

## A Brief Summary of Recent Strikes in the U.S.

By George Gruenthal

In January of this year, nurses in the private hospitals in Nork City, organized in the New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA), fought for a new contract. The demands were not just for higher salaries, but also, and just as important, for increased staffing levels. This helped to ensure community support for the nurses. Most of the hospitals finally agreed to a contract without a strike. But two of the, Montefiore and Mt. Sinai, refused to agree. This led to a 3-day strike of some 7,000 nurses at the two hospitals. The final result was a salary increase of 19.1% over 3 years (at most making up for the high rate of inflation) and increased staffing at all the hospitals.



There were other significant recent strikes. Part-time workers at the New School (which provides itself on being a “progressive” institution) went on strike for 25 days at the end of last semester, demanding a salary increase, health insurance and paid family leave. The school finally settled on December 10. It should be noted that the great majority of classes in private colleges are now taught by part-timers, mainly graduate students.

There has also been continued organizing and strikes at Starbucks. Some 300 Starbucks stores have been organizing unions, there was a three-day strike in December at over 100 of them.

The Ruling Class Cracked Down to Prevent a Railroad Strike. But the most important strike struggle was the one that didn't take place, among railroad workers. The workers are organized

into 12 different unions. Although the union bureaucrats had agreed to a contract, it was rejected by workers in the 4 largest unions, representing a majority of the workers. One of the major points was that the contract did not include any paid sick days. As the railroad unions have a tradition of supporting each other, a strike would have shut down all the

freight railroads. These railroads carry about 30% of the freight shipped in the U.S.

On December 1, Democrats and Republicans in the Senate united to vote 80 to 15 to prevent the railroad strike. This shows the unity of the two major capitalist parties in their fight against the workers.

As a long-time longshore worker pointed out, most businesses have only an inventory that lasts for two weeks, so a prolonged strike could practically shut down the economy. We have also seen how strikes by bus and subway workers in New York have practically created a situation of a general strike, even though such strikes in the public sector are illegal. This makes transportation workers (and warehouse workers such as in Amazon) such a key sector of the economy. The Taft-Hartley Act, signed into law in 1947, allows the President to prevent strikes that are harmful to the “national interest” (really the bosses' profits). At some point, hopefully, these workers will consider a strike even if breaks the capitalists' law.

## Taft/Hartley Act: Outlawing Organizing and Disarming the Working Class

Class struggle defines the context of productive forces in our lives. The ruling class conducts its struggle against the interests of the working class by legislating behavior in the workplace and its supporting communities. In the United States of America this legislation is developed to weaken the unity of the working class. After the war (1939—1945) to crush the first workers State was defeated the allies against the working class in the USA formulated a law that crushed the hard fought gains of worker solidarity and discipline.

The Labor-Management Relations Act (1947), most commonly referred to as “Taft-Hartley,” was aimed directly at worker unity. When passed it faced massive opposition. Rallies were held all over the country and more than 17,000 miners went out on strike

in protest against it.

At a mass rally in New York's Madison Square Garden, Philip Murray, president of the CIO, reflected the hatred of the bill amongst most American workers: “Our liberties are threatened by reactionary monopoly, driving us on the first long step toward domestic fascism . . . From here henceforward, if this bill be-



By Stephen Paulmier

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comes law, the organized labor movement is on the defensive in this country . . . Let us return to private life the backers of this ugly measure.”

In the 1930's the original Wagner Act included a list of “unfair labor practices” that employers could be charged with, providing some measure of protection for workers. The Taft-Hartley Act introduced a much lengthier list of unfair labor practices that could be used against union unity. Most of these are specifically aimed at preventing unions from organizing and preventing worker discipline during strikes.

Taft-Hartley required union officials to sign affidavits asserting that they were not communists in order for the union to bring cases before the National Labor Relations Board, something which was later declared unconstitutional—well after the damage was already done.

Opportunist union leaders used this anti communist requirement to rid the unions of Communist Party members and sympathizers, hundreds of whom were officers in the CIO unions. Although claiming he was against Taft-Hartley, that didn't stop CIO President Philip Murray from leaning on it to expel the ILWU, UE, TWU, United Public Workers and Fur and Leather Workers unions from the CIO, unions which were largely under the leadership of communists. This forerunner of McCarthyism began well before Joseph McCarthy's witch hunts in the 1950s.

Taft-Hartley also prohibited “jurisdictional strikes,” used to assert union members' rights to particular job assignments associated with their industry, or to protest violations of this. This is often found in the construction industry, where it is common for employers to subcontract certain jobs to non-union workers.

Political strikes and wildcat strikes were also prohibited by Taft-Hartley. Any union engaging in these types of strikes could now be served court injunctions declaring the strikes illegal. There were also provisions that allowed the executive branch of the

federal government to issue court injunctions against strikes that “imperiled the national health or safety.” President Truman, who demagogically vetoed Taft-Hartley, ended up using this provision 12 times during his presidency. President Biden used it to kneecap the rail workers in their effort to strike this year.

Taft-Hartley made it legal to deprive workers of their most powerful tools: solidarity strikes, boycotts, and mass picketing. It also requires unions to give state and federal mediation bodies 60-days' notice before any strike. This gives the employer time and opportunity to sabotage union activities and to prepare scab labor for the duration of the strike.

In addition, Taft-Hartley reaffirmed the right of employers to express their opposition to unions. This has led many employers to hire modern day Pinkertons to give presentations about the “criminality of unions” and the showing of “informational” videos intended to spread disinformation about unions.

Closed shops—where the employer has to hire only union workers—are also prohibited by Taft-Hartley. It allows for the “union shop” agreements where workers hired at a workplace are required to join the union within a certain period of time, determined by the contract. This make it possible for employers to hire workers on temporary contracts, never being required to join the union. It also allows for state governments to prohibit union shops by passing so-called “right to work” laws, which are in reality “the right to be fired for no reason and with no recourse to a grievance” laws.

In total the Taft/Hartley Act is responsible for effectively outlawing the primary tool the working class has to wage the class struggle, the strike. By making the courts the arbiters of how a strike can occur, how long it can be used and the power to incarcerate workers who attempt to use it the Taft/Hartley Act makes an authentic strike impossible.

### **Organizing Initiative Board:**

Antonio Artuso

activist and translator - pueblo1917@gmail.com

Nellie Bailey

founder, Harlem Coalition Against War at Home and Abroad

harlemantiwar@gmail.com

George Gruenthal

www.RedStarPublishers.org

Robert Ismaël

Political Analyst - robertismael16@gmail.com

Noshin Hatami

retired Teacher, History and Civics - fruitdoc1@yahoo.com

Stephen Paulmier

retired Pressperson, Hawai'i Friends of the Soviet People

Denis Vermette

Canadian anti-imperialist activist

If you would like to work with us, send in written or financial contributions, or help with distribution, please contact us at: [editor@independentworkersparty.org](mailto:editor@independentworkersparty.org)

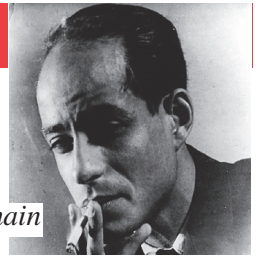
Some articles may have been edited for space considerations the full versions are at available at our website:



[www.IndependentWorkersParty.org](http://www.IndependentWorkersParty.org)

## Introduction: The Necessity of Theory

The following text is a translation of a section from *Schematic Analysis 1932-1934*, the founding document of the original Haitian Communist Party (1934-1936). The document was written by Jacques Roumain, a renowned Haitian writer whose 1944 novel, *Masters of the Dew*, was translated into English by Black U.S. communist poet Langston Hughes



Jacques Roumain

Can the workers' movement be progressive if it neglects theory? Even today we often meet practical workers who consider theoretical questions as side issues that are no doubt interesting, but devoid of real importance; sometimes, going farther still, they disdain theory as a waste of time.

It is certainly not impossible that someone who shares these views might pick up this little book and carelessly leaf through the first pages. If that is the case, it will be necessary to note that highly "theoretical" questions are dealt with here, and wishing to dissuade such a person from closing the book with impatience, we should attempt at the beginning a sort of justification of our aims. To be honest, we need to respond to the questions of this "practical" man: "What good is theory?" and "How can it help a practical worker carry out their work better?"

The best response will be to follow our friend "the practical worker" in their day to day struggle. In that which is their own field of activity, they soon discover, at each bend they run into that very theory that they so look down upon. They will find

themselves subject to the question "What is to be done now?" And the response always contains that other question: "What goal are you trying to attain?" In order to justify workplace action (a strike, for example) they are forced to appeal to general reasons (in this case: the general aim envisaged and the general experience of the strike tactic). But such general facts as these are linked precisely with that which we call theory, and if moreover, they show the characteristic of having been verified by experience, we call them scientific theory.

The theory which is at the base of all conscious socialist activity is scientific socialism (Marxism). This theory understands before anything else the strategy and the tactics of the class struggle in the strict sense. (The strike tactics mentioned above are one such detail). It requires equally an understanding of the historic economic roots of the class division of capitalist society, and of those laws of development of capitalist society whose weight was assessed for the first time by Marx in his great work: *Capital*.

<https://cosmonaut.blog/2021/01/10/the-founding-of-the-haitian-communist-party/>

## Iran – Social Democracy (Socialism) / Neo-Liberal Democracy (Imperialism - Capitalism)

by Noshin Hatami

After 40 years of an incompetent and corrupt Islamic Republic, the young people of Iran are protesting that regime with their slogan of "Women, Life, Freedom". In response, the Islamic regime brought in their henchmen to slaughter thousands of young protesters.

In my opinion, this is the beginning of a long revolutionary movement against the backward clerical rule. Iranians want freedom, democracy and free expression for all political parties including nationalists, socialists, communists and others.

I congratulate the young people for bravely fighting against the backward, theocratic rule of the Islamic Republic.

Because of this great, young movement in Iran, Iranians outside of Iran have become excited. As a result, the Royalists have gathered around Reza Pahlavi, the son of the former Shah. They are meeting with the western and eastern powers to overthrow the Islamic Republic.

In my opinion, they are not secular democrats, and will probably make a deal with the western and eastern imperialists against

the Iranian people. This is not what Iranians want. They want the right to free speech, free press, free assembly and the right to organize.

There are many independent organizations, in spite of the Islamic Republic, such as teachers, students, writers, truck drivers, taxi drivers, workers and many others. The people are tired of the Islamic Republic. The clerics have done nothing but systematically oppress and torture people. They promise people a good life in the hereafter, while they themselves enjoy the riches of Iran.

This has to be done internally by the people inside Iran. They will create a free, progressive and independent country.

'Khomeini used religious popularism and lied to people to gain power. And he was ready to die for personal power. Unfortunately, the leftist intellectuals (the Communists) followed him.

In my opinion, the solution to getting out of all the problems Iran has, including poverty, is a socialist revolution.





# The Torch Campaign for a Free Health Care System in the U.S.

By Antonio Artuso

## Introduction:

The main priority now is stopping the war raging in Ukraine. But there are many other priorities. The Torch / Independent Workers Party is starting an active campaign for a free, universal and publicly funded health care system in the United States. We will work with all the citizens, organizations, political parties, trade unions that are already fighting for a such a health care system. The Torch must ally theory and practice: Theory means that we must raise the level of knowledge. Practice means that we must apply knowledge to transform society for the benefit of the people.

**The U.S. health care system** – The clearest example of what is capitalism: a criminal system, only motivated by greed, planned by capitalists, serving only the rich and destroying the working class and the people.

During his campaign for the presidency, Bernie Sanders said that “18,000 U.S. citizens die every year because they don’t have access to a doctor when they need that doctor”. He compared the health care systems of many European, Scandinavian countries and Canada, with that of the U.S., and supported the free, universal and public health-care system as a fundamental human right.

Amy Goodman, of Democracy Now, explained: “The U.S. health care system once again ranks dead last among wealthy countries. That’s according to a new report by the Commonwealth Fund. Researchers found that U.S. spends far more per capita than ten other nations, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Holland, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, yet it has the lowest life expectancy and the highest infant and maternal mortality rates, and the most glaring inequities. Pramila Jayapal (D-WA) of the Congressional progressive caucus responded that the cruel, for profit health-care system is broken. It is time to guarantee health care as a human right. It is time for Medicare for all.”

Michael Moore produced the movie “Sicko”, showing the differences between the U.S. and the numerous other countries where the health care system is partly or totally socialized.

## **The Canadian socialized health care system – (1) free, (2) universal and (3) publicly funded:**

Although Canada and many other developed countries are capitalist, their health care system is socialized. This means that their health care system (1) is free, (2) is universal (available for every Canadian citizen, permanent resident and certain temporary resident) and (3) is publicly funded (almost totally paid by the government of Canada).

My family is an excellent example. My parents and I arrived in Canada 58 years ago as immigrants. We were immediately covered by the system. All these years, we have benefited from all the necessary check-ups and multiple very costly operations in excellent hospitals without paying a cent. My father had cardiac and cerebral operations, my mother was treated for all kinds of illnesses, and I am being treated for cancer and a heart attack for free. In the U.S., we would be financially ruined. Only the state (the government) has the strength to assume the heavy costs of a

socialized health care system for millions of people. Today, Canadians firmly believe that the state has the absolute responsibility of taking care of the health of all its population.

## **The class struggle between the capitalists and the working class for the control of the health care system:**

There are two health care systems:

-1-the capitalist health care system: the capitalist class want to keep the health care system private, because private clinics, hospitals, and the capitalist health system generate huge profits for those who own them. Profit and greed motivate the capitalist economy. And the capitalist economy is planned by the capitalist class, its state, its capitalist politicians.

-2-the socialist health care system: the working class and the people in general need desperately a socialist free, universal and public health care system, in which all the service are free and for everybody. To be at service of the people is what motivates the socialist economy. The socialist economy is planned by the working class and the people and by the socialist state.

## **Examples of free health care systems in history:**

Many societies throughout history considered that the community or the state was responsible for the general welfare of the citizens (health, education, housing, jobs, etc.)

-In the middle ages, religious communities took care of the poor and the sick people;

-In Germany, in the 1870’s, under the Bismarck government, the state was responsible to provide healthy and professionally trained workers to the capitalists;

-The Soviet Union health care system started in Russia, after the October Revolution [1917]. The new communist government (Bolshevik) brought the working class to power to organize society in a socialistic way to fulfill the needs of the workers, the different nations and the people in general.

-In Europe, after the catastrophic devastations of World War II [death of 57 million peoples, massive destruction of industries, land, infrastructures], the governments and the capitalists were forced to introduce socialist measures to reconstruct the economies of the countries: they transformed wide sectors of the economy from private to public state-owned: free health, free education, free services, state-owned coal and steel industries, state owned railroad systems, etc.

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*In March 1990, on the centenary of his birth, Canada and China simultaneously issued twin commemorative postage stamps in honour of Dr. Bethune.*

### **The 2 stages of struggle for a free, universal and public health care system in Canada:**

#### **-1-Dr Norman Bethune in the 1930's:**

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, Dr. Norman Bethune, a physician, increasingly concerned with the number of tuberculosis cases and deaths due to massive poverty started giving free medical care to unemployed and poor people. In 1935, he went to the Soviet Union, where he could see firsthand their system of universal free health care. He became a committed Communist and joined the Communist Party of Canada. After his visit to the Soviet Union, he started a campaign to explain that he had seen a country where all citizens received treatments, contrarily to capitalist countries where, from the same disease, a worker or peasant could die, while a wealthy person could be cured. He started a campaign for radical reforms in medical and health-care services in Canada by creating the Montreal Group for the Security of People's Health. In 1936, with the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, Bethune interrupted his campaign for a free, universal health care system in Canada and went to Spain to serve with the International Brigades against the fascist forces of Franco, Mussolini and Hitler. After the fall of Madrid, Bethune went to China in support of the Chinese people during the Second Sino-Japanese War. He died there of septicemia after cutting himself in an operation.

#### **-2-Tommy Douglas in the 1950's and 60's:**

In 1947 and in 1950, two parties, the CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, which became the New Democratic Party) and the Social Credit party, implemented the first public hospital system in Saskatchewan and in Alberta.

In 1957, at the federal level, the first national public health-care system was implemented – the Hospital Insurance and Diagnostic Services Act (HIDS). In 1961, it was adopted by all provinces.

### **The fierce opposition of the capitalist establishment to universal public health care**

The fight for a broad publicly funded system began at the provincial level. It was led by Saskatchewan Premier Tommy Douglas and the CCF, who won the 1960 Saskatchewan general election on a campaign promise of publicly funded health care, over the opposition of the medical profession.

The struggle for a socialized type of medicine continued under Lloyd, who succeeded Douglas. Lloyd overcame considerable public opposition to the plan, including a strike by the province's doctors, who withdrew their services from the public in opposition to the proposed Medicare plan. The resolution of the dispute was assisted by mediation by a British Labour peer, Lord Stephen Taylor, who had been involved in the development of the National Health Service in Britain.

### **Today, in Canada, the socialist health care system is in danger:**

The class struggle continues to be fierce in Canada, between the capitalist class and the working class, between the capitalist system and the socialist system. The Canadian working class and people have to fight against the policies of the capitalist class, of its state and of its capitalist political parties:

- (1) They must fight for drugs for all (drugs are covered only for elderly and low-income citizens), dental care, glasses, hearing aids and other items that they still have to pay;
- (2) They must fight against the military budget, which is staggeringly high while the health care budget is totally insufficient: it is overloaded in big cities and it is deficient in a majority of the regions of Canada;
- (3) They must fight the capitalist class, which wants to privatize every sector of the economy and the health care and every public sector of the country such as education, public services. Throughout the country, although the majority of Canadians firmly believe that the state has the absolute responsibility of taking care of the health of all its population, the capitalist class and its political parties want to destroy it.

### **What is to be done in Canada, in the U.S. and in every country of the world:**

The Torch, central organ of the Independent Workers Party, has an important role to play in the U.S., in Canada, and internationally:

- 1-The Torch is now actively promoting a campaign for a free, publicly funded and universal health care system in the United States;
- 2-The Torch is contacting the U.S. citizens, progressive organizations, political parties, trade unions, elderly, poor and racialized people fighting for such a health care system;
- 3-The Torch is promoting a united front of the working class and the people in general against (1) the exploitation of workers by the capitalist corporations, (2) the oppression of peoples by the capitalist governments, (3) the plunder of countries by capitalist corporations, (4) the crisis in every sector of society by the capitalist policies, (5) fascism and (6) capitalist and imperialist wars.



# Russia and America / An Interpretation Dr. W.E.B. Du Bois 1950

## Chapter I – A Quest for Clarity (continued)

[Each new issue of *The Torch* will serialize this book while the complete work can be read at: <https://redstarpublishers.org/DuBoisRussiaAmerica.pdf>]

It was in Germany that my first awakening to social reform began. My teachers, Adolf Wagner and Gustav Schmoller, were not radicals nor Marxists; but they were broad and inspiring men, and the atmosphere of Rudolf Virchow, "rector magnificus," when I entered the University of Berlin, led me far. Nor did the frenzied diatribes of Von Treitschke fail to open my eyes to the connection between European imperialism and race hate. I can see him now — huge, nervous, black coated, with swift, tumbling words; glaring, as it seemed, directly at me as he said, "Die Mulatern sind niedrig: sie fühlen niedrig!"

I became consequently particularly interested in the Social Democratic party; they were the greatest party in Germany but had been gerry-mandered out of their strength by Bismarck. But they were strong and growing and they emphasized the fundamental Marxian doctrine of the basic importance of labor in human culture. I attended their meetings and picnics and became strongly tinged with theoretical socialism. Moreover, I now actually saw poverty: in Germany, in Italy, in Eastern Europe; poverty which was not a matter of race, but of industrial organization. And when Race entered as a cause of social dislocation, as it did in Germany and Poland, it was a matter of white folk and not of the color line.

Returning to America in the Fall of 1892, I was plunged into the color problem again; but not with the same provincialism as before. For me social reform still meant primarily the opening of doors to black men, so that they might run the race of life in equal competition with the white. I was teaching at Wilberforce — Greek, Latin, German, everything but the new Sociology which I yearned to help build as a science, — when Booker T. Washington laid down his industrial program at Atlanta in 1895. I was all for it, save one thing: it must be implemented by the vote and not fatally ignore the suffrage; and the voter must be guided by trained minds.

After two years, came my chance to place my theories of race relations on a scientific basis, where practical statesmen could link them with the social uplift of all men. I got a year's chance to study the Negro in a single Philadelphia ward. This work, which was lengthened to nearly two years, made, for me, the problems fronting the Negroes, clear and vivid and launched me on a scientific solution of broad social measurement, presenting facts to the world for use in any way men would. In such an ivory tower of social reform I went to a life work at Atlanta University.

But after thirteen years of effort, I found my life revolutionized; I found, on the one hand, hard as I tried to present carefully garnered and objective truth to the American world, this world would not support the effort; and that with the facts before it, lynching and lying in America increased and the Tuskegee idea, distorted from its defensible logic, was being used to close Negro colleges and make Negro labor a low-wage caste. Reluctantly I turned from science to propaganda and went to New York to help organize and conduct the new National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

I attended a Races Congress in London in 1911, and addressed it. I began to give attention to the race tensions of the East. I remember advising a high-caste Indian who was consulting me, to make alliance between India and the new British Labor Party. He stiffened and said slowly, "I do not think we would like to be associated with dirty English workers." I think we all began to think of a new era of interracial comity, but even then tremors foretelling the First World War reached us. Back in the United States, I was compelled to surrender thoughts of detached scientific study of the race problem and go into the arena as a social fighter rather than as a scientific student. I deeply disliked this role and

never proved demagogue enough to be successful as popular

leader or public propagandist. But I did succeed in 1910 in establishing the *Crisis* magazine as an organ for my ideas, and it gained wide circulation. In 1915, I took a brief trip to Jamaica and for the first time saw the colonial problem face to face.

In New York, I was thrown with Socialists; among my colleagues in the N.A.A.C.P. were Charles Edward Russell, William English Walling and Mary White Ovington, all members of the Socialist Party; there were conservatives like Oswald Garrison Villard and liberals like John Haynes Holmes and Joel Spingarn, but I joined the Socialist party in 1911, and from then forward began to regard the problem of race, more and more as part of the problem of industrial reform.

But two developments obscured my broader vision: first the extraordinary anti-Negro outbreak following the election of the first Southern-born president since the Civil War; for whose election I had left the Socialist Party in 1912 to fight; and secondly, the outbreak of the First World War, with race riots, lynching and burning; migration and hostile legislation; the appearance of the Negro as strike-breaker, and the question of his entrance into the army as private and officer.

It was then that the Russian Revolution took place and I scarce knew what it meant to me and to the world. Not much had been said of Russia in my school days, in secondary nor high school years. In college, I remember reading George Herman's articles in the *Century* magazine. These stories of cruelty and injustice connected with banishment to Siberia stirred me greatly: the long trek across a quarter of the world; the tearing apart of families; the insensibility to human suffering. I have never quite outlived the impression which these stories made upon me. Rather negligently I followed what little was offered in the press on Russian history and policy. Chiefly it was a matter of Czars and Grand Dukes in their relations with Western Europe; of the folks themselves there were only incidental references to picturesque mujiks. Passing references to anarchists and the assassination of a Czar and high officials, left in my mind the current impression of Russia as semi-civilized and tyrannous.

Czar Alexander III was reigning while I was studying in Germany and in 1893, sent his fleet to France to conclude the Entente Cordial. This was impressed on me as I saw in Berlin, on the Tempelhofer Field, a celebration of the renewal of the Triple Alliance, with pomp and pageantry and with Wilhelm II and the Italian Crown Prince present. Later in 1900, I attended the most perfect of international exhibitions in Paris and crossed the Pont Alexandre which celebrated the new Franco-Russian alliance. For my exhibit on American Negroes I received a gold medal; and at the same time I noted exhibits of the new Russian industry which French investment was then nourishing.

All this was of passing interest until Russia and Japan went to war in 1904-1905. I admired the temerity of one of the Darker peoples daring to wage war against a great white power. I remember outlining its progress on the floor of the chapel of Atlanta University and using my baby daughter's choo-choo train to mark the moving of the armies along the Trans-Siberian railroad. My concept of Russia began to gain body and clearness. Already my contact with socialism in Germany had made me critical of Czarism, and there was now added the race problem in the conflict of a white and colored people. After that I followed from afar the Russians struggle for emancipation and drew parallels between Russian peasants and American Freedmen, emancipated at nearly the same moment and both kept in slavery by denial of land.

I read of the pogroms against the Jews and likened them to our lynchings, which were ominously increasing.

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few moments to relax by reading or writing poetry, playing an instrument, growing plants, etc.

The immense heritage of arts and culture created during hard times, civil wars, revolutions:

You can find on line resources for articles such as “Protest songs in the United States”, songs, dances of the peoples expressing the anger, the courage, the strength of the heroic peoples of the world.

- the African American spirituals - "Oh, Freedom" and "Go Down Moses", etc. - Slavery period;
- the French Revolution - “La Marseillaise”, «Ah ça ira», etc. (1789);
- the U.S. Civil War - "When Johnny Comes Marching Home", "Song of the Abolitionist", "No More Auction Block for Me", "Oh Freedom", and "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child", etc.; (1860-1865);
- the Paris Commune - “L’internationale”, “La semaine sanglante », La commune n’est pas morte)(1871);
- the U.S. Trade Union songs “Joe Hill”, “Which side are you on?, When the union’s inspiration through the workers’ blood shall run, etc.;
- the songs of the struggle against the Tsarist regime and of the October Revolution;
- the Spanish Civil War (1936-1938);
- the songs of the Resistance during the Nazi occupation of France and other countries;
- the U.S. singers and composers of the depression and Vietnam Anti-War struggles-Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, Joan Baez, Peter, Paul and Mary, Phil Ochs, etc.;
- the Communist songs of the Vietnamese people;
- the Unidad Popular songs / Chile – Quilapayuns, Inti-Illimani, Victor Jarra, etc.

### What are arts?

Each of us spend hours watching movies, songs and dances, reading comics, magazines and books, looking at beautiful objects, places, paintings and sculptures, enjoying cooking, eating, being together with people, laughing or sharing emotions, memories, ideas.

Cinema is a very complete art. Why movies, novels, theater fascinate us, why we find them so important? It is because we want to see how other people behave, solve problems of jobs, love and their role in society, adapt to different situation, cope with difficulties, make themselves accepted by the group, etc.



*Harry Belafonte*

### What is culture?

Each of us has always a vast culture of some sort, from our background, family, religion, country, education, profession, travels, influences in our life. We have a vision of life, a style of life, attitudes and behaviours, models that have shaped us, a goal in life, a role in society, an individualistic or a collective meaning of life, a code of conduct, characteristics of being courageous, just, respectful of others, compassionate, rigorous, etc. or the contrary.

Our culture is also the way we see ourselves, our identity, the models in our life, our philosophy, the cause we are fighting for. We chose to be a religious person or atheist, a tough guy or a whining person, a winner or a looser, a romantic, a rational person, a dreamer, a realist. We can identify with a scientist, a hero, a saint, a mixed-up kid like Jerry Lewis, a warrior, a samurai, a Buddhist, a Liberal, a free-thinker, a communist, a Vegan, an antinatalist, etc.

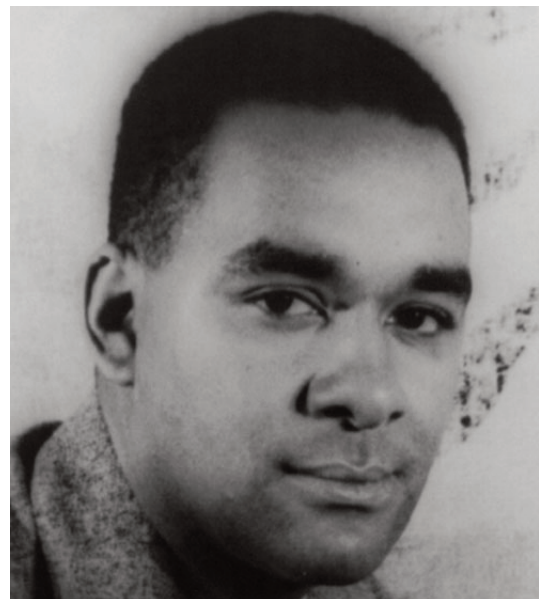
In our youth and at any moment of our lives, we can take the decision to change ourselves, our vision of life, our attitudes and behaviors. The culture that surrounds us changes us constantly. Sometimes a movie will give us a model of person that will make us more courageous and humane.

Philosophy, psychology and politics – Three elements closely linked together:

Three elements, among others, are linked together, and arts and culture have an important role on them:

- 1-philosophy (vision of life / ideology),
- 2-empirical psychology and neuroscience, and
- 3-politics

Culture also involves (1) knowledge (theory) and (2) action (practice). The more we know, the more we learn, and the more we act in ways that are adapted to reality.



*Richard Wright*

# On Arts and Culture, Life and Class Struggle

By Antonio Artuso

*This is one of the first articles published by The Torch about arts and culture. It is also an invitation to readers to send our magazine articles on movies, books, songs, poems, essays of all sorts on philosophy, psychology, politics.*

## Two conceptions of Arts and Culture – the bourgeois and the proletarian conceptions:

“Arts” and “Culture” are often wrongly associated with snobbish intellectuals of the upper classes, who want to look superior



*Paul Robeson*



*Woody Guthrie*

to the common crowds, spend hours in idle, individualistic, abstract and boring chatter, and have nothing concrete to say.

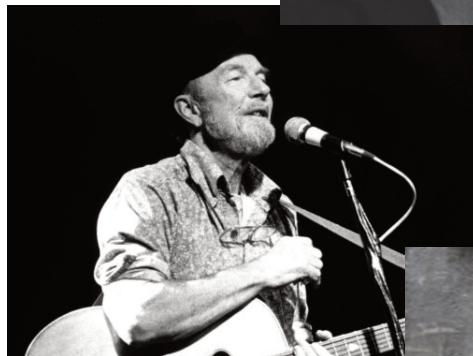
We will focus instead on the proletarian arts and culture. They express the concrete reality of the working and living conditions, the emotions of the workers and of the people in general, the daily heroism of the millions of women and men who fight to feed their children, their sorrow and courage in adversity, their solidarity with the toiling masses, the proletariat of all countries throughout the ages. We will focus on the revolutionary arts and culture of all times.

In fact, we, workers and people in general, are all big consumers of arts, and we all have a deeply rooted culture of some sort. This article deals with the importance of arts and culture, their role in our lives and in the class struggle

## Mind over Mood – The importance of arts and culture in our lives and in the class struggle:

I have gone through two serious nervous breakdowns. I could pull through thanks to (1) cognitive and behavioral therapy (CBT) sessions, and (2) the theories and practices of Alfred Adler, a psy-

### *Lorraine Hansberry*



*Pete Seeger*



*Joe Hill*



*Joan Baez*

chologist (1870-1937). Today it is known that the mind (ideas, images, songs, etc.) produces hormones (adrenaline, serotonin, etc.) that change the mood (emotions of sadness, joy, fear). Arts and a culture of courage does the same during hard times, civil wars, revolutions and in the everyday life. Songs, marches and hymns, with fife, drums and bagpipes, lift the spirits of the people in struggle.

But arts and culture also give us the necessary relaxation. During the Vietnam war (1964-1975), in the middle of a catastrophic number of deaths, injured people and destructions, the Communist Party of Vietnam gave the comrades the order to dedicate a

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