

## CHAPTER VI

### "The Greatest Endorser of the Twentieth Century" or "An Insidious Form of Imperialism"?

In 1995 Michael Jordan felt bitter about losing in the playoffs. He was almost equally incensed over the arrival of young players in the NBA who were undisciplined, insensitive, overpaid, immature, and concerned more about their personal statistics than team success. He especially noted these *nouveaux riches* did not pay proper respect to their already proven elders. His views resembled those held by Magic Johnson, Larry Bird, and Isiah Thomas toward himself in 1984.

Stories, planted by both reporters and some younger players, circulated that Jordan's championship days were over. It was time for him to pass on the torch of NBA leadership, and also pass on the fabulously profitable business deals that came with that torch. During the summer of 1995, Jordan therefore pushed himself through a terrifyingly rigorous conditioning program. He also worked hours each day on his jump shot. He knew he had lost a half-step, and that he could no longer slash to the basket with the speed that had set him apart. "Beating defenses this way [by shooting over them] is just as enjoyable as the other way," he decided.<sup>1</sup> He somehow retooled his

game even while filming the movie *Space Jam*. Jordan starred with actor Bill Murray and popular cartoon figures to win a climactic basketball game. This highly successful film scored \$230 million at the box office and over \$200 million more in video sales.

His shooting proved to be equally successful as the season began. He won his eighth scoring title in 1995-1996 with a 30.4 per-game average. A television analyst noted Jordan's two-way domination: "Line up all the players in the league and ask them which player they'd least want to guard, and which player they'd least want to guard them, and in almost every case the answer would be Michael Jordan."<sup>2</sup> In superb shape, he started all eighty-two regular-season games. He aimed not only to win but at times to destroy an opponent mentally. "I just want to get inside their head," he declared. "Like when I'm playing against a rookie, I might say: 'You watched me on TV, now you're going to see me for real. [But] on TV you can change the channel; you can't now.'<sup>3</sup>

Bulls General Manager Jerry Krause acquired Dennis Rodman, who, despite a passion for tattoos, changeable multicolor hair, and various body piercings, was also the NBA's best rebounder. Pippen had another outstanding season. The Bulls broke all NBA records by winning seventy-two games while losing only ten. Jerry West, a Hall-of-Fame player, and now the general manager who had built the Los Angeles Laker championship teams, announced that "Michael Jordan is just the best ever."<sup>4</sup>

In the playoffs, Chicago swept by Orlando and New York. The championship series against Seattle was broadcast to 175 countries in two dozen languages. The Bulls won in six games. A tearful Jordan told reporters that the final victory "happened on Father's Day, which makes it even more special. There's no way to really describe it."<sup>5</sup> He also won his fourth NBA Most Valuable Player award.

After enduring all the frustrations of playing baseball, Jordan again set the standard in basketball. One interesting standard could be measured by noting that in 1989–1990, six NBA players had shaved heads. Jordan then shaved his. By 1996, seventy-six players followed his example.<sup>6</sup> Jordan and the Bulls also set the standard in the 1996–1997 season for victories as they breezed into the playoffs. Phoenix Coach Danny Ainge had played with and admired Larry Bird when both were members of the championship Boston Celtics. "I always thought that Larry worked harder than any player . . .," Ainge declared. "And . . . I never thought that Michael, or anyone, could ever be as intense as Larry in terms of winning. But Michael is at least his equal in all those categories, besides being the superior athlete." Ainge concluded, "Michael's the best player, without question, of all time."<sup>7</sup>

Jordan's intensity appeared in the championship series against the Utah Jazz and their star, Karl Malone, who had narrowly defeated Jordan to win the NBA's Most Valuable Player award. The Bulls' star scored 31 points to dominate Game One, including the winning long jump shot as the final buzzer sounded. Chicago went on to dominate the entire series.<sup>8</sup>

In 1998, the Bulls repeated their triumph over Utah to win a sixth championship. Again Jordan made the crucial points, including the decisive jump shot in the last eighteen seconds of the final game, which the Bulls won 87–86. This season, however, had a notably bittersweet flavor. There was an increasing feeling that this marked the last time Jordan, Pippen, and Coach Phil Jackson would be together. As Jordan played his season-ending games at various NBA cities, ticket brokers were able to charge as much as \$200 per ticket so sentimental fans could wish him good-bye. Jackson announced his retire-

ment. After the final championship game, Jackson and Jordan embraced at midcourt while whispering to each other. "I said," the coach told reporters, "it was just a magical ending, and that I don't know how much more a person can do in this game."<sup>9</sup>

Jordan had become an even more mythic figure. He moved well above the normal run of humanity even as much of that humanity tried to identify with him. "In a world hungry for public men and women to respect and admire," columnist Bob Greene wrote, "Jordan had come along to fill some need many might not even have been aware they fostered."<sup>10</sup>

### *Expanding the Empire*

Greene was correct. And nearly everyone who had been pulled into Jordan's orbit had been sucked in by television. He and his times were perfectly matched, Mike Lupica observed, because "we're—like it or not—members of the highlight generation. Our sports are geared to quick bursts, perfect for the leisurely television viewer with a short attention span. Julius Erving may have been as original as Jordan, but only those "who saw [Erving] in the [American Basketball Association] arenas [of the 1970s] remember his basketball skywriting." Expanded television, built on new technologies, "is the only reason that so much of what Jordan did in the NBA seemed so new," Lupica believed.<sup>11</sup>

Jordan's return had an electric effect on NBA television ratings for Ted Turner's cable network. In 1995–1996, those ratings shot up 21 percent over those of the year before. The fifteen Bulls games that were telecast attracted 50 percent more viewers than non-Bulls games. As one Turner broadcaster phrased it, Jordan "eats a tunafish sandwich and you get a 4.5 rating"—that is, twice

the usual television audience for basketball. Such figures made it possible for Phil Knight to announce that "Michael Jordan is the greatest endorser of the 20th century."<sup>12</sup>

In 1997, the Great Endorser's earnings shot up to \$100 million, or about 90 percent over those of 1996. The possibilities seemed endless. In addition to Nike, McDonald's, Oakley Sunglasses, Gatorade, Wilson Sporting Goods, Wheaties, Rayovac Batteries, and a half-dozen other companies, he was profiting from the Space Jam film, CBS-Fox Home Videos, WorldCom, and CBS SportsLine—all products of the post-1970s technology. The CBS SportsLine deal put Jordan on the World Wide Web for ten years (for \$10 million), to answer e-mail, analyze games, and, of course, do commercials.<sup>13</sup>

The arrangement worked out by Jordan's agent, David Falk, with WorldCom especially intrigued. WorldCom was the fourth largest long-distance phone company, with ardent ambitions to be number one. Jordan was to be WorldCom's launchpad to the top. All of the other products endorsed by Jordan, a WorldCom executive believed, would be advertised and hooked together in the company's commercials and web sites. Jordan could profit handsomely. As one observer put it, Falk "figures Jordan might persuade WorldCom to insert McDonald's coupons in its mailings, or get Sara Lee Coach leather-goods . . . to promote sales of backpacks by offering samples of Bijan Fragrances' Michael Jordan perfume."<sup>14</sup> Imagine: because of the new late-twentieth-century media, a computer owner, filling some personal need the owner might not even be aware of having (as Bob Greene had phrased it), could—in a fit of impulse buying with just one click of the mouse—order everything Michael Jordan had pronounced good.

NBA Commissioner David Stern's most extravagant

dreams were coming true. Thus Stern's "manifest-destiny regime," as author Jeff Coplon termed it, raised the number of countries viewing weekly NBA games from 35 in 1986 to more than 175 ten years later.<sup>15</sup> The games went out over communication satellites in forty languages. Nowhere overseas did these satellites make Michael Jordan more famous than in the world's most populous, and potentially most profitable, country: China.

As Chinese from all walks of life stopped to watch the Bulls defeat Utah in the 1998 championship series, the cry of "Qiao Dan, Qiao Dan," or "Jordan, Jordan," was heard in the dormitories of Beijing University. One management major at the university said flatly that "Jordan is much more famous than [President] Clinton here." When a Chinese firm asked a thousand people to name the best-known Americans, Jordan finished second (just behind Thomas Edison by a narrow margin), and ahead of Albert Einstein, Mark Twain, and Bill Gates. On the avenues, vendors sold Michael Jordan posters and calendars alongside those of the late Chairman Mao, father of the Chinese Revolution. The Bulls' final playoff game against Utah drew such an audience that state television ran it three times. A week later, President Clinton made his first state visit to Beijing. A thirteen-year-old boy, Chen Tong, stood by the parade route to see the President's car, but told a reporter that while he liked "President Clinton, I even worship him," the other two Americans he held in reverence were "George Washington and Michael Jordan."<sup>16</sup>

As Beijing stores demonstrated, sales of NBA clothing soared parallel with the increased number of global viewers. The NBA was not making much money from anything with Jordan's likeness on it. Falk and the star had stopped those sales by threatening to take the NBA to court. Stern and the NBA backed off; they could make

money in other ways. With Chicago's renewed championship run, for example, Bulls jackets became a fashion in Sweden.

The market was expanding so fast that in 1997 Jordan announced he was creating his own exclusive line of clothing. With financial backing from Phil Knight's Nike, the Jordan line was projected to take in \$250 million in gross revenues during its first year—a figure that immediately made it one of the nation's largest clothing businesses. Jordan was drawn to the new venture for many reasons. He could run his own manufacturing and distributing company (with, that is, considerable help from Nike experts). As Jordan publicly mulled over the possibility of retiring from the NBA, moreover, being head of this business and overseeing the sale of Air Jordan sneakers could absorb some of his energy. "I wanted to invest in something that will keep me in touch with the game and the fans whenever I leave," he declared. "But I didn't want to do the ordinary, like coach or report from the sidelines. I want to leave my mark without actually having to be anywhere near the court."<sup>17</sup> The game that made him would not be the game that would hold him. The new global technology held out too many other opportunities for that.

Another reason for his new venture: he continued to be troubled by, and criticized for, the violence sometimes caused by adolescent passions for Air Jordan sneakers. "I don't want kids killing for these things," he reiterated. He was convinced that any change had "to start with parents instilling values in their kids that don't allow them to be so materialistic." Somewhere in his mind, Jordan must have known that such a hope was not likely to be realized very fully in an America full of television advertising, demands by parents and children for instant gratification, and, of course, the combined efforts of cultural icons like

Michael Jordan and overpowering technology to convince viewers to buy more and ever more. He consequently decided to produce clothes that were in colors street gangs usually had no interest in, and Air Jordans that would cost under \$100.<sup>18</sup>

In mid-1998, *Fortune* magazine estimated that Jordan had at least a \$10-billion impact on the U.S. economy. About half, or \$5.2 billion, benefited Nike. Another \$3.1 billion of increased sales of NBA-licensed clothing (especially jerseys with No. 23 on them) had passed through cash registers since Jordan had entered the league. *Fortune* also credited him with providing hundreds of millions of dollars in profit to television and cable companies.<sup>19</sup>

But the \$10 billion only involved the United States. His true reach was global. It even included France, which had been fighting a losing battle throughout the twentieth century to keep American business and culture from penetrating its society. Until the mid-1990s, the blasé French had so studiously ignored the world's greatest endorser that Paris was one of the few cities in the world where Jordan could eat in a restaurant in peace. Then in mid-1997, the Bulls came to the French capital to play two games. A thousand journalists and France's prime minister attended. In the country that had led the attack since the 1920s, and especially in the 1980s and 1990s, on the expanding reach of U.S. culture and advertising-marketing, hard-bitten journalists, as well as thousands of fans, showed up in Bulls warm-up jackets. One of the reporters again demanded to know whether it was true that Jordan was a god. "I play a game of basketball," he explained. "I try to entertain for two hours and then let people go home to their lives. . . . I could never consider myself a god."<sup>20</sup>

It was fitting that Jordan climaxed the visit by posing under the Eiffel Tower wearing Nikes and promoting

McDonald's. Beneath an industrial wonder of the nineteenth century posed three wonders of the post-industrial era. The Eiffel Tower was one of the few sites Jordan could visit. The media that had made him now prevented him from taking his wife and three children out of their hotel room for fear of being mobbed by Parisians fanatical about the *taureau rouge*.

Germany had surrendered to the NBA-Jordan magic at least as early as 1992 when the U.S. Olympic Dream Team dominated television screens. One German basketball coach recalled that after the Olympics, ten to thirty kids called each day to ask where they could learn to play basketball. Then came an onslaught of NBA marketing and Nike television commercials. Soccer remained the nation's first sport (as, indeed, it remained throughout the world). But the 200,000 Germans playing basketball in the late 1990s doubled the number of ten years before. A German professional team won the European championship in 1993, then began selling its clothing by using NBA marketing techniques. But because of Jordan and television, NBA goods accounted for 20 percent of sales in several major outlets. "Basketball is a symbol for the American way of life, like American music, Whoppers, Big Macs, basketball jackets and caps," observed one German official.<sup>21</sup>

Europe was a special target, but not the only region targeted by Jordan-inspired basketball and marketing. In South Africa, Chicago Bulls hats appeared in cricket fields and also in Bushman villages. (Large street gangs, who learned about Americans from *Rambo* movies as well as television ads, called themselves "The Young Americans" and "The JFKs.") When South African officials warned that in such post-colonial societies as theirs the people could both admire—but also deeply resent—colonial power, an American replied that it was the British who

had colonized South Africa. The United States had not done so. "Oh, ycs you did," came the answer. "Culturally you did."<sup>22</sup>

In Japan, where many parts of U.S. culture had long been admired and absorbed, not only was basketball growing in importance, but a strange mania set in for old, beaten-up Nikes and Adidas. Nikes from the early 1970s fetched as much as \$2,600 for one pair. Early Air Jordans gained popularity as buyers offered as much as \$600 for mid-1980s models.<sup>23</sup>

The ability of basketball, U.S. advertising techniques, and American-dominated media to penetrate other cultures amazed observers. Christine Ockrent, a French television personality, believed that "The only true pan-European culture is the American culture." Historian Richard Pells, a close student of American culture's impact abroad, noted how European intellectuals worked to try to absorb the influence of "Hollywood and Hemingway, Elvis Presley and Michael Jordan," so they would become European as well as American icons.<sup>24</sup>

Such influence could be mind-bending, even forcing different generations to follow different paths. A senior official of Morocco's government, for example, said he was sending his children to U.S. schools instead of French institutions (in which he had been educated), for two reasons: "First, in the world we are going into if you don't speak English, you're illiterate. Second, the French system teaches you to be an administrator. The American system teaches you how to survive on your own. That's what I want my kids to know." The Moroccan official formed these impressions not only from direct contacts with Americans, but from U.S. television and films.<sup>25</sup>

Many observers argued that the power of American culture did not simply roar down a one-way street. Other nations might be seduced by parts of that culture, but

they fiddled with and integrated it into their own dominant culture, whether European, Asian, or South African. Americans, these observers concluded, thus had to adapt to customs and beliefs in other nations if they hoped to sell McDonald's and Nikes. If the Americans did not adapt, they could be threatened with violent protests—as happened to Kentucky Fried Chicken when farmers in India saw the U.S. company as threatening their own small businesses. Cultural officials and intellectuals in France and elsewhere meanwhile tried to discourage, even outlaw, the use of English and the spread of some American culture.

One U.S. analyst concluded that while such a dynamic culture did not simply take over supposed "passive and vulnerable" countries, "it is certainly true that the major diffusionary source of this culture is a single Western country: the United States."<sup>26</sup> In other words, U.S. culture changed other cultures more than those cultures changed how Americans lived, thought, and spent their leisure time. One of Michael Jordan's most profitable endorsements was McDonald's, and one of the more interesting—if exaggerated—descriptions of how this culture affected other societies was offered by Ronald L. McDonald, in an authorized history of McDonald's:

We have seen radical changes in the dining habits of Europeans that have been just as dramatic as the changes in their diets. In countries such as Austria, Switzerland, and Germany, the once popular wurst sandwiches, spicy sausages served in a French bread roll, didn't stand a chance against an All-American burger once it entered the market. Street vendors folded like houses of cards once the big American burgers appeared on the scene.

A more considered analysis was given by Richard F. Kuisel, who has written one of the best accounts of U.S.

cultural power (well entitled, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization*). Kuisel encapsulated the transforming force of the new U.S. capitalism:

What is important is that it seems European eating habits have been modified by fast food introduced by McDonald's. The disappearance of thousands of cafés in Paris as well as the long family lunch amounts to significant social change. Wearing sneakers, no matter how they are advertised, represents a new informality in European dress and perhaps even behavior. Watching MTV, even if it has been customized for European consumption, suggests that European youth are receiving social and cultural messages as Americans do. And children's imaginations are changed by viewing American television and Hollywood movies.

Kuisel quotes the greatest French statesman of the 1940 to 1970 era, Charles de Gaulle, as observing that "Great Britain is an island, France the cape of a continent, America another world." The United States itself, Kuisel concludes, did not have to change its own process of "Americanization" as it so dramatically changed other cultures.<sup>27</sup>

Friends closer than the French were bitterly protesting this "Americanization." Canadian historian Geoffrey Smith believed that "[I]n most global sport—so much of it Americanized—we behold a new and insidious form of imperialism." This "imperialism" was especially insidious for its "absurd monetary stakes" and its attractiveness to "millions around the globe." "[K]ids in Berlin and Madagascar" change local habits and "pay homage to Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls from head (bald) to foot (Nike)." Star basketball, hockey, and baseball players leave their home countries to play before the global media centered in the United States. "Small wonder," Smith believed, "that as free-trading international capital-

ism threatens the existence of traditional political structures, sports products and [sports] prodigies take on huge importance."<sup>28</sup>

It should be remembered that while "Americanization" had been seen as threatening to Canadians, Europeans, and others since at least the 1920s (if not the 1890s when basketball was invented), it had only recently taken on a new and staggeringly powerful form. In 1984, when a fan turned on television to watch the young Michael Jordan, he probably watched on one of the three major networks (NBC, CBS, ABC), because there were few other channels. To pull in the game even from those few networks, the viewer needed either an antenna on the set or a hook-up to the newly introduced cable lines. When Jordan returned to win the NBA championships in 1996-1998, the fan lived in quite another technological world. Ted Turner and Rupert Murdoch carried games on their own channels that sucked audiences away from the three old networks. The new channels exploited communication satellites and more powerful cable.

Turner, Murdoch, and Michael Eisner (who headed the vast Walt Disney empire that owned ABC network, ESPN sports channels, the Anaheim Angels baseball team, and enjoyed extensive overseas access) no longer thought in terms of just one product (as basketball) and one country (as the United States). They saw the whole world as their market, a market tied together by satellites. They then put together mammoth marketing machines that used basketball (or baseball) games to show advertising that sold their transnational corporation's books, movies, and other television programs.

The magic words were "packaging" and "synergy" (that is, the cooperative working together of two or many more goods to make much larger profits than the goods could make alone). Michael Jordan again stood apart as a global

symbol of synergy's magic. He and his agent, David Falk, had begun in the 1990s to use a global communications company for selling not just one of the products Jordan endorsed, but a bundle of them linked together. Thus Jordan could suggest that his fans watch the *Space Jam* film while sitting in their Hanes underwear, eating Big Macs, washing those down with Gatorade, and preparing to buy Jordan's videos over their Jordan-endorsed cell phone.<sup>29</sup>

American media, advertising, and marketing entered an unexplored, unimagined era. It was an era that not only expanded "Americanization," but produced—even among some of the United States' historic friends—strong anti-Americanism. Michael Jordan personified that new era. So did Phil Knight.

### *The Swooshifying of the World*

Wearing his Nikes, Jordan's image flew around the world and across geographical boundaries that seemed increasingly to be—especially for the media that carried that image—almost meaningless lines on maps. Knight accurately proclaimed that "Sports has become the dominant entertainment of the world."<sup>30</sup> He stepped up his drive to make Nike the most powerful company in all sports. But the firm's sales dipped shortly after 1996 as shoe styles changed and sneakers began to fall out of favor. Critics charged that, in his drive to rule the market, Knight had overreached.

He indeed had paid millions of dollars to have the Swoosh placed on the athletic uniforms of ten NBA teams, more than forty universities, eight National Football League squads, and eight National Hockey League clubs. Knight also exploited the rising popularity of women's basketball, notably the 1996 U.S. Olympic team and its star, Sheryl Swoopes, who had her own Air

Swoopes shoe. Nike paid more attention to women's sports after women outspent men in purchasing athletic footwear for the first time in 1994, \$5.4 billion to \$5.3 billion.

U.S. women's groups, led by author Alice Walker and Congresswoman Maxine Waters (D-Calif.), told Knight his new attention to them was quite insufficient. American women wore Nikes to perform well, they told him, while "Indonesian, Vietnamese, and Chinese women making the shoes often suffer from inadequate wages, corporal punishment, forced overtime, and/or sexual harassment."<sup>31</sup>

Knight ran into more trouble when he overcame his old reluctance and bought the rights to pin the Swoosh on nine national soccer teams, including the world-famous Brazilian squad. He handed out \$200 million over ten years to have the Brazilians, favored to win the 1998 World Cup, wear Nikes. Knight was targeting not only the tremendous global soccer audience, but the growing number of Hispanic-Americans and other soccer fanatics in the United States itself. France, however, not Brazil, won the World Cup in 1998. And Pelé, once the world's greatest and most famous soccer player and now Brazil's sports minister, blasted Nike's money for corrupting Brazil's leading sport. Nike dismissed the fight as merely one between Brazilian politicians, but the charges stung.<sup>32</sup>

Nike was condemned even in the sport that had given birth to Phil Knight's empire, track and field. As the official outfitter of the 1996 U.S. track and field team in the Olympics, Nike designed track suits with Swooshes instead of stars in the American flag. Condemned by *Newsweek* as "crass even by Olympic . . . standards," the uniform was finally ditched because of rules that limited the number of such logos on a uniform.

Despite these blistering criticisms and setbacks in the

mid-1990s, Knight determined to accelerate the company's global activities. In addition to sponsoring international soccer, he organized world championships of various types. The first Nike "Hoop Heroes" contest occurred in Japan during September 1996. It starred Jordan, Charles Barkley, and other Nike endorsers challenging wildly popular, three-hundred-pound Japanese sumo wrestlers to a game of basketball. Tickets sold out in twenty minutes. Acting like the powerful transnational it was, Nike controlled every part of the planning, advertising, and marketing. Knight set up a global marketing division to create similarly profitable sports events that would showcase Nike products worldwide. Not only was Nike now dominating sportswear sales, it was creating sports (Michael Jordan versus sumo wrestlers?) and the events at which the clothing would be peddled.<sup>33</sup>

The company already controlled 36 percent of the world market for sports equipment. Knight determined to tighten that grip not only by dreaming up international sports events, but by simply purchasing foreign companies. Nike thus took over the famous Canadian firm of Canstar Sports, which had established businesses around the world to sell its popular hockey equipment. Nike also plugged into vast computer systems. At first, Knight considered buying a television network, but, as Nike marketing executive Liz Dolan put it, "Who needs TV when you have the Internet?" The Nike website was planned to work like a television network, only it would be global immediately and open to commercial opportunities that were missing on television channels. Nor would Internet regulations be nearly as bothersome for Nike's highly imaginative advertising and marketing people.<sup>34</sup>

Thus Knight planned to supplement, if not replace, the new media of global television with the newer, hotter, more open, and more unregulated media of the Internet.

Such innovation could not, however, protect him and Nike from withering criticism for their purchasing of athletes, even universities, and for using mistreated Asian laborers in their shoe factories. Such criticism, it was to be noted, came almost entirely from angry private citizens, not from governments. The governments, including the U.S. government, said and did little until individuals began pointing out what Nike was doing—and sometimes not even then.

For example, Bill Friday, the former president of the University of North Carolina (Michael Jordan's alma mater), blasted the university for letting Nike buy its way into Carolina's famous basketball program and hence into the larger university. "They [Nike] influence the coach's salary. They influence who wears what, and they prescribe what logo is worn," Friday observed. "I think they've gone too far."<sup>35</sup> Few in the state or federal governments, however, seemed to care if decisions in leading state schools were being purchased by private firms, as if the schools were simply up for auction. Critics of such auction sales nevertheless held to the belief that universities, after all, had interests and responsibilities quite different from those of private transnational companies.

Few cared about university sports departments being up for auction. After all, in other areas of American higher education university administrators and faculty sold themselves and their institutions to the highest bidder. Often, they felt they had little choice. State and federal monies to higher education were down. Alumni were unable or unwilling to make up for these cuts at many schools. Meanwhile those schools were being asked to educate increasing numbers of students in new as well as traditional fields of study. Some colleges saw little alternative but to sell themselves. In some instances, however, the auction resulted from simple greed, a kind of lust not

lost on observing students. Some University of North Carolina students and faculty began organizing to stop some of the auctions.

They faced a steep uphill fight in challenging a firm that could stride over the world like the transnational colossus it had become. One type of 1996 Nike sneaker, for example, was designed in Oregon and Tennessee; cooperatively developed by technicians in Oregon, Taiwan, and South Korea; then manufactured in South Korea and Indonesia by putting together fifty-two separate components produced in five countries.<sup>36</sup> Every time someone laced up the sneaker, the wearer was being touched by a product in turn touched by people from at least a half-dozen nations.

Since the early 1990s, the media regularly reported that some of these people worked in subhuman conditions. To be sure, by the late 1990s, these conditions had improved too little. In Indonesian factories, where Nike made 70 million pairs of shoes in 1996, 25,000 workers each got \$2.23 per day. Not a livable wage, critics charged. Low pay, however, formed only part of the problem. When Indonesians were forced to work as much as six hours a day overtime, and when they were beaten or sexually harassed by managers, the workers tried to form unions for self-protection. The mere threat of such unions brought in the military, which controlled Indonesia's government, to fire union organizers and maintain the status quo.<sup>37</sup>

Nike announced a code of conduct to protect workers. When a journalist interviewed a dozen workers, however, only one had even heard of the code. And it was obviously not being enforced. Some young Indonesians believed that if young Americans knew about these conditions and quit buying the sneakers, the situation would be corrected. One U.S. journalist, William Greider, said

he did not even try to explain to Indonesians why American young people knew little, and cared less, about their problems—and that these Americans certainly would not quit buying sneakers for such reasons.

Working conditions in Vietnam were also terrible. Some twenty years after the United States had finally given up trying to destroy the Vietnamese Communist government in a savage war that lasted three decades (1945–1975), U.S. officials opened diplomatic relations with those same Communists in the mid-1990s. U.S., Japanese, and other transnationals rushed in to take advantage of cheap, disciplined labor. Indeed, the chance to exploit Vietnam's labor and emerging market was a central reason why relations with the former enemy had been established. In 1997, Thuyen Nguyen, of the U.S.-based Vietnam Labor Watch, visited the Nike plants. He reported that "Supervisors humiliate women, force them to kneel, to stand in the hot sun" for punishment, while paying them \$1.60 for eight hours work. (It cost \$2.00, observers estimated, to buy three meals a day in Vietnam.) More than 90 percent of the 35,000 workers were women who worked twelve-hour days to contribute the \$2.00 labor cost for each pair of shoes. Workers reportedly fainted from exhaustion and malnutrition.<sup>38</sup>

Nike announced it had fired the manager of its main Vietnam factory. The company also joined with other transnationals in a media-covered meeting at the White House that set up a code of conduct for working conditions in the United States and abroad. Those signing included L. L. Bean, Reebok, Nike, and the television celebrity Kathie Lee Gifford. The code of conduct urged a sixty-hour maximum workweek and payment of legal minimum wages of the nations in which the plants were located. Critics declared the report weak. For example, they noted, minimum wages in some countries did not

buy the food and shelter workers needed. The code's demand that workers be able to form unions was "pure hypocrisy," one critic announced, because the Asian nations (especially some militaries) refused to recognize union rights. President Bill Clinton and others at the signing ceremony nevertheless believed the code a beginning.<sup>39</sup>

Nike also tried to quiet the uproar by asking Andrew Young to investigate. Young, former ambassador to the United Nations, was a widely respected and politically powerful African-American politician. His report stated that Nike factories were "clean, organized, adequately ventilated and well lit," but labor rights needed more protection. He said he found no widespread or systematic abuse. Critics damned Young's report as "extremely shallow," based on quick visits to factories during which he depended on Nike-hired translators. The report, the critics continued, said far too little about the low wages.<sup>40</sup>

Phil Knight declared he would rapidly implement and improve upon Young's recommendations. Shortly thereafter, a Nike factory manager in Vietnam was sentenced to jail for physically abusing workers. Another manager fled Vietnam as he was being investigated for sexual abuse charges. Several months later, an internal Nike investigation became public. It concluded that a carcinogen, toluene, had been found in amounts even higher (some claimed 177 times higher) than Vietnamese law allowed. Toluene was known to damage the liver, kidneys, and central nervous system. Nike again announced it was moving quickly to remove this substance from its plants.<sup>41</sup>

In mid-1998, as the anti-Nike criticism was joined by a sharp drop in sneaker sales, Knigh announced that the company would raise its minimum working age in Asian factories to eighteen, although current workers (some as

young as fourteen] would not lose their jobs. At non-shoe factories, where toxic solvents and dangerous machinery were not used, the minimum age would be sixteen. Air quality controls were to be raised until they met U.S. standards. Knight said nothing about raising the one-dollar- or two-dollar-per-day wages of Indonesian and Chinese workers respectively. Critics applauded the improvements, but condemned Nike's refusal to pay "a living wage." They also insisted that the plants be closely monitored by independent agencies.<sup>42</sup>

The decline in Nike sneaker profits in 1997–1998 (they went down 49 percent from record sales of \$9.6 billion) had little to do with labor conditions in its Asian factories. It had more to do with crashing Asian economies (especially Japan's), which created fierce competition and price-cutting. It also had something to do with an over-selling of the Swoosh. A number of buyers were simply tired of its presence everywhere they looked in the media. "There's a big backlash against Nike under way," one fashion analyst concluded. "The skateboard generation doesn't want to wear Nikes because their fathers wear them." Knight even decided to undertake a de-Swooshing campaign to make it less common. On some shoes the Swoosh was markedly inconspicuous. One line of Nikes, however, defied the sales downturn trend: Michael Jordan's brand increased in sales by 57 percent while every other major category of Nike footwear sold in the United States suffered steep falloffs. After Jordan scored the decisive basket in the final seconds of the 1998 NBA championship finals, his shoes "sailed out of stores," as one observer put it. Knight and Nike were holding tight to Jordan, almost as a life preserver, even as the star talked about retiring. Jordan and NBA basketball had helped make Nike a great transnational, and now—despite a fading Swoosh on the uniforms of no fewer than

two hundred universities, and despite the endorsements of more than three thousand athletes worldwide—Nike, in its time of trials, depended increasingly on Jordan.<sup>43</sup>

### *Capital versus Culture: Implications and Conclusions*

Nike demonstrated how in the post-1970s world of the new transnational corporation, money was free to move anywhere it could find quick profit—but most people were not. The new capitalism, fueled by information age technology, had many sides, some well known to Americans, some unknown to (or ignored by) Americans.

In 1980, Michael Jordan, Phil Knight, Ted Turner, and Rupert Murdoch were not well known. Within little more than a decade, Jordan stood as the world's most popular sports and commercial figure; Knight's Nike dominated the sports product marketplace, which in turn dominated the world's public entertainment; while Murdoch and Turner, along with other transnationals such as Disney, Viacom, and Time-Warner (with whom Turner joined in 1996), shaped global media.

By the end of the 1990s, Murdoch's empire alone included 20th Century Fox Films, the *New York Post*, one-third ownership of the Golf television channel, the Fox television network, Fox Sports Brazil (a twenty-four-hour Portuguese-language cable channel), partnership with the ESPN sports network in Asia, part ownership of Fox Sports Australia, half ownership of the National Football League in Europe, and ties with other European and Asian (especially Chinese) media. To ensure that he had something to show on these many channels, Murdoch bought the Los Angeles Dodgers baseball team; the rights to televise major league baseball, football, and hockey; and part ownership of the New York Knicks basketball

and Rangers hockey clubs. In mid-1998, Murdoch paid the most money ever shelled out for a sports franchise: \$1 billion for the famous Manchester United soccer club. For many British, this was too much. Manchester United matches had always been shown to vast audiences on free or cable television, but Murdoch was clearly intending to display the team on his expensive pay-for-view television channels. He became Public Enemy No. 1 as British newspaper headlines screamed, MURDOCH MOST FOUL.<sup>44</sup>

Perhaps no one better caught the new era than the villain, Carver, in the 1997 James Bond film, *Tomorrow Never Dies*. Carver, in the eyes of many viewers, was based in part on Murdoch and his determination to control the globe's information systems. "Words are the new weapons," Carver proclaimed, and "satellites the new artillery. . . . Caesar had his legions, Napoleon had his armies, I have my divisions: TV, news, magazines—and by midnight tonight [when Carver believed he would control the entire China market], I'll reach more people than anyone save God himself."

"Carver" was only following out the logic of the new transnational capitalism born, with the help of revolutionary technology, in the 1970s and 1980s. Other giant media companies such as Cablevision, Comcast, and Disney also bought professional teams at high prices. Sports were not in the first place for fans, but for media which, like an out-of-control bacteria, always needed new material to stay alive twenty-four hours every day. The media then passed on the sport and its many commercial by-products to the fans—at a price.

James Naismith would not have been pleased. With his strong religious background and his immediate need to keep overactive young men busy during the winter months, he had hoped to develop human character through an interesting new sport. But his invention proved

to be compatible with Knight's, Murdoch's, and Turner's ambitions a century later. Naismith's game quickly became valuable for the money it could generate. In a society based on business, and for a sport that from the start attracted large, loud audiences just at the point of century's turn when cities, transportation networks, and leisure time were booming, the commercialization was hardly surprising. With the advent of vast television audiences in the 1950s and 1960s, basketball's profitability leaped ahead.

David Stern, Michael Jordan, and Phil Knight built on these successes and, with the technology on which the revolutionary media was based, took the sport to marketplaces in all corners of the globe. As Stern summarized, when Jordan entered the league "the globalization of sports hadn't yet occurred. So the notion that someone would call me from Milan to say he watched [NBA basketball on] the German channel at 3 in the morning Sunday night because the Italian channel was tape-delaying it, although he got his results on CNN and nba.com, all those notions didn't exist in the '80s. And onto this exploding stage," Stern added, "walked a player of extraordinary talent and extraordinary personality, and almost defined the growth."<sup>45</sup>

Nike, the NBA, and Jordan grew rich together, but all paid a price for being dependent on the new media. Unlike other transnationals (for example, global oil companies such as Texaco or Chevron, which had long been able to keep their business dealings out of the public eye), Nike paraded its celebrity endorsers. But this made it a target, and as Nike sales and profits hit problems, the target was no longer as rapidly moving as it had been a decade earlier. Critics condemned the company's labor problems overseas. Some university officials—even Jordan's legendary coach at North Carolina, Dean Smith,

who was otherwise revered for supporting good causes—tried to quiet the growing criticism of Nike. Despite such efforts, student groups sprang up at North Carolina, Michigan, Notre Dame, Illinois, and elsewhere (often emerging after class readings and discussions about the transnationals' problems) to focus attention on the sneaker industry's use of Asian labor and how American colleges and media had profited from such exploitation.<sup>46</sup>

One Nike endorser, Reggie White, star defensive end of the football champion Green Bay Packers, did speak out against the Asian and U.S. sweatshops. When White, however, also attacked homosexuality as unnatural and un-Christian, the ensuing uproar made the public forget his criticisms of Nike. Other endorsers, including golf champion Tiger Woods, tennis star Pete Sampras, and Jordan, remained silent. Jordan's repeated response was that he was "looking into it." Nike's direct and, to say the least, puzzling response to Reggie White's and others' criticisms came from a company spokesperson: "There are poor people everywhere. We need to pray for them all."<sup>47</sup>

A potentially more dangerous rebellion against Nike arose in a New York City public housing project. Leo Johnson, a director of youth activities, began a campaign to have his African-American youngsters return their sneakers to Nike because the company would not hire their unemployed parents to make shoes in the United States instead of Asia. Phil Knight refused to believe Johnson's pleas. Convinced that he and his youngsters "have the power to make these companies speak to [us] in more honest ways, not just show them Hollywood images of shirtless black men with their chests glistening with sweat," Johnson led a busload of his group to Nike's mid-Manhattan store. As columnist Harvey Araton recorded the event, "in the cold rain . . . , more sneakers were

thrown back [at the store] like fish, while network cameras recorded the event for the evening news." The new media again carried the message. "We're at the bottom of the market," Johnson declared, "but if the bottom falls out" as inner-city youth refused to buy Nikes, "the whole thing can collapse." Michael Jordan was not recorded as having any comment.<sup>48</sup>

Unlike most athletes, sneaker executives, in their more direct moments, realized that they had run into a major problem in transnational capitalism. As a Reebok official observed, "We can't keep chasing wages around the globe forever like we do. There has to be a better way."<sup>49</sup>

The post-1970s commercial success of Jordan, Nike, the NBA, and Turner-Murdoch media raised other fundamental questions. Observers debated, for example, whether U.S.-based sports, media, and transnational corporations were parts of a new post-1960s imperialism that threatened to change (some would say corrupt) other cultures. After all, in 1998 all of Spain's ten most popular movies were American; in Great Britain, Germany, and Italy nine came from Hollywood; and even in France seven were U.S.-made. The U.S. dominance in film and television meant huge profits: in 1993, Americans made \$4 billion more from Europeans than European film, television, and video sales earned from the Americans. By 1996 the gap shot up nearly 50 percent to almost \$6 billion. U.S. influence, moreover, can be subtle. Where American television programs like *Blind Date* and *Wheel of Fortune* are not seen, other nations' copies of them are often highly popular. With its capital and technology, as one analyst observed, "America has written the 'grammar' of international television by creating its formats and concepts."<sup>50</sup>

Some analysts, such as former State Department official Joseph Nye, thought the United States would indeed wield its cultural power, and that everyone would benefit.

The soft power of the American media and popular culture would bestow on the world's peoples "its liberalism and egalitarian currents" by dominating "film, television and electronic communications." Soft power would make the twenty-first century "the period of America's greatest preeminence." Some examples of this "preeminence" were stunning. McDonald's, blaring Michael Jordan's endorsement, operated in 103 nations and fed one percent of the world's population each day. "Within the East Asian urban environment," one historian of the firm notes, "McDonald's fills a niche once occupied by the tea-house, the neighborhood shop, the street-side stall, and the park bench."<sup>51</sup>

Is such soft power a new information-age disguise for age-old imperialism? The reality is more complex, and interesting. Webster's defines imperialism as "the policy of extending the rule or authority of an empire or nation over foreign countries, or of acquiring and holding colonies and dependencies." Such a definition bears little relationship to the extension of transnational power since the 1970s. Certainly there was no interest in holding "colonies and dependencies" in the traditional political sense. And Europeans and Asians and Latin Americans did not have Nikes and Big Macs imposed on them against their will. Of special importance, the extension of that new power was not in the hands of states, but of corporations and individual capitalists such as Knight and Murdoch.

The Jordan-Knight-Murdoch-Turner phenomenon exemplified two central themes of the new information age and post-Cold-War era. One was an emphasis on acquiring vast, fresh markets (not an emphasis on military security)—markets best developed by huge amounts of capital. Another was the pivotal role played by transna-

tionals and elite individuals (not nation-states or military alliances) in amassing the capital and creating the markets that quite willingly absorbed American popular culture once the media presented that culture.

Recent students of "post-imperialism" have taken these themes a step farther. They argue that transnational corporations have created in many nations a new class—a native "nationalist managerial" class—which works to help the transnational spread its power among people of whom this new class is a part. Thus it is in the interest of cable and television companies in Europe, or shoe stores in Latin America, to sell Murdoch's or Knight's products because they can fetch a good price from customers who admire Michael Jordan. This post-1970s class can provide a vital support on the important local political level for transnationals. The new corporations thus not only change buying habits in a society, but modify the composition of the society itself. For the society that receives it, soft power can have hard effects.<sup>52</sup>

Do these transnationals/new media embody a more specific cultural imperialism? For example, does U.S. culture and its ideology exert imperialist control over other cultures and alter their ideology? This has been intensely debated since the information age began in the 1960s and 1970s. Cultural imperialism is a new term dating probably from the 1960s. Analysts cannot agree on exactly what it is or how it works. Indeed, there is little consensus on what "culture" is, other than a vague "way of life" in a given society.<sup>53</sup>

Todd Gitlin, an analyst of culture and sociology, commented on the debate: "[W]hile the culture warriors have been revising books, cultural conservatives," Gitlin observed, "have been revising global markets to their benefit." Gitlin demanded that the debate center on politics

and economics: "Conceivably, someday, a critical mass of student activists will learn how to spark movements that address poverty, environmental degradation, and war."<sup>54</sup>

Those who "have been revising global markets," to use Gitlin's phrase, understand how politics and economics drive culture. Public figures who represent the transnationals, such as Michael Jordan, might try to move above politics and refuse to take positions on such thorny issues as exploited Asian labor. But transnationals cannot, in reality, be neutral on such issues. They have to take political positions because the politics and economic benefits (or losses) are interrelated. When faced with the imperative to take political positions, they have responded in one of three ways: they back down in order to save their market, they use their leverage to force a political critic to back down, or they (usually with great reluctance) appeal to a government to help them protect their market.

An example of the first—backing down in order to save the market—occurred when Murdoch changed his news programs, especially regarding Hong Kong, so as to avoid a Communist Chinese government blockade of his television network. In 1998, Murdoch again surrendered to the Chinese. Chris Patten, Hong Kong's last British Governor, wrote a book highly critical of the Communist officials' attempt to humiliate him and other British officials, while China reneged on some agreements. Patten's book was to be published by Murdoch's HarperCollins publishing house in London. But when the Chinese attacked the book's contents, Murdoch and HarperCollins cancelled its publication. Critics charged that HarperCollins surrendered because Murdoch's Star TV satellite channel, based in Hong Kong, wanted to dominate the vast Chinese market. Patten's book received wide attention when published by Macmillan, but as one HarperCollins author, novelist Doris Lessing, observed of Murdoch's decision:

"It is so shocking I can't find words for it." In London, HarperCollins's editor-in-chief, Stuart Profitt, resigned over Murdoch's decision.<sup>55</sup>

An example of the second type of political action—using their leverage to force critics to back down—was exemplified when an independent filmmaker made a documentary about Nike's contract factories in Southeast Asia. CBS was interested in the film, but then refused to show it. Critics charged that CBS's decision was directly related to the network accepting large amounts of advertising from Nike. At the Olympics, CBS commentators even wore jackets decorated by the Swoosh while on camera, a form of advertising that received blistering attacks from viewers who saw the jackets as a CBS sellout of its objectivity where Nike, or athletes who endorsed Nike goods, might be involved.<sup>56</sup>

The third type of political action—appealing to the government for help—occurred at a White House ceremony. On this occasion, the President of the United States and Phil Knight jointly approved the agreement to treat Southeast Asian laborers better.

"Soft power," it seems, can become a mere cover for "tough power"—that is, the tough creation of important new classes, and the tough politics of transnational-government relations. The larger question is whether this combination of soft and tough power will, in Nye's words, make the twenty-first century "the period of America's greatest preeminence."

One important dissent from Nye's thesis came from Samuel Huntington, whose *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (1996) was widely debated. Huntington suggested that cultures, especially religious-based cultures, such as Islam, Hinduism, and Confucianism as well as Christianity, would conflict, and that this conflict would to a great degree shape twenty-first-

century global affairs. Huntington argued that some of these cultures already viewed U.S. culture as a dangerous, corrupting influence that had to be stopped, if necessary, by force.

Huntington's thesis seemed to turn into reality in mid-1998 when bombs blew up U.S. diplomatic embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. Twelve Americans and more than 250 Africans died. The U.S. government blamed the blasts on Osama bin Laden, an Islamic fundamentalist. Bin Laden hated the United States for, in his view, corrupting his native Saudi Arabia through the stationing of U.S. troops and the growing influence of American culture in that country. The United States struck back with missile attacks on bin Laden's supposed supply bases in Afghanistan and Sudan. U.S. officials declared what they termed a "new war"—the "war of the future"—against terrorists such as bin Laden.<sup>57</sup>

Clearly, the expansion of transnationals and American culture was not universally hailed. But equally clearly, the opposition—contrary to Huntington—did not run only along the lines of different "civilizations," as he termed them. When French leaders, German newspapers, and Canadian observers condemned the inroads of American influence, the condemnation came from within the "civilization" that included the United States. Indeed, some analysts suggested that most critical splits in our new information age would occur between moderates and political radicals (or religious fundamentalists) *within* each "civilization."<sup>58</sup> In the United States, the worst terrorist attacks of the 1990s (such as the bombing of the Oklahoma City Federal Building that killed 168 people), were the work of few U.S. citizens who saw the U.S. government as engaged in a vast conspiracy against individuals' freedom. Bin Laden himself had been thrown out of Saudi Arabia by Saudi conservatives.

In the post-1970s information age, neither the "clash of civilizations" nor the clash of capital with a culture could be easily and simply described. But some tried. Two authors who celebrated American triumphalism in the aftermath of the Cold War wrote in 1997 that "the end of the Cold War also saw the triumph of a set of ideas long championed by the United States: those of the free-market economy and to some extent [*sic*] liberal democracy. . . . This cleared the way," they believed, "for the creation of a truly global economy. . . . Everybody on the planet [*is*] in the same economy."<sup>59</sup> But as people as different as the French Cultural Minister and Osama bin Laden illustrated, not "everybody" wanted to be in that "same economy" if American principles and images were to dominate it. By late 1998, moreover, that "truly global economy" was in deep trouble. Many nations, led by Malaysia, Russia, and the new Chinese territory of Hong Kong (once a rabid free-market bastion), began to rebel against the U.S. "free-market economy and . . . liberal democracy." They did so for two reasons: First, they had developed doubts about that economy and democracy. And second, they turned against U.S. leadership after concluding that the power of transnationals, especially banks, had become dangerous to their economic survival, and even corrupt.

These recent crises highlighted an interesting and explosive paradox noted by Huntington. Millions of Americans now make their living in the world economy, either at home or abroad. These Americans, however, remain alien to—even quite ignorant of—the cultures that pay their bills. Consequently when other peoples react, sometimes with violence, against U.S. influence, Americans tend to turn inward, or respond unilaterally and angrily. Both of those responses—turning inward or responding unilaterally (and sometimes with force)—are

deeply rooted in the American character. The roots go back, indeed, several centuries and are accurately called "isolationism." These two responses in our time are deeply problematic, for in the integrated electronic global village, turning inward is impossible and unilaterally using force in such a village can be suicidal.

To understand this new age and avoid self-destruction, we must understand the transnationals such as Nike and the media empires of Murdoch and Turner that are based on revolutionary technology. The long commercial history of basketball's evolution in the marketplace, and the career of Michael Jordan as a culmination of that evolution, help us in this.

The battlefields ahead, then, will revolve not around imperialism versus anti-imperialism, or civilization versus civilization, but capital versus culture. The Cold War between American capitalism and Russian Communism dominated much of the twentieth century. At the end of that day, the West had adjusted to the post-1970s technology and Communism had not. America and capitalism stood triumphant. After 1991, the nature of the struggle noticeably changed. It was now between new, technological forms of capitalism versus cultures pressured to adjust to changes demanded by the capital. As the *Economist* phrased it with slight exaggeration, the "1,000 . . . people who run the world" do "not mind whether an idea, a technique or a market is (in Mr. Huntington's complex scheme) Sinic, Hindu, Islamic or Orthodox. If an idea works or a market arises," these thousand people "will grab it."<sup>60</sup>

Capital will ultimately win this new contest, just as it has broken down political, economic, social, and geographical barriers since its appearance in a recognizable modern form five hundred years ago. At the end of the millennium, as Masao Miyoshi observed, the new

transnational capitalism "converts most social and political issues into economy, and culture into a commercial program. Arts and architecture are absorbed into business." Sports can be added to that list. Unless controlled, this contest between capital and culture will not be orderly and peaceful. It is an irony that Americans love order and seek stability, but insist on expanding a capitalism that often undermines order and generates violent instability. This is precisely what occurred during the first great wave of U.S. corporate expansionism abroad after the 1880s, and on a much larger scale it is occurring a century later. *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman argued that many nations, including such friends as the French and Japanese, believed the United States is "the capital of global arrogance." The reasons for this feeling, he added, were U.S. economic successes and how Americans sometimes "throw their weight around unfairly." "And part of it is because Americanization, from Mickey Mouse to Microsoft, has become a powerful, tempting and frequently destabilizing force, challenging every traditional society."<sup>61</sup>

In the late 1990s, some nations began to discuss how to control that struggle to prevent U.S. influences and the disruption those influences have generated. As noted above, a few nations, led by Malaysia and Hong Kong, placed some controls on foreign capital. A mid-1998 conference called by the Canadian government convened nineteen nations, but did not include the United States. The conference discussed how to keep U.S. cultural influences out while nurturing ordinary commerce. The United Nations sponsored a similar meeting in Sweden. European officials met in England to discuss "the Digital Age," but as the *Economist* noted, the real subject was "How Can We Keep the Americans, Especially Rupert Murdoch, Out?" Murdoch actually appeared at the con-

ference. His message was direct: "eliminate barriers to the free flow of capital, labor, and talent."<sup>62</sup> The other conference delegates held a different view. To them, since labor did not move easily, and since capital could control talent, the real problem was capital—such as Murdoch's.

James Naismith, the commercial development of basketball, post-1970s technology, and the transnational corporation transformed how many Americans spent their time in the late twentieth century. Michael Jordan, Phil Knight, Rupert Murdoch, and Ted Turner—all linked together in the global marketplace—also transformed how much of the rest of the world spent its time as the new millennium approached. Whether all this will be for the long-term benefit of the world's peoples remained a central question. Multibillionaire George Soros, one of the more thoughtful global capitalists, warned that "We can have a market economy, but we cannot have a market society."<sup>63</sup> Americans had hardly begun in the 1990s to think through that distinction, even though it was the problem posed by Nike, Murdoch, and Michael Jordan-endorsed products, which made little distinction between market economies and market societies.

In the new tightly wired world, Americans cannot escape these questions. They can only begin to deal with them by understanding the history of how we all became part of a global market economy and market society.

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