

WAR ECONOMY AND YOUTH

By Doxey A. Wilkerson

The Game of Death—Effects of the Cold War on Our Children, by Albert E. Kahn. Cameron and Kahn, New York, \$3.00 (paper \$1.00).

The alarming increase in crime among young people during recent years, widely heralded in the press and of growing concern to everyone, underscores the great value of *The Game of Death* as an aid to building the people's coalition for democracy and peace. Next to the material requirements of life, the masses of men and women are most concerned about the education and welfare of their children; and this book, more than any other I know, lays bare the immediate cause of the recent upsurge in juvenile crime—the calloused exploitation, persecution and brutalization of children in the interests of monopoly profits and the Cold War.

As this is written, the press of New York City carries banner headlines about a gang of teen-age boys, "all from good homes," who confessed to two especially heinous murders and numerous brutal beatings of unoffending people—with no apparent motive other than to "get a kick." This incident is but one unusually horrible example of the growing pattern of youthful sadism and crime reported from all parts of the country.

Confronted with this development, pseudo-scientists are busy with all kinds of "explanations"—"child neuroses," "insufficient parental affection," "too much parental affection," inborn "criminal instincts," and similar nonsense. Meanwhile, practical men of affairs press for the only corrective

they can conceive: Get tough! "CITY LOSING GUERRILLA WAR TO TEENS," shouts the *New York World-Telegram*, developing the thesis that "the cops must handle them with a modified version of total warfare." The police begin nightly round-ups of hundreds of so-called "young hoodlums" in Times Square, Harlem, East Harlem and other working-class areas; and the Commissioner of Police calls for "at least 7,000 more men" to supplement the present force of almost 20,000.

Thus do the ideologists and administrators of a decadent ruling class shadow-box with the symptoms of a fundamental ailment whose roots they are afraid honestly to disclose—a foreign and domestic policy which calls for the deliberate and systematic glorification of violence and contempt for human values to the end of preparing our whole population, and especially our youth for atomic mass murder abroad and for fascism at home. The young people of our country are bombarded on all sides with governmental and "private enterprise" propaganda designed to fulfill the unusually candid "educational" prescription of Director of Selective Service Major General Lewis B. Hershey: "What the nation needs are killers for survival"; yet, when the growth of young killers is fostered, all officialdom claims to be "baffled."

One notable exception to the prevailing obfuscation emanating from bourgeois "scientists" and governmental agencies is Dr. Frederic Wertham's partial answer to the question: "Why

Do They Commit Murder?" (N. Y. *Times Magazine*, Aug. 8):

Very important is a general atmosphere of violence, for violence is as contagious as the measles. The more we inculcate in young people the false idea that there is something courageous about killing, the more do we foster it in susceptible individuals.

Wertham does not define the economic and political inspiration of this "general atmosphere of violence"; but that job is done most effectively in Albert Kahn's *The Game of Death*, with abundant factual proof and an emotional fervor to which all parents will respond.

The first four chapters of this book expose the concerted drive to transform public education into a Cold War appendage of the State Department, into what President Eisenhower calls an "instrument of national policy." Here described, in dramatic detail, are the A-Bomb drills and identification tags imposed on school pupils in many communities; the widespread and deliberate efforts to militarize youth through the introduction of "warmaking" into school and college curricula, through "selling" young men and their parents on the glories of military life, and through ever-recurring legislative attempts to foist Universal Military Training on our country. Here also are vivid accounts of how hundreds of fine and devoted teachers are being purged for suspected "disloyalty" to this destruction of true educational values, together with facts and figures on the scandalous deterioration taking place in school facilities and personnel as a result of the priority given to armaments in the national budget.

Another chapter details the "Niagara

of Horror" to which many millions of children are subjected, day after day, through "comic books," movies and so-called "children's programs" on television and radio—a vast and profitable industry for the perversion of children. The distinctive features of its output are violence, murder, sex and moral degeneracy; and its dominant themes are anti-Communism and war. There is also a chapter dealing specifically with the growth of juvenile delinquency—dope, prostitution, arson, gambling, theft, gang wars, cynical and violent assaults on people—and with the virulent anti-Semitism and white chauvinism so prevalent in such outfits as the "Hitler Youth Group" in Philadelphia, and among the "Jungvolk" whose violence shocked the whole world at Peekskill, New York, in the late summer of 1949. A notable feature of this latter chapter is analysis of the very substantial contribution which so-called "reformatories" make toward strengthening this anti-social trend among young people.

One chapter—"Vengeance on the Young"—tells the revolting story of the F.B.I.'s hounding and persecution of the young sons and daughters of Communist leaders victimized under the Smith Act, and also of the heroic counter-offensive of these children and their families—who "refused to be intimidated or demoralized." Another—"Loyalty Program for Parents"—reports dramatically three celebrated cases in which our war-bound government forcibly separated children from devoted and effective mothers who were "accused" of being Communists or of teaching their children to respect Negroes as equals, or of advocating peace; and here, again, one sees the

heroic struggles of these mothers to hold and protect their children. Still another—"Infamy of the Nation," the second longest chapter of the book—pictures the special oppression of Negro children against the background of that hollow "Pledge to Children" adopted by the Midcentury White House Conference on Children and Youth. This latter chapter concludes: "No section of the population has been more grievously victimized than the Negro people by the repression of the Cold War; and no section of the population is doing more to forge a future peace and true freedom for their children." There follows a discussion—although brief—of the "appalling . . . conditions under which American Indian children live today," along with simply passing reference to "the deprivations, discriminations and hardships endured by the children of Mexican-American, Puerto Rican and other minorities in the United States."

In the "Foreword" of this book, the author declared:

The harsh and tragic fact is that of the whole population, children are paying the most heavily for the Cold War. So heavy, indeed, is the price being exacted of them that this question must inevitably arise: Is our nation, in the name of defending its children, actually ravaging their security, deforming their characters and imperiling their lives?

The obvious affirmative answer, abundantly documented in these pages (including nearly two dozen pages of pictures), is driven home with great power in the tenth and final chapter—"Way of Life—which contrasts the enormous sums our government spends for war with its meager allotments for health, housing and education; the un-

precedented Cold War profits of Big Business with progressive deterioration in the general welfare of millions of American children and the continuing A-Bomb threat to their very lives.

All who read *The Game of Death* will understand the phenomenon of teen-age "thrill-killers" far better than the "experts" and police commissioners being quoted in the newspapers; and they will also know what must be done to combat the more general problems of crime among young people. As the author states in his moving postscript: ". . . each of these problems stems in its present form from the Cold War, and none can be truly solved while the Cold War continues."

How decadent and immoral this social system which feeds its youth into the maw of Mammon! How refreshingly different the universal solicitude for child health and welfare in socialist lands! Without ever saying so, *The Game of Death* provides devastating proof of the inherent rottenness of monopoly capitalism, and of the necessity for a socialist America.

The fact that this book exposes so effectively the misanthropy which inheres in U.S. imperialism's drive to war probably explains in large measure the acclaim with which it has been received by the people's forces in other countries. It has been translated into nearly a dozen languages. It was featured in *Teachers of the World*, the official publication of the World Federation of Teachers' Unions. And it was given an extended, laudatory review in *For A Lasting Peace, for A People's Democracy!* which concluded: "*The Game of Death*, which deserves to be translated into all the languages

of the world, will kindle hatred in the hearts of all for the criminals who use little children as guinea pigs in their attempt to win their parents for the policy of preparing war."

There are, however, at least two serious limitations of this volume; and they seem to flow from a one-sided approach to the politics of our day. *First*, the exclusive and somewhat sensational emphasis on the corrupting influences and anti-social practices among young people tends to strengthen the distorted picture which the gutter-press tries to give of a young generation steeped in crime. But the dominant and more significant fact is that, despite the conditions under which they live, the overwhelming mass of our young people—all but a very tiny fraction—have not been debased. They are not a generation of criminals; rather, they are normal, wholesome young people, with special problems, true, but not won over to McCarthyism and war, and deserving a more equitable and beautiful America. *Secondly*, the absence of any interpretation of the growing people's democratic movement in our country tends to feed unwarranted moods of defeatism. We can stir our countrymen to greater struggles for peace, not alone by picturing the horrors of war and

preparations for war, but even more by giving them a basis for confidence that the achievement of peace is within their power. In both these respects, *The Game of Death* seems to reflect an overestimation of the strength of imperialism and an underestimation of the strength of the democratic forces of the people. In so doing, it tends to undermine its own effectiveness in helping to build that people's coalition which alone can impose democracy and peace on the imperialist rulers of the United States.

The technical excellence of this volume is fully consistent with what we have learned to expect on the basis of previous books by Albert Kahn—*High Treason: The Plot Against the People*, and (in collaboration with Michael Sayers) *Sabotage, The Plot Against the Peace* and *The Great Conspiracy*. The importance of its message has been enhanced by developments since it was published. And its rich store of facts, most effectively presented, should prove extremely useful to progressives who have come to understand the great political potential which is inherent in the deep concern all people share for the education and welfare of their children.