

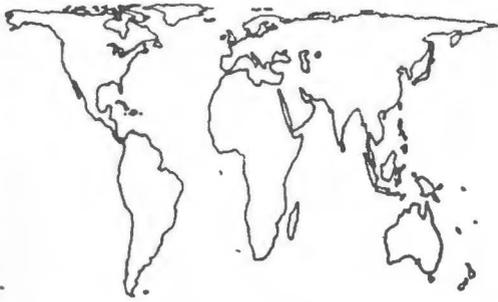
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INTERNATIONAL REVIEW



occasional internal bulletin

Revolutionary Communist League of Britain



INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

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This is an occasional internal bulletin designed to circulate information on the international communist movement, and the analysis of, and developments within fraternal organisations.

There may be unacknowledged disagreements with positions expressed, and these articles should not be regarded as representing official R.C.L. positions.

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AZANIA : NEW SOUTH AFRICA ?

The widely expected result of the April elections of an ANC dominated victory saw the dawning of bourgeois democracy in South Africa. The ANC failed to win the crucial two-thirds share of the vote it needed to carry through constitutional change with compromising with its partners in the multi-party government of national unity. Out of 19,726,579 votes counted for the National Assembly seats the ANC received 62.6% of the votes:

PARTY	VOTES	SEATS	%
ANC	12 237 655	252	62.6
National Party	3 983 690	82	20.4
Ikatha	2 058 294	43	10.5
Freedom Front	424 555	9	2.2
Democratic Party	338 426	7	1.7
PAC	243 478	5	1.2

Other parties participating in the election received less than one per cent. In the voting for the Regional Assembly seats only two of the seven regions were outside of ANC domination : running second to Inkatha's 41 seats in the regional elections for KwaZulu/Natal, and in West Cape Province where the outgoing National Party Minister of Law and Order, Knel, emerged as the Premier with 53.2% of the popular vote to the National Party.

The ANC won a landslide of more than 85% among black voters throughout the country. One commentator pointed out, " The irony was that the most steadfast support for the ANC, in essence a party of the urban elite, came from rural blacks". The more radical Pan Africanist Congress attracted little more than 1% of the vote. In their post-election meetings the PAC has reportedly dropped its slogan "One Settler ! One bullet!" and replaced it with the call "One Child ! One Education!".

President Mandela has appointed the old guard of the ANC to his cabinet with Thabo Mbeki, the national chairman of the ANC, as first Deputy President and effective Prime Minister. De Klerk has the constitutional right to be the second Deputy Primeminister, and Inkatha's Buthelezi has been offered the Home Affairs Cabinet post.

Mandela has ignored the collective feelings of the ANC by the appointment of former ANC secretary-general Alfred Nzo to the post of Foreign Minister and appointing Joe Modise as Defence Minister. Modise was implicated in the ANC's own internal enquiry into the torture camps of exiles in Angola. [See 'The End of the Beginning: Towards a post-apartheid South Africa' distributed July 1991.] Modise is reportedly unpopular within the ANC but because of his enthusiasm for boosting South Africa's military capabilities welcomed by the South African Defence Force.

The post of Finance Minister has been offered to the National Party with the retention of Derek Keys, a noted capitalist and former chief of the mining house Gencor. Agriculture, Constitutional Affairs, Mineral & Energy, Environment and Welfare & Population Development are held by the the National Party. These posts are to reassure the business community that reconciliation is the order of the day.

In his Presidential address Mandela said: " The time for the healing of wounds has come...We must therefore act together as a united people, for national reconciliation, for nation-building, for the birth of a new world."

The BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT OF AZANIA had campaigned unsuccessfully for a boycott of the elections amidst the popular euphoria and raised expectations of those previously denied the ballot: "The struggle will not end in April. Black people will still have to try and get their land back. We will still have to try and get a better life in our rich country. We will have to find ways of protecting ourselves from white criminals and their agents who causes violence in Black areas. We will have to fight for our children to get a good education so that they can get good jobs."

The BCM(A) in a communique issued in the monthly newsletter "Letsetse", argued against the vote being used to sustaining "perpetual poverty, landlessness, oppression, homelessness and powerlessness" under the banner that "Now We are Free!".

"The BCM views the struggle as being aimed at the total liberation of Black people. Central to that struggle is the return of our colonized land to its rightful owners and the restoration of the dignity of Black people....The negotiations [for the April elections] have, through stealth and cunning, endorsed land theft and economic deprivation. They have also guaranteed jobs to the civil service, whose duty it is to maintain the status quo."

"Effectively the state machinery in the form of the army, police and civil service have been left intact, thereby ensuring the continued repression of our people and the sustenance of white supremacy."

What we are witnessing in South Africa is the victory over apartheid, the establishment of a bourgeois democracy, as but a stage towards a liberated and free Azania. The impetus for developing a revolutionary socialist movement will bring forth those organisations who still acknowledge that there is no easy road to freedom. The raised expectations of those dispossessed given nothing but the vote, will subside as the ANC's promises are wrecked upon an intact white power structure. The ANC's policies have conceded so much that the old economic order remains unchallenged. The most sweeping of the policies is the plan to transfer mineral rights to the state but leaving the mining concessions untouched. The ANC budget argues against large tax increases or heavy government borrowing to finance the £7 billion Five Year Reconstruction and Development Programme [RDP]. It is clear from the proposed policies that President Mandela aims to oversee the construction of a capitalist social-democracy in post-apartheid South Africa.

The RDP promises free compulsory education, universal basic health, a million new homes and providing electricity and running water for 2.5 million more. It has provision for the redistribution of a third of arable land, almost all of which is in white hands, and speaks of creating over 2 million jobs for a population where 49% are without a source of steady income.

The problems of reconstruction faced by the ANC's development plan are those who administered apartheid, those who grew rich upon the backs of Black labour, those who stole and farmed the land of the rural dispossessed, those who tried to suppress the anger of a people in revolt, those who talk of the interests of all South African but wish to preserve their own. There is no strategy involving the people in their own liberation after all they had a vote.

FOOTNOTE:

In June the Anti-Apartheid Movement will go into voluntary liquidation.

**CALL TO THE ALL INDIA CONVENTION AGAINST
IMPERIALIST CULTURAL AGGRESSION**

from Communist Party of India (ML) - Janashakti.

*Sponsored by various cultural organisations on
3rd and 4th April 1994, Shaheed Com. Nutan Nagar
(Rana Pratap Hall), Hyderabad.*

Dear friends,

Despite the tremendous uproar and protest from all corners of the country the Indian Government has signed the GATT agreement (now renamed WTO) and accepted the Dunkel Draft proposals which are against the interests of vast masses. The rulers did not have the slightest hesitation in signing the agreement which implies total submission to the dictates of the imperialists. This would further tighten their exploitative noose around our necks. These comprador rulers, by the very nature of their class, are for the total sell-out of the country's economy to the imperialist super-powers, to the IMF, World Bank and the WTO. They, for the last five decades after the transfer of power, have pushed the economy into an abysmal crisis with their pro-imperialist policies and now they say, "There is no alternative to survive but to become a part of the GATT or to beg a fresh instalment of loan from the IMF and the World Bank". They vociferously mouth the slogans of liberalisation, privatisation and inculcate the ideology of colonial slavery in the masses, particularly the educated middle class. Naturally it is the same ruling classes who perpetuate communalism, advocate Hindu fundamentalism, engineer attacks on dalits, minorities, women, tribals and nationalities -- according to the very dictates of the imperialists. Infact imperialism cannot survive unless it allies with the most reactionary force, feudalism. Hence the comprador ruling classes, comprising of big bourgeoisie, big landlord classes strive to maintain the semi-feudal and semi-colonial character of the economy while selling out the country to the

imperialists. It is in this backdrop that the recent spate of Hindu fundamentalism and the uprise of reactionary feudal ideology such as superstition, backwardness, mysticism, pessimism, *karma* etc. have to be understood.

The comprador ruling classes, through their New Economic Policy, New Industrial Policy, Liberalisation and privatisation policies, are making every effort to hand over the country's economy to the imperialist powers in the name of globalisation and free market, aiding them in their attempts at recolonisation. Imperialism which goes hand in glove with feudalism would tighten its stranglehold over our country with complete support from the treacherous native compradors. They will drastically cut down import taxes while increasing further the tax burden on people multifold, giving easier access to the imperialists. While making our lives miserable, they will provide subsidies to foreign investors but withdraw even the so-called social welfare measures cutting down even the so called subsidies to people -- all this to make our country a part of the global 'free' market. Brutal repression on the struggling masses is inevitably on the increase. Those who protest are either implicated under TADA or killed in fake encounters or tortured to death. Patriotic people fighting imperialism and feudalism are branded terrorists. 'Hindutva' is being projected as nationalism.

Since 1947, the Indian State, which declares itself 'secular', has infact been acting as a Hindu state. The same ruling classes, who have adopted Hindu fundamentalism as their philosophy to perpetuate their exploitation, are advocating globalisation to serve the interests of the imperialists. They promote decadent imperialist and feudal cultures simultaneously to propagate the ideas of 'being slave to a master', which means feudal submissiveness to an imperial master. Imperialist culture with ingredients such as pornography, popculture, wham culture, personal anarchy, lumpen culture and consumerist culture is promoted and propagated by the ruling classes. Extravagant pop shows are organised by multinational companies and the government promotes them. Pop music which originally emerged as a protest against the system played a significant

political role in the 'sixties and 'seventies. Multinational music companies have been largely successful in deflecting, degenerating and diverting the protest into personal anarchy and pornography. The pop music yielded, since it lacked a political consciousness and commitment. Today it is sheer commerce.

The feudal culture, essentially undemocratic in nature, aims to keep people in the dark. In the context of its alliance with imperialist culture, it is also adopting modern and sophisticated forms. In a very polished manner, it may say that women and dalits can also read Vedas, Puranas and perform rituals, but its oppressive content remains unchanged. It must be reiterated that the feudal and imperialist cultures are in a strong alliance. They compliment one another and operate to reinforce each other. Hence in our country, it is impossible to analyse or fight imperialist culture in isolation. It has to be tackled with its essential counter part -- the feudal culture.

Imperialism cannot be understood merely as an economic-military system of control. Cultural domination is an integral dimension to any sustained system of exploitation. Imperialism, in its efforts to plunder the third world politically and economically, is also invading the cultural spheres of these countries. Cultural imperialism colludes with the native feudal culture and strengthens it to breed a hybrid semi-feudal -semi - colonial value system. The comprador ruling classes and the imperialists have realised the importance of cultural intervention, as any idea of protest can be countered to prevent it from materialising into a movement of political struggle. Though there has been much ado about the government yielding to IMF, World Bank, WTO, not much is said about the cultural dimension of Imperialism. Cultural imperialism is equally dangerous as it works and penetrates silently. In the recent past our government has made several cultural polices allowing imperialist satellite and network electronic media to invade our cultural skies, and propagating decadent ideas. The government is trying hard to privatise Doordarshan which as it is away from the masses and propagating decadent values by advising it to compete with an unequal, mammoth competitor -- Star TV. While government

sponsored cultural festivals abroad patronise feudal culture fashion parades, beauty contests, star nites, musical extravaganzas etc. are promoting imperialist culture onto our land.

The government has subsidised import tariffs on innumerable imperialist cultural commodities to ease their influx and their lucrative advertisement propaganda is already on a full swing on Star TV and US media channels which have penetrated into a majority of Indian households. One of the recently conducted survey indicates that the increase in the number of TV sets is directly proportional to the decline of average individual income. It is not surprising to note that the culture and communication equipment are slowly replacing the manufacturing goods by occupying 20% of the US and European economies, while they were 2% three years ago and are on the upswing in our economy too. This makes it evident that the cultural invasion is essentially an economic factor. This cultural invasion is injecting the ideology of colonial slavery in to our veins, simultaneously strengthening feudal values such as superstition, backwardness, religion etc. All this to make us silently accept the imperialist plunder and feudal exploitation.

Cultural imperialism has two major goals, one economic and the other political : to capture markets for its cultural commodities and to establish hegemony by shaping popular consciousness. It plays a major role in dissociating people from their cultural roots and traditional solidarity replacing them with media created 'needs'. The political effect is to alienate people from traditional class and community bonds, atomising and separating individuals from each other. Cultural imperialism emphasizes the segmentation of people and encourages them to think themselves as a part of hierarchy highlighting minute differences with those below them, rather than the vast inequalities that separate them from those above. Imperialist entertainment and advertisement target the most vulnerable youth and give a message that 'modernity' is associated with consuming imperialist products. Mass media manipulates adolescent rebelliousness and channels discontent into

consumer extravagances. Cultural imperialism focusses on youth not only for the market but also for political reasons, to undercut a political threat in which a personal rebellion could become mass political revolt against economic as well as cultural forms of control.

In relation to the Third World in general and our country, in particular, cultural imperialism can be defined as the systematic penetration, and domination of the cultural life of the popular classes, by the ruling classes of the imperialist countries in order to reorder values, behaviour, institutions and identity of the oppressed peoples that conforms with the interests of the imperial and native feudal classes. Cultural imperialism takes both traditional feudal forms and modern forms. Through religious fundamentalism and fanaticism cultural imperialism operates in the traditional form and through mass media, publicity, advertisement and 'secular' entertainers in the modern form. Intellectuals play a major role in the latter. Cultural imperialism today is oriented towards capturing mass audiences and it is global in scope and homogenising in its impact. The mass media as instruments of cultural imperialism are private only in the formal sense. The absence of formal state ties provides a legitimate cover for the private media projecting imperial interests as 'news' or entertainment, and political interests are projected through non-imperial subjects.

The mass media have become an integral part of the imperialist system of global political and social control as well as a major source of super-profits, the latter emphasising its growing economic significance. As the levels of exploitation, inequality, poverty and unemployment increase in our country, imperialist controlled mass communications operate to convert a critical public into passiveness and deflect potential unrest. They create illusions of international and cross-class bonds. Through TV images a false intimacy and an imaginary link is established between the successful subjects of the media and the impoverished spectators. These linkages provide a channel through which the discourse of individual solutions to private problems is propagated. The message is very clear -- victims are

blamed for their own poverty, success depends on individual efforts in relation to 'karma' or 'fate'.

While imperialist arms disarticulate civil societies and their banks pillage the economies, the imperial media provides individuals with escapist identities. Economic terrorism as practised by the IMF, World Bank and WTO destroys local industries, erodes public properties and savages wage and salaried households. Cultural terrorism is responsible for physical displacement of all forms of people's culture and people's artistes. Though cultural terrorism preys on the psychological weaknesses and deep anxieties of our people, particularly their sense of being backward, traditional and oppressed, it provides new images of mobility and free expression only in the frame-work of feudalism to preserve and strengthen feudal values further. Cultural imperialism in the name of self-expression tyrannises our people, 'entertains' them, coerces them and titillates them to be 'modern' to submit to the demands of the imperialist market and feudal exploitation. It makes use of terms like 'globalisation' or 'internationalisation' to justify attacks on all forms of solidarity, community and social values. The images of individual mobility, the 'self-make person', the emphasis on 'self-centered existence' and slogans like "privatise or perish", "globalise or perish", "make a fast buck"

have now become major instruments in dominating our country. The new imperialist cultural norms -- private over the public, individual over the social, sensational and violent over everyday struggles and social realities -- contribute to inculcating precisely the egocentric values that undermine collective action. The culture of images, of transitory experiences, of sexual conquest, anarchy and vandalism, works against reflection, commitment and shared feelings of affection and solidarity. Cultural imperialism distracts from power relations and erodes collective forms of social action.

If the threat and danger posed by imperialism in the cultural front is so enormous, what then is the task ahead of us, fighting for people's culture? At the outset we must recapitulate and reiterate the fact that the imperialism, however gigantic it may

appear, is on its deathbed. It's only a paper tiger! Since it has entered into an unprecedented crisis it is coming up with new aggressive designs in economic, political and cultural spheres to capture and conquer the third world countries. This aggression is only a transitory phase but if underestimated can result in dire consequences. We must realise the importance of cultural intervention, in the broadest sense including ideology, consciousness and social action, which is the crucial link converting objective conditions into conscious political intervention. Cultural imperialism cannot succeed as a sustained phenomenon as the stark reality stands opposed to it. The personal experience of misery and exploitation caused by the imperialists and the native comprador ruling classes that have collaborated with it, the brutality of state violence, growing poverty, hunger can never be changed by the escapist imperialist media. Within the consciousness of the oppressed people there is a constant struggle between the demon of individual escape cultivated by the mass media and the past experiences of collective action and responsibility. There are absolute limits in the capacity of cultural imperialism to distract and mystify people beyond which popular rejection sets in. The false promises of cultural imperialism become objects of bitter jokes in the reality of abject poverty, hunger and perpetual denial of minimum livelihood to millions of people. Where class, racial, gender and ethnic bonds endure and practices of revolutionary collective action are militant the influence of cultural imperialism is rejected. Historical movements are abundant among the oppressed people who have been reeling under the yokes of feudalism and imperialism for centuries. Where people of different occupations and communities converge on class basis with collective revolutionary cultural traditions and practices, cultural imperialism will have to retreat.

People from all sections and different walks of life must realise the immediate danger posed by cultural imperialism hand in glove with feudalism and break the myth and fetishism it tries to create. This is possible only by a collective action of all like minded democratic, secular, and patriotic people led by the

working class. Genuine people's culture, the culture of the toiling masses, has to be unearthed from the filth of feudal and imperialist cultures. The culture would have to be purified, sharpened and enlightened with scientific proletarian world outlook. Only this new democratic cultural value system, which is anti-feudal and anti-imperialist can be a potential alternative to the oppressive feudal and imperialist cultures. Hence it is our prime task to struggle and build such a cultural value system that envisages a just, humane, egalitarian and democratic society that is free from all kinds of exploitation and oppression. This can only be achieved under the leadership of the working class which is the prime leading force in alliance with the broad peasantry which is a motive force, of conscious revolutionary social change and the harbinger of the dawning new society.

Building of a people's cultural movement and achieving cultural liberation is dependent on the development of a socio-political force capable of confronting state terror that goes together with cultural conquest. Hence the movement against for the liberation of the country from the clutches of the semi-feudal, semi-colonial oppressive system and to establish a new democratic society. Since the feudal and imperialist cultures are instruments aimed at perpetuating exploitation and oppression, the struggle against them for a new democratic culture has to be closely linked with the economic and political struggles waged by the oppressed classes under the leadership of the working class. It is such struggles that are anti-feudal, anti-imperialist and anti-comprador bourgeois ruling classes, with which the new democratic cultural movement has to be deep-rooted, strengthened and united to stand firm against the aggressive designs of cultural imperialism which tries to segment people and make them preys for exploitation. Undoubtedly victory shall be ours!

We, militant cultural organisations striving to build a new democratic cultural movement and establish people's culture, call upon all sections of people to react to the grave threat posed by cultural imperialism. We plan to organise a two day All India Convention against the Aggression of Imperialism in

Culture on 3rd-4th April 1994, at Hyderabad. We are aware that this convention cannot be a grand success without the active participation and solidarity from democratic, secular, patriotic people and likeminded organisations, groups, sections, and individuals. Hence we request all such organisations, groups, sections, individuals and people to join hands with us in this fight against cultural imperialism. We appeal to one and all to extend a helping hand in conducting this convention. The enemy may seem gigantic and the task enormous but people are invincible. Nothing can stand against the mighty force of united collective action of the toiling masses led by the working class. Our faith in the new society that shall be built upon humane, just and democratic values and culture is scientific and invincible. Our confidence in the ultimate victory of people's culture is immovable. Let us all stand united, hand in hand. Let us build a human wall that would raze to the ground the anti-people "technical excellence" of cultural imperialism and reactionary feudalism. Let us uphold the banner of people's struggle and people's cultural movement.

- * Down with imperialist aggression in culture
- * Down with feudal culture
- * Down with semi feudal-semi colonial culture
- * Down with anti-people cultural policies of the government
- * Long live people's culture
- * Long live new democratic culture
- * Down with state violence
- * Down with cultural imperialism
- * Long live New Democratic Revolution

*Preparatory Committee for the All India Convention
against Imperialist Cultural Agression.*

26.1.1994

Hyderabad.

FOURTH CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF JAPAN / LEFT

Information from The People's Star, February 1994

Towards the end of 1993, following a complicated process of line struggle, publicity was given to the Fourth Congress of the CPJ/L and the exposure and defeat of a revisionist tendency that had emerged in the Party's Central leadership.

"The political line of this revisionism is: Bernsteinism because it destroys the political line of forming a revolutionary united front and seizing the state power from the enemy and works only for immediate activities with no ultimate aim; social democracy because it has no viewpoint of seizing the state power; and street activism because it is not for accumulating strength of revolution in workshops, factories and key industries."

It sought to "bring bourgeois personal relationship into the revolutionary party, or to change the Party into an organisation where commandarism and bureaucraticism prevail and people to apply Marxism to others but liberalism to themselves.... It forges a history of the revolutionary struggle with personal historic episodes and widely advocates the viewpoint of historical idealism to deny all the achievements and lessons gained by the people and the Party. It pursues one's own fame, honour and feats."

"The ideological line of this revisionism wrecks the thought of serving the people and the idea and method of the mass line, both of which stand on the basic viewpoint of historical materialism."

In line with the decisions of the 4th Congress that "the greatest importance should be attached to its ideological aspect", the CPJ/L called upon its members and supporters in a New Year Editorial of its publication "Jinmin No Hosh" to "Study and apply to our activities Mao Zedong's works: On Practice and On Contradiction" and carried an article "Significance of study of Mao Zedong's Three Articles - Establish the thought of serving the people."

SOSYALIST TURKIYE PARTISI REORGANISES

Last autumn, the Turkish Constitutional Court (at the bidding of the government) accused the STP of breaking the Turkish Constitution because its political programme supports the Kurdish people's right to self-determination. [See International Review No. 8 'Talk by London-based supporters of the Socialist Party'.]

Before the trial to ban the STP came to an end, its comrades had already created a new legal Marxist party to compensate for the banning of the STP. They declare, "Our fight to bring socialism into Turkey will now continue under the banner of the SIP" (Sosyalist Iktidar Partisi - The Party for Socialist Power).

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO THE U.S. WORKING CLASS
by Bill Fletcher, Jr.

Much has been written recently about the changing shape of the U.S. working class. Below are a few points aimed at integrating some of this material into broader strategic discussion of the role of the working class in the struggle for fundamental social change.

Standard of living is down

First, facts clearly demonstrate that the U.S. working class has been getting poorer over the last twenty years. This tendency preceded Reagan, and will likely continue, short of dramatic economic and political changes. The standard of living has been declining since 1973 and is currently at a level—factoring in inflation—somewhere between 1960-67 levels.

This decline has many sources. The first is the deindustrialization of the United States. Between 1979 and 1989 over two million manufacturing jobs were eliminated, jobs which tended to pay what was once known as the "family wage." During the same period, five million of the 13.6 million new jobs created paid less than \$13,000 per year. This points to the second factor, i.e., the growth of the service sector and the "hollowing" of the U.S. economy. There has been a dramatic reduction in value-producing jobs.

This entire situation has to be set against the growth in competition between the United States and other capitalist powers. This competition has encouraged U.S. corporations to "downsize" and adopt a mean-and-lean approach.

At the same time, to stop there misses some important political factors. As a result of the Reagan economic policies, corporate tax breaks did not encourage new investment, but rather the use of extra funds for non-productive endeavors, e.g., leveraged buy-outs and real estate speculation. Thus, immense amounts of money were invested to shift the playing field among capitalists, not to increase the competitive edge of U.S. corporations vis-à-vis foreign competitors.

Divisions within the class

Stratification of the working class is becoming more permanent. Contrary to economists who view the stratification of the U.S. working class as a new phenomenon, it's clear that stratification has long existed based on race, nationality and gender. So what's new?

We are witnessing a more rigid division within the class between those

who work in what are often called "high-performance" industry (essentially innovative enterprises) and those who are in the service economy working one or two jobs to get by.

Transition from the unskilled or semi-skilled sector, particularly in the service economy, into the high-performance sector has become more difficult for several reasons. For one, the number of jobs has declined, due to technological innovation and the failure of U.S. business to reinvest. Second, and relevant to discussions regarding education reform, many of the technical demands in the high-performance sector necessitate greater levels of education and training. Thus, within U.S. capitalism we are witnessing both the de-skilling of many jobs,

Stratification of the working class has long existed based on race, nationality and gender. So what's new?

¹ In particular, I would recommend Mike Davis' *Prisoners of the American Dream*, and the Economic Policy Institute's *The State of Working America, 1990-1991*.

as well as the increased skilling of others. This situation has led to many of the struggles we are now witnessing around the value of public education and its place in economic development.

Reshuffling gender and ethnicity

The working class is becoming browner and more female. The U.S. working class has always been diverse. A myriad of European ethnic groups as well as African Americans, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Native Americans and Asians have made up the class. However, immigration from Latin America and Asia over the past twenty years or so has significantly increased the proportion of workers of color. The class has also become more female with the large-scale increase of women in the workforce beginning in the late 1960s, and rapidly developing with the erosion of the U.S. economy. This has led to a reshuffling of which ethnic groups and which gender occupy various job classifications and positions in the work force. The long-term tendency is for the majority of the United States to become "of color" by 2060 and for the majority of the working class to be made up of women and workers of color by the year 2000.

The sun belt and beyond

The "sun belt" remains central to the designs of capitalism, but the bourgeoisie is thinking more in terms of the western hemisphere than ever before. The sun belt—the South and Southwest—remain the areas of major population and economic growth in the United States. In terms of population,

Florida and Texas are among the leading states in actual growth. North Carolina is not far behind. Business has continued to shift to the sun belt for political, economic and climate reasons, but what is different now is that businesses are also leaving the sun belt and moving further south!

Despite the prostitution of the South to business from the North, in this age of global competition, business has been searching for sources of cheaper labor and a more favorable "business climate." It is in this context that the debate over the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) must be seen. In many respects, the world is evolving into economic blocs reminiscent of the three blocs in George Orwell's *1984*. In its effort to compete with the European community, U.S. capitalism is looking to strengthen its hold over the western hemisphere. This is not for military or strategic reasons in a narrow sense, but to give it a competitive advantage.

This means that relations between the U.S. working class and the working classes of Latin America and the Caribbean take on new and strategic significance. We are not looking at a situation of moral international solidarity, but rather a situation demanding actual coordination and collaboration in the struggle for survival.

We are witnessing both the "de-skilling" of many jobs and the increased "skilling" of others.

Given the situation facing today's working class, the left must examine possible areas of growth and figure out which sectors will play a pivotal role as the various struggles unfold. Some within the left have cited the growth of information technology and computerization, and they have decided that the traditional working class is all but dead, and that the unemployed and homeless are

the areas in which a left should base itself. I have many reservations about this.

First, capitalism has many tendencies, but it is an overstatement to talk in terms of the disappearance of the working class. Even with robotization, we are talking about a tendency over the next hundred years where some of the jobs currently done by humans may be replaced by machines. The service sector is an interesting study in contrast. Many jobs in the service sector tend to be labor-intensive, such as those in health care. These will be hard to replace with robots. At the same time, office and clerical work is undergoing a massive restructuring (what some people call "re-engineering"), which is leading to the displacement of workers. This latter trend is hitting the insurance and banking industry with a vengeance.

Second, as noted above, there is a new stratification under way. Within the lower sector of the class are those workers who patch together part-time employment and work in near minimum wage jobs. Also in that category are many of the homeless and the unemployed. The lines dividing this sector are not hard and fast. Political work in the lower strata must include organizing the unemployed and homeless. But they must be seen in the context of the overall strata, not in isolation.

The working class is being reshaped into strata of perhaps three different levels. While the distinction between the semi-employed and the unemployed is not hard and fast, there is, nevertheless, a difference. The tendency seems to be toward: (a) the bottom of the barrel, those workers who are out of work, are homeless and may never have a stable relationship to the means of production; (b) above that, the "contingent" workforce which is growing

astronomically, including part-time, temporary, workers who—to paraphrase a recent article in *Time*—assume a role analogous to migrant workers, and (c) those workers in high-performance manufacturing sectors or more stable sections of the service sector.

Third, there is a tendency within the left toward a quasi-deterministic view of economic development. There is reason to believe that technological innovation, while generally handled in an anarchistic manner by capitalism, is not completely out of control. Here we can learn some interesting lessons from the environmental movement. Let's look at the issue of nuclear power. This technological innovation which, particularly during the 1960s, was claimed to be the unstoppable wave of the future, ran into major resistance from popular struggle. In other words, while this was a technological advance, popular struggle shifted the terms of discussion.

During the 1980s we often lost sight of the role of popular struggle in the production process (particularly if, for whatever reasons, we ignored the environmental movement). There is a similar problem here.

There are a variety of social costs which have to be borne by someone with the introduction of various technological innovations. As always, the question is whether the bourgeoisie (or sections of it) can outflank their opposition and either co-opt or crush popular resistance to such steps. This, in other words, is an argument for political struggle on matters of the economy and new technology. I would argue that such struggles are very much in line with addressing the issues and questions facing the lower strata of the class. ■

Bill Fletcher, Jr. is a Washington, DC-based labor activist and writer.

**This is an argument for
political struggle on
matters of the economy
and new technology.**
