have to be careful! Just because the numbers of workers in general and African American workers in particular in basic industry have decreased does not mean that the significance of African Americans as workers in basic industry has decreased. In 1960, 38 percent of the African Americans employed population in general, 54 percent of the African American employed male, and 14 percent of the African American employed female population held blue collar manufacturing jobs.

By 1970, African American females so employed had increased to 17 percent.¹ By 1992, 44.6 percent of the African American male and 14 percent of the African American female employed population held jobs in precision production, craft, and repair and as operators, fabricators, and laborers.² Based on 1996 data, 23.2 percent of the African American employed population in general held jobs in those areas.³ With the export of capital out of the country and the introduction of new technology, hundreds of thousands of jobs were lost in these industries and many workers including African Americans were forced to take lower-paying jobs, especially in the low-wage service industry, or to join the ranks of the unemployed. The data suggest that the significance of African American workers in manufacturing has suffered a quantitative not qualitative decrease.

Based on constant 1993 dollars, in 1975, the median weekly earnings of African American workers, male and female, were \$401; by 1993, it declined to \$370. The white section of the population in 1975 showed median weekly earnings of \$489, and by 1993 it declined to \$478. For African American males, the decline in median weekly earnings was from \$445 in 1975 to \$392 in 1993. For white males, the decline was from \$579 in 1975 to \$531 in 1993. African American and white females showed an increase comparing 1975 to 1993 median weekly earnings from \$334 to \$349 and \$355 to \$403, respec-

tively.⁴ The median family income for the year of 1995 was \$25,970 for African Americans and \$42,646 for whites.

DATA WEAKNESSES ▣ We need to question the statistical data made readily available by our government. We need to be concerned about methods of data collection, calculation, and interpretation. For example, if you separate out the capitalist class from the white segment of population and leave only working-class whites, what would the comparative data between Black and white reveal? It is reasonable to assume that the income gap would be less wide and the rates of poverty would be closer.

Such data would be important to exposing more sharply that all who must sell their labor power to survive are the victims of exploitation and oppression. National and racial, and gender oppression are additional features that influence the depth of pain and suffering. Extraordinary measures are taken to hide white exploitation and oppression based on class and to distort the case of the African American. We must make the effort to expose, for example, that though poverty has a "Black face" the overwhelming majority of those living in poverty are white. African American poverty is concentrated in central cities (74 percent), while white poverty is dispersed between the central cities (49 percent) and the suburbs (51 percent).

To contribute to exposing the interest of white working people in participating in the struggle for social progress and to enlighten us all on the process of the pauperization of the working class in general under capitalism, we have to be leery of statistical data collected, presented, and interpreted on the basis of the Black/white dichotomy. Its explanatory value is not that great, and it contributes to hiding the fact that the standard of living and quality of life gaps are greater between capitalist class and working class whites than between working class whites and the African American people or within the working class in general.

Furthermore, the government determines standards and standard changes to serve its purposes. Official unemployment rates do not reflect the real mass of the unemployed because who will be counted is a standard determined by the government. Many unemployed workers are intentionally not being counted. The determination of poverty presents many problems as well: the standards are artificially low and are at odd intervals changed by the

government making data not easily comparable. The poverty threshold as determined by the government and used to produce the following data was \$15,569 a year for a family of four!

Using official data, 36.4 million people live in poverty in the United States of America. The poverty rate for African Americans is 29.3 percent; it is 11.2 percent for whites. Over 24,423,000 whites, 9,872,000 African Americans, and 8,574,000 Latinos are poor. The poverty rate for African American children is 41.5 percent (4,644,000); for white and Latino children it is 15.5 percent (8,474,000) and 39.3 percent (3,939,000) respectively. In our country, 20 percent of all children live in poverty. African Americans who are 65 years and older have a poverty rate of 25.4 percent.

Over a third (26.4 percent) of all African American families live in poverty. According to official data 58 percent of all African American families with children under 18 are female-headed, and 50.3 percent of all African American female-headed families with children under 18 live in poverty.

Mass impoverishment and widespread misery are the greatest threats to the African American people, and every other social ill and injustice, including police brutality, is exacerbated in this setting.

UNDERCLASS REVISITED ▣ This increase in impoverishment and misery has led some social scientists to advance the concept of an underclass totally dependent on the welfare system "as we knew it" or illegal activity. It is argued that this underclass is wrought with social pathology including the inability and unwillingness to work. Such a concept contributes to the syndrome of blaming the unemployed for being unemployed and the poor for being poor. It is a product of bourgeois social science in one of its rankest forms. These ideas are used to suggest that something is internally wrong with the African American people, caused by genetic or socio-cultural inferiority, that the expenditure of public funds cannot help. These ideas have permeated public policy and are used to help justify the total destruction of the already inadequate provisions of the public welfare system and to cut present and future funding from people-helping programs. This form of vulgar social science is against the interest of the African American people in particular and the working class in general. The concept of the underclass should be rejected no matter who the proponents or from which lofty halls of academia it

emerges. The victims of impoverishment and misery remain a component of the working class and can be organized to become a strong fighting contingent of our people and our class.

The main causes of impoverishment and misery today are mass underemployment, low wages, and joblessness which are inherent features of the economic system of capitalism. With the destruction of public aid, many are left without a legal source of income, and children are hurt the most. A sound program for the African American people must begin with the issue of the fight for jobs.

THE FIGHT FOR JOBS ■ Unemployment kills! The most current news reports indicated a recent dip in official unemployment rates. It was reported that the overall unemployment rate is just under 5 percent and the official African American unemployment rate is just under 10 percent. More realistic figures would double if not triple those percentages. Unemployment, underemployment, and low wages destroy families and lives.

The claim that the absence of values is the source of the problem is a tactic aimed at promoting blame being directed squarely and only at the victim. The strategy is to hide the real problem and the real source of the problem. We must vigorously reject such arguments.

The infrastructure of the cities has deteriorated to the point that a danger to health and well being is constant. We need new schools, hospitals, and housing built, and old schools, hospitals, and housing repaired. We need streets, sidewalks, sewage systems and bridges repaired. A massive public works jobs program funded by the federal government through a bill like the Martinez Public Works Jobs Bill, HR 950, providing jobs and job training at good wages would go far to provide needed employment for working class people in general and African Americans in particular. Because of the deterioration of our cities, there is a real need to have such work done.

There is no justifiable reason why Congress cannot pass and the president sign a public works jobs bill to relieve the impoverishment and misery and the infrastructural decay which is destroying our cities. We must speak with our feet and with our vote. Any candidate who receives our vote should actively support such a public works jobs program regardless of the position in public office sought. This is a particularly important issue in light of the

1998 races for Congress. Any public official who does not support such a bill should be voted out of office.

WAGE GAP ■ Data reveals that 16.2 percent of the U.S. working class is covered by unions while 21.2 percent of African American workers are so covered. Non-union jobs kill and maim, and many will not elevate workers out of poverty even though they are employed. For example, 47.5 percent of the African American heads of households in poverty worked full or part time.

Based on 1996 data, (these figures are not directly comparable with median weekly earnings data presented prior because the calculation of the dollar value is not held constant), variation in union versus non-union median weekly wages is noteworthy. Union median weekly earnings for African Americans was \$507; for whites it was \$635. The non-union median weekly earnings for African Americans was \$356; for whites it was \$480. For African American males, union median weekly earnings were \$526; non-union earnings were \$380. For African American females, union median weekly earnings were \$485; non-union earnings were \$336. The wage gap for union and non-union African American workers based on this data is about 42 percent.

Unionization is a necessary condition to fight for better working conditions and higher wages, both of which concern the interest of the African American people who must work to live. If one works, one needs a union, union wages, and a contract.

Unionization is also a necessary condition for the united action of workers, Black, Brown, Red, Yellow, and white, on the job and in the political arena. Today, organized labor has taken steps toward advancing the fight for the rights and needs of workers on the job and advancing the fight for the rights and needs of workers and the people in relationship to our government. Joining organized labor in the fight to strengthen the unionization of workers is in the direct interest of the African American people who must work to live.

African Americans have fought for the right to vote since the day of victory over the British in the Revolutionary War. All obstacles to the voting rights of the African American people must be removed and the campaign to win representation that will fight for the needs of our class and people in all

branches of all levels of government must be waged. As the Harold Washington experience in Chicago, and others throughout the nation, proved, the masses will rise up, register, and vote if the candidate will fight on the side of the people. Further, the demand for measures which provide for the realization of advanced democracy need to be placed on the agenda. Ideas such as those advanced by Lani Guiner are seriously considered.

NOVEMBER ELECTIONS: WHAT'S AT STAKE ▣ The fight for real representation in all branches and levels of government is of decisive importance to the African American people and the working class. The battle for control over Congress will continue in the 1998 elections, and organized labor and the African American community must unite in the effort to defeat the ultra-right Gingrich gang.

At stake is control over public funds. Tax dollars will either be spent on people-helping programs or they will be spent on increasing the riches of the already wealthy. Present law allows the wealthy and large corporations to use the tax structure and loopholes to escape, by and large, paying taxes while working people pay a significant portion of their income. The biggest "welfare queens," contrary to the slander against women in general and African American women in particular, are the large corporations that feed at the public trough almost at will. The corporations and the wealthy can get away with these crimes because they have their representatives in government. Closing the tax loopholes used by corporations and the wealthy would provide billions of dollars in taxes.

Often there is talk of excessive government waste. Most often such talk is directed against spending on programs particularly those that assist those with a Black or Brown face. In truth, the greatest waste in government spending is in the military budget which is almost at \$300 billion. Cutting the military budget alone could provide the needed resources.

The African American people and the working class together must fight to place their representatives in all levels and every branch of government. Through the united action of our people and our class we can win, and we can fund the programs that are so desperately needed!

Throughout the country blocks of homes in major cities sit boarded up and empty while hundreds of thousands are homeless. Federal funding

for the building and support of low and middle income housing has not significantly increased over the past years and was cut severely under prior administrations. Increased federal funding for community run and managed low and middle income housing will go far to improve the living conditions of African Americans and the poorer sections of the working class in general who are forced to live in squalor or homelessness.

Over 15 percent of working people in general and 21.0 percent of African Americans do not have health care insurance. Universal health care is an overdue public necessity. High infant mortality, disease epidemics, and poor mental health are in part a product of the inadequate health care system which is in place today. Violence and drug addiction are public health care issues, and they will not be treated sufficiently without a universal health care plan that does not allow the for-profit health care industry to be the beneficiary.

PUBLIC EDUCATION ▣ Education has been a basic concern of the African American people since the right to learn was denied to and made illegal for our slave ancestors. The African American people have always put much hope in having our children receive a "good education."

Public education was fought for and won by working-class forces during the early 1800s. Without public education the opportunity to learn would have been denied to the vast majority. It was the demand of the former slave for education that instigated the wide spread expansion of public education in the South.

Today, the public educational system is being allowed to deteriorate. Corporations and for-profit companies are being permitted to penetrate the public educational system under the guise that "the private sector does it better." The voucher system, the drive to destroy the teachers' unions, and making public funds directly available to nonpublic institutions are all geared toward the goal of privatizing education and making it a for-profit enterprise. Those who will suffer most will be the children of the African American people and those of the working class. The fight must be for quality integrated public education from day care through college.

Why integrated? The answer is simple: separate but equal did not and will not work; it never has and never will under capitalism. Separate is inherently unequal.

The fundamental problem facing the public educational system is the lack of federal funds. All the corporate school adoption schemes in the world will not replace the increase in funding needed from the federal government.

Affirmative action programs were introduced to overcome built in discrimination. Initially, affirmative action programs held the promise of providing opportunities to the disadvantaged particularly, but never exclusively, those who were subjected to racial, national, and gender discrimination. Through affirmative action programs universities were forced to open their doors to disadvantaged youth, Black and white, male and female. Through affirmative action programs corporations were forced to expand job opportunities and apprenticeship programs which benefited Black and white, male and female. Through affirmative action programs big business and government were forced to set aside contracts for small business which did not have a chance to participate prior.

The attack on affirmative action is an attempt to turn back the hand of time. It is an attempt to refuse opportunity to those for whom opportunity has most often been denied.

We need not only to support but fight for the strengthening of affirmative action programs with the inclusion of quotas and time tables in education, business, and government.

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN ▣ African American women remain the lowest paid with a median yearly income of \$10,961. The median yearly income for African American males is \$16,006, for white females it is \$12,316, for white males it is \$23,895. African American women have been viciously slandered as the cause of the deterioration of the African American family because of their "matriarchal tendencies" and "chosen dependency on welfare." To add insult to injury, notions have been popularized that African American women are favored by the ruling class and hence, are disproportionately in high-paying, top-level management positions in businesses and corporations. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The real truth is that African American women are the victims of national, racial, gender, and class oppression. A report on a recent research project, "New Study Shows Low Number of Minority Female Executives" which appeared in the October 23, 1997 *Chicago Sun-Times*, revealed that African

American female executives have a median weekly earning, \$514 which is less than the \$526 median weekly union wage of African American males. Though the percentage of African American females in executive positions, (20.1) percent, is slightly greater than that of African American males, (14.7) percent, the government and some social scientists have gone to great lengths to develop the interpretation and popularize the notion that the African American female is faring better under the present-day crisis conditions.

The reality is that 61.9 percent of all African American women had an income of less than \$15,000 a year, and 46.7 percent had an income of less than \$10,000 a year. Nearly 47 percent of all African American men had an income of less than \$15,000 and 33.9 percent earned less than \$10,000 a year. Of all poor persons, the proportion of African American women was highest at 68 percent. Only 0.35 percent of African American women and 1.99 percent of African American men earn \$75,000 or more a year. This official data suggest that neither is favored and both suffer, unequally, but suffer nonetheless.

AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILY ▣ There is an attempt by the ruling class of this nation and their collaborators in science, academia, and society to pit African American men against African American women while African American children are left to suffer grave deprivation. It is reminiscent of the notion on the subject of slavery popularized by vulgar social science that African American women were the willing benefactors of the slave masters' favor and out of the condition of slavery became emasculating matriarchs. This view distorts the history of the African American people in general, African American women in particular, and the reality that there has been a historical attack on the African American family in addition. It distorts the actual experience of how we resisted and survived together or apart. It defiles the reality that in the context of wretched conditions there evolved a relationship of egalitarianism which was and is necessary to maintain the resistance in struggle of our people.

The welfare hoax is particularly vile. By creating the illusion that subsidies to families with unemployed heads of households were being abused particularly by Black women, public officials were allowed to completely dismantle a program which in the main helped children, though always inade-

quately. Without day care or a job supply that would guarantee above poverty wages, these women, men, and children are being or will be forced to live without a legal source of income. The welfare hoax leaves capitalism unscathed and lays blame for such horrendous poverty and misery in the wealthiest country in the world at the feet of the African American people.

African American women must have jobs at union wages, quality public day care, affordable quality housing, access to education and training, and quality health care for themselves and their families.

AFRICAN AMERICAN YOUTH ■ Enmeshed in a public school system that is significantly under funded, labeled as uneducable, criminal, and a menace to society, African American youth have difficulty determining how to eke out a future. In the inner city, they speak horrifyingly of police brutality: of being smacked in the face, punched in the stomach, cursed, and belittled with epithets. Their lives are riddled with death, pain, and despair. They speak despondently of low-paying jobs that require too many hours for children who are still in school or of no job at all when one is badly needed. For too many, the scourge of poverty and impoverished conditions haunt the environment in which they must grow and flourish. When their families are lucky enough to be able to afford a comfortable life, the filth still touches them because they are African American youth and the stereotype has permeated the very fiber of our society.

The criminal justice system rustles African American youth to fill the increasing number of prison cells in our country like cattle. Once confined, they are increasingly being used as a source of cheap labor for private businesses that have contracts through the government.

African American youth have an official unemployment rate of 34 percent, and 41.9 percent of all African American youth and children under 18 years of age live in poverty.

African American youth must have quality integrated public education, quality jobs that are training centers and pay decent wages, quality housing, health care, recreation, and social services. Police brutality and the injustice of the criminal justice system must be stopped.

The final draft of a program would need to include consideration of the quality of life of African

American seniors, the environmental pollution of nationally oppressed and working-class communities, the continued rape and plunder of Africa, and African American culture. Those items will not be further developed here though they merit inclusion in our discussion.

SOCIALISM AND THE ROLE OF THE CPUSA ■ Past and present, the system of capitalism is responsible for the horrifying experience of the African American people. The ideologues of capitalism work diligently to convince us that the problems are intrinsic to the African American people themselves. The needs of primitive capitalism led to the development of modern slavery. The needs of burgeoning capitalism led to the re-enslavement of African Americans under the system of peonage. The needs of industrial capitalism led to the proletarianization of the overwhelming majority of the African American people. The needs of state-monopoly capitalism threaten to sentence the masses of African Americans, with the masses of the working class, to lives of poverty and misery with no refuge or relief.

Only the system of socialism offers a permanent solution. Socialism would end the capitalist class domination over this society. Socialism would replace the drive of capitalism for more and more profits with the drive to service the needs of the people. Socialism would eliminate poverty, hunger, and homelessness as caused by exploitation and oppression and allow us to face head on the challenges of nature. Socialism would outlaw racism, discrimination, and gender oppression and strive for their permanent elimination and the eradication of their effects. Socialism would provide for the full development of the individual, male and female, Black, Brown, Red, Yellow, and white, toward the good of all. Socialism would furnish the very best for its children.

But socialism does not come into existence outside of struggle. The working class with its allies – the whole of the African American people being strategic – must consciously strive to break the reign of the capitalist class over this society. To play its historic role, the working class must achieve consciousness of its historic mission and the fact that it, with its allies, is the only force that can win. The alternative is to remain in a constant state of threat that victories won will be lost and in perpetual struggle with a dominant class that is propelled by greed.

The role of the Communist Party is to train and organize those who wish to struggle in how to do so most effectively. The Communist Party is the party for African Americans, and all others, who are interested in fighting back. The CPUSA offers an avenue through which one can unite with others in the struggle to wage the good fight for real freedom and equality for all.

CONCLUSION ▣ Presented above is the framework for a discussion toward the development of a pro-

gram concerning the struggle for African American freedom and equality. You are encouraged, Party and non-party alike, to share with us with your views and opinions on this question. □

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Homeless

*"I may not have a home, but I am not less!"
cries a voice from the back of the crowd.
It's barely a whisper above the talk,
though he believes he is speaking quite loud.
He represents a significant few,
that have such sad stories to tell,
But none give them mind, or the day, or the time
But still they continue to yell.
A sad, desperate cry from the back of the crowd,
to all who listen, they do address.
Says the small little voice in the back of the crowd,
"I may not have a home, but I am not less!"*

—Julie Bohm



U.S. Imperialism in Crisis

Gerald Horne

Editor's Note: Recent events concerning U.S. imperialism and the continent of Africa will be dealt with in an upcoming article by Gerald Horne.

With the dissolution of the Soviet Union, U.S. imperialism felt that it was on the verge of creating a "new world order" that would lead to its unchallenged hegemony. However, with every passing day, it is becoming increasingly apparent that this belief has not proven to be accurate; instead, new rivals to U.S. imperialism's pretensions are becoming increasingly bolder in asserting their own ambitions – and hampering those of Washington and Wall Street.

This became evident during the recent crisis over inspection of facilities producing weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. To its chagrin, Washington found that France, Russia and China – all permanent members of the UN Security Council – moved to block this latest attempt at aggression. Moreover, the world community of nations – while calling for a peaceful solution to issue of inspections of Iraqi weapons sites – condemned the pending invasion.

What influenced the entire international community to stand firm against Washington was the spreading catastrophe in Iraq, a nation that according to a writer in the *People's Weekly World* has suffered "the most comprehensive sanctions in modern history," which has been no more than "an extension of the devastating Allied bombing campaign of 1991." More than "one million Iraqis have died – 567,000 of them children" as a "direct consequence of economic sanctions... more children have died in Iraq than the combined toll of two atomic bombs on Japan and the ethnic cleansing of former Yugoslavia."¹

Pulverizing and demonizing the people of Iraq has not served the U.S. ruling class well. In addition, increasingly U.S. imperialism is worried that its close alliance with Israel will alienate the major oil-producing nations, thus potentially jeopardizing the interests of Exxon, Mobil and the other chief puppeteers of Washington's foreign policy. Imperialism

breeds chauvinism like swamps breed mosquitoes; thus today one cannot help but notice how certain sections of the ruling class have started echoing sentiments that are generally bigoted and specifically anti-Semitic.

Recently the *New Republic*, a prime supporter of Israel, nervously noted how James Schlesinger, former Secretary of Defense during the Nixon administration, observed that the "fragmentation and hubris" of U.S. foreign policy was due to the "excessive influence" amassed by certain ethnic groups. Harvard professor Samuel Huntington spelled this out more specifically, observing that certain "diasporas," pointedly referring to Jewish Americans and other ethnic groups – "can be a source of spies used to gather information for their homeland governments." Returning fire, the *New Republic* charged that these two men were "the last gasp of the oldest ethnic lobby in America: the WASP establishment..."²

Such exchanges are not only a troubling example of a growing chauvinism among the U.S. ruling class but, similarly, a reflection of the growing pressure on U.S. imperialism.

While imperialism scrambles to maintain its stranglehold over its lifeblood – petroleum – it continues working overtime to complete the task of suffocating socialism. Yet, despite the inordinate pressure placed on Cuba by the Helms-Burton legislation, which was designed to choke off foreign investment, socialism continues to survive and, indeed, has deepened relations with old and new allies – in a decided rebuff to U.S. imperialism.

In the spring of 1997 Cuban Minister of Foreign Investment and Economic Cooperation Ibrahim Ferradaz completed a "fruitful 10-day tour of Germany and France." At that point there were 10 "French-Cuban joint ventures on the island, with a similar total in the final negotiating stage."³ In 1996 Cuba had positive economic growth of 7.8 percent and attained a similar rate in 1997; increasing international cooperation – a direct rebuff to the machinations of U.S. imperialism – is one reason why.⁴

This cooperation was signaled further when Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammed visited Havana in the fall of 1997, accompanied by a

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"large delegation of senior government officials, including ministers and deputies and a large representation of enterprises interested in doing business with the island."⁵ Malaysia, which had been reeling from the currency crisis that afflicted Southeast Asia, was quite pleased with the economic deals that emerged from this high-level gathering.

Of course, close relations between Mexico and Cuba have been in place for some time now. "Trade between Mexico and Cuba has doubled over the last seven years" as biotechnology and pharmaceutical products have accompanied Havana's traditional exports of "tobacco, sugar and alcoholic beverages."⁶

One reason Cuba has been able to excel in these competitive sectors is because of its advanced utilization of the labor of women. "One-third of the most significant scientific achievements made [in 1996] in Cuba were made by women," a rate that puts the U.S. – and, in fact, most of the world – to shame.⁷

Such attainments have attracted increasing attention from Cuba's neighbors to the consternation of Washington. "Hundreds of college students from throughout the Caribbean are now studying at Cuban universities... Caribbean business people are investing millions of dollars in Cuba's booming tourist trade," according to the *Los Angeles Times*. This development is a response to the fact that "in recent years U.S. development aid to these islands has slowed to a trickle and that the Clinton administration has taken the lead role in blocking preferential European trade arrangements which supported the banana-based economies of several islands." In response Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of South Florida has "introduced legislation... aimed at punishing Caribbean and Central American countries that sidle up to Havana." Instead of intimidating these small nations, this attack on their sovereignty has seemed to stiffen their resolve.

Thus, the dissolution of the USSR has not ended the war against socialism. Instead this lengthy struggle has simply taken on new forms.

THE U.S. & CHINA □ The dimensions of this conflict can be glimpsed by examining U.S. imperialism's relationship with China. During the Cold War Washington worked overtime to worsen relations between Beijing and Moscow; today Washington would like to be closer to Beijing and Tokyo than these two powers are to each other. But this strategic goal of U.S. imperialism is becoming increasingly difficult. This was revealed when Chinese Defense

Minister Chi Haotian visited Tokyo in February 1998 and met with Defense Agency chief Fumio Kyuma. This visit, according to the *Japan Times*, "is the latest indication of the recent improvement in the Sino-Japanese relationship, which was tested in early 1996 due to growing tension in the Taiwan Strait over the sovereignty of Taiwan." This visit was seen as a setback to Washington which had been striving to drag Tokyo into an anti-Beijing alliance.⁹ Perhaps in partial response, Washington recently announced that it would not be pressing Beijing on alleged human rights violations at an upcoming meeting in Geneva; likewise, President Clinton has decided to visit China in the spring of 1998, rather than the fall as originally envisioned.

Despite the formidable recent problems in Asian economies, the fact remains that in 1997 the U.S. trade deficit hit a 9-year high; there were two major reasons: Japan and China. "The deficit with Japan rose to \$55.7 billion last year from \$47.6 billion in 1996. The deficit with China rose to \$49.7 billion from \$39.5 billion." These staggering figures have dampened enthusiasm about the alleged "strength" of the U.S. economy and, according to *The New York Times*, "raise the prospect that trade could become a more potent political issue" in "mid-term Congressional elections" in November 1998.¹⁰

U.S. imperialism's efforts to manipulate Beijing and Tokyo have been hindered by what *Beijing Review* calls a crusade to "demonize China." Why have certain circles in the U.S. pursued such a policy? According to this publication, "in addition to the ideological prejudice, the racism giving superiority to the white is another major factor."¹¹ This bigotry, it is suggested, has led to "sowing seeds of hatred for China."

A number of commentators detected a hint of racial bias in the campaign finance investigations that seemed to target Asian Americans and Chinese. Recently Senators Alfonse D'Amato of New York and Lauch Faircloth of North Carolina requested that the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) establish an Office of National Security to monitor the fund-raising activities of companies with ties to the Chinese government. Others are demanding that the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, a little-known but powerful U.S. agency, compile annual reports on Chinese securities that are held in the portfolios of pension funds.¹²

Still, the U.S. ruling class is split on Beijing, as suggested by the fact that corporate America is investing heavily in China, with Motorola investing

\$1.2 billion; Atlantic Richfield, \$625 million; Amoco, \$350 million; Ford, \$250 million; United Technologies, \$250 million; Pepsi, \$200 million; Coca Cola, \$500 million; Lucent Technologies, \$150 million; and General Electric, \$165 million.

Given such stakes, it will be ever more difficult for U.S. imperialism to launch the kind of campaign against the Chinese Communist Party that the ultra-right desires.¹³

These U.S. monopolies acknowledge, in the words of *The New York Times*, that "the Chinese economy is growing at an amazingly fast clip" and is "the fastest growing economy in the world;" in the first half of 1997 this amounted to a hefty 9.5 percent growth.¹⁴ This growth of the Chinese economy and the role of U.S. transnationals in this process has raised concern that U.S. imperialism will not be able to crack down on Beijing in the manner that some hawks would prefer.

This issue came to the fore when information emerged about China's dealings in arms and oil with Iran and Iraq – both characterized by U.S. imperialism as "rogue states."

U.S./JAPAN CONTRADICTIONS ■ Nevertheless, despite difficulties with China, it seems that at times Washington is even more concerned about the U.S.'s alleged ally – capitalist Japan. This point was dramatized when Kodak complained bitterly about a "surprise attack on the U.S. color film business" by Fuji. The Rochester, New York transnational "has repeatedly accused the Japanese photo giant of unfair trade practices in the U.S. and Japan... Fuji has been grabbing business from Kodak in both color film and photographic paper." When Kodak laid off 14,700 workers and sold off \$8.9 billion in assets, it did not blame the multi-million dollar salaries and stock options held by its greedy and slothful executives: instead, these executives blamed Fuji – and Japan.¹⁵

Certain Japanese monopolies – particularly the automobile manufacturers – have continued to present a stiff challenge to their U.S. counterparts, while the U.S. mass media continues to make dire predictions about the fate of the Japanese economy, with some predicting its imminent collapse. Such jousting is an expression of the inter-imperialist contradictions that have gripped the planet since the collapse of the USSR. Yet, according to Kenneth Courtis, chief economist and strategist at the Deutsche Bank Group Asia Pacific,

In 1996 Japan had a 3.6 percent growth, the fastest of all the world's developed economies. This was more than one percentage point faster than the United States and two percentage points faster than Germany. Despite constant claims that 'Detroit is back,' Japan's automakers have the largest market share ever in the United States, at 32.08 percent for cars in the first quarter of 1997 and a 41.6 percent market share for auto parts.¹⁶

The New Republic also concluded that:

If Japan should start unloading its T-bills or stop buying new ones, then the U.S. would face a financial crunch. Interest rates would have to rise to attract buyers for Treasury notes, and Americans, including those who believe that we have beaten the business cycle, would find themselves in the midst of a downturn, as American firms, discouraged by rising rates, began to cut back production and lay off workers.¹⁷

Shortly after the publication of this article, the *Japan Times* reported that "Japan became a net seller of U.S. Treasury securities in the third quarter of [1997]."¹⁸ Of course, Japanese imperialism has its own severe problems some of which are more daunting than those of U.S. imperialism; still, the point is the contradictions between these two imperialisms continue to mount and intensify with every passing day.

ASIAN FINANCIAL CRISIS ■ It does seem that U.S. imperialism – drenched as it is in the mire of "white supremacy" – has a particular problem in dealing with its erstwhile capitalist allies in Asia. This became clear when the economies in Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and South Korea began to suffer severe difficulties in the second half of 1997.

Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan summed up the sentiments of his comrades best when he chortled that the "dismantling in many Asian countries of the model of so-called mercantilist capitalism, which involved a good deal of state intervention" was a "more modest replay of 1989" when Communists in the former GDR and other nations were ousted from power.¹⁹

Greenspan was not alone in his delight at the decline of would-be Asian capitalist rivals of U.S. imperialism. Former Reagan administration trade official Clyde Prestowitz, in words hardly heard since the days of the USSR, claimed that "the Asian brand of capitalism is dangerous to the world's

economy health..." and, therefore, setbacks should be welcome.²⁰

On December 14, 1997, *The New York Times* carried a frontpage story about "Asia's Surrender;" these nations were "humbled" and this was a triumph of "Wall Street powerhouses," said this paper of record. Roger Robinson, a Washington financial consultant who once worked on the National Security Council, mused that with this current crisis, the world is witnessing the dawn of a new financial Pax Americana that could extend U.S. leverage over China and Russia as well as the rest of Asia. Though Indonesia, South Korea, Thailand and Malaysia were solidly capitalist, Wall Street seemed to take particular umbrage at the notion that their economies had been buoyed by "state intervention," as Greenspan put it. "Wall Street powerhouses" were so gleeful about the decline of would-be rivals that they had a hard time understanding that the financial crisis was not that of a continent, Asia – but a system: imperialism. Instead of contemplating how it was unrealistic, at best, to assume that capitalism could be a savior for developing nations, Wall Street has leaped to the conclusion that this crisis signals nothing more than another victory for U.S. imperialism.

Such chauvinist and one-sided triumphalism – which echoes the triumphalism of U.S. imperialism after the collapse of the USSR – has angered many in Asia. This is particularly the case in South Korea; but throughout the region, hostility to U.S. imperialism is spreading as the conclusion is reached that the prescriptions of the International Monetary Fund, supposedly designed to help ailing economies, are, in fact, little more than programs designed to increase the hold of U.S. imperialism over this region.²¹

DEFLATIONARY SHOCKWAVES □ Nevertheless, it is easy to see why Wall Street has been so ecstatically short-sighted about Asia's troubles for this crisis allowed U.S. transnationals to pick up a number of inexpensive bargains in Asia; Procter and Gamble bought a paper-making operation from Korea's Sangyong Group, for example.²² Yet, such "victories" obscure the fact that this current crisis conceivably could increase depression-like inflationary pressures as some Asian nations seek to export more goods at a time when efforts continue to drive down wages globally.

Already *The New York Times* has reported that problems now centered in Asia "[are] starting to

affect Europe, slowing down exports of everything from heavy machinery to telephones and worsening what were already gloomy prospects for reducing joblessness this year."²³ California, which exports agricultural products, among other items to Asia, will be impacted similarly. "Orange County alone," says the *Los Angeles Times*, "will lose \$150 million of about \$1 billion in annual sales to Hong Kong, Singapore, Indonesia and other areas of Southeast Asia..."²⁴ According to the *LA Times*, the crisis in Asia

is also being reflected in the volatility of U.S. technology stocks, sagging beef and cotton prices, even the dwindling number of California sea urchin divers... Earlier this month the stock of Oracle, the giant Redwood City... software firm, lost nearly one-third of its value after it reported lower-than-expected earnings due in part to a slowdown in sales in Asia.²⁵

IMPACT OF EUROPEAN CURRENCY □ This bad news for U.S. imperialism comes at a time when challenges from across the Atlantic are becoming increasingly powerful. This development is best seen by examining the introduction of the common European currency – the euro – which is scheduled to come on line within months and will provide direct competition to the dollar. Initially U.S. imperialism supported European unity as a wedge to be used against the former USSR. But now as the European Union is beginning to encroach on preserves once thought to be exclusively the property of U.S. imperialism, second thoughts are emerging.

For example, Nobel Prize winning economist Milton Friedman has sharply criticized the single currency though his remarks were rebuked immediately by Jacques Santer, president of the European Commission.²⁶ Recently *Business Week* questioned the euro in no uncertain terms:

Thanks to the dollar's role as reserve currency in world financial markets, the U.S. has been able to do what no other country can – consistently import more goods than it exports. Dollar hegemony has raised America's standard of living beyond what it could otherwise attain.

Soon a competing numeraire, the new euro, will make its appearance. And Europe's single currency could make it much harder for America to continue running current account deficits. Germany and France fully intend to make the euro a reserve currency. They see it as the financial equivalent of Europe's Airbus Industrie, the only major competitor anywhere to the U.S.'s Boeing Co.

With stunned surprise, this organ of imperialism glumly concluded, "The euro could change everything."²⁷

This grim scenario has been echoed in other quarters. One writer in the *National Law Journal* stated that the introduction of the euro "will increase the importance of Europe as a financial center and will lead to the rise of London and Frankfurt, Germany and the decline of New York as the financial capital of the West."²⁸

The prominent economist Lester Thurow has not disagreed. "With the euro as a viable alternative to the dollar," he writes, "the temptation to jump out of dollars into euros whenever the dollar looks weak is going to be very high." He compares this situation to the "period... right after World War II when the dollar was replacing the British pound in world trade." Today's situation could be even more traumatic since

then governments maintained capital controls and could limit the buying and selling of foreign currencies. Now they can't because of "deregulated financial markets... Put simply, for the first time since World War II, a run on the dollar becomes a possibility."²⁹

This growing financial might has emboldened certain EU members – particularly France – to challenge the arrogance of U.S. imperialism. France's Total has joined with Russia's Gazprom and Malaysia's Petronas in signing a large oil production contract with Iran despite opposition from the U.S.³⁰

In South America the EU has surged ahead of the U.S. in economic dealings with Mercosur – the trade block led by Brazil and Argentina: \$43 billion in trade for the EU versus \$29 billion for the U.S. In Brazil alone, "Seven of the ten largest private companies are European-owned, while just two are controlled by Americans."³¹ Mexico has followed suit, seeking to negotiate a trade pact with the EU that "could prove eventually as far-reaching as [NAFTA]."³²

In sum, U.S. imperialism not only faces ever sharper objections from imperialist rivals but, as well, the ever present confrontation with socialism.

This perception was solidified when *The New York Times* reported that "Russia and Germany agreed... to hold a meeting with France next year to lay the foundation of a relationship that Moscow hopes will serve as a counterbalance to United States influence in Europe."³³

"Detente" – lessening tensions between France

and the then socialist block – was a French word and reflected the fact that Paris more than once strayed from the embrace of U.S. imperialism. And even today one can see that Russia and France, as in the UN debate on Iraq are continuing to diverge from time to time, from the diktat of U.S. imperialism. This may help to explain why U.S. imperialism has sought vigorously to expand the jurisdiction of NATO to the borders of Russia. Of course, NATO expansion will also be a financial windfall for arms manufacturers, as nations like the Czech Republic will be compelled to spend millions to "upgrade" their armed forces. Nevertheless, despite the fall of the USSR, U.S. imperialism continues to recognize that Communists remain strong within the parliament of Russia and that the continued reign of President Boris Yeltsin is far from assured.

NATO is not the only supra-national organization that U.S. imperialism is seeking to manipulate for its own narrow purposes.

MAI ■ Consider, for example, the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), which is intended to knock down remaining global barriers to investment for the benefit of monopoly capital.³⁴ Not surprisingly, Deputy Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers rhapsodized, "this agreement is good for America and good for the global economy."³⁵

Nonetheless, even a cursory inspection of this agreement reveals that it not only presents a major challenge to the sovereignty of all those nations in South America, Asia, Africa – and Europe – that are not imperialist, it also presents a direct threat to the U.S. working class; for the MAI may lead to the undermining of health and safety and environmental protections, affirmative action and other measures that could be deemed as "barriers" to the free flow of capital.³⁶ Even *Business Week* on February 9, 1998 has raised questions about the "secretive talks" that have led to the MAI and has quoted opponents as terming this deal as "NAFTA on steroids."

Tentatively, MAI is scheduled to be signed at a meeting of the leading imperialist nations in April 1998, though fierce opposition has cast some doubt on this occurrence. These opponents have placed a copy of the secret draft treaty at <http://www.citizen.org/pctrade/tradeframe.html> in order to spur mobilization.

The MAI is just the latest example of this tendency of imperialism to seek to use any means necessary to erode the strength and influence of the working

class. Of course, this tendency has been met by a similarly powerful tendency: the organized fight-back of the working class itself. For example, in October 1997 in Puerto Rico some 150,000 strong stormed the capitol in San Juan demanding that the legislature block the sale of the government owned telephone company to the highest transnational bidder.³⁷

The fightback of the international working class against such outrages has been compromised by the ouster of Communists from power in Eastern Europe. According to the International Labor Organization, membership in unions has "dropped most dramatically in the former Communist countries of Eastern Europe... in the Czech Republic and Poland, union membership is nearly 50 percent lower." Strikingly, Spain forms a useful counterpoint to this trend; there privatization has spurred a 62.1 percent increase in union membership since 1985 – one of the largest increases globally; unsurprisingly, some of the strongest opposition to NATO has come from this nation. Likewise, union membership in South Africa – where the Communist Party continues to wield significant influence – during the same period has grown 130.8 percent.³⁸ There affirmative action has been pushed vigorously – just as it has been assailed in the U.S. where, according to the ILO, union membership has fallen 21.1 percent during this period.

Still, there are signs that the new leadership of the AFL-CIO is dragging the labor movement out of the torpor in which it found itself as a result of the misleadership of George Meany and Lane Kirkland. This has happened not a moment too soon.

"Despite a robust economy," *Business Week* tells us, "plenty of companies plan to downsize." If the proposed merger between CoreStates Bank and First Union Bank takes place, up to 18,000 jobs may be eliminated. Even Wall Street itself is planning layoffs, as cuts are expected to follow in the wake of the Morgan Stanley merger with Dean Witter and Discover; and the merger of Travelers with Smith Barney.³⁹

The international working-class movement is also forcing various governments to stand up to U.S. imperialism. This became apparent during the global negotiations to ban land mines. First the negotiations proceeded under a rule of consensus, in which any government could block progress. Naturally, Washington did just that. In response Canada – which has been compelled to stand up to the U.S. on fishing rights, among other issues – backed by a broad array of nations established parallel negotiations that were open only to those favoring an

unconditional ban, effectively bypassing the U.S. The same thing is happening right now concerning global negotiations on barring the use of child soldiers – parallel negotiations have been established to block the whims of the corporate troglodytes who wield undue influence on U.S. foreign policy.⁴⁰ Fundamentally, the international community is being forced to unite against U.S. imperialism.

Above all, U.S. imperialism continues to be faced with a socialism that simply will not disappear and inter-imperialist contradictions that are becoming ever sharper – particularly with Japan and the EU. As a consequence, despite spending trillions to subdue the USSR, the conclusion cannot be avoided that for U.S. imperialism the crisis continues. □

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Class Unity and the Struggle for Mexican American Equality

Lorenzo Torrez

Two gatherings I attended recently prompted me to write this article. One was a conference called by the National Chicano Moratorium Committee in the city of Tucson, Arizona. The second one was a rally called by the State AFL-CIO in front of the State Capitol building in Phoenix, Arizona.

Both meetings were highly motivational. Both were efforts to forge greater unity for their causes. No sane person would argue against such a noble cause. However, my purpose is to discuss some of the weaknesses observed at each of these gatherings.

First, I want to deal with the conference called by the Chicano Moratorium Committee. The most notable weakness there was the attempt at association with Native American Indian populations of the past. Of course, not all of that is necessarily bad – in fact there are some strong, positive elements with this development. However, I saw no evidence or call for unity with Native Americans now living in the reservations or those living among us in the cities throughout the country. In this regard, the city of Los Angeles is the most densely populated. San Francisco, Phoenix, Tucson, as well as other cities throughout the country are experiencing a growing population of Native Americans.

The question of concern is not our historical roots; admittedly, we are a mixture of Indians and Europeans. What is bothersome is how the question is being presented.

According to the Moratorium Committee – and this view was in all their literature – all our present problems such as discrimination, inequality, a general lack of voice in our society, and disunity are the fault of “Europeans,” not class differences but Europeans in general.

Historical development is presented as if there were no class differences among settlers that came across the Atlantic to the Americas. Thus, in one stroke, the struggle for independence from Britain, Spain, Portugal and other European monarchies are

ignored. The struggle to adopt new and more democratic rules of law and more democratic constitutions is erased forever! The struggle to build more democratic liberal and even socialist and Communist parties is lost forever. The effort to build unions and other working-class organizations is deliberately sloughed over. There is no discussion of the Mexican or the American Civil Wars. And the Civil Rights movement is also forgotten in the process.

The root cause of this is the negation and absence of class consciousness. For example, if one were to accept their view of historical development of the Americas, one would have to assume that only European aristocrats sailed on those ships across the Atlantic. The facts are otherwise and easy to comprehend. Most who did come across were workers and artisans of all kinds. They were the ones that sailed the ships and did the work, they were at the base of the developing economy. It is true many were uneducated or poor, therefore they did not dominate the ideology of the time. They also did not have the monetary resources to become the rulers. They were at a disadvantage as we are even at this stage, but they fought back as we continue to fight to this day.

REAL SELF-DETERMINATION ■ The main slogan of groups such as the National Chicano Moratorium is “Chicano Power!” The truth is that the program of “United Action” and “Chicano Power” itself is an illusion in the absence of a united effort with the multiracial, multicultural components of the U.S. working class. Yet, one has to say, in their own small way these groups do play a role in inspiring national pride among Mexican American youth. What is not positive is their sectarianism and their attempts at separation. Their call for “self determination” is bound with the self-determination of the rest of us, in particular, the self-determination of the U.S. working class.

Is this how the majority of Mexican Americans and Latinos see the world? No! I don’t think so. In fact, I think the opposite is true. That has been my experience from many years of in the movement for equality. For example, researchers now tell us that

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in 1996, 69 percent of Latinos voted for President Clinton. In California the vote was even more impressive. The characterization by some reporters is "overwhelming" – 86 percent for Clinton! Now the question to ask is, was the presidential race the real issue? Was this why Latinos abandoned the Republican Party at the voting booth? I think not. Involved were many more substantial issues of concern. These issues were the vicious attacks led by the extreme right-wing Republicans; activities against immigrants, cutbacks in social services, English-only legislation, projected cuts in education and dismantling of affirmative programs. Republicans are still debating on how they will attract those voters back.

Thus, I think the main line of political independence among Latinos falls within the framework of "common ground" with all Americans who must work for a living regardless of nationality or color of skin. Furthermore, I believe the experience of Mexican Americans and Latinos form the basis upon which to launch a stronger united front which Brother John Sweeny calls "voting like a worker." Voting like a worker is not limited to members of unions only. This is not what happened in '96 among Latinos. In the Latino community it was a genuine working-class approach which involved not only unions, but it involved forces in education, churches and mass community organizations of all kinds. Evelina Alarcon's articles in *Political Affairs* are a good source of information in this regard.

BUILDING CLASS UNITY ■ This leads me to the next issue. The issue comes to mind as a result of a personal conversation I had with a couple of state AFL-CIO leaders after a demonstration before the Capitol Building in Phoenix.

We live and operate in a state with a Republican majority of in the State House and Senate. Thus it is an uphill battle just to hold back the massive anti-labor, anti-people legislation being proposed. However, we have had some success at defeating some real bad legislation by referendum. Now the effort is on to limit in some way the ability to amend or recall by use of the proposition process.

In the discussion between us it became evident that neither of these union leaders had picked up on Brother Sweeny's concept of voting like a worker. One of them expressed great pessimism. He said, "Yes it's a good idea but what does it mean? How

do you get the idea across?"

Not having time nor all the ideas of how, I simply injected the thought that it was not impossible. I cited the 1996 Latino vote as an example and expressed the thought that if Latinos were able to grasp the concept in '96, I felt others could also be brought around. How did the Chicano-Latino community do it? With a lot of hard work and contact with masses of people, i.e., grass-roots organizations. The latter experience shows that more polemics need to be done to imprint on the minds of workers the concept of "voting like a worker." It simply is not enough to bring such a concept in one speech even if it's before a National Convention of the AFL-CIO. Who is in a better position to do this than Brother John Sweeny who coined the phrase himself?

Comrade Gus Hall, Chairman of the Communist Party USA, has said time and time again that we need to build in a mass way toward "one class and one nation," a nation that encompasses all the multinational culture and composition that is our country. This thought also recognizes that certain ethnic groupings still have special needs. For example, there is still great disparity and inequality between white people and people of color, inequality between men and women. There are problems in regard to language, but all these things can be solved better within the framework of class struggle.

Division among us is in the interest of the ruling class, banks and corporations. The loudest voice to front for them is the far right associated with the Republican Party. That was the key lesson learned by Latinos. For example, in our state of Arizona a coalition of Mexican Americans, African Americans, Native Americans, labor and senior citizens came together and dealt the first notable blow to the right wing by defeating Pat Buchanan in the primary election. Then it went ahead and voted for the Democratic presidential candidate breaking the record for any state in the union. Arizona had not voted for a Democrat president since 1948. This unity is what the future holds. It can be duplicated all over the country. In it lies the key to the future. □

How I Came to Write *Burning Valley*

Phillip Bonosky

After returning from a visit to the bloody coal fields of Harlan, Kentucky, (1931), where, as a member of a committee of writers, and under the auspices of the International Labor Defense, he had gone to see what was going on in "Bloody Harlan..." Theodore Dreiser would write:

Actually... a worker... is laughed at and, in times of unrest and contest, spat upon as a malcontent, a weakling, a radical, an undesirable citizen, one who has not the understanding and hence not the right to complain of the ills by which he finds himself beset. Herded, in so far as the majority of him is concerned, in work-warrens called towns, watched over as the slaves of the South were watched over in the days before the Civil War, by the spies and agents of the immense cooperative associations of wealth, in the factories and mines and mills for which he now works, warred upon by the veritable armies of mercenaries employed by these giants whom he still so much admires, in order to overawe him and subdue him; he finds himself discharged, starved, and then blacklisted and shot down when he strikes; he finds himself... frustrated, ignored, and denied by his church, his press, his paid officials and his supine and traitor government.

A few years earlier, (1922), Sinclair Lewis, through the mouth of his most typical American businessman, George Babbitt, summed up the reigning "businessman's view" of the American working man: "No one ought to be forced to belong to a union... All labor agitators who try to force men to join a union should be hanged. In fact, just between ourselves, there oughtn't be any unions allowed at all..."

These two quotations pretty much express the real conditions in which workers lived before the Wagner Act, making the joining of unions legal in this country, was passed in 1935. It was the atmosphere in which I grew up. The memory of the war (WW I), but more so, the memory of the Great Steel Strike, (1919), dominated the minds of the people in all the dozens of "work-warrens called towns" up and down the three river (Ohio, Allegheny, Monon-

gahela) valleys converging on Pittsburgh. A virtual reign of terror had been imposed on the population, enforced by all the police powers at the corporation's (US Steel) command, including the notorious Iron and Coal Police, who, armed with sabers and rifles, and riding specially trained horses that could knock a man down and keep him pinned to the earth, were ruthless, and served as models later for Hitler's storm troopers. The KKK openly paraded through the towns, adding their own form of menace to the situation already fraught with acute danger for the ordinary workingman. A curfew drove everybody indoors at 10 o'clock, everybody who didn't have police permission to be in the streets. Two men talking to each other was cause for suspicion; three men constituted a conspiracy. The mines and mills were infested with spies and informers, called "sucks" by the workers. Among children the worst thing you could say about another child was: "He's a scab." "He's a squealer."

My father had come home from work one day, his head streaming blood. Unlike at other mills, only half the workers at the Duquesne mill had walked off the job. It would be nice, at this late date, to be able to say my father had been a striker. If he had been he would have been fired. But most probably he had had his head split open by the strikers as he tried to get into the mill. Like so many of the workers, he was only lately in this country from Europe (Lithuania) and already had a growing family.

The process which would change a young ex-peasant, totally ignorant of unions, barely tolerated as a "foreigner," into a man who some 15 years later urged his sons to join a union, was (and is) an historic one. But it was a process, which meant that it had its various stages, as indeed William Z. Foster, who headed the 1919 steel strike, fully understood, insisting against all the "evidence" at the time that East European peasants were organizable. (Along with the African Americans who also were once considered "unorganizable," the East Europeans were to prove to be the most dependable, loyal and consistent supporters of unionism, becoming the backbone of the CIO organizing drives of the '30s.)

So, briefly put, this was the atmosphere into

Phillip Bonosky's novel, *Burning Valley*, was recently republished by the University of Illinois Press.

which I was born, and I grew up, saluting the flag at public school every morning and pledging allegiance to "one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all." There followed by a reading from the *Bible* ...

This class-struggle atmosphere was forged by the Great Steel Strike.

General Superintendent Diehl of the Duquesne works told the Senate committee investigating the strike of the remarkable support for the company among authorities: "There were probably a hundred citizens besides our police force, a lot of police we had in the mill, that went into the homes, and in some instances brought the men back to work."

And to cap it, Mayor Crawford, also known as "Toad" Crawford said: "We're not going to stand for any God-damned hoodlums coming into town. We're going to meet them at the bridge and break their God-damned heads."

To back these words up, the Duquesne mill became a customer of Federal Laboratories Inc., which controlled 60 percent of the domestic tear gas market and had the distribution rights to the Thompson machine guns, both of which it bought and stored, as well as miles of barbed wire which it strung along the fences and walls of the mill, effectively turning the mills into forts and prisons, its workers into slaves.

Among the three (and other) people active in the strike and thrown into jail were Mother Jones and William Z. Foster. The jail bordered the children's playground, and if you went high up on a swing you could almost look into the jail itself through the window - as I did, a little three-year old. I didn't know then that the people in jail were there because they were fighting to liberate me, the child of a despised "foreigner," a despised worker. I only knew with Robert Louis Stevenson that going up in a swing was "the pleasantest thing ever a child could do." (Many years later, I had the inestimable pleasure of introducing that same William Z. Foster to a meeting of steel workers in McKeesport.)

MY "CONVERSION" TO MARXISM-LENINISM ▣ Sometimes people ask me: "How did you get converted to Marxism?" And my answer: "Converted? I was never converted to Marxism. Were you "converted" to the multiplication table or to the alphabet?"

When I read my first serious Marxist literature, which happened to be the *Communist Manifesto*, it seemed to me that Marx and Engels were continuing

my own inner monologue, and so I went on with them without missing a beat. Like Moliere's *Gentilhomme* who discovered that he had been speaking prose all his life I discovered that I had been thinking Marxism long before I read or met a Marxist who merely widened and deepened what I had already been thinking. In those times - the Depression Thirties - you lifted your eyes from the book or pamphlet of Marx you were reading - and saw Marx all around you in the shut-down mills, the lines of unemployed, the hunger in the face of the children.

Life converted me to Marxism. Still in my teens I consciously rejected the version of life, history and events taught, not only in the schools but pounded home to all of us through the media in the hands of our oppressors. I sought out the real history of our lives and found it in the struggle of our parents, our friends, of the workers in steel and coal, who lived as we lived. To challenge the power of the great monopolies, in this instance the Morgan-owned US Steel works, seemed to me to be incredibly courageous - does so still. I had a ringside seat in the campaign in our town to organize the steel workers into the CIO, and I, still a boy, followed and identified with that struggle all the way. Heroes I had around me!

At the same time I was an avid reader, and though I was grateful to Andrew Carnegie for nothing else, certainly I was grateful for the library he "donated" to our town (now torn down). It became my home away from home. I read and I read, determined to learn everything!

HOW I BECAME A WRITER ▣ And though I learned a lot, it began to dawn on me after a while that in all my reading something was missing. I was missing!

Yes, I was to read about Penrod, Booth Tarkington's middle-class teenager, the youth in Eugene O'Neill's *Ah, Wilderness*, Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer* and *Huck Finn*, Hemingway's *Nick*, and even Jack London's *Martin Eden*.

Nowhere in all the books in the library could I find a working-class boy, living in a distant working-class town, born of immigrant parents, whose life was dominated by the great steel monopoly of JP Morgan. I didn't exist for them; the workers didn't exist for them. What we believed in and stood for and fought for was missing from American literature. It was then I more or less decided to do what I could - for by then I was already a "writer", as the school paper would testify - to rectify that omission. But how to do it?

Standing on the Shoulders of Giants: Paul Robeson & Martin Luther King Jr.

Frank Chapman

Paul Robeson, and Martin Luther King, Jr., two titans, contemporaries, both descendants of slaves, both men of vision and indomitable courage in the historic struggles of the 20th century to eliminate "the color line."

As we enter the 21st century the long nightmare of racism, born in the belly of slave ships, still lingers in the brains of the living. The same capitalist ruling class that fathered this monstrous ideology while occasionally admitting the racist crimes of the past, does not hesitate to use these self-same racist rationalizations to justify the social savagery of the present. This savagery was recently characterized by the Urban League in their last annual report, as the "Great Depression in the ghettos."

Two years before King was born, Paul Robeson, at the urging of William L. Patterson, was on a picketline (organized by the International Labor Defense) in Boston, protesting the frame-up and imminent execution of Sacco and Vanzetti. Already he had turned away from the role assigned to him by his white peers at Rutgers; already he had descended from the Olympian heights where it is safe to fight for opportunities for the Black bourgeoisie to exploit Black workers and rule the ghetto market.

Robeson refused to let the white ruling class use him as a showpiece of American democracy, which has no equal in hypocrisy. From the very beginning he recognized in his actions and thoughts that the struggle against racism must be firmly grounded in the working-class struggles against injustice and for socialism. In 1943, after having been duly seasoned in the great working class struggles of the Depression era and the united front against fascism, Robeson stated before the *Herald Tribune* Forum:

Two years ago many Americans, like Hitler, expected the Soviet Union to crumble under the treacherous blitz attack. Now Americans are beginning to know something of the great power of the Russian people – a power born of unity, of legally enforced equality, of opportunity for

all the many millions within its borders, regardless of race, creed, nationality, or sex. No other nation on earth has achieved such a thing. And no other nation on earth has stated with such explicitness its war aims: abolition of racial exclusiveness; equality of nations and integrity of their territories; the right of every nation to arrange its affairs as it wishes.

Robeson's assessment was in direct conflict with the aims and interests of U.S. imperialism, and linked with the struggle of progressive humanity for peace, racial and national equality, and socialism. Not only was he a formidable and fearless leader of the movement for African American freedom and equality, he also recognized and understood the fundamental importance of the working class in all progressive struggles. He opposed on principle any and all attempts to isolate the struggles of African Americans from the American working class. For Robeson Black and white unity was not a tactical but a strategic question, a necessary precondition for bringing about the end of capitalist domination and the emancipation of the working class.

As a Marxist-Leninist, Robeson knew that fantastic longings for a better world were not enough. That is why he joined the Communist Party USA. He understood that the struggle against state-monopoly capitalism must be scientifically organized and systematically carried out to the finish.

As Jack O'Dell pointed out in *Freedomways*, long ago, the freedom movement led by Robeson was centered in the working class, the true emancipator of modern society, and therefore the trade union movement. As a Communist he knew the working class was the locomotive of history. One of the strategic objectives of the Cold War was to destroy the Communist Party and the militant trade union movement in order to prepare for war against socialism and liberation movements in developing countries. This is why Robeson was persecuted; this is why leaders of the Communist Party were jailed and militant trade union leaders, many of whom were Communist, were barred from unions.

Martin Luther King, growing up in the South,

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learned early the apartheid character of U.S. racism in those days. He was eleven-years old and had ventured into a shop in "white only" territory. A white woman walked up to him and slapped his face. "You're the little n---r," she yelled in anger, "that stepped on my foot." That first humiliating, racist slap carried with it all the weight of Jim Crow rule, that could degenerate in a heartbeat into a howling lynch mob – yes, even against an eleven-year old child.

The insults continued while King was a student at Morehouse. Working at a mattress factory during the summer months, King discovered that the white students were paid nearly twice as much for the same work.

King, like Robeson was a brilliant student with extraordinary social insights. His educational pursuits took him north to Boston. When he graduated he was offered a pastorship commensurate with his Doctor of Philosophy degree. He chose to go south, to Montgomery, Alabama, the cradle of the "Confederacy" to Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. That was June, 1955 one year after Chief Justice Harlan had ruled (in *Brown v. Board of Education*) that segregation was unconstitutional.

A year later on June 12, 1956, Paul Robeson was subpoenaed to testify before the un-American Activities Committee. He declared his position with forceful and militant clarity:

I stand here struggling for the rights of my people to be full citizens in this country. They are not in Mississippi. They are not in in Montgomery. That is why I am here today. You want to shut up every colored person who wants to fight for the rights of his people!

Comments on Robeson's testimony appeared in several African American newspapers. Many took courage in hand and saluted Robeson. For example, the *Sun-Reporter* (San Francisco) June 23, 1956 editorialized:

Robeson as far as most Negroes are concerned occupies a unique position in the U.S., or the world, for that matter. Whites hate and fear him simply because he is the conscience of the U.S. in the field of color relations. Those Negroes who earn their living by the sweat of their brows and a few intellectuals idolize the man. He says the things which all of them wish to say about color relations, and the manner in which he says these things attracts the eye of the press of the world.

Robeson's name rang in African American communities more often than church bells. Surely King heard these ringing words, which appeared prominently in the African American press. In those days you couldn't get a hair cut without hearing a discussion on Paul Robeson!

Perhaps one of the great ironies of human history is that the same year (1956), in which Paul Robeson was being ostracized in his own country, the Montgomery bus boycott, led by King, was victorious in a United States Supreme Court decision, thus becoming the opening shot in the civil rights revolution. The very thing the U.S. ruling class, that "great enemy of humanity," thought it was getting rid of in banishing Robeson history found in Rev. King – a fearless fighter for African American freedom and equality.

When Rosa Parks, a courageous working-class woman, refused to honor the racist regulation and move to the back of the bus, a boycott was called from Rev. King's church four days later. All of the 50,000 African Americans who lived in Montgomery honored the boycott. A rally was called. The church was packed with 4,000 milling out into the streets.

"There comes a time," said King in his first speech on the Walk For Freedom (the name given the boycott),

when people get tired. We are here this evening to say to those who have mistreated us so long that we are tired, tired of being segregated and humiliated, tired of being kicked about by the brutal feet of oppression! ... We had no alternative but to protest. For many years, we have shown amazing patience. But we come here tonight to be saved from that patience that makes us patient with anything less than freedom and justice.

A few years earlier, in 1950, the U.S. government revoked Robeson's passport (he had held one since 1922.) Why? Fascism had been defeated in a united front led by the U.S and the Soviet Union, giving rise to new aspirations for freedom and democratic expectations in the colonies and capitalist dominated countries. By the State Department's own admission "he [Robeson] had been for years extremely active politically in behalf of independence of the colonial people of Africa."

In 1957 Robeson had to sing over transatlantic phone circuits to over 1000 gathered in a London theater because he was still trying to regain his passport. Robeson said: "Yes, I have been active for

African freedom for many years and I will never cease that activity no matter what the State Department or anybody else thinks about it. This is my right – as a Negro, as an American, as a man!"

Meanwhile along the Walk to Freedom King's home had been bombed. He was shaken, unable to sleep. "The people," he thought, as he struggled to break the grip of fear, "are looking to me for leadership, and I stand before them without strength and courage, they too will falter. I am at the end of my powers. I have nothing left."

It was precisely at that moment of facing death, facing threats of death and knowing the fear that drives some men to cower, that this young inexperienced man answered the call of his people: "Stand up for righteousness, stand up for truth, and God will be at your side forever..."

Fear was gone, never to return. The end became the beginning for now he realized that the movement could not perish so long as oppression and exploitation existed. He knew that his suffering, struggling people were the source of his resolve: "I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the promised land ... So I'm happy tonight. I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man..."

Driven by the objective laws of class struggle the King-led freedom movement ultimately ended up standing for peace, that is, opposing the war in Vietnam, and standing shoulder to shoulder with the working class in the ineradicable struggle for equality and economic justice. When King was struck down by the assassin's bullet in Memphis he was in the midst of a struggle to defend the rights of workers to organize. The journey that began in Montgomery cleared from the path of freedom a lot of the racial rubbish of segregation, especially the socially sanctioned insult of "white only."

In a way King's life in the struggle ended where it started but at a higher level. It started with an African American worker, Rosa Parks standing up against American style apartheid (a system that made race the basis of social standing, education

and occupation). And it ended up being gunned down as he stood with African American workers (sanitation workers they called them in Memphis) who were standing up for the rights of all workers to organize! Shortly after his assassination King's widow, Mrs. Coretta Scott King, at a United Auto Workers Convention stated:

It is not an accident that my husband was assassinated while leading a strike, nor is it coincidental that the time of his assassination came when he was calling for a coalition of all the poor Black and white, and urging that they create a union organization. He was arousing a sleeping giant when he was cut down.

LIGHTS FOR THE PATH ▣ Both Robeson and King like signal rockets soared up into the night of our ignorance casting much needed light on the fact that there is no easy walk to freedom, and that along the way to freedom we discover and rediscover many times that the enemy is capitalism. We learn that a social revolution without a political revolution is nonsense.

Both Robeson and King were constantly hounded by the U.S. ruling class and made the objects of the most vicious campaign of lies and slander. And now, after their death, for the mere consolation of the oppressed and working people there is an attempt to convert them into what Lenin called "harmless icons." We will not accept this. We cannot accept this. What we will accept is the historic responsibility of the African American people to humankind which is to stand side by side with all progressive humanity in the struggles for freedom, equality and socialism for all people for all times.

Robeson and King have left us a proud legacy of struggle. Undaunted courage in the face of adversity and their lives, make us recall the immortal words of Tom Paine: "Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict, the more glorious the triumph." □



The 150th Anniversary of The Communist Manifesto

Anna Pha

The *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, written by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, is a rich historic document which has affected the lives of millions of people around the world. As Communist and workers' parties around the world are celebrating its 150th anniversary, their enemies are at work, churning out the usual claims that the 150-year old document is dated and irrelevant. *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* or *Communist Manifesto* as it has become commonly known was written as a program document for the Communist League and first published in February 1848. The Communist League was a federation of socialist workers and intellectuals of various nationalities which had been formed in 1836 by German revolutionary exiles.

The name *Manifesto of the Communist Party* emphasized the need for the working class to create its revolutionary organization – its own political party.

The *Manifesto* reflects the three sources and three component parts of Marxism as Lenin described them: classical German philosophy; classical English political economy; and French socialism combined with French revolutionary doctrines in general.

There had been revolutionary turmoil in Europe since the French Revolution of 1789, which removed the feudal barriers to the development of capitalist society in France.

CLASS STRUGGLE ■ In England the Industrial Revolution had been underway since 1770. British manufacturing was thriving, and both the proletariat and bourgeoisie were growing in size and strength as capitalism developed.

Trade unions were formed as wage workers began to organize themselves. A meeting of 60,000 workers in Manchester in 1819 had been savagely attacked by the militia – the famous Peterloo Massacre.

In Britain pressure for laws against the fierce exploitation in factories and mines was strong enough to lead in 1819 to the first laws against child labor.

The People's Charter of the Chartists, drawn up in 1832, contained the demands for universal suffrage, secret ballot and other reforms.

In developing the theories that laid the basis for the *Manifesto* Marx and Engels drew on other philosophers, economists and political leaders, as well as their own analysis and experiences in the political struggles of that time and before them.

Marx and Engels clarified ideas, opposed unscientific beliefs, added much that was new and developed a coherent body of theory that reflected reality.

They developed the philosophical system of dialectical and historical materialism – the consistent continuation and extension of materialism – and raised the struggle for socialism from a utopian vision to a science.

This is how Marx, in part, described the fundamental principles of materialism as applied to human society and its history:

In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces.

The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness.

Marx, in a letter written in 1852, stated explicitly what was new on his part. He had shown:

- That the "existence of classes" is bound to "definite historical phases of the development of production,"

- That the class struggle necessarily leads to the "dictatorship of the proletariat," and

- That this dictatorship is itself only a transition to the "abolition of all classes" and leads to a "classless society." These achievements are embodied in principles that form the foundation of *The Communist Manifesto*.

The first of these principles is the scientific method used by Marx and Engels, known as historical materialism.

Anna Pha is editor of the *Guardian*, newspaper of the Communist Party of Australia.

They used the principles of historical materialism to make their analysis of capitalism, its origins and the way in which the working class can achieve its emancipation. Marx and Engels understood the revolutionary role of the bourgeoisie as society moved from feudalism to capitalism. They recognized the bourgeois revolution as the victory of one exploiting minority over another, and looked ahead to the next revolution, the overthrow of the bourgeoisie by the working class.

The powerful productive forces that were unleashed by capitalism (machinery, technology, the skill of the working class) would become incompatible with the existing property relations, (the private ownership of the means of production and the commodities and services produced).

CLASS STRUGGLE ■ Their analysis of society brought them to the conclusion that "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." This is the second principle in the *Manifesto*. Today, the struggle between classes in society still determines economic, political and social developments.

The class struggle takes different forms and varies in its sharpness and intensity but never lets up. The struggles around working hours and conditions, wages, safety, jobs, the right to form and join trade unions, and the right to strike are all part of the class struggle between labor and capital today. So too are the struggles for public services, and basic needs such as pensions and unemployment benefits.

The capitalist state machinery – military, police, courts, laws protecting private property, parliament – are at the service of the capitalist class, reinforced by the capitalist media.

Far from being dead, the class struggle is alive and kicking, worldwide.

The third principle is the *Manifesto's* explanation of the nature of capitalism in terms of commodity production, private ownership of the means of production, accumulation of capital, wage labor, and the expansion of markets.

It is still valid to speak of "the class of modern wage-laborers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labor power in order to live," as Engels refers to the proletariat in a note to the English edition of the *Manifesto*.

"The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nest everywhere, settle

everywhere, establish connections everywhere" says the *Manifesto*.

This is the scientific characterization of the growth of trade and colonization, out of which imperialism developed during the 50 to 60 years following the writing of the *Manifesto*.

It remains true in the present era of imperialism and "globalization" as transnationals extend their tentacles to every corner of the globe.

So today, on the whole surface of the globe, imperialism can be seen enforcing naked exploitation and seeking global domination through military and economic means. So today also, the statement that the bourgeoisie (now in the form of U.S. imperialism) "compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production..." remains true.

HISTORIC INEVITABILITY OF SOCIALISM ■ A fourth principle is the historic inevitability of socialism. Marx and Engels demonstrated why the workers of all countries are the "grave-diggers of capitalism." The fall of the bourgeoisie "and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable" they wrote. The working class is that class which has the greatest reason to bring an end to capitalism. It is also the most numerous and the best organized.

The *Manifesto* puts forward a clear theoretical and political program and calls for support for every action of a genuinely democratic nature, be it small or large in scale.

The role of the working-class parties and Communists is clearly defined. "They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole." "Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communist revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win." The ruling classes still tremble. Their fear of Communism has been demonstrated time and again – whether it be the Cold War, Suharto's Indonesia or Hitler's massacre of Communists, McCarthyism in the U.S., bans on Communist parties, the U.S. blockade of Cuba, outlawing of Communists in the public sector in Germany and the never-ending anti-Communist propaganda churned out by the mass media.

Marx and Engel's foresight and understanding of social and economic developments is no better illustrated than in the *Manifesto's* final words, the call to struggle, as relevant today as when they were written: "Working men of all countries, unite!" □

Human Rights: U.S.-Style

Leslie Silko

These are dangerous days for human rights, not just here along the border but all over the world. More than ever, justice is bought and sold. If you don't have a \$100,000 donation no one in the U.S. government wants to hear from you. This is no longer a representative democracy; that is the dirty secret of the United States. Unless you have \$100,000 to donate to one of the two political parties, you are not represented – you are taxed but you are not represented. No taxation without representation was the cry in 1776 – look at us now!

In the 1950s and '60s people in the civil rights movement looked to the federal government for leadership and protection. But now as we learn more about J. Edgar Hoover's hatred of Martin Luther King, terrible doubts arise over the role of the FBI in his assassination. News has come out of South Africa that the CIA urged the white government of South Africa to arrest Nelson Mandela.

Arizona must be the government's secret laboratory to test to see how much we U.S. citizens will endure. First, we had the bizarre election of Evan Mecham as governor, then both of our U.S. senators aided and abetted the convicted felon Charles Keating who stole \$2 billion from ordinary citizens. He did a little time in a country club prison, now he's free. Not bad for \$2 billion!

Most recently we had convicted felon Fife Symington for our governor. Representative democracy in Arizona is some kind of a bad joke. But the most frightening experiment that is being conducted on us by the U.S. government is with the Border Patrol police state. They want to see just how long we citizens will allow them to trample human rights. They want to see how long they can intimidate us into surrendering our human rights for the convenience of their police state. One morning we will wake up to find that human rights are no longer recognized. They'll tell us human rights are too costly and time consuming, and that the U.S. cannot compete in the new global economy if human rights are respected.

Leslie Silko is an activist in the Native American Indian movement.

When I was growing up they used to say that we were free to come and go as we please in the United States. This was one of the big freedoms we Americans enjoyed. Get in your car and drive and it was no one's business. No longer. We have government checkpoints on all of our north-south interstate highways along the border. You cannot pass. The Border Patrol thugs march into schools, airports and bus stations to drag away innocent people, U.S. citizens and all.

One night in the spring of 1993, I had a terrifying encounter with the Border Patrol while driving back to Tucson from Albuquerque where I went for a book-signing. We took the short cut from Hatch over to Deming and on that lonely dark stretch of highway, at midnight, suddenly there was a Border Patrol roadblock – three cars and one van. When my companion rolled down the car window to ask what was wrong he was told to shut up and both of us were told to get out of the car. This border patrol agent had cranked himself up into a fury even before my companion spoke. His anger was tangible; it was in the air and it felt murderous like he was hoping that we would say or do something wrong so that he could hurt us. He called out for another agent to bring the dog. By this time we were standing on the side of the dark highway behind our car, and I started to think that this was it, they were going to kill us. Another agent brought the dog, a small female German Shepherd, and right away I saw in her eyes that she didn't want to be associated with these men – she could sense their murderous mood and wanted no part of it. Not even a dog wanted to be associated with those Border Patrol agents that night. We exchanged glances that night, me and the dog. She looked at me apologetically; she knew that Border Patrol agent was a psycho. I thought to myself "this is it."

The homicidal agent dragged the dog by her leash to the car, to the car's trunk, and then they forced her head over to smell me and my companion. Even that dog had too much integrity to serve them!

U.S. Border Patrol policy is a brutal continuation

of the genocidal Indian Wars conducted by the U.S. government in the 18th and 19th centuries. The U.S. government has always feared the large population of indigenous people in Mexico and Guatemala – you know that old Yankee saying – the only good Indian is a dead Indian. This is the true story behind U.S. Border policy and the blatant U.S. violations of the Treaty of Guadeloupe-Hidalgo and other international law. People often ask, how could the German people “not know” about the death camps for the Jews and others 50 years ago?

But today a virtual police state by the Border Patrol has taken hold from southern California to south Texas. Drunk Border Patrol agents rape and murder at will. We are always hearing about bodies found shot in the desert and the media say, “oh, a drug deal gone wrong.” But now we begin to realize that some of the dead were probably murdered by Border Patrol agents. More recently the U.S. government has experimented with U.S. Marines on the border. They shot down a sixteen-year old U.S. citizen near El Paso just to see if we citizens would tolerate this action.

The lawlessness of the Border Patrol follows the pattern of police and military abductions and killings carried on in Argentina in the late 1970s. The absolute power of the police corrupts completely; some police and military personnel become addicted to their power to terrorize and kill detainees. In Argentina, the psychosis progressed until the police and military went out and picked up ordinary citizens off the streets. Before they killed them, the police used to force them to sign deeds which gave the police all their real estate and all their property.

Abuse of police power is a contagious mental illness. The abuses by the Border Patrol have negative effects on other law enforcement. A permissive atmosphere for police violence is created. Last year there came a time when Tucson police officers themselves were committing felonies at a rate

greater than that of us ordinary citizens. In short, we citizens would have been safer with no Tucson police at all. I began to wonder, how many of the unsolved murders last year did Tucson police commit?

Hitler was not the first to make lamp shades out of human skin. In the middle 1500s, the Portuguese slave trader de Guzman made lamp shades out of the skins of indigenous people from southern Sonora. Hitler consulted books on the U.S. government’s system of Indian reservations before he built his death camps. Years before the Nazis lined up Jewish women and children in trenches and murdered them, the Mexican Federal Army forced Yaqui women and children to dig mass graves and then slaughtered them.

So this part of the world has been a testing ground for torture and murder for almost 500 years, and this border policy is only the most recent diabolical experiment.

The indigenous people from the south are related to us indigenous people of the north; we are one big family that shares similar languages and cultures. That border represents an attempt at cultural genocide. For 20 thousand years the indigenous people traveled freely back and forth and then suddenly, only very recently, the U.S. government has tried to put a stop to it. That border didn’t exist 160 years ago – 20,000 years versus 160 years. That “border” won’t last, that border won’t last even another hundred years. The U.S. government has existed only 221 years – that’s a mere blink of the eye. How long will it last with its corruption and murder?

Aztlan! Aztlan! The old stories tell us that one day the people from the south will return to Aztlan. This return is already underway and it cannot be stopped. The migration of human beings is a force of nature like the winds and nothing no steel walls, no guns, no power on earth, can stop the return to Aztlan. □



GERMANY

In December 1997 an Anti-Discrimination Conference was organized in Berlin by a number of German civil rights and anti-imperialist groups. An Appeal to Jurists throughout the world to protest against the massive abuse of the German legal system for political purposes was adopted.

The former independent sovereign state, the German Democratic Republic (GDR), has effectively been annexed by the old Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) and tens of thousands of GDR citizens are now treated as criminals.

Over 60,000 criminal investigations have been conducted, but only two percent have led to indictments. Nevertheless, tens of thousands have suffered under the pressure of these investigations, often lasting years. They have been morally discredited, socially excluded and driven into financial ruin.

The entire German court system is pursuing one single strategy of exacting revenge on former leaders and activists of the GDR.

Instruments of criminal law are being used to continue the Cold War against a sector of the German population. In the process legality itself is being trampled underfoot, including the German Constitution and the United Nations Charter.

The Appeal calls on jurists all over the world to demand that the German government observe internationally recognized legal norms and stop the political persecution of former GDR officials. The full text of the Appeal follows:

Since 1990 the German nation once again exists as a single state. But the internal division inside the country is greater than ever before, because one part of the population is being discriminated against and suffering inequality on various levels. The legal system is being massively employed for political purposes. Tens of thousands, who had loyally served their state, the German Democratic Republic, are now being treated as criminals. Millions, who had been involved throughout their lives in building a socialist society, are supposed to feel guilty for hav-

ing done so.

The population of Germany was not given the chance of participating in determining the conditions under which their unification would take place nor of formulating a new constitution in an act of free self determination. The Constitution of the (old) Federal Republic of Germany, was imposed on all Germans from above. The unification of Germany was forced into the mold of West German political ideology. The accession of the GDR has been in fact transformed into its direct annexation.

The court system in Germany has been summoned to contribute to the delegitimation of the GDR. This was publicly demanded of it by the Minister of Justice, at the time, Klaus Kinkel, himself.

Under the heading, "Regierungskriminalitt" (meaning literally government crimes) offenses were construed, designed to stigmatize acts of state as being "criminal." Affected are former judges, state attorneys, politicians, soldiers, intelligence and other officials who carried out their function in the GDR. Their guilt lies in the fact that they have acted in accordance with the laws of and in the interest of their country. The prosecutors and judges that they confront, come from a court system, which unlike the judiciary of the GDR, had never made a radical break with the Nazi judiciary, for whom the GDR never was anything else than a hostile state with an abominable social system. These judges can hardly be considered an independent and impartial tribunal.

Since under norms and principles of democratic jurisprudence, it would not be possible to prosecute what they consider "Regierungskriminalitt," they have developed juridical contrivances and interpretations. And of course, not applicable at all were the values and laws of the old FRG but only the GDR's own laws which originated from its sovereign status as an independent state. Not withstanding, however, the West German court system wanted to pass verdicts on manslaughter related to the border regime and other acts of state. The

courts applied laws freely invented by them. The verdicts thus passed are lawless condemnations.

According to incomplete estimates more than 60,000 criminal investigations have been conducted, half of which are still in process. In only 2 per cent of cases did investigations lead to indictments. Tens of thousands of those affected persons have suffered a deterioration in their health under the pressure – often covering a period of years – have been morally discredited, socially excluded and driven into financial ruin. It is characteristic that the afflicted persons have been punished and discriminated against in various ways. The network of the independent court system from the Federal Constitutional Court to the social and labor courts to the criminal courts and administrative courts, functions according to one single strategy – retaliation against the former officials of the GDR. Some of the persecuted could not stand the pressure and died.

The Cold War is being continued against one sector of the population with the instruments of criminal law. A growing number of German legal scholars and practitioners, also from the judiciary, are criticizing the persecution as being fundamentally wrong and unlawful. The struggle of these forces together with those personally afflicted and with the support from outside Germany is the only means to restore legality. Not amnesty, only a law on legal restitution permitting the annulment of the verdicts can redress the errors of the judiciary.

This is not only in the interest of Germany alone. The attempt of the German judiciary using criminal law to retroactively negate the sovereign status of the GDR is in violation of the sovereign equality of states (Article 2, 1 of the Charter of the United Nations), a fundamental principle on which the order of the international state system is based. The respect of this principle is a condition for the peoples of the world to determine their destinies democratically.

The international community must urge united Germany to respect the principle of the sovereignty of states without any restrictions. We appeal to jurists all over the world to demand the observance of internationally recognized legal norms from the Federal Republic of Germany.

We call upon jurists all over the world to raise your voices against the political persecution of former GDR officials. □

IRAQ

Below is an interview with the general secretary of the Communist Party of Iraq, Hamid Majeed Musa, from the Morning Star.

Founded in 1934, the Iraqi Communist Party sunk deep roots among the country's working class and intelligentsia, roots deep enough to survive periodic bouts of illegality and now nearly two decades of sustained repression.

This last period of persecution began in 1978, after Saddam Hussein ended an uneasy six-year period of Communist legality, forced on his Baath party by a combination of international and domestic factors.

The Iraqi CP used this period to build up its strength, and the Party's warnings about the direction taken by Saddam found an echo among broad sections of the Iraqi people. The Party's daily newspaper *Tariq Al-Sha'b* (People's Path) had achieved a circulation of around 7 million by 1975.

Worried by the party's growing vigor, Saddam tightened his grip and the Party was forced to hold its 4th Congress in semi-clandestine conditions in Baghdad in 1976.

Today, the Party sees its main tasks as uniting the opposition and campaigning for the lifting of the economic sanctions imposed by the UN on the country.

Mr. Musa identifies four trends in the anti-Saddam opposition, "There is the Kurdish nationalist trend, the Arab nationalist wing, the Islamic current and the democratic opposition, of which our Party is a constituent part. Our aim is to unite the opposition and to remove obstacles to unity. We, of course, concentrate on the democratic trend in the mass movement and opposition."

Mr. Musa says of the Party's 6th Congress perspectives: "The masses are the main power to topple the regime. To achieve that, we have emphasized that the Party must be more active and dynamic, more modern and more in touch with the aspirations and expectations of our people.

"Despite ferocious repression by the dictatorship, the Party uses its bases in Iraqi Kurdistan to broadcast in Arabic and Kurdish through its nine radio and three TV stations. Its main radio station "Voice of the Iraqi People" is listened to throughout Iraq. The Party organizations inside the country distribute leaflets and, aside from regional publica-

tions, the Party publishes two main organs *People's Path* in Arabic and *Path of Kurdistan* in Kurdish.

"In the past decade, the Party has refined its position on the national question adopting the slogan of a democratic, federal Iraq. The Congress also discussed the relationship between the Iraqi CP and the Kurdistan Communist Party of Iraq, which exercises full independence in relation to Kurdish affairs.

"The Party is deeply concerned by the outbreaks of conflict between the Kurdish Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan.

This fighting harms the cause of the Kurdish people in particular and the struggle of the Iraqi people in general against the dictatorship."

But while welcoming genuine international solidarity Mr. Musa warns of the dangers of outside interference. "Change inside Iraq is the duty of the Iraqi people. We need solidarity but we reject intervention in the future of any state. There can be no outside solution. Therefore we condemn some of the UN's harsh resolutions which undermine the rights of our people. We especially condemn the role of the U.S. administration which has a dual method of dealing with the Iraqi regime and implementing resolutions against the Iraqi people.

"The repeated armed invasions of western Kurdistan by Turkey ostensibly to fight guerrillas of the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) is condemned by the Iraqi CP as aggressive, hostile and expansionist, and these incursions are also used to take advantage of the PKK's conflict with the KDP. The Iraqi CP also points out that Saddam's bluster against UN weapons inspectors is in sharp contrast to the regime's toleration of this violation of Iraqi territory, its collusion with Ankara and unwillingness to approach the UN on the subject. The Turks have even set up a self-declared Security Zone in flagrant violation of international law.

"Iraqi Communists support the ending of the economic blockade against the country, and for the full implementation of UN Security Council resolution 986 which allows the food-for-oil trade. However, the Party is for unceasing efforts to isolate the regime through political and military embargoes.

"Our Party is active in using all means to achieve our goals. Inside Iraq, our comrades participate in clandestine work to mobilize the people to meet their daily needs. Our people are suffering from hunger and disease because of the methods of

the regime, its corruption and privileges, suffering which economic sanctions exacerbate. This underground activity is difficult and dangerous.

"The dictatorship's methods are straightforward, if there is a peaceful demonstration all participants will face execution, and reprisals against their families. We have to exercise caution. In principle, we have no hesitation about armed struggle; Communists participated in military struggle against the regime in Kurdistan and in the south.

"Throughout the past two decades, Iraqi Communists have suffered, along with their compatriots, bitter hardships for the liberation of their country."

But Mr. Musa is confident about his Party and the international movement.

"Communists feel most responsible and ready to suffer for the cause of the masses, struggling for the happiness, welfare and real freedom of working people. We are always struggling against human exploitation and ethnic discrimination, for social justice. Our main struggle is to secure wealth for those who produce it, so that they may benefit from it and enjoy a peaceful life." □

GREECE

On March 10, 1998, the Communist Party of Greece held a discussion on the situation in Yugoslavia and the Balkans and came to the following conclusion:

The developments taking place in Kosovo show that the new plan of the imperialist forces is being put into effect, the purpose of which is the further dismemberment of the former Yugoslavia and the parceling out of new spheres of influence, mainly between the U.S. and Germany. The overall plan which is being promoted, probably within the coming period, aims, in addition to Kosovo, to detach the regions of Montenegro, Vojvodina and Sandzak from present-day Yugoslavia. Such a development would lead to a more general conflagration in the Balkans. It would encourage governments and reactionary and nationalist political forces to put forward demands to change borders in the name of defending minorities and ethnic rights, in the name of existing and non-existent problems. The imperialists cannot in the least guarantee the rights of minorities.

No one should forget the age-old, tried and true

policy of the imperialists which is to create splits in order to satisfy their rapacious appetites and to strike at anyone who dares resist.

If a stop is not put to the new schemes for the further partition of Yugoslavia, fresh problems will be created for the peoples and for the minorities who are already suffering from plundering and oppression.

The CPG states categorically that the rights which should be enjoyed by the Albanian minority in Kosovo – and by every other minority within the context of existing states and borders – can and must be settled by the peoples themselves in conjunction with the struggle against the policy of “divide and rule” which the imperialist powers apply to protect their own interests. The people of the Balkans know the dangers inherent in imperialist “protection,” especially today, and what its goals are: To control all the small, weak and fragmented Balkan states, and to make them appendages of the great powers who are competing among themselves.

The decision by the majority of the so-called Contact Group to impose new measures and embargoes, i.e. fresh economic sanctions, against the new Yugoslavia, harbors major new dangers. What rights have the imperialists to decide on misery, genocide and slaughter for people? Who called them in? □

AUSTRALIA

On March 11, 1998, the Guardian, newspaper of the Communist Party of Australia wrote an editorial on the privatization of health care. Below are excerpts:

Once again the attempts of the federal government to push people into the private insurance companies have come unstuck. Despite the expenditure of \$600 million to encourage private health insurance the people are voting with their feet as they abandon private health insurance in droves. By this act, they are telling the government that they do not want a private system but the maintenance of Medicare and public hospitals.

But the government is not likely to listen and will push on with its drive to cut public health expenditures and establish an American-type private enterprise system which will leave large numbers of low-income earners without any health cov-

erage whatsoever.

This is of little concern to the Howard government which is tied by a thousand strings to big business circles, among them the private insurance companies.

A private system would see the sabotage of Medicare with the objective of bringing about its eventual collapse.

The Communist Party calls for the maintenance of Medicare as a free universal health system. If necessary, the Medicare levy should be increased to help finance Medicare. The public hospital system must be maintained and properly funded. Private health insurance should be allowed to die out except for those who want some additional hospital luxury.

The federal government has wasted \$600 million to encourage membership of the private health insurance schemes. It would have been better spent directly on the public health system.

The federal government gives hand-outs to various big business companies whenever they come along with cap in hand. It has found billions to help bail-out the economies of Thailand, South Korea and Indonesia. Yet when it comes to public health, one of the nation's most important assets, the government cries poverty. It's all to do with the government's extreme right-wing pro-big-business policies. A new type government with pro-people policies is urgently needed. □

SOUTH AFRICA

On February 12, 1998 a bilateral meeting between the national leaderships of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party was held. The discussion took place against the background of important strategic resolutions on socialism passed at COSATU's Congress held in September 1997 and the African National Congress' (ANC) national conference where the ANC reaffirmed that its two major alliance partners were socialist. The SACP and COSATU agreed on the necessity of developing specific socialist-oriented policies and programs of action. Below we print the main decisions from the bilateral meeting:

The implementation of the COSATU Congress resolution on building SACP work-place units. Most, although not all, of our Party base structures are residential. The Party and COSATU acknowl-

edge the need to build a Communist Party political presence at the work-place itself. While these things have to be worked out in specific circumstances, the bilateral [meeting] agreed that there would need to be a clear understanding that the role of the SACP structure would not be a trade union role but rather an ideological and political education role.

Concrete proposals were made and are being followed up on the COSATU resolution to provide material support to the SACP.

The bilateral [meeting] also considered initiatives around socializing the economy. It was agreed to pursue an in-depth project of research, and of practical work around the co-operative sector. The more strategic use of worker-investment initiatives was also discussed.

On the critical question of democratizing and transforming the public sector, the bilateral [meeting] agreed that we must work to ensure the effective implementation of the Tripartite Summit resolution to establish an alliance task group, under ANC President, Thabo Mbeki. The bilateral [meeting] also agreed that the tripartite alliance must ensure that there is a common strategic perspective on job creation before the presidential Job Summit due later this year. It is imperative that we resist the attempt of business to set a job creation agenda that centers around labor market "flexibility."

Finally, the bilateral discussed how, as the ANC's two leading partners, we shall work to strengthen the ANC's election campaign in 1999. □

RUSSIA

An extraordinary meeting of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation was held in response to the decision of the President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin, to dismiss the government.

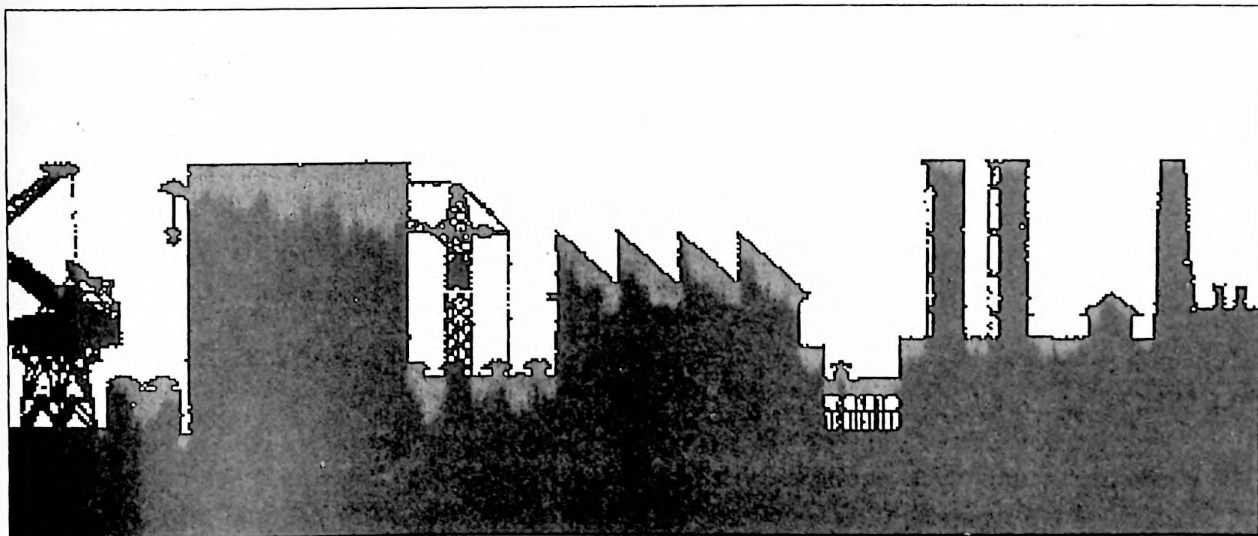
The Presidium noted that the dismissal of the government of the Russian Federation did not come unexpectedly for the leadership of the CPRF. It is an emergency measure undertaken by the president because of the worsening social and economic situation in the country and the demand of the opposition to immediately change the economic course and for the formation of a Government of people's trust.

It is obvious that the President's action is aimed at forestalling the growing discontent of the people. The most immediate aim is to frustrate the planned all-Russian protest action on April 9th and to avoid the Government's report to the Duma and its being held responsible before the State Duma and the Russian people.

In his address on March 23, the president announced his adherence to the present economic course. The Presidium thinks that the change of government without changing the present "reform course," which is fatal for the country, does not change the situation in the country.

The Presidium considers it necessary to continue all-round preparations for the all-Russian protest action and be out in the streets of the cities and villages on April 9th with united demands for a complete change of course and the formation of a government of people's trust. □

International Department, CPUSA



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