

THE CHICANO STRUGGLE AND THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALISM

by the Revolutionary
Communist Party U.S.A.



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FOR SOCIALISM**

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Communist Party U.S.A.**

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Introduction

Revolution is sweeping the world. People everywhere are rising up in their millions and smashing the chains of oppression that have held them down, marching over exploiters and reactionaries of all kinds who obstruct their path to emancipation.

In this country, each passing day is giving rise to more struggle. Millions are out of work, war looms on the horizon, social services are in decay, and cops are spreading terror—most viciously in minority communities — working people are under attack from every side and are beginning to respond blow for blow.

In the course of its daily battles, and with the aid of communists, the working class, the largest and most powerful class in history, is more and more becoming conscious of itself as the class of the future. Its labor is the source of all society's wealth; it has no interest in common with the tiny class of capitalist parasites who live off the wealth the working class creates and whose system of exploitation is the cause of all the evils and the turmoil in this society.

Through their suffering and their struggles, working people are coming to see the fundamental sickness of this system. They are learning that it can't be patched up by reform, but must be done away with and replaced with a new and better form of society. This means revolution, and the working class, the proletariat, is the only class able to mobilize the vast majority of American people, unite all their struggles under its leadership, and aim them all at the heart of the

enemy.

The working class is one class and has one interest as a class — to wipe out capitalism. But it is made up of many different nationalities, and throughout the history of this country the development of capitalism has meant special forms of oppression of minority nationalities along with the exploitation and oppression of the working class as a whole.

The Chicano people are one such oppressed national minority. Their forced subjugation as a people and their long history of struggle against this subjugation is rooted in the conquest of the Southwest by the U.S. ruling class in the Mexican-American War, the domination of U.S. imperialism over Mexico, and the maintenance of the Southwest as an oppressed region.

Discrimination, the denial of democratic rights, violent police repression, suppression and mutilation of their culture, exploitation and oppression as members of the working class held in the lowest positions, with constantly high unemployment, the lowest paid jobs, at the bottom of the housing barrel, the worst of bad health care and other social services — this is daily life for the masses of Chicanos and other oppressed nationalities in the U.S. today. And this is what has given rise to the militant struggle of millions against the system of capitalism that is responsible for it.

The dramatic growth and intensification of the Chicano people's struggle in the last 10 years, including the farmworkers movement, the struggle of the Alianza to regain stolen territory

in New Mexico, the countless battles against discrimination and police repression, have all been a powerful force in the surging movement of the masses of people in this country and the people of the world against the imperialist system and its sharpening crisis.

From the beginning of the conquest, and especially during the last 75 years, the struggle of Chicano people has always been closely linked with the overall struggle of the working class. This can be seen in the strikes of the late 1800's and early 1900's, in the factories, mines and fields. During the 1920's, and even during the depression of the '30's, Chicanos were the backbone of many militant, mass farmworker strikes.

Today this link can be forged all the more firmly because Chicanos are, in their vast majority, part of the working class, and their struggles are immediately and directly bound up with those of the whole class. The national oppression Chicano people and other minorities face, and the exploitation of the whole working class, can only be eliminated by making revolution and eliminating their source — capitalist rule.

The strategy for revolution — the only way revolution will succeed in this country — is to build a broad and powerful united front led by the working class and its vanguard revolutionary communist party, uniting all sections of the people who suffer under this system. The solid core of this united front will be the militant unity of the working class and the oppressed nationalities. This unity is built by mobilizing the masses of oppressed nationalities into struggle against their oppression, and mobilizing the whole working class to take up this fight as its own, bringing forward the revolutionary outlook of the working class, and the common interest of the whole class in fighting all exploitation and oppression. In this way the national movements will merge with the workers movement in a revolutionary alliance.

To carry out this task, the working class needs to have a thorough and all-sided understanding of national oppression — where it comes from and how to fight it. This can only mean using Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tse-tung Thought, the science of revolution, the world outlook of the working class as the means to analyze the situation, learning from the past, taking what is

good and useful and discarding any baggage that holds things back.

In the past, we in the Revolutionary Union did not base ourselves firmly enough on this science in analyzing the Chicano national question. As a result, we put forward a superficial and largely incorrect analysis that Chicanos are an oppressed nation within the U.S. We first put forward this position in the second issue of our theoretical journal *Red Papers*, and repeated in it *Red Papers* 4 and 5. At the time of the writing of *Red Papers* 5 (*National Liberation and Proletarian Revolution*, winter 1972), although we had begun to recognize the need for a much more thorough and scientific analysis of the question, we still put forward that "After the conquest of the Southwest in the middle of the 19th century, the Mexican-American people in that area, the Chicanos, were welded into an oppressed nation. With the development of U.S. capitalism to its imperialist stage, and especially after the depression and World War II, the Chicanos have been dispersed into concentrations in urban centers and transformed from a peasant nation into an overwhelmingly working class nation, part of the single U.S. proletariat."

Although there are some correct aspects to this analysis, overall it is incorrect. The great majority of Chicanos who are now concentrated in urban centers — mainly in the Southwest, but to some degree in the Midwest — have not been dispersed there from the countryside of the Southwest, but from the countryside and cities of Mexico. This has occurred mainly since 1910. Further, in those areas of the U.S. where Mexican-Americans have lived for many generations (even centuries) — specifically northern New Mexico and to a lesser degree southern Colorado, they did not develop into a nation. Their settlements were largely scattered, with no common economic life or much contact between them.

The terms "nation" and "national minority" have specific meanings, and the purpose in determining whether a people are a nation or a national minority is not to rate them according to "good, better, best," but to understand the historic development they have gone through and what this means for the future of the struggle. Our purpose is not to *speculate*, or to analyze for

the sake of analyzing, but to understand the nature of the oppression people face, so that a plan of action can be drawn up that will successfully do away with this real oppression by eliminating its source. It does not serve the interests of the working class nor advance the struggle of the Chicano people to concoct forms of oppression that do not exist or raise demands that have nothing to do with the actual oppression Chicanos face.

A nation is an "historically constituted, stable community of people formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life and psychological makeup manifested in a common culture." (Joseph Stalin) Nations first rose and developed with the rise and development of capitalism, and because capitalism developed more quickly in some nations than in others, some have become dominant over others, subjugating the less developed nations, and retarding their independent growth. And, in fact, this domination often prevented groups of people from developing into a nation at all.

The fact that nations have internal cohesion makes it *possible* for them to form separate states, not because anyone has granted them this possibility, but because the potential for this to happen actually exists in the real world. This is why the working class which stands for equality between nations upholds the *right* of self-determination, the right of an oppressed nation to secede from the dominant nation and set up a separate state, if it so desires.

Oppressed national minorities, on the other hand, which have also been subjugated to the needs of the developing capitalism of dominant nations, do not have the right to secession. This is not because the right has not been *granted* to them, but because the possibility of actually seceding into a separate territory with a separate economic, political and cultural life does not exist. To call a national minority a nation and say it has the right to secede is like calling a man a woman and saying he has the right to bear children. There is no basis for it in the real world and just saying that there is does not change reality, but rather reveals a failure to come to grips with reality, which is the only way we can change it.

We in the Revolutionary Union think that the kind of error we made in our previous sketchy and largely incorrect analysis of the Chicano people's struggle is an important one to sum up and learn from, and that is why we are stressing it in this introduction. Our previous position was based on idealism and a failure to take the stand, viewpoint and method of the working class.

While we have correctly helped develop the fight against the oppression of Chicanos as a people and have identified this oppression with real historic and material forces, nevertheless, we failed to stand firmly with the working class. Instead, we tailed after certain petty-bourgeois tendencies within the Chicano movement and the communist movement as a whole who for one reason or another subjectively desire that Chicanos be considered a nation. Unscientific analysis will only aid the imperialist ruling class in maintaining illusions and division among the people, holding back our ability to unite all who can be united under the leadership of the proletariat to overthrow imperialism and build socialism. As our understanding of the need for a scientific analysis and of standing firmly with the working class has deepened, we re-examined our position on the Chicano national question through summation of practice and extensive investigation.

Within the overall movement headed towards revolution in this country, many Chicano activists have come forward to fight not only their own national oppression, but the oppression and exploitation of the entire working class. Many of these people have become communists, taking up the science of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tse-tung Thought, and playing an important part in advancing the class struggle and linking it up with the Chicano people's struggle.

At the same time, in the course of the last several years, certain points of view and political tendencies have arisen within the Chicano movement which reflect an incomplete or incorrect understanding of who the enemy is and how to fight him. In many cases, these incorrect views come from substituting emotion and subjective ideas for a scientific view of the world. While the proletariat unites with all that is progressive in these sentiments — with the desire and determina-

tion to fight oppression — there can be no substitute for an accurate analysis of the road forward that will help guide us through all its twists and turns.

Some people have also come forward who consciously attempt to divert the struggle of the Chicano people down blind alleys, away from the working class and away from revolution. These ideas are usually pushed by those intellectuals, professionals and businessmen, politicians, phony “revolutionaries” and others who are staking their careers on the continued suffering of the people

so that they’ll have something to pimp off of. These people and the lines they represent must be ruthlessly combatted. In summing up the history of the Chicano movement in recent years, we will try to hit on some of these deviations and show how they can and are being overcome.

We hope that the presentation on the Chicano national question in this pamphlet will help move both the growing movement of the Chicano people and working class as a whole closer to socialist revolution — closer to the real liberation of the Chicano people and the entire working class.



Colonization, Conquest, and Capitalist Development

The Chicano people are an historically evolved national minority whose roots go back 350 years to the original colonization of what is now the southwestern portion of the U.S.

When Columbus drifted upon the Americas in 1492 it marked the beginning of a whole new stage in human history. It triggered off tremendous activity on the part of the rising merchant classes of Europe, the budding capitalists who had already begun to burst apart the narrow restrictions placed upon them by decaying feudalism.

The Americas promised to be a new source of wealth and power, especially for the rising bourgeoisie. The leading countries of the world scrambled to stake their claim. Spain, for one, had a mind to declare the entire Western hemisphere the sole property of the Spanish Crown. But to give her claim any meaning, Spain had to be prepared to defend it against all other challengers, and first of all, against the millions of Indian people who already occupied the "New World."

Spain conquered Mexico gradually, and only with the force of arms. Eventually the Spanish took control of all Mexico, Central America, most of South America, and what is now the southwestern part of the United States. Throughout the conquest, the Indians did not give up easily. As a Spanish conquistador testified:

"In the whole of New Spain (Mexico), the demand for tribute was a signal for insurrection, and those who attempted the collec-

tion of it were killed, as indeed were all Spaniards who fell into the hands of the natives. The resistance was universal and we were under the necessity of going from one town to another with a company of soldiers to keep the peace."

This resistance to oppression was to continue among the Indian and Mexican peoples for 400 years.

Few Spanish women came to New Spain, so from the beginning of the conquest there was a physical blending of Indians and Spanish which initiated the development of a new people — mestizos — and along with this developed a new culture, the culture of Mexico. All the wealth of the native people was stolen from them and they made peons and slaves by the Spanish nobility who were the main class of Spaniards to settle in New Spain.

The search for mineral wealth drove the early Spanish explorers into the Southwest in the 1540's for the first time. Heading north through Mexico they became convinced that the legendary "golden cities" existed because all the Indians along the way told them, "Si, más allá" ("Yes, farther on") — meaning, of course, don't stop here! While no golden cities were discovered in the Southwest, silver and gold mines were found closer to Central Mexico, diverting Spain's attention for fifty years.

The second time around it wasn't gold or silver, but international rivalry that encouraged Spain to

permanently settle regions north of Mexico. The English and French also had their eyes on the New World. The frontier had to be fortified if Spain was to hold onto its claim. In 1598, a large expedition of Spaniards journeyed out of central Mexico and founded San Gabriel de los Españoles, now called Chamita, in northern New Mexico. In 1609 a section of this expedition established Santa Fe as the Spanish center in the colony of Nuevo Mexico.

However, claim or no claim, the real masters of the Southwest were still the nomadic tribes of Apaches, Comanches, Navajos and Utes who were never conquered by the Spanish precisely because of their mobility and fierce resistance to domination.

In this area also lived the Pueblo Indians, who had developed a high level of civilization and agriculture. Spanish survival was assured by conquering these more settled people, seizing their food supply, adopting their agricultural techniques and forcing them into slave labor.

The Spanish lived off the backs of the Pueblo Indians and the Mexicans. After a century of colonization, the Pueblos were decimated by overwork, abuse, torture and disease. They'd had enough. In 1680 the Pueblos rose up and launched an attack on all the Spanish settlements in the region, forcing the Spaniards to abandon

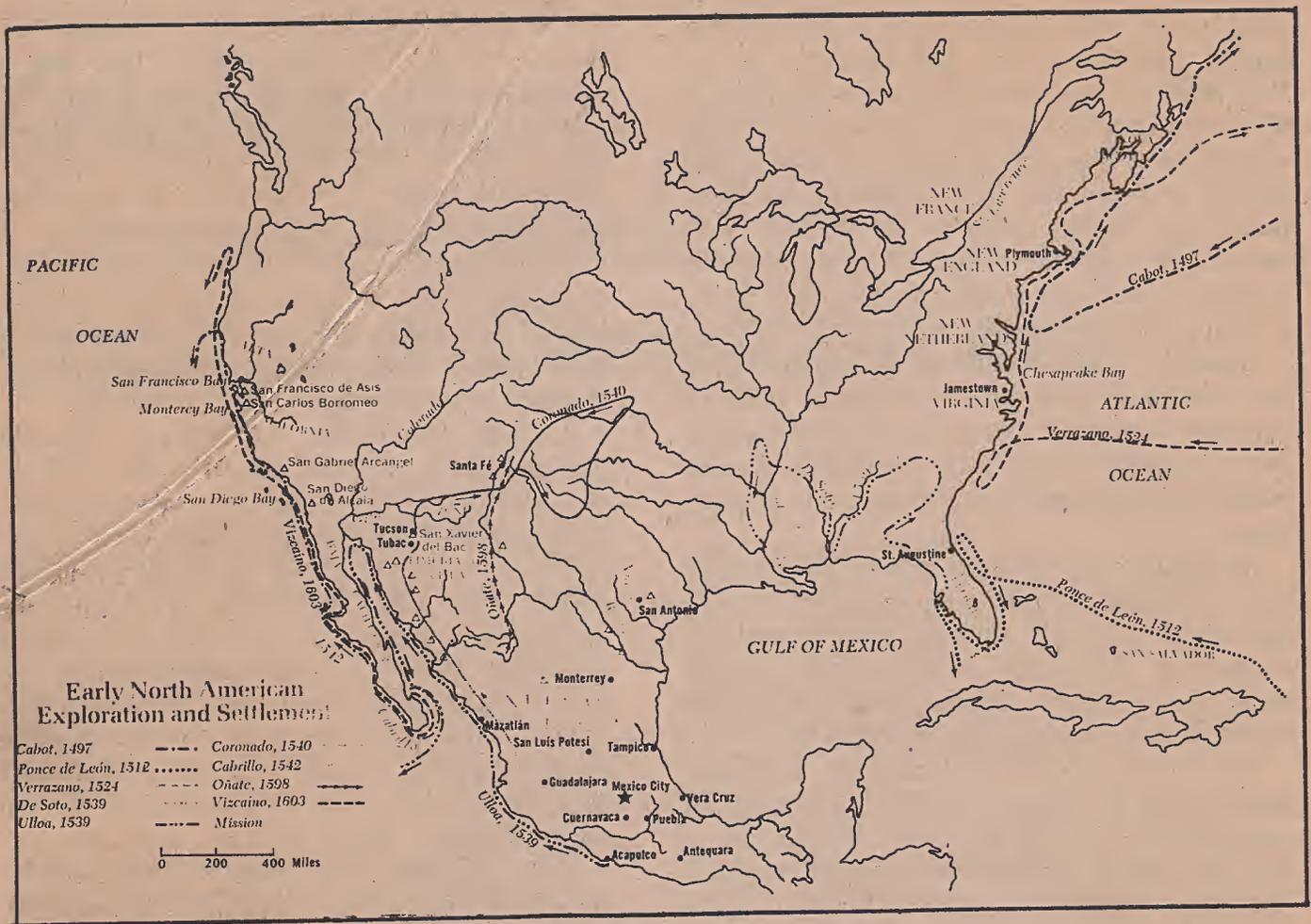
northern New Mexico and retreat down the Rio Grande to the El Paso region. This was a tremendous victory for the Indians, but it was only temporary. The sweep of history was against them. Still, it took fifteen years and superior military force for the conquerors to once again make the Pueblos submit to Spanish authority.

The conquest had taken its toll on the Pueblos, whose population was reduced to a small percentage of what it had once been. This virtual lack of Pueblo slaves forced the Spanish government to find new ways to settle and control the area.

A large population of Indians, Mexican peasants and Pueblos had settled in the north on the outskirts of Santa Fe. The Spanish government granted these people communal land on the northern frontier in return for building fortified villages that would provide a line of defense against the nomadic Indians and encroaching European countries. These settlements started in the 1700's, and still exist today. The poor settlers became small independent landowners growing subsistence crops and living in communities where they raised sheep on common pastures with communal water rights.

These villages were isolated from Central Mexico by the long distance and stark deserts. Largely self-sufficient, they traded with merchants from Chihuahua, Mexico, only every few





years, and with each other annually at the trade fair in Taos, New Mexico. This isolation and relative stability enabled the people of northern New Mexico to begin developing a society of their own, based on communal land grants, distinct from Mexico and from other settlements that were established in the Southwest.

The southern portion of New Mexico was settled very differently. Rather than parceling out communal land to the poor, a few elite were given large land grants. They used Mexican peasants and Indians to work their land. Society was divided into very rich and very poor, with the Spanish on the top and the mestizos and Indians on the bottom. Primarily due to constant Indian raids from hostile tribes, the new settlements grew very slowly. At the end of the 18th century all of New Mexico had about 8,000 settlers in fourteen towns and villages, and little contact with the heartland of Mexico.

Texas and California in the Early Period

Spain's initial interest in settling Texas came in response to the French, who were beginning to penetrate the area by way of Louisiana. The Spanish entered Texas with a cross in one hand and a sword in the other, establishing Catholic missions and armed garrisons as outposts of their colonial rule. But they ran into a giant obstacle — the Comanche Indians, who would swoop down on Spanish settlements at will and take whatever they needed. The Spanish were never able to secure a foothold in eastern Texas. By the end of the 18th century only a few garrisons remained in the area.

Spanish settlement was more successful between the Rio Grande and Nueces rivers in south Texas. From 1748 on, Spanish ranchers were encouraged to settle along both sides of the Rio Grande, mainly as a defense line against Indians. The large ranchers viciously exploited mestizo

peasants, whom they brought from Mexico to work their land.

The fear of French rivalry ended when the Spanish purchased Louisiana from the French in 1763. The colony grew only gradually after that. At the end of the century there were only a few thousand settlers in this area. Long distances and hostile Indians prevented contact between this colony and those of New Mexico and California to such a degree that they were hardly aware of each other's existence.

California was first settled by Spain in 1769, to stave off both Russia and Britain. The Spanish mission system prospered here. By 1823, 21 missions, three towns and three garrisons had been set up between San Diego and San Francisco.

The missions were set up on the coast near Indian settlements. The California coastal Indians offered less resistance than the Apaches, and were less developed than the Pueblos. Their lands were taken over by the Church and cultivated by the Indians who were "persuaded" by peaceful means and trickery if possible, by force if necessary, to devote themselves to "serving Christianity" by becoming slaves.

The resistance of nomadic Indians in central California prevented the missions from gaining a foothold there. Being further away from central Mexico than either Texas or New Mexico, California was the most isolated of all, with the smallest population of the three colonies in 1821.

There had been many attempts by Spain to settle Arizona, especially after the discovery of silver in the early 1700's. In 1751, though, Indian revolts drove out most of the settlers, and subsequent Apache raids wiped out the remainder. In the early 1800's there were more attempts to establish settlements, but the feudal Spanish rulers were locked in a struggle to maintain their rule over Mexico and were unable to spend the money needed to defend the Arizona settlements against Indian raids.

To sum up, the first settlements in the Southwest and California were sparsely settled between 1600 and 1800 by the Spanish, using Mexican and Indian labor. Neither Texas nor California developed on the basis of communal land grants, as did northern New Mexico; and

neither New Mexico nor Texas were able to develop a mission system based mainly on Indian labor like California did. Divided from each other and from central Mexico by hostile Indians and difficult terrain, these settlements had their own unique developments, with little in common except their general Mexican heritage.

The Mexican Period: 1810-1848

From 1776 to 1836, a series of colonial independence movements shook the Americas, throwing off the yoke of foreign domination. Father Miguel Hidalgo, a pastor in the small village of Dolores, Mexico, led a revolt that sparked the outbreak of Mexico's war for independence from Spain. On September 16, 1810, Hidalgo uttered the famous "Grito de Dolores": "Long live our Lady of Guadalupe, down with bad government, down with the Spaniards!"

During the eleven years that followed, the revolutionary struggle had many ups and downs, but the Mexican people were determined to be liberated from Spanish rule! In 1821 Mexico proudly declared its independence.



Father Hidalgo

The people living in the far-off provinces of the Southwest did not participate to any great extent in the independence movement. At first they were unaffected by the change from Spanish to Mexican rule. The new ruling class of Mexico, made up of large landowners and rising merchants, was struggling within itself over how much control the government should exercise over the provinces.

The borderland settlements were developing more and more independently of Mexico. The suppression of Apaches in New Mexico led to a revival of migration from Mexico, resulting in some expansion of ranching and farming. Copper and gold were discovered, and mining increased somewhat in importance in the following decades.

In 1822 the Santa Fe Trail was opened, connecting Santa Fe with U.S. markets by way of Independence, Missouri. Likewise, in California, Spanish and Mexican settlers found it easier to trade with Boston by way of clipperships, than to trade with Mexico by overland routes. These new trade routes were reducing the isolation of the provinces from the U.S., but increasing their separation from Mexico.

The Mexican government began parceling out unsettled land in California and south Texas to favorites of the new regime in an effort to increase its presence and influence in these areas. Later, in 1834, the Mexican government even seized the missions of the Catholic Church and parceled out its holdings in California.

Forces in the ruling class of Mexico recognized that the government had to bring the provinces under more centralized control or lose them to the expanding United States. They led a revolt in 1835 that brought Lopez de Santa Ana to power. The taxes and trade restrictions his government imposed on the northern provinces, in an effort to redirect their trade away from the U.S. and back to Chihuahua, caused widespread reaction. The people of New Mexico, rich and poor alike, had become dependent on goods that could be bought more cheaply from the states in the U.S.A.

Santa Ana's appointment of a non-New Mexican to be governor of New Mexico sparked a revolt of both rich and poor alike against the central government. But it was eventually suppressed by government troops and New Mexico's

large landowners, who quickly realized they had more to fear from the Indians and peasants who were most active in the revolt, than from Mexico's central government.

The Mexican-American War

In those early 1800's, two economic systems were competing in the U.S.: slavery and capitalism. Northern workers sweated long hours in the factories for starvation wages.*

It was the southern slave system, with its constant need for new land, that was the driving force behind the seizure of the Southwest territory from Mexico. But the capitalists in the North eyed this territory too, as a source of land, gold, and other resources, and an opening of trade to the west.

In 1836 the slave owners, who had been moving into eastern Texas, grabbed the land from Mexico and declared it the independent Republic of Texas. This set the stage for the Mexican-American War of 1846. The rulers of Mexico had repeatedly warned that if the United States made Texas a state it would lead to war.

In 1845 the U.S. annexed the Texas Republic anyway, and war quickly followed. The U.S. claimed that the border of the new state extended all the way to the Rio Grande. Mexico maintained that it went no further west than the Nueces River. When United States and Mexican troops clashed in the disputed territory, the U.S. declared war on Mexico.

The masses of Mexican and Indian peasants waged a heroic struggle against this first large-scale U.S. war of aggression. A number of Irish immigrants as well as some other U.S. soldiers deserted to the Mexican side, forming the San Patricio Corps.

Few rich landowners in New Mexico offered resistance to the U.S., preferring instead to follow the philosophy of "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em." But the masses of New Mexican peasants and Indians made their feelings very clear — theirs was the life of the exploited and they had no desire to be handed over to a new set of exploiters.

On January 19, 1847, the people revolted, scalping the U.S.-appointed governor Charles Bent

* And in the South the Black people were used as slaves on the plantations, while many poor whites were hardly able to carve out an existence on their small farms or in the towns, as the plantation owners grabbed up more and more land to use for slave agriculture.

and killing fifteen or twenty more of the most prominent landowners in New Mexico.

In California, it took the combined efforts of four military commanders and all the troops under their command to suppress the revolt of the small Mexican population there.

Despite this resistance, the outcome of the war was never in doubt — the U.S. held an overpowering military and economic advantage. The war ended with the defeat of Mexico on February 2, 1848.

The U.S. ripped off 45% of Mexico's territory, vast areas of its potentially richest farming, grazing, and fruit-growing lands. Mexico lost land that contained large oil fields, immense copper deposits and incalculable other natural resources.

The general result of this war of aggression and conquest was to cripple Mexico's future economic development. It also brought to a head the struggle between the U.S. slaveowners and U.S. capitalists over the question of who would control this new territory.

The Mexican-American war left in its wake 75,000 Mexicans in the Southwest, 60,000 of whom were in New Mexico. The majority of these people were poor farmers, peasants, ranch hands and miners. Under the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, which Mexico was forced to sign, Mexicans were entitled to the enjoyment of all rights of U.S. citizenship according to the Constitution and "shall be maintained and protected in the free enjoyment of their liberty and property." This treaty and the protocol that was also signed, guaranteed the Mexican people their land grants, language, and civil rights. But to the U.S. government it was a mere scrap of paper that it never meant to respect.

Nine days before the signing of the treaty, gold was discovered in California. In the rush that followed, the small Mexican population of 7,500 was completely overrun. The state's population leaped to 67,000 by the end of 1848, to 250,000 by 1849. Taxation, squatting, and court costs required to affirm land titles, ruined Mexican



TREATY OF GUADALUPE-HIDALGO

The signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848 ended the Mexican-American War. This treaty, completed shortly before the discovery of gold in California became known, stripped Mexico of one-half of her land, including what are now the states of Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and half of Colorado, and gave the U.S. a clean title to Texas. The U.S. agreed to pay fifteen million dollars for this vast territory.

Conquered militarily, the Mexican government tried to get some retribution for its losses and extend some protection to its citizens left in the annexed areas. As a result, several articles dealing with this were inserted into the treaty. These articles specifically safeguarded the property rights of the Mexicans in the Southwest, and also guaranteed the civil and religious rights of the people.

The U.S. Senate killed Article 10 of the Treaty which dealt extensively with land ownership. However, the statement of Protocol, which accompanied the final version of the treaty, stated:

The American government by suppressing the 10th article of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo did not in any way intend to annul the grants of land made by Mexico in the ceded territories. . . ."

The land grants and rights of the Mexican-Americans have been systematically violated by the ruling class of the U.S. ever since that time. Whether it was the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, the treaties with the Native American tribes, or the Paris Peace Accords, the United States capitalists have never let any treaty interfere with their pursuit of profit.

ranchers. This was made worse by the bad droughts in the 1860's.

Some Mexicans worked as ranch hands, or were self-employed as artisans and craftsmen. Those who attempted to mine gold were hit with a "foreign" miners tax, the cost of which prevented them from mining.

The Mexican people fought back against this wholesale ripoff. Such figures as Tiburcio Vasquez and Joaquin Murieta are testimony to that resistance.

The war was over but the people's struggle was not. In Texas the big U.S. cattle barons and plantation owners were trying to take over everything and push the Mexicans aside. The Texas Rangers were the strong-armed lackeys of the big ranchers. One of their main jobs was to murder, hunt, rob, and generally terrorize the Mexican people into submission.

With no choice open to them but to submit or rebel, poor Mexicans and displaced property owners rose up. Juan Cortina led the heroic fight

back in Texas, escaping the clutches of the Rangers and carrying on armed resistance for over a decade. (See box.)

U.S. expansion came slower to New Mexico and Texas. In the decades following the Mexican-American war, the northern industrialists and southern plantation owners were locked into the competition and battles that produced the civil war. They weren't able to exploit these new areas. Very few Anglo-Americans migrated to New Mexico or southwest Texas, and those that did married into prominent Mexican families, becoming part of the landowning elite.

The first settlers to come into New Mexico after 1848 were federal officers, followed by territorial officials and lawyers. These vultures proceeded to violate the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo by stealing the land from the small Mexican farmers. Between 1850 and 1900, two million acres belonging to individuals, 1.7 million acres of communal land, and 1.8 million acres of other New Mexican land was seized by the U.S.



El Paso-1896, Texas Rangers were used as a private army of landowners to terrorize and suppress the struggles of Chicano and Mexicano people.

government.

A notorious alliance of politicians and some twenty rich New Mexican families, known as the Santa Fe Ring, enabled its members to acquire huge tracts of land. By conducting court only in English, the imposition of high taxes, arbitrary laws, expensive confirmation of land deeds and outright robbery and murder, the seizure of communal lands away from the New Mexican people was devastating. With their homes and farmlands stolen from them, a number of New Mexican peasants moved northward into the southern portion of Colorado. These settlements still exist today.

The Consolidation of Capitalism

The victory of capitalism over slavery in 1865 brought even bigger changes to the Southwest. The extension of the railroads linking the east and west coasts was accomplished, but only by the military annihilation of the Indians, and through the backbreaking work of Mexican, Irish and

Chinese immigrant labor.

Cold-storage boxcars that could ship agricultural products in great bulk and over long distances encouraged large-scale capitalist agriculture. This further undermined the old master-peon feudal setup that still existed here and there in the southwest, ruining the landowners and forcing the peasants into the mines, railroads and truck farms.

The railroads also brought with them further consolidation of large landholdings by cattle ranchers who could now ship beef to the east. These landgrabbers fenced their claims, denying New Mexican shepherders and small farmers access to timber, water and grazing lands. Secret organizations of New Mexicans, like Las Gorras Blancas (The White Caps) were formed in the late 1800's to fight back against the cattle barons who carved up their lands and shut them out. These groups cut fences and engaged in other acts of sabotage, enjoying popular support for their militant actions.

In southern Texas, the completion of the Texas-Brownsville-Mexican railroad in 1904 rapidly undermined any feudal economic relations that remained. A small class of Mexican merchants in this area was able to prosper from the market provided by the transition of the peasants from subsistence farming to agricultural wage laborers. But for the vast majority of Mexican people in

the U.S., capitalism only advanced by running roughshod over them and subjugating them to its needs. A reign of terror was unleashed on them, and their resistance to its domination was drowned in a pool of blood. Thus began the transformation of the oppressed minority of Mexicans into a new and distinct oppressed national minority within the U.S. — the Chicano people.

CORTINA EARLY RESISTANCE FIGHTER

The years immediately following the Mexican-American War saw a wave of terror unleashed against Mexican people in the newly annexed territories. Resistance to this, individually or in more organized forms, was inevitably labeled "banditry" by the big ranchers and merchants, who directed the terror.

One important resistance leader was Juan N. Cortina. Born in 1822, he was the son of a well-to-do family who owned land in the Brownsville area of Texas. During the Mexican-American War he fought with the local militia in Texas against the invading U.S. army. After the war he remained in the state and became a U.S. citizen under the terms of the treaty. The aggression and expansion of the U.S. capital swept aside, plowed under or held down even many "well-to-do" Mexican ranchers, and many people, like Cortina, came forward from this strata to wage resistance.

Police brutality, then as now, was a common occurrence and it was such an incident that spurred Cortina to raise the cry of revolt. One day in July, 1859, while in Brownsville, he came upon the town marshal beating a Mexican he was trying to arrest. Recognizing the man as a former ranchhand on his family's ranch, Cortina attempted to intercede on his behalf. The marshal responded by saying: "What's it to you, you damned Mexican." Cortina fired a warning shot, and when the marshal still refused to release the prisoner, Cortina shot him down and took the prisoner to safety.

Realizing he could not fight alone, Cortina joined with others. These "bandits" and others like them, had the support of the Mexican people because they were resisting oppression. The next blow against injustice struck by Cortina came when he led this band of armed men in the seizure of Brownsville on September 28, 1859. They took the town with the express purpose of bringing well-known killers of Mexicans, including the marshal, to justice. The marshal escaped, but several of the murderers they sought were found and met a just end.

For several years thereafter Cortina successfully led his followers through armed clashes with the Texas Rangers and the U.S. Army. The key to his success was the widespread popular support for him. Even one of the army officers sent to capture him conceded: "the marauders have active sympathy of the lower classes of the Mexican population."

Eventually Cortina was forced to retreat into Mexico, where he played an active role in the struggle of the Mexican people against the French. But he was not forgotten by the people of the borderland. In 1890 he visited the border areas and received a hero's welcome. And even today his exploits are remembered in the corridos (ballads) of the area.

SUMMARY

Before the Mexican-American War of 1848, the Mexican settlements in the Southwest were operating under various forms of feudal economy, from the small plot subsistence farming and communal grazing land that dominated northern New Mexico, to the landlord-peasant system that existed almost everywhere else. The merchant class that carried on trade with these settlements did not arise within them, but came from Mexico and the U.S.

At the time of the conquest the various Mexican settlements in California, Texas, New Mexico, and what few existed in Arizona and Colorado, were small and isolated, not only from Mexico, but also from each other. Divorced from the general development toward nationhood going on in Mexico, the level of economic development of the southwest settlements as a whole, and especially in northern New Mexico, was much too low, and their isolation too great, to give rise to their own development into a nation.

The conquest, and subsequent U.S. capitalist expansion and domination, completely destroyed the landlord-peasant class relations that had

existed in the Southwest for over two hundred years. Landlords, who had lived off the labor of Mexican and Indian peasants, had their land stolen from them, forcing them either into partnership with the U.S. capitalists, or driving them into the working class. Peasants who had worked the land for one or another landlord, became wage workers for one or another capitalist.

In the communal land grant areas, many people had their lands stolen from them, and those that didn't found it increasingly difficult to scratch out a living off their small plots. These people, too, were either thrown fully into the working class or became semi-proletarians — working their own land part of the year and working as wage slaves the rest of the year. While the consolidation of U.S. capitalism over the Southwest retarded the independent economic, cultural, political and social development of the Mexican people in the area, in so doing it forged them together into a single oppressed nationality — Mexican-Americans or Chicanos, and welded them together with workers of other nationalities into the single U.S. working class. All of this set the stage for a higher level of struggle against the common enemy in the decades to come.

In the Fields and Factories

In 1910, under the cry of "Land and Liberty," revolution broke out in Mexico. 95% of the Mexican people were landless peasants and tenant farmers. The main thrust of their revolution was for redistribution of the land. Peasant leaders like Emiliano Zapata, from southern Mexico, and Pancho Villa, from the northern part, led armies of peasants to confiscate the lands of the rich landlords and distribute them among the landless peasants. The fighting continued for several years, causing tremendous economic turmoil and upheaval in Mexico. In part due to this upheaval many Mexicans came to the U.S. in search of work.

Chicano and Mexican workers in the U.S. supported the Mexican Revolution. The Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM), a party dedicated to social revolution in Mexico, was very active doing labor organizing and conducting propaganda for the revolution among Chicanos and Mexicans* in the U.S. The leader of this party was Ricardo Flores Magon, who had been forced out of Mexico in 1904, and was later imprisoned by the U.S. government and murdered in prison.

Many of the leaders of the later Chicano labor struggles considered themselves Magonistas (followers of Magon). They often worked with a group of revolutionary workers, the I.W.W. (Industrial Workers of the World). The I.W.W. placed great emphasis on organizing unskilled workers, including minority workers, in the U.S. It was natural for the I.W.W. and the PLM to work together since both were organizing agricul-

tural workers and Chicano workers, and both shared similar political views.

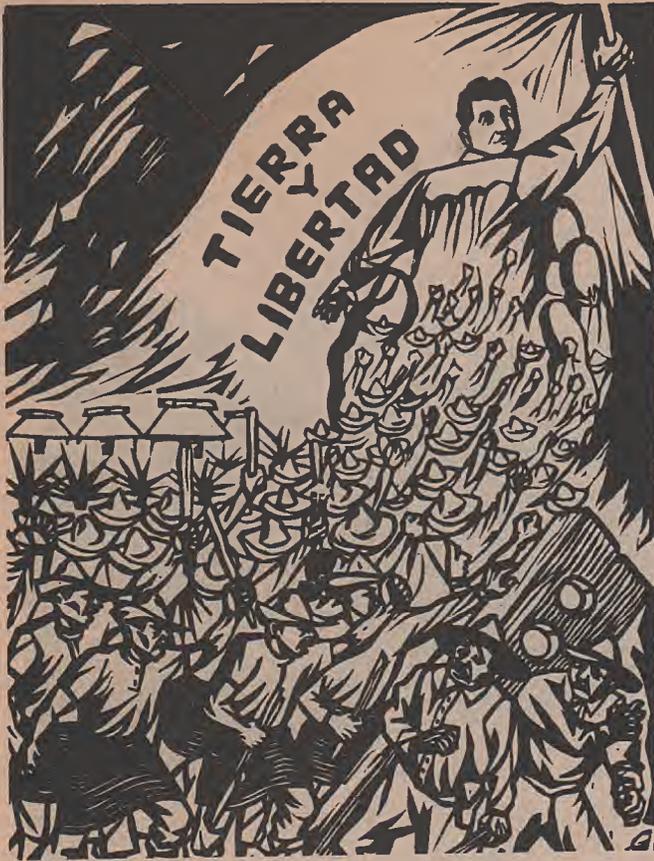
This period marked the beginning of a large migration of Mexican people to the United States. This massive migration was encouraged by the rapid development of capitalist agricultural production in the U.S., which required many more laborers, especially in the Southwest and California, where irrigation had turned arid land into fertile fields. The crops grown were cotton in Texas and Arizona, sugar beets in Colorado, and all kinds of vegetables and fruits in California. All of these crops required a large workforce to harvest. The U.S. capitalists also needed workers for the mines and railroads in the Southwest, and for the large factories in the Midwest.

DECADES OF MILITANT LABOR STRUGGLE

Immigrant workers had traditionally made up this workforce, and with the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the 1924 immigration law, Mexicans became the main group of immigrant agricultural workers. When the economy was on the upswing and there was a need for labor, Mexican workers could be recruited in large numbers. During times of economic crisis and depression, they could be forced back to Mexico. Of course, the capitalists did not count on the fight back of the Mexican workers, or the unity of the working class.

During 1910-11, in Los Angeles, Chicano workers struck the railway companies for better wages and against wage discrimination. Chicano

* Mexicans refers to Mexican Nationals, people who have recently arrived from Mexico; Chicano mainly refers to people of Mexican descent who were born or brought up in the U.S.



workers, some of whom were I.W.W. members, struck the L.A. Gas Works the same year. After a short, but militant, strike they won both higher wages and union recognition. These strikes were part of a great upsurge of the working class as a whole at this time. For example, the famous Lawrence strike of 1912, where 25,000 women textile workers of all nationalities had united and won their demands, was an inspiration to the entire working class.

The following year in Wheatland, California, over 2,800 agricultural workers and their families, from over 27 nationalities, went out on strike. The U.S. was in one of capitalism's inevitable recessions, and like all capitalists, the owners of the Durst ranch in Wheatland needed to increase their profits by forcing wages down. They advertised for twice as many workers as they planned on hiring. The owners figured that with a surplus of workers they could pay lower wages and provide poorer housing — if a worker complained, there was always another to replace him.

But the workers and their families had traveled from all over to find work, and they were angry.

They decided to fight the Durst's instead of each other. The one thing the owners hadn't counted on was the workers' unity and determination. The workers went out together on strike and held militant meetings and demonstrations, which were translated into many languages. Their unity was strong and the strike was ended only after an armed battle between the workers and company-owned police.

Ludlow, Colorado in April of 1914, was the scene of a militant strike of more than 9,000 miners against the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company. The workers, mainly Chicano, Italian, and Slavic, were striking for union recognition, wage increases and better working and living conditions.

The company kicked the workers and their families out of the company housing when the strike started. The workers set up "makeshift" homes in union tents on nearby vacant lots, determined to continue the strike. J. D. Rockefeller, father of Nelson Rockefeller, called in troops to "protect his property." They machine-gunned workers and then set fire to their homes, killing two women and eleven children. This is known as the Ludlow massacre.

Although the strike was lost, the members of the United Mine Workers Association increased their determination to carry on the fight. In the ten days following the massacre, forty-six men were killed, the overwhelming majority of them company guards. Miners came from all over, including New Mexico, to aid the Ludlow strikers, and to avenge the murder of their wives and children.

Mining in the Southwest was one of the first industries Chicanos worked in. Chicano miners, because of their experience in the mines of northern Mexico, actually built and set up many of the mines in the Southwest. Their knowledge of the land and the mining process, of course, far surpassed the knowledge of the owners, who had never worked a day in their lives. Despite the knowledge and abilities of Chicano miners, the bosses paid them less than they paid others. This pay discrimination was used by the bosses to make superprofits from the labor of Chicano workers and to keep the workers of different nationalities divided.



Miners in Ludlow Colorado armed against Rockefeller's army.

This "divide and conquer" scheme often backfired. Many of the strikes of both Anglo and Chicano miners included demands to end discriminatory pay scales (which were known as the "Mexican Rates"). One such strike was against Clifton-Morenci in 1914. Started by Chicano workers, it was later joined by all the miners. During this whole period, the U.S. working class was taking on the capitalists everywhere. As part of this upsurge, there were many militant strikes of Chicano miners, especially in Arizona.

In Ajo, in 1916, thousands of workers walked out of the Phelps Dodge mines. In 1917, in Bisbee, Arizona, 15,000 miners struck the mines there. It was such a militant strike that the sheriff had to deputize 2,000 men to "protect the properties of the mining companies."

To break the strike, these deputies loaded over 1000 Chicano miners into boxcars. After three days under armed guard, they were dumped in the middle of the desert near the border, without food or water. It took a long trek out of

the desert to survive.

During World War I, due to the stepped-up production for the war economy and because many workers were shipped off to do the fighting, the need for labor increased. The war, centered in Europe, had cut off the flow of immigrants from Europe to the U.S. Immigration laws set up at this time had a clause pertaining to Mexican labor. If the capitalists needed workers, they merely petitioned the Immigration Department, and it would lift the immigration restriction for Mexico.

The labor shortage of World War I also encouraged the first moves of large numbers of Chicanos and Mexicanos into heavy industry. Factory owners from the Midwest sent recruiters to the Mexican border to bring back workers for their factories.

Many of the workers were directly recruited either from Mexico itself, or from border towns in Texas. Others worked their way north on railroads, and then stayed in the cities of the

Midwest. Still others went to Michigan, Wisconsin, or Minnesota to pick sugar beets, and some Chicanos left the fields of northern New Mexico and Texas for the factories of the Midwest. Chicanos worked in the steel mills, auto plants, and packing houses of Chicago, Detroit, Gary, Omaha, St. Louis, Kansas City, and Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

The recruitment of Mexicano workers into the Midwest became increasingly important after the war, since declining European immigration had decreased considerably the supply of workers necessary for the rapidly expanding U.S. industry. These Midwestern cities soon had growing Chicano communities. An example of the move of Chicanos to industrial centers can be seen in the jump in Chicago's Chicano population from 4,000 in 1917 to 20,000 in 1930.

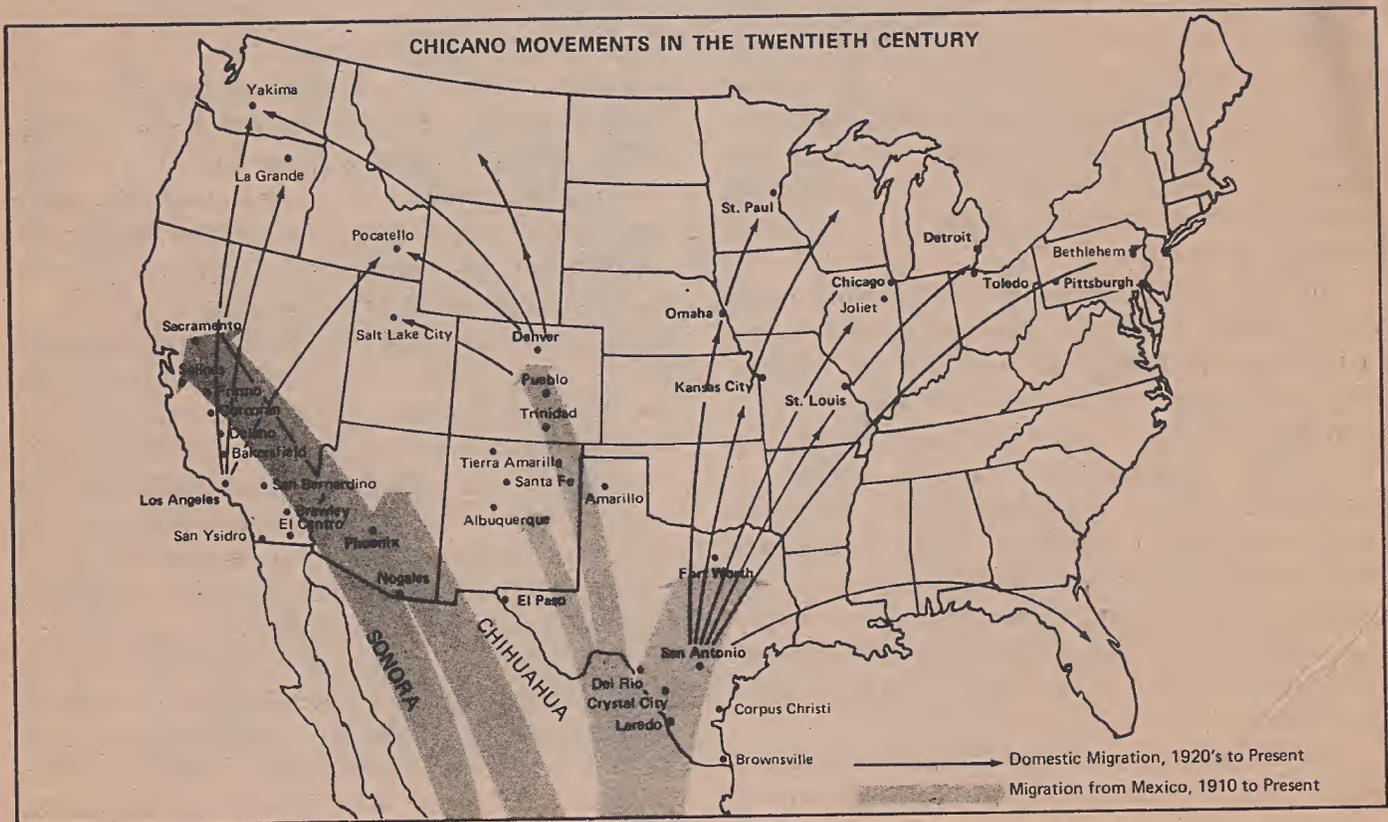
While this move to the basic industries was going on among Chicanos and Mexicanos, the battle in the fields was still raging. During this period from 1917 to 1920 there were several important strikes involving Chicano farmworkers. Agricultural workers struck against the canteloupe growers and caused a loss of 1000 carloads

of melons at Turlock, California in 1917. In January 1919, citrus workers went out on strike in San Dimas, Covina, San Gabriel, Azusa, Monrovia, and Duarte, all in California. In April of the same year, there were even more strikes in many of the southern California fields.

In 1920 a strike broke out in the Arizona cotton fields. World War I had created a great demand for cotton, but when the war ended, so did the cotton boom. Thousands of Chicano workers had been recruited for work in the cotton fields, and now were left stranded without work.

Over 4000 workers struck the cotton growers who were still producing. With the large surplus of cotton workers, the growers felt they could cut wages and worsen working conditions. Despite violence, jailing of leaders and deportations, the strikers were able to establish a confederation of Chicano agricultural workers locals.

After 1921, Mexicanos crossing the border were forced to pay an \$8-a-head fee and a \$10 visa fee. Poor Mexicanos could not pay this to cross into the U.S., so many came over "illegally." By 1928, 75% of the Mexicanos in the Imperial Valley of California were "illegal." The



growers and factory owners used this "illegal" status as a weapon against the workers, threatening them with deportation if they gave the bosses any trouble.

The wages for Chicano and Mexicano workers from 1920 to 1930 were low and usually based on piece work, rather than hourly wages. The average daily rate for Chicano and Mexicano workers was around \$1.50 at most.

During the 1920's, the Chicano struggle took on forms other than labor organizing, though that certainly continued. Mutual aid and benefit associations were being developed throughout the Southwest and California. These *mutualistas* were often started as organizations for low rate insurance by small businessmen, and often had ties with the Mexican government through the Mexican consul.

The *mutualistas* were also a place for workers to organize, and often developed into forms of trade unions. However, they were very weak, conciliating with the dominant growers and businessmen in order to retain their respectability — this tendency was pushed and reinforced by the small businessmen. These mutualistas also dealt with many of the desires of Chicanos for full democratic rights — equal education, an end to discrimination in employment and to discrimination under the law and by the police. The experience gained in these mutualistas led to the understanding of the necessity of collective struggle and the formation of other social and political groups. They still exist today in some parts of the Southwest.

Chicano professionals and small businessmen also formed societies strictly for themselves in this period. These societies required U.S. citizenship and would not admit "common laborers." The first such organization was La Orden de Hijos de America formed in San Antonio in 1921. A few years later, in 1928, the League of United Latin-American Citizens (LULAC) was formed, and it still exists today. Though these organizations preached non-violence and reliance on the capitalist system, they did fight against discrimination, especially in education and criminal justice.

These organizations were formed initially in south Texas. Because of the rapid growth of

urban Chicano farmworker communities after the turn of the century, a sizable Chicano petty bourgeoisie was able to develop and exist in these towns, based on the market provided by these Chicano wage-workers. The aims of these organizations represented the class outlook of their members. As professionals and businessmen, for example, it was in their own immediate interest to have equal education. They did not take up other issues that would benefit the majority of Chicanos, people who are overwhelmingly workers, because it was not in their own class interests.

At the end of 1929, following the collapse of the Stock Exchange resulting from the intensified overproduction crisis of capitalism, the world capitalist system underwent a crisis unparalleled in its history. Throughout this history periodic crises had taken place, but in the past, these crises had always been relatively short-lived, and production always resumed on a higher level. But the development of capitalism into imperialism, the outbreak of World War I and the revolution in Russian ushered in a new era, an era in which capitalism is in decay and decline and revolutionary struggles against its rule are rising and gaining in strength throughout the world.

It was in this context of a fundamentally and permanently sick system that the depression of the '30's hit the U.S. Tens of millions of workers were laid off, and wages in general were cut by 50%. Industry and international trade were drastically cut back. Mortgages were foreclosed by the thousands and bank failures wiped out peoples' savings. Farm prices dropped so low that corn was used for fuel instead of food.

Workers around the world refused to take this crisis lying down. Here in the U.S. a huge movement developed to fight for relief for the unemployed. Industrial workers by the millions rose up in the face of tremendous hardship to organize the C.I.O. The Communist Party, at that time a revolutionary organization of the working class, grew by leaps and bounds as it called upon and led the workers in fighting back.

The depression meant severe changes for the Chicanos, as well as all other Americans. In many work places, they were the first laid off due to a lack of seniority or because of outright discrimination. Thousands were forced to return to

Mexico. Many people had planned to return someday, but now they had no choice.

The Midwest had the largest deportations, since few of the people were native-born. They were working in industries which were some of the first and heaviest hit by the lay-offs. Whole communities of people were shipped back past mines, railroads, and fields they had poured their sweat and blood into together with workers of other nationalities. When they returned to Mexico they found that U.S. monopolies had grabbed up the best land, forcing millions of peasants into the cities, where U.S. domination was holding back industrial development, except in those few sectors of the economy that the imperialists developed in line with their own profit needs.

Well over half of the Mexican people were already jobless. The Mexican people who had been brought into the U.S. by the imperialists in

the first place were now being forced out by the imperialists, only to find that this same system of imperialism and its crisis made it equally impossible for them to make a living in Mexico.

The capitalists were in trouble, and saw that Mexicans were one immigrant group that could be sent home cheaply when they weren't needed; and alongside of the Mexicans, they deported U.S. citizens, Chicanos, who were born or who had made their permanent home in the U.S. The capitalists spread the lie that Mexicans wanted to go home, and they lied about the conditions in Mexico to try to trick people into voluntarily returning.

All the Mexicans in the U.S. and many Chicanos were cut off relief. They were not allowed to work on W.P.A. (government "public works") projects. In Gary, Indiana all unemployed Chicanos and Mexicans were put in



Train load of Mexican and Chicano workers being deported from Los Angeles. Tens of thousands were deported.

railroad cars and shipped back to Mexico. This was "cheerfully" paid for by U.S. Steel. In all, over one-third of the Mexicans and Chicanos in the U.S. were deported. (It is believed to have been over 500,000.)

It has always been the practice of the capitalists to try to shift the burden of their crises on to the backs of the workers, and as part of this to blame their crises on the foreign-born. But the U.S. working class aimed its blows at the real enemy. Its struggle continued to grow and threaten the bourgeoisie. Even in the depths of the 1930's depression, in the face of massive unemployment, hunger, and hardship, the workers of this country rose up and united in the millions of all nationalities, employed and unemployed. Unemployment compensation and social security were important victories won by the working class in this decade. The great sitdown strike at the Flint, Michigan GM plants, the 1934 dock and general strike in San Francisco, the

struggles of workers in rubber, mining, and other basic industries, the huge demonstrations of unemployed, mark high points in the history of the workers' movement.

In this period thousands of workers turned to Marxism because it could not only aid their day to day struggles, but showed how to make those struggles part of the overall battle to end exploitation and oppression forever. The Communist Party USA, which was still a revolutionary party, a party genuinely representing the working class at that time, gave leadership to many of these struggles. It also took the lead in uniting many workers to form the C.I.O. in order to organize all workers, skilled and unskilled, of all nationalities, into unions. Unions like the United Auto Workers and the United Electrical Workers were formed through militant strikes, slowdowns, sabotage and mass picketing. Chicanos were very active in the union drives of the 1930's, especially in mining, agriculture and canning, where they



Auto workers demonstrate in front of the Cadillac plant in Detroit. The '30's saw militant working class struggle break out across the country.

were most heavily concentrated.

During this period the Communist Party worked closely with the Confederacion de Uniones Obreras Mexicanas (CUOM — founded in 1928) to organize farmworkers. CUOM was made up of many different forces, including some who were led by the Communist Party, as well as some people from the old mutualistas. It was the first Chicano-Mexicano labor union to organize both rural and urban workers. The Communists helped to establish an organization called the Agricultural Workers Industrial League, which united workers of different nationalities in their fight against the bosses.

This organization led four strikes in 1930, and in July of 1931 it was changed to the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union (CAWIU). In California alone CAWIU led 156 strikes. By 1932 CAWIU was organizing in six northern California counties.

1933, the height of the Depression, was a year of widespread militant struggle for farmworkers in California. There were at least 37 big strikes, 24 of which were led by CAWIU. The first significant one was the Cherry Strike. In Santa Clara County the price the growers got for their cherry crops had risen, but they had lowered the hourly wages from 30¢ to 20¢ an hour. The workers struck hard. The growers had to use the police and state to violently put down the strike. Before the strike was over, though, its militancy had spread to other berry pickers in the San Gabriel Valley and Orange County, as well as the celery and onion growers in Santa Monica.

The biggest strike took place in the cotton fields of California's central valley. Wages had fallen from \$1.00 to 40¢ per 100 pounds of cotton picked. The CAWIU called for a strike and between 15,000 and 18,000 workers, 75% of them Chicanos, walked out.

In the first few days over 1000 workers and their families were evicted from the company-owned labor camps. The growers called in police and armed goons to attack the strikers — two were killed, 11 injured. Nevertheless, the cotton workers continued the strike, and after 24 days they won an increase in wages to 75¢ per 100 lbs., but they failed to win union recognition or an end to the contract labor system.

The 1933 strikers pushed wages almost up to the pre-Depression levels, but the growers prepared a counter-offensive. They formed the Farmers Association, the main members being the largest farm corporations. They pushed through anti-union legislation in rural California counties and had the police arrest CAWIU leaders.

By 1934 the growers had succeeded in destroying the union. The A.F. of L. did nothing to stop its destruction. In fact, the A.F. of L. Teamster Union moved into the canneries and packing sheds right after the CAWIU had been driven out. The growers were relieved to see the Teamster Union leadership, because they knew that eventually the workers would get organized; and the Teamsters leadership could be counted on to ignore the mainly Chicano farmworkers, who were again without a union.

While there were many militant strikes involving thousands of workers, large scale organization of farm workers had not been really developed at this time. However many lessons were learned and the experience of the communist-led CAWIU had an influence on the direction of the Chicano struggle.

Organizing was also going on in the cities in the 1930's. In Los Angeles, the International Ladies Garment Workers Union organized a general strike in the garment district, a feat that has never been repeated. There were over 7,000 workers on strike, mostly women, 75% Mexicana and Chicana. Their demands were for union recognition, a minimum wage instead of piece rate, and no home work. (It is common in the garment district to send work home with women.)

There were mass picket lines and the strikers battled it out with the police. They were denied relief (many of them supported several children and this was a great hardship), and the police deported the leaders who were Mexicans.

Another C.I.O. union called United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA) was involved in one of the most heroic struggles of the 1930's. In 1938 in San Antonio, Texas, thousands of pecan shellers walked off their jobs during the peak of the pecan shelling season. The workers struck 130 plants because of a reduction in the piece rate. Much like farm work, pecan shelling was an industry



1933 cotton pickers strike at Corcoran, Calif. Workers were shot down by growers and their goons. In the face of the capitalists' violence, the strikers stood firm.

that employed whole families. Within the first week of the strike over 1000 picketers were arrested with the local sheriff using tear gas to try to disperse them.

Over 6,000 workers were on strike, and their leader was an UCAPAWA organizer, a twenty-year-old Chicana communist.

Much of the business community of San Antonio was out to get her. The strikers were so harassed they filed an injunction against the police chief, who was arresting strikers for everything, even for setting up soup kitchens for other strikers. At the hearing for this injunction the chief of police stated that "I did not interfere with the strike, I interfered with a revolution." The judge agreed with this outlook, refusing to issue the injunction. The strikers continued their struggle, injunction or not, and won their union after 37 days of hard struggle.

WORLD WAR II

World War II again created a need for a large supply of labor. Millions of unemployed workers in the U.S. went back to work, but this was insufficient for the needs of the army and for the increased industrial output for the war. By 1943, Mexicano workers again began to seek work in the United States. In Detroit there were 4000-6000 Mexicano auto workers by '43. The same was true for Chicago's industry.

Braceros

In the fields there was a particular shortage, because many of the Chicanos and poor whites who had worked the fields during the Depression were drafted into the armed services. 375,000-500,000 Chicanos fought in the war against the Fascist Axis. The growers were in need of a cheap labor supply and their solution was to have the borders opened up again to allow as many Mexicano workers to migrate as possible. This would guarantee the necessary labor supply, with a surplus, without any restrictions on how much they exploited the Mexicano workers.

The Mexican government refused to have an open border. In 1942 the problem was resolved by the setting up of the Braceros program. It guaranteed a set amount of Mexicano workers to

work in the U.S. for a particular harvest and then return to Mexico at the end of the growing season.

The Braceros had absolutely no rights as workers, they could not organize or strike. The terms of agreement stipulated that the Mexicanos would not "take jobs" away from domestic workers; they could not be drafted by the U.S.; and there was to be no discrimination against them. In addition, housing and transportation were supposed to be regulated. These provisions were merely a set of empty phrases.

From 1942 to 1947 there were 220,000 Braceros brought into the U.S. for farm labor. Many labor unions and Chicano organizations opposed the Bracero program, because the Braceros were denied any kind of rights as workers. In some cases the Braceros were forced to act as strikebreakers. Overall, they were used to maintain a surplus of workers and thereby hold down wages and enable the continuation of unsafe working conditions.

World War II years had an important impact on the Chicano people in several ways. The fact that hundreds of thousands of Chicanos served in the armed forces meant for many the breakdown of rural isolation, coming into contact with new ideas, different people, including Chicanos from other areas. Another important effect of the war was that the need for increased industrial output brought even more Chicanos and Mexicans into the industrial and agricultural proletariat. But even as the Chicano people were making important contributions to the fight against the Fascist Axis on the battlefields and in wartime industries, the ruling class was instigating new attacks against them.

In Los Angeles these attacks took on large proportions. In June 1943, bands of servicemen, aided and encouraged by the police, roamed through the Chicano communities attacking Chicano youth. Called the "zoot-suit riots" by the reactionary local press, these attacks were accompanied by a propaganda barrage about the "criminal nature" of the Chicano people. This was not the first time that the ruling class had tried to promote the chauvinist line that Chicanos were an "inferior" people, as an excuse to attack and deport them. These chauvinist lies were a

cover for the super exploitation of Chicanos.

When the Chicano vets returned they were not about to accept the same conditions they had left. After fighting and many of them dying to defeat the Fascist Axis, which the ruling class called a "fight for democracy," they demanded to be treated as equals and were determined to win their rights.

But the U.S. ruling class, which was pursuing its own imperialist aims while fighting the fascists, had no intention of granting equality to the Chicano people. Any rights gained would have to be fought for. Such incidents as the refusal of the Three Rivers, Texas cemetery to allow the burial of a Chicano soldier killed in the Philippines, and the extensive pattern of discrimination and segregation in public facilities and education, spurred on the formation of Chicano veteran and community groups to fight for these rights.

These years following World War II saw some gains in the fight against discrimination, but these struggles were almost always confined to the courts and rarely mobilized the masses of Chicanos to fight.

Following the Chinese Revolution in 1949 and the Korean War in the early 1950's, U.S.

capitalism was again thrown into a recession. The rise of McCarthyism and the ruling class attacks on the working class and progressive movements in the late 1940's and early 1950's corresponded with the revival of deportations used against the Mexicano and Chicano peoples.

Midnight raids, street dragnets, and the use of schools as concentration camps to hold people awaiting deportation, characterized the reign of terror unleashed against the Chicano people, which was labelled "Operation Wetback" by the immigration authorities. Again, millions of people, citizen and non-citizen alike were deported. Especially singled out were Chicanos active in the working class and progressive movements, depriving the Chicano people and the entire working class of many militant fighters and leaders.

These attacks in part account for the ebb in the struggle of the Chicano people, and in the working class as a whole, during the late 50's. But it was just the calm before the storm. Concentrated in industry, and facing continuous oppression on all fronts, the stage was set for new and deeper struggle in the '60's.



Rally of Bracero workers in early 1960's demand wage increase for farmworkers. Signs say "Braceros will not work for 85¢ per hour." "we demand \$1.25!"

heavy industry, steel, meat packing and construction industries in different parts of the U.S. especially the Midwest. It was this process that forged Mexican-American people together with other workers in the U.S. into a single, multinational working class, and their struggle for a better life became immediately and inseparably bound up with the struggles of the entire class against the capitalist system. But, occurring as it did under imperialist rule, this "assimilation" into working class life was not, and could not be, complete and equal.

From the beginning, the rulers of the United States have been driven by the laws of capitalism to wring the most profits possible out of the labor of working people, which is the only place where profits can be made. The development of capitalism into imperialism did not do away with this exploitation, but on the contrary, it intensified it. Driven by even sharper competition and sagging profits, the monopoly capitalists have made use of color, race, language, age, sex and cultural differences among workers to divide the class, and to carry out savage oppression and superexploitation against Chicano and other minority nationality workers. But these very conditions of extreme oppression could not help but give rise to the

fiercest resistance and struggle by working people of all nationalities against the system of imperialism responsible for their misery.

Over the past seventy-five years the Chicano people have waged powerful struggles against their own national oppression and have played a key part in many struggles of the whole working class. During the 1920's and '30's, when tremendous battles were being fought by workers everywhere, the Chicanos were the backbone of many widespread militant farmworker strikes, even in the face of the fact that the ruling class, no longer able to use such a huge pool of labor, deported hundreds of thousands of people — both U.S. citizens and Mexicans — to Mexico.

Again in the 1950's, millions of people were deported to Mexico, again both Chicanos and Mexican Nationals, including many class conscious fighters of the working class. But this kind of terror used by the imperialists has failed to halt the Chicano people's struggle against exploitation and oppression. This struggle was bound to and thus has continued to develop on a more massive and militant level than ever before, merging more closely with the struggle of the whole working class.



In 1951 during the famous Empire Zinc miners strike in Silver City, New Mexico, miners' wives took to the picket line in defiance of an injunction brought against the predominantly Chicano and Mexican workers.

The Struggle of the Chicano People Today

The ruling class does not enforce national oppression against Chicano people out of any particular hatred for them. Imperialists look at all workers as a source of labor — and profit to be made from that labor. In capitalist society the workers' labor power — their ability to work — is a commodity which the capitalists try to buy at the cheapest price possible in order to turn the greatest profit possible for themselves. The imperialists would like to be able to superexploit (pay below average wages and make extra profit from the labor of) every man, woman, and child that they hire, regardless of color or nationality.

In the beginning of this country, the working class was made up of immigrants from various European countries who brought with them their national cultures, languages, and other distinctions. The capitalists have used these differences to pit workers against each other, giving one group a few more crumbs than another; hiring this nationality, but not that one in different situations, and superexploiting as many of them as they could get away with over a period of generations. But as the working class united itself in struggle, and as the national distinctions between workers were broken down, this has

become increasingly harder to do — though, whenever they can, the capitalists continue to do it.

Meanwhile, Blacks, Mexicans, and workers of other nationalities began increasingly to become a part of the U.S. working class. The imperialists could not then, and cannot now, afford to give up the profits made by superexploiting these workers. Based on the history of domination of these nationalities by the ruling class of this country — and the backward conditions and economic relations these nationalities have historically been held in — the ruling class has built a structure of national oppression to maintain this superexploitation, propping it up by again emphasizing racial and cultural differences and justifying it with poisonous theories of white supremacy.

Because of this, national oppression hits not only workers, but all classes of Chicano, Black, and other minority peoples. The ruling class hopes to make use of the social antagonisms created by national oppression in a desperate attempt to drive a wedge between and hold back the struggles of Chicanos and other oppressed nationalities and the working class struggle as a whole.



Chicano men and women are heavily concentrated in the fields, packing sheds, and canneries of U.S. agribusiness.

But they are bound to fail, because Chicanos and other oppressed nationalities are overwhelmingly workers, and their struggle against national oppression is an inseparable part of the whole working class struggle.

National oppression will be ended by ending its source — capitalist rule. And capitalist rule can only be ended by the entire working class uniting in revolutionary struggle against its own exploitation and oppression, and against all oppression. In order to correctly take up the fight against the national oppression Chicano people face, the working class and its party must identify the many forms it takes and mobilize the masses of Chicano people and the rest of the working class to build the struggle against them.

Chicano People in U.S. Today

Because of the ridiculous obscurity of the population statistics, it is impossible to know exactly how many Chicanos live in the U.S. Estimates range from 6 to as high as 12 million people.

In 1950 65% of the Chicano people lived in urban areas and by 1960 this had increased to 80%. In the rural areas, the overwhelming majority of Chicanos are agricultural wage workers, as the number of people able to subsist by owning their own farms has continuously de-

creased. In 1950 only 4% of the employed Chicano workforce were farmers; by 1960 this number had declined to 2% and it's even less now.

60% of the total Chicano workforce is concentrated in 17 cities, working side by side with workers of other nationalities. *One out of every two Chicano workers is in basic industry; working in unskilled or semi-skilled jobs; one out of every three is in service industries such as restaurants, retail, etc.* Chicano women in particular have the highest concentration of women in industry of any nationality, working in electronics, garment and food industries. The vast majority of Chicano people are descendants of immigrants whose parents' and grandparents came from Mexico to the United States not as peasants, farmers or professionals, but as wage workers who had no way to live but to sell their labor power to capitalists in the U.S.

Conscious discrimination nurtured by the ruling class and its government has resulted in only a handful of Chicanos being allowed into professional, technical, managerial and other white collar categories. Only about 11% of the employed Chicano workforce hold these kinds of jobs. To illustrate this: in El Paso county Chicanos hold 80% of the service industry jobs, but only 10% are in managerial positions of any kind. Or in Bernalillo County (Albuquerque),

New Mexico, while holding 40% of the jobs in mining, they hold no technical or professional positions.

The bourgeoisie pushes the line that people are lucky to have any jobs at all. But that's to cover for the fact that under their anarchistic profit system, unemployment is a constant thing. While unemployment for all workers has skyrocketed, the unemployment rate among Chicanos is twice the nationwide rate. Even before the current surge of layoffs and cutbacks real unemployment among Chicanos in the Southwest was 18%.

The capitalists make superprofits off the labor of oppressed nationalities by paying them less for equal or comparable work as that done by white workers. In doing this, they also attempt to create divisions within the working class, while promoting ideas that divert the struggle away from the real enemy. The well-known film "Salt of the Earth" illustrates how this tactic has been used in the mining industry and how the working class can unite to struggle against it.

Another source of superprofits for the imperialists is their domination of neighboring Mexico which allows the bourgeoisie to use the border area as a haven for non-union, runaway shops. Since 1965 over 400 labor intensive industries have set up operations along the border, hiring mainly Chicano and Mexican women workers, and enforcing the most extreme superexploitation, in an effort to prop up their profits. This is going on with the cooperation of the Mexican government.

The result is a constant influx of Mexican workers into the U.S., who are superexploited by the imperialists when they employ them and, as a whole are used as a reserve army of labor to hold wages of all workers down even further. These factors, along with the class collaboration of top union leadership, have enabled the imperialists to maintain the Southwest as an unorganized region, where wages are held down for all workers, particularly the large number of Chicanos and Mexicanos. This is one of the reasons why the victory of the Farah strike in El Paso, Texas, a "right-to-work" state, was such a solid blow against the national oppression and the exploitation of the working class as a whole by the capitalist class.

The capitalists constantly try to squeeze more profits from the labor of all workers, paying as little wages as they must. National oppression enables the capitalists to pay Chicano workers even less — about \$3000 a year less than average. Of those who are able to get work, over a sixth of the men and nearly half of women earn less than \$2000 a year. Even where education is equal, Chicanos earn less. Chicano high school graduates are paid about three-fourths the average of white American graduates. Between college graduates, the difference is still about \$1500 a year.

ATTACKS ON LIVING STANDARDS

People of every nationality want to be able to provide their families with a decent home and they work like hell to do it. National oppression has resulted in segregated housing patterns where choices are limited for Chicanos and other minorities. Discrimination on the part of landlords reinforces this segregation. As a result, they are forced into communities where landlords who don't live in the community make fortunes off their special oppression. Often these communities are the oldest, most rundown and overcrowded sections of the cities, yet the people end up paying more than they would for better housing in other areas of the cities.

These communities become favorite targets for "red-lining" on savings banks and loan associations maps. This means: mortgage money is not granted to home buyers or landlords in these red-lined areas; little or no money is allotted for maintenance, sidewalks, street lamps, hospitals, or other public services; these communities are maintained as unincorporated areas, or incorporated separately from the central city, cut off from city revenues; land values go down and big money moves in, buys up the slum buildings, moves out the people, clears the land and sells it to private developers at a fraction of the original cost. The bourgeoisie calls this "urban renewal." "People Removal" is how the people in the renewal districts view it, and this hits not only minorities but also other sections of the working class as well.

This is a widespread phenomenon that constitutes a very real form of national and class

oppression. For example, when developers decided it would be profitable to build Dodger stadium in the Chavez Ravine area of Los Angeles, they first had to remove the Chicano people who had lived there for nearly a century. Only with the help of the police and the entire bourgeois state apparatus were they finally successful. That's what it required to deal with the resistance of the people, who were not so willing to give up what they had worked for all their lives.

Just as this system is incapable of providing decent housing for the people, it is totally unable to provide decent health care. While health care for all working people is bad and getting worse, the high cost of medical insurance and the lack of union or company medical plans make it a nightmare for Chicano and other minority nationalities who are forced to turn to rundown clinics and overcrowded county hospitals.

In the rural areas especially, the lack of decent medical care is criminal. There are three counties in northern New Mexico that have only one doctor. For farm workers, there is always a danger of being sprayed by pesticides and poisons because the growers are not going to cut into their profit — which comes from the labor of the workers in the first place — to safeguard the health of the workers. Whereas the life expectancy in this country is 70 years of age, for farm workers it is 45.

Even as health care deteriorates and federal funds marked for health care are slashed even further, funding for county hospitals to conduct campaigns of forced sterilizations on poor and oppressed women are on the rise. The capitalists see working class women as an assembly line — produce children when they need more workers, stop production when unemployment gets too high. Chicanas and Mexicanas, and women of other oppressed nationalities, are special targets of this. The practice of forcing women into being sterilized has evoked the anger of workers of all nationalities in the Los Angeles area where it was recently exposed.

Working people of all nationalities are constantly fed the line that anyone who has the desire to better himself or herself can "make it" in this society if they stay in school. Many people

want to go to school in order to earn a decent living, to understand the world around them and to learn about their history and culture.

But schools in this society are not set up to meet the needs of the working class. The ruling class doesn't allow working class kids to get the skills and knowledge that are necessary for higher paying jobs (since there aren't very many of these jobs and the capitalists need workers to exploit) and beyond that, bourgeois education instills



Chicanos, like other oppressed national minorities and large sections of the working class, are forced to live in lousy but high rent housing.

bourgeois ideology, including a distortion of history, chauvinism toward oppressed nationalities and slander of the working class. Education is used as a club to hold people down, divide them and promote illusions among them. This club is swung especially hard at Chicanos and other oppressed nationalities.

The attack is two-pronged: on the one hand Chicanos are prevented from getting even the lousy education that is generally provided; on the other hand, whatever education they do get is used to suppress and distort their history and culture. 25% of Chicanos over 25 have not even finished fifth grade; over a third of the Chicano people never graduate from high school; even when they do finish high school almost all are prevented from going into higher fields of education where they can learn a profession.

To give just one example, Los Angeles has the largest Chicano population in the country, yet as of 1970 not *one* Chicano had ever graduated from the UCLA Medical School; out of 27,000 students there were only 27 Chicanos on the entire UCLA campus in 1967. In the rural areas, where farm workers and their children by necessity migrate from labor camp to labor camp, the bourgeoisie has no interest in providing the children with even the most elementary schooling.

The bourgeoisie consciously exploits the particular problems of language that often exist among Chicano children. Chicano children repeat the first grade almost three times more than the average. This is clearly a result of the language barrier.

Even more vicious is the fact that many of these children get placed in classes for "slow learners" or are labelled mentally retarded. In California in 1972, people were outraged to find out that 22,000 Chicanos were trapped in classes for the mentally retarded because they were given I.Q. tests in English instead of Spanish. But by enforcing discrimination in education as a means of maintaining national oppression, the ruling class has picked up a rock only to drop it on its own feet. The explosion that erupted on high school and college campuses in the late 1960's and that is rumbling again today, is in direct response to this discrimination.

Literature, art, music — all forms of culture in the hands of the people that reflect their life, history, and struggle against all oppression — are powerful weapons that the bourgeoisie consciously and ruthlessly tries to corrupt and destroy, replacing them with its own decadent culture.

Since the conquest of the Southwest, the culture and language of the Chicano people have always been under attack. Up until 1968 it was *illegal* in several states, including Texas and California, to speak Spanish on school grounds. It wasn't until the ruling class was faced with the upsurge of the Chicano people's struggle that this law was taken off the books. This barbaric kind of law served a real purpose for the bourgeoisie: to suppress and degrade the Chicano people, to set up walls between Chicanos and the rest of the working class, to deny them their proud history and culture, and to hold back their struggle against oppression.

But what the bourgeoisie wants and what it gets are two different things. Along with the development of their struggle against national oppression, in recent years there has been a resurgence of various forms of Chicano culture, some of which is making contributions to the developing revolutionary culture of the multinational working class. At the same time, the absence of working class leadership had held back the development of a fully revolutionary culture among Chicanos, a culture which can both draw on the rich history of struggle of the Chicano people and at the same time bring out forcefully the great power and militancy of the proletariat as the class of the future.

POLICE TERROR

As the revolutionary struggle against national oppression and class exploitation and oppression grows, so does the police terror unleashed in the oppressed communities to keep the people down. In 1968 when Chicano students walked out of L.A. high schools to protest miserable conditions, sheriffs' deputies and police reacted by treating the protest as an insurrection, breaking up the demonstration, beating students, and arresting those who did not move fast enough. A more recent example is the 1973 Dallas shooting of

Santos Rodriguez, a 12 year old boy. Santos was pulled into a squad car for supposedly tampering with a vending machine. The cop tried to scare him into confessing by playing Russian Roulette. He clicked off an empty chamber while his gun was pressed against the boy's head. The next pull of the trigger blew Santos' brains out. A protest of thousands of people, mainly working people, Chicano, Black and white, against this slaughter, forced the courts to convict the cop of manslaughter, and even then they only gave him a five year sentence.

Across the country similar incidents are giving rise to an increased struggle on the part of the Chicano people and the whole working class against police repression. The bourgeoisie clearly recognizes that the Chicano people will not passively accept national oppression of any sort and that more organized resistance is bound to grow. By concentrating police forces, sheriffs and agents of every kind in Chicano communities and conducting sweeping deportation raids throughout the communities, the capitalists are trying to hold back this resistance and keep it separate from the struggle of other working people. But they are bound to fail, because the working class is one working class, with one class interest — to end exploitation and all oppression.

DEPORTATION RAIDS

The question of "illegal aliens" and the hysteria the bourgeoisie is once again trying to whip up around them is important not only to the Mexican and Chicano people, but increasingly for the entire U.S. working class. In 1974 over 800,000 people, mostly Mexicans and Chicanos, were deported.

It is the U.S. imperialists, of course, who illegally smuggle the Mexicans and other Latino workers into the U.S. Now, faced with deepening economic crisis and chaos which they cannot solve, with production stagnating and unemployment growing, the ruling class is attempting to deport foreign born workers to save unemployment and welfare costs.

The imperialists also have two political purposes in the current deportation program. One is to spread the lie that the "illegals" are responsible for unemployment, trying to divide the working

class into competing nationalities and get U.S. workers looking to "their" bourgeoisie for protection. And secondly, the deportations and the threat of them serve as part of the repression not only against non-citizens, but also against Chicano, Puerto Rican and other minority workers subject to suspicion and harassment, and against the whole working class.

It is only from the standpoint of the working class, from the point of view of building unity of workers of all nationalities and countries that the question of immigration and deportations can be really understood and the working class can deter the attempts of the imperialists to divide it and separate it from its strongest allies — the oppressed nationalities in this country and oppressed nations throughout the world.

The Past Decade

The United States emerged from WWII as the major imperialist power in the world, taking over in many colonies and neo-colonies where other imperialist countries had been forced to leave off. Their position of temporary strength enabled the ruling class to hold back the workers movement in the U.S. to some degree, by building up its labor hacks to control the unions which millions of rank and file workers had built through historic struggle and sacrifice. This attack, combined with the total degeneration and sell-out of the "Communist" Party USA, which left the working class without conscious revolutionary leadership, accounted for the fact that the workers movement went into a period of temporary ebb.

This period of relative strength for the U.S. imperialists was extremely short-lived. The victory of the Chinese revolution and the defeat handed the imperialists by the valiant struggle of the Korean people marked the beginning of their decline. The struggle of Black people in the U.S., beginning in 1955 with the "civil rights movement" in opposition to Jim Crow laws in the South, and developing into a revolutionary storm for Black liberation, dealt further blows to the imperialist system. This movement was closely linked with the break-up of the plantation system and the transformation of millions of Black people from serf-like sharecroppers to industrial



(above) Farah strikers joined with others in El Paso, Texas, in 1973, to protest the police murder of 11 year old Santos Rodriguez in Dallas.

(below) Immigration agents (La Migra), used by growers to attack and harass Chicano and Mexicano workers, arrest a family without papers in the fields.

workers following WWII.

The Black liberation struggle rekindled revolutionary spirit throughout the country and provided tremendous inspiration for people of all nationalities. It became the main force pushing ahead all other struggles against the capitalist rulers at that time.

The Black liberation struggle was gathering further momentum at the very time when the escalation of U.S. imperialist aggression in Indochina was meeting increased resistance. Other international setbacks for U.S. imperialism, on top of internal economic contradictions were hastening the development of the current economic crisis. All this provided excellent conditions for the resurgence in 1965 of the farm workers struggle in California, in which thousands upon thousands of Chicanos participated.

FARMWORKERS

On September 16, 1965, Chicano and Mexican farm workers joined with striking Filipino campe-

sinos in the grape fields of Delano, California. This began a new period of struggle in the fields of California and the Southwest. Under the leadership of the newly-formed United Farm Workers Organizing Committee, later to become the United Farmworkers Union, this new drive mounted the most serious challenge the agribusiness barons had yet faced. The bourgeoisie's memory wasn't so short to have forgotten the massive upsurge in the fields during the early and mid-1930's, struggles often led by communists. The farmworkers were bound to come under heavy attack and they did. Despite the fierce opposition of the growers and their cops and courts, the farmworkers union scored major gains in the struggle. The union was able to score such victories because the farmworkers themselves, like all workers, have a tremendous amount of class hatred for their oppressors and have constantly struggled in the fields in various ways, waging massive and hard fought battles and showing great heroism and self-sacrifice. This struggle has



Lamont Calif., Striking farmworkers facing sheriffs and goons.

involved thousands of farmworkers, and mobilized countless other members of the working class into the struggle, through the boycott and other support activity.

Workers from all over the world have united in support of the farmworkers militant class struggle. Workers from New York to Belgium refused to handle scab grapes, and forced union bureaucrats and liberal politicians to give support to the struggle.

The farmworkers movement has provided valuable lessons for the whole working class, and it has been a spur to the movement of the Chicano people. Given this, it is understandable that the bourgeoisie would do all in its power to smash the farm workers movement, or at least, prevent it from being linked up to the overall class struggle. While they are trying to destroy it with every weapon they can find, including sweetheart contracts with reactionary Teamster officials, they also try to keep it within the bounds of trade unionism and on the reformist path. In this, they have found willing partners in Cesar Chavez and George Meany. The union leaders always assure the ruling class that the farmworkers movement does not challenge its basic interests. They have tried to paint the movement as a moral, pacifist one in order to cover up the clear militant class struggle that it is. And they have fallen in with the ruling class line that "illegals" are taking American-born workers' jobs, and should be deported — even though many of the most militant fighters among the farmworkers have been Mexican nationals. Despite the union leadership, the farmworkers continue to be a fighting example for the whole working class.

Further, they have been an inspiration to other sections of the Chicano people, not only because of their resistance to exploitation, but also because in their fight, the farmworkers have exposed the national oppression that all Chicanos face; and they have raised demands around many of the issues that Chicanos in the community are fighting for. These include demands for better housing, schooling and medical care, an end to all forms of discrimination.

In the Chicano communities around the country the farm workers inspired many people to

fight for these demands — as rights the people should have, not gifts or luxuries to ask for.

ALIANZA

While the struggle of the farmworkers continued to grow and provide inspiration, another front of struggle was developing in northern New Mexico. In 1963, La Alianza Federal de Mercedes (Federal Alliance of Land Grant Heirs) under the influence of Reies Tijerina changed its name to La Alianza Federal de Pueblos Libres (Federal Alliance of Free City-States). This broadened their campaign from being solely an attempt to regain land from the federal government for land grant heirs, to include other Chicanos who lived in the area. Their demand was for the setting up of independent communities on the original land grants, which had been stolen from the people by the U.S. ruling class.

The Alianza attracted a number of impoverished rural Chicanos, many of whom were descendants of the original grantees. All of them suffered at the hands of the government and big ranchers who restricted their grazing, water, wood and fishing rights.

In the first years of its existence, the Alianza's activities consisted mainly of petitioning various government officials and agencies to carry out investigations in order to get their land back. By late 1966, after the failure of these other approaches, the Alianza decided to use more militant tactics. On October 15, 1966, 350 Alianza members occupied a national park that had once been part of a land grant. They claimed it on behalf of the former land grant inhabitants. The authorities moved in and arrested a number of the Alianza members.

Despite repression and harassment, the Alianza continued to struggle for the land rights of northern New Mexican Chicanos, raising quite a bit of alarm in ruling circles. This fear reached a fever pitch with the scheduling of an Alianza conference on June 1, 1967, in Coyote, New Mexico. Determined to prevent the meeting from occurring, the authorities set up road blocks and arrested would-be participants.

In response to these repressive measures some 19 Alianza members decided to make a citizen's arrest of the District Attorney directly respon-

sible for these attacks on their basic democratic rights. This armed group of Alianzistas went to Tierra Amarilla to make the arrest. Boldly seizing the courthouse, they searched from office to office for the D.A. A few cops tried to interfere and one was shot down. Finding the D.A. gone, the Alianzistas withdrew.

The ruling class responded with the largest military operation in New Mexico's history. They imposed a siege on the area, calling up several national guard units complete with armored vehicles, as well as state troopers. Doors were kicked in and houses were ransacked.

Word of the courthouse raid was soon heard throughout the country and around the world, capturing especially the attention of Chicanos. Many people were awakened to the long history of systematic oppression of the people of northern New Mexico.

Although a spontaneous action by a few heroic individuals, it represented both a cry against the injustice of the past and a militant example of resistance to the oppression of the present. These people were not asking the exploiters for favors, they were demanding their rights. The raid and the struggle by the Alianza had an important impact not only on Chicanos, helping to break down the regional barriers and divisions among the Chicano people and uniting their struggles, but it also showed people that their fight was part of the struggle of all oppressed people against the U.S. capitalist system.

The Alianza today is not at the center of the people's struggle in New Mexico, and its leadership has withdrawn once again into reformism and reliance on petitioning the bourgeoisie. Many people in New Mexico and elsewhere realized that the movement led by Tijerina tried to rely on a few heroes, like himself, to lead the way, and did not rely on the masses of people. This left it isolated from the people, to a large degree, and did not enable it to build a broad base of support. Further, it was not consciously linked to the overall struggle against the ruling class, and was not based on the fact that the working class is the only force capable of leading this struggle and carrying it through. Since then, the focus of struggle in New Mexico has shifted from the rural areas to the cities, while the lessons of the

Alianza's struggle have been taken up there and all over the country.

CHICANO STUDENTS

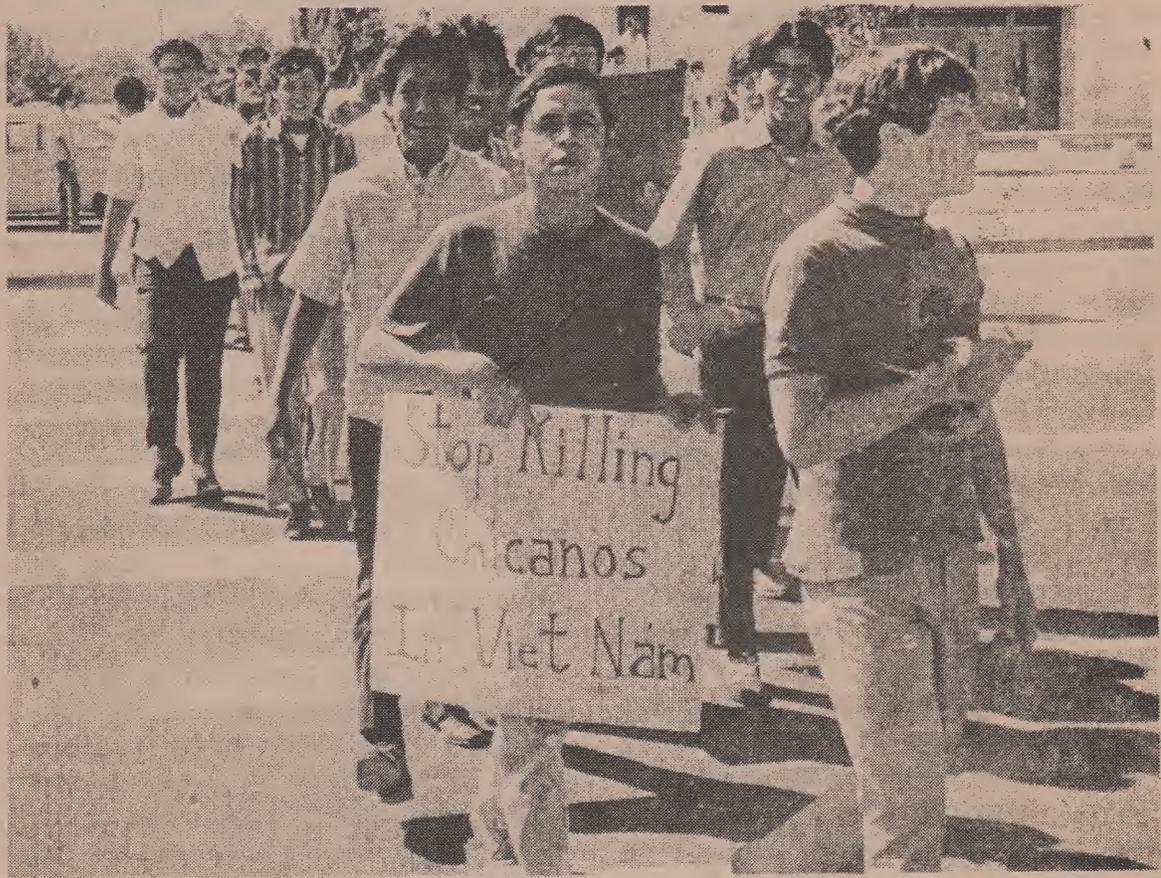
While the farmworkers and the Alianza represent the beginning of a new era in the history of the Chicano people's struggle, it was in the cities of the Southwest and California that the volcano was erupting with special force.

The mid and late 1960's saw an upsurge among Chicano youth and students, inspired by the militant struggles of the farmworkers and the Alianza, influenced by the example of the developing Black liberation movement as well as by the growing opposition among students and others to the war in Viet Nam. During this period, youth and students emerged as the most active sector among the Chicano people in the fight against oppression. On high school and college campuses, Chicano students began organizing themselves into a number of different local groups, such as MASC (Mexican-American Student Committee), UMAS (United Mexican-American Students), etc.

The initial activity of these groups centered around opening up the educational system to Chicanos, through relatively mild reforms, similar to the early approach of the civil rights movement itself, such as asking for tutorial programs, special admissions, financial aid for Chicanos. When these basic requests were met either by denial or token concessions by school administrators and the government bureaucracy, it became clear to many that just asking and going through "proper channels" was not enough to open up the educational system.

In the course of meeting this initial resistance and gaining only a few token reforms, the students stepped up their fight. They began demanding not just a few classes but entire Chicano Studies departments, not just a few more token Chicano students, but open admissions.

These broader demands brought with them a new level of militancy, accompanying the heightening awareness that the schools and universities would never concede anything voluntarily. In the period of 1968-70, the new tactics were those of militant strikes, occupying buildings, and demonstrations. This was a result both of spontaneous



(above) Chicano students demonstrate at University of Texas, El Paso campus.
(below) Hundreds of thousands of Chicanos actively fought against the Vietnam War, pointing out that the war was opposed to the interest of Chicanos. During this period the class nature of the war became clear to many.

and righteous anger of the youth, as well as from the leadership of political organizations that were formed out of this growing consciousness. These political groups and the struggles they waged were, for the most part, based on progressive nationalism — the determination to fight the oppression of Chicanos by the system. But because the nature of the system, the class relations and exploitation that lie at its foundation, were not thoroughly understood, and because these groups were basically isolated from the working class, their outlook often was strongly influenced by narrow nationalism: viewing “Anglos” as the enemy and dividing Chicano students from students of other nationalities, rather than uniting them in struggle. Overall, however, the direction of the movement was toward a higher level of understanding, with some of the more advanced seeing imperialism as the enemy. As time went on, more and more of these struggles were carried on with other sections of students, especially other minority nationalities.

Paralleling and overlapping the student movement, a broader youth movement of Chicanos developed in the urban areas of the Southwest and other cities with significant Chicano populations, like Chicago. This youth movement took on issues like language and cultural repression in the high schools, police repression and brutality in the communities, and job discrimination in the workplace.

This period was marked by a broadening and deepening of national consciousness among Chicanos and a growing political understanding of the source of oppression in society. This growth of national consciousness was reflected in: (1) beginning to see the Chicano people as one people, the breakdown of regional differences; (2) a growing recognition that the Chicano people as a whole faced a common enemy; (3) the reaffirmation and development of national pride, as shown in a new emphasis on retaining and developing the Spanish language and reclaiming the real history of the people, and a whole new development in culture of teatros, art, corridos, etc.; (4) the moves toward consolidating and linking up struggles and organizations of Chicanos.

By and large, this was an advance, although

many activists still lacked an understanding of the basis for national oppression. And to many, the role of the working class in leading the fight and building multinational unity had not yet become clear.

In March of 1969, a major Chicano youth conference was held in Denver, Colorado, bringing together 2,000 to 3,000 Chicano activists. For the first time, people were able to get in contact with each other — meeting people from all over the country wherever Chicanos were active.

The “Plan de Aztlan” (the idea of establishing a Chicano nation in the Southwest) was a product of this conference. This “plan espiritu de Aztlan” was exactly that — a spiritual declaration. It found some following among Chicanos because it touched on some very real problems faced by the Chicano people and their desire to be free from oppression. But it didn’t reflect an accurate view of Chicano history or a program for struggle towards revolution, which is the only way to actually wipe out this oppression. The mystical concept of Aztlan that was presented reflected a petty-bourgeois view of longing for some utopia as the solution to national oppression, while refusing to recognize the necessity of being firmly planted in reality and based on the working class.

This same period of time saw the development of unified student organizations on a statewide basis, like MECHA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan) in California. Closer region-wide links were built.

CHICANO MORATORIUM

At the same time, the broad opposition among Chicanos to the war in Vietnam reflected a growing political consciousness, though this opposition was based on many different reasons and sentiments, with an increasing concern over the disproportionate number of Chicanos dying in Vietnam. While some viewed it simply as a “white man’s war,” others saw it more clearly as a rich man’s war, and many began to see that it was a war of aggression by the imperialist system. This diversity of opinion on the nature of the war was sharply reflected in the 1970 Chicano National Moratorium.



Chicano Moratorium- August 29, 1970, East Los Angeles.

In August of 1970, over 25,000 Chicanos from across the country gathered in Los Angeles to demand an end to the Vietnam war and an end to national oppression. The march was organized under the slogan "Raza sí Guerra, no!" (Chicanos yes, the war no). Some of the demonstrators brought out an even more advanced consciousness — that some wars, such as those for national liberation, are just, while wars of imperialist aggression are unjust — through such slogans as "FNL Vencera!" (Victory to the NLF) and "Raza Sí, Guerra Aquí!" (Chicanos, Yes, Our War Is Here).

This slogan was opposed by some of the leaders of the march, because it tried to broaden the struggle, linking the Chicano people's struggle with the rest of the people against the war and the rest of the world's oppressed peoples against U.S. imperialism. Further, it called for a revolutionary struggle while many of the demonstration's organizers wanted to hold the struggle within the bounds of reformism and narrow nationalism.

The demonstration was a tremendous show of

strength and solidarity. The ruling class responded with a police attack. Over 1500 sheriffs and other police were unleashed on the peaceful demonstration. In response, the masses of people fought back, locking the whole community in combat with the cops for several hours. The police killed three people, including a well-known Chicano journalist, Ruben Salazar, but they also took a beating at the hands of the righteously angry masses of people in the Chicano community. Some of the leaders of the demonstration betrayed its tremendous success by joining in chorus with the bourgeoisie's defeatist summation of the event. What they drew from it, and tried to convince other people, is that people shouldn't demonstrate because the ruling class might respond with violence.

But this completely negated the real meaning and tremendous success of the Moratorium, which clearly showed that unity and action are strength and power. It was an inspiration for many people throughout the country, and a school of struggle for the tens of thousands who participated. Those who correctly summed up the

1970 NATIONAL CHICANO MORATORIUM

The National Chicano Moratorium held on August 29th, 1970, in Los Angeles, marked a new level in the struggle of the Chicano people. The Moratorium grew out of the 2nd National Chicano Youth Conference, held in Denver during March of 1970. It was preceded by dozens of local moratoriums throughout California and the Southwest, which ranged from a few hundred participants to several thousand. These were seen as building actions for the August 29th demonstration.

For several years the high rate of Chicanos killed in Vietnam (according to official figures Chicanos are 10-12% of the Southwest's population, but they represented 20% of its war dead) had been a cause of anger among Chicanos, and was clearly another aspect of national oppression. There was also a beginning awareness that the struggle of the Vietnamese people was linked to the struggle of the Chicano people, that both faced the same enemy.

On the morning of August 29th, over 25,000 people assembled to begin a march to Laguna Park (later renamed Salazar Park) for a rally. There were thousands of signs and banners with many different slogans, reflecting different class forces and viewpoints, from "Abrazos no Balazos" (Embraces, Not Bullet Wounds) to "FNL Vencerá" (NLF will win). The march, receiving cheers and applause from the Chicano community along the way, reached its destination without any trouble.

But the rally had barely begun when the police, using a minor incident a block away, attacked the crowd with teargas and clubs. The people fought back with whatever was at hand.

The battle soon spread throughout the community, with older people as well as the youth taking part. While several large stores, notorious for high interest rates and low quality merchandise, went up in flames, many small store owners brought out crates of empty bottles for the people to use against the cops.

The battle lasted several hours. Three Chicanos, including the well-known journalist Ruben Salazar, were killed, but the ruling class and their cops received a taste of the fury and strength of the Chicano people.

experience of the Chicano Moratorium learned more about the nature of the state and the whole system, and became more resolved than ever to dedicate themselves to building a revolutionary movement of the people and bring it down.

The limitations of the existing Chicano organizations at that time, such as single-issue type orientation and the separation of the student and youth movement from the overall community — as well as the realization that neither Democratic nor Republican parties were in the interests of the Chicano people — spurred the development across the country of the La Raza Unida Party. LRUP was initially developed in the Winter Garden area of Texas*, in particular Crystal City, a town of 85% Chicanos. In this town LRUP had been able

to win victories in several local elections.

The seeming success of these actions attracted the attention of activists across the country. Initially many activists hoped that La Raza Unida Party could be the vehicle for developing mass struggles in the Chicano community, but the leadership of the LRUP substituted electoral politics for mass struggle, and elections came to be seen as an end in themselves by those who remained with the party.

The main force and leaders in LRUP were petty-bourgeois professionals, politicians, and careerists who wanted to build themselves and their influence. They pushed the idea that Chicanos as a "bloc" could be the swing vote influencing the Democratic or Republican Party.

*Agricultural area of South Texas.

These people were reformists who knew electoral politics could make a difference — for them — and who pushed the idea that it would make a difference for the Chicano people. LRUP received some support at first because people saw the bankruptcy of the bourgeois parties and the need to link up students and community in one movement. But as it became clear that LRUP was not a fighting organization, its influence faded and it became more and more irrelevant.

But even as the most intense activity of the youth and student movement began to ebb, the seeds of a renewed struggle, based on the working class, were being planted by many activists who saw building the revolutionary leadership of the working class as the road forward.

During the 1960's the ruling class peddled the lie that the U.S. working class, swimming in prosperity, was fat and happy and no longer needed or wanted to struggle. But the entire working class, with Chicanos a part of it, *never* ceased struggling against its exploitation. Chicanos fought against the discrimination they faced as minority workers with caucuses and committees of Chicano and Mexicano workers — fighting discrimination in hiring, firing and promotion and all the aspects of oppression faced by Chicanos both as workers and as members of an oppressed nationality. In many unions, such as the Teamsters, Chicanos fought for contracts to be written, and meetings held, in Spanish, and to make the unions real fighters for their needs. Increasingly, the whole working class is taking up and leading this fight.

This period was also marked by the rise in the struggles to organize the unorganized. The UFWU led the way in this, not only building massive strikes in the fields of the Southwest and elsewhere, but also inspiring Chicano workers across the country to organize and unionize. The Farah strike, one of the longest and hardest fought strikes in recent history, is but one example of that growing movement.

Throughout this period, everyone of these struggles from the farmworkers to the Moratorium brought out the question of the road forward — the basic question of reformism versus revolution. At each crucial stage in development the question of who would lead, petty-bourgeois elements or the working class, confronted the movement. Whenever the petty-bourgeois, with their careerist and “get-rich-quick” schemes for political struggle, were in leadership, they held back the development of the struggle, sidetracking and demoralizing people. Due to their class outlook they could not recognize and tried to hide the fact that, increasingly, the movement of the Chicano people was part and parcel of the resurgent struggle of the working class. A movement that more and more required, if it was to continue to move forward, revolutionary leadership basing itself on the unity of the whole working class with the final goal of revolution.

The Chicano movement up to this time was characterized by intense but largely spontaneous struggles, and had a big impact on all sections of the Chicano people. It had also developed a clearer understanding of the nature of Chicano oppression and its source — the imperialist system. But it is precisely because of the nature of that system — the fact that the oppression of Chicanos is *caused* by the exploitation of the masses of working people for the profit of the imperialists, and the need for the imperialists to “super exploit” minority nationalities — that the struggle against the oppression of Chicanos must be led by the working class as a whole, the only class that can do away with that exploitation.

But that wasn't the case with the Chicano movement in the '60's, and by 1971, this led to its temporary decline. Because it was based primarily on students and youth and *not* led by the working class and its party, it was taken in a reformist direction by increasing numbers of “poverty pimps” and professionals, and was not able to survive the massive police infiltration and repression unleashed against it.

The Road Forward

In the course of the many militant struggles that hundreds of thousands of Chicanos and millions of other American peoples have waged in the past fifteen years, many have come to see that something is basically wrong with the whole system we live under.

More and more people are talking of revolution. More and more people have learned through their own experience that, although the Chicano movement, and the other movements of the last decade have all dealt powerful blows to the foundations of capitalist rule and the oppression it causes, they have not been able to knock it down. Alone and separate from each other and from the leadership of the working class and its Party, these movements could only go so far before they hit a wall.

The working class is the only truly revolutionary class in society, and the most revolutionary class in all history. The basic conflict in the United States and all capitalist countries is the conflict between the working class — the millions who have no means to live except through their labor and whose labor is the driving force in society — and the capitalist class, the handful who do no productive work, but who live and accumulate billions from the labor of workers and continually try to grind the workers down in order to accumulate more. It is out of this basic contradiction that war, unemployment, national oppression and all the other evils of capitalist society stem. And it is only by the resolution of this contradiction through proletarian revolution

— the working class overthrowing and finally eliminating the capitalist class and all exploitation — that these evils will be ended.

The working class is the only class that has no stake in the preservation of capitalism, and it is the only class capable of not only leading the overthrow of the present ruling class, but also of completely remaking society to abolish all classes. And in this country, the working class is a majority of society, comprised of people of all nationalities.

What has been learned, not only from the experience of Chicanos in this country, but from the history of people in every capitalist country, is that to bring down the dictatorship of the capitalist class and all the suffering it causes, requires that we build a broad and powerful united front of all people oppressed by this system, under the leadership of the single U.S. working class and its single revolutionary communist party.

These are some of the lessons that have been summed up not only by Chicano activists, but also by many other people who learned them in the course of fighting for a better life. In order to continue advancing along the revolutionary path, to knock down the wall in the way and move on, it is crucial to sum up these lessons of the past and apply them to the battles of the future.

As we've tried to show in this pamphlet, the Chicano people's struggle has gone through various stages in the last decade. And at each stage there have been those who learned through

their experience, who have come to see more clearly who is the common enemy and how to unite people to fight that enemy. And too, there were those who have done everything in their power to mask the enemy, derail the movement, and sidetrack it into dead ends.

FARMWORKERS

The resurgence of the farmworker's movement in 1965 and its development over the last ten years provide us with some very valuable lessons. Their struggle erupted at that particular point in time for a couple of reasons. The Bracero program had just ended (making the agricultural workforce more stable and able to be organized) and the Black people's struggle was providing tremendous inspiration to all people, especially those who also suffered national oppression. While these factors provided favorable conditions, it was the basic contradiction in capitalist society between workers and capitalists that gave rise to the farmworkers movement against the growers.

The organizers of the farmworkers union were

not out to help build the revolutionary movement of the working class against all oppression and exploitation. Their goal was to win for the farm workers "the *advantages* organized industrial workers had won." But in order to gain any credibility for themselves as leaders, to say nothing of forcing the ruling class to accept a union when it depends so much on the profits to be made by superexploiting farmworkers, the masses of farmworkers had to be mobilized into struggle.

Whether the union leaders like it or not, there have been many revolutionary sparks ignited by the farmworkers movement, as there is in every struggle of the working class against its exploiters. And the farmworkers' union leadership has had to spend a great deal of time trying to douse them all out.

Where the farmworkers themselves have exhibited the greatest militancy and courage, the UFW leadership has pushed the line that farmworkers are "poor helpless Mexicans" who should be supported out of pity.

Where the farmworkers themselves have shown



1974 demonstration in Salinas, California, demanding an end to discrimination in education, boycott Gallo wine, Throw the Bum Out, and in opposition to the energy freeze.

great class hatred for the growers, the cops, courts and scabs, union leadership has tried to impose on them pacifism and religious mysticism. Where the farmworkers themselves have demonstrated the need for proletarian internationalism and uniting with Mexican workers, the union has promoted the line that "all Mexicans are scabs and all scabs are Mexicans" — going so far as to volunteer farm workers to beef up the border patrol, doing the capitalists' dirty work for them. Where the farmworkers themselves have displayed great enthusiasm for linking their struggle with the struggle of the whole working class and other sections of the people against the capitalists, the leadership has done everything in its power to tie the farmworkers to the tail of the liberal politicians, the capitalists' union hacks and petty bourgeois do-gooders.

For a long time many people thought that the UFWU leadership was just practical-minded, do-

ing everything it could under difficult conditions to advance the farmworkers movement. If they united with "liberal" politicians like Kennedy or relied a little too much on sell-outs like George Meany of the AFL-CIO, it was only because the working class movement was too weak to really be relied on.

But, experience in struggle has taught a great deal. It has shown that the leadership of the UFWU are not the saints and heroes they play themselves to be, but in fact are agents of the ruling class within the workers' movement who believe in capitalism, who believe there is a good life to be had under this system (for them), and who will continue to fight against the spread of revolutionary consciousness among the farm workers like it was the plague, in order to keep the struggle in the bounds acceptable to the bourgeoisie, and thereby not offend their capitalist masters.



Workers across the country, like these Arab auto workers in Detroit, have given strong support to the farmworkers' struggle.

In this, they are no different than any other union hack who has more unity with the ruling class than with the masses, and more faith in the continuation of capitalism than in the ability of the working class to build a revolutionary movement that will do away with capitalism and all exploitation and build a far higher form of society.

But try as they will, the ruling class and its union mis-leaders in the UFWU cannot do away with the anti-capitalist thrust of the farm workers movement, because it is capitalist exploitation that makes the farmworkers movement necessary in the first place. In addition to being in a front-line battle of the working class, the farmworkers have been a continuous source of inspiration to the Chicano people and other nationalities in their struggle against national oppression.

STUDENT MOVEMENT

The main thrust of the Chicano student struggle was for open admissions, Chicano Studies departments, and other democratic rights related to their own nationality. This struggle erupted at a time of tremendous ferment on the campuses in general. Black students were fighting for much of the same kinds of demands, while white students were engaged in large-scale struggles against the war. At the same time, the minority nationalities were also struggling against the war, while white students joined in the struggle for open admissions and ethnic studies struggles. The student movement as a whole was picking up steam. Behind all these struggles stood a common enemy and a tremendous potential for uniting in common struggle against that enemy.

The bourgeoisie and their front men in the school administrations saw this and worked overtime to keep the various struggles from joining together into a united assault on the whole system. One of their most common divide and conquer schemes was to get the various minority nationalities fighting each other over how to divide up the EOP (Equal Opportunity Program) and other budgets.

They played on the divisions that capitalism fosters and maintains among students and in the

working class. The youth of the oppressed nationalities grow up having to deal with a hundred forms of national oppression every day of their lives. Because it cannot deny this special oppression completely, the ruling class constantly tries to divert the blame for it off themselves and onto the masses of white people, especially white workers. It pushes the line that people from the oppressed nationalities should be concerned only with the advancement of their own nationality and should fight people of other nationalities for a bigger piece of the pie.

At the same time, the ruling class throws a few more crumbs to the masses of white people, all the while trying to convince them that, as bad as life may be under capitalism, they should not try to complain or fight back because, after all, they are better off than the minorities. And to sweeten this, the ruling class pushes the line that whites are better off because they are smarter, harder working, inherently better than other people.

Further, the ruling class is always spreading the lie through subtle and more overt means that the minority nationalities are in one way or another responsible for all the problems in society. In doing all this the bourgeoisie encourages white chauvinism among whites, and narrow nationalism among oppressed nationalities, trying to set the masses of people at each other's throats, while it continues to exploit and oppress them all.

In the early stages of the Chicano student movement there was a lot of narrow nationalist sentiment, but in the course of struggle many came to see more clearly the face of the real enemy. They began linking up with other people who they could see were also fighting the enemy. They got involved in struggles that didn't only affect Chicanos, but people of all nationalities, like the anti-war movement. It became increasingly obvious that in order to win anything, they had to "unite the many to defeat the few" and that this unity with students of other nationalities was not in contradiction to the needs of Chicanos, but on the contrary, enhanced the possibility of meeting those needs.

These were the people who played the most advanced role in moving forward the struggle. Many of these people eventually made a radical rupture with the ideology of nationalism altogether.



(above) Sept. 16, 1974 - 5000 march in Denver. Signs VIVA TERAN and VIVA GRANADO refer to two Chicano activists killed by bombs planted by reactionaries.

(below) 1974 - Students of all nationalities joined the fight against cutbacks in Ethnic Studies and Criminology Departments at U.C. Berkeley.

er, becoming Marxist-Leninists and militant fighters for the whole working class in its struggle for revolution.

There were others who may have found it opportune or necessary to unite with different nationalities now and then, but were never able to make the leap ideologically. They continued to view all whites as "gringos" and as the enemy. They constantly looked for reasons why *not* to unite. These are the people who "got stuck" in the national movement, and often got entrenched in administering the various programs that the ruling class was forced to concede to this movement.

The nationalist tendency that these people promoted gave rise to all sorts of separatist schemes that in effect lead nowhere. There are several variations on this theme, but basically the exponents of separatism all put forward that the only way Chicanos can be free is by going it alone.

Some of these people believe that the way of life that existed in the days prior to the conquest can somehow be resurrected. Others talk vaguely about building a "new" kind of society once they reclaim the conquered lands. Still others contend that simply by taking the existing institutions and "Chicanoizing" them, the liberation of Chicano people can be achieved.

While all these schemes might serve the interest of Chicano politicians, capitalists, and would-be capitalists, and certainly serve the interests of the ruling class itself, they in no way serve the interests of the Chicano people, exactly because they separate them from the rest of the working class and its struggle for revolution. The masses of Chicano people face national oppression and want to be free of it, but they know that the idea actually of "separating" is a ridiculous notion based on fantasy. Still, the narrow nationalist view that this notion is built on, finds a basis in the reality of national oppression and continues to play a role in holding back the struggle.

Today many of the gains that were won in the Chicano student movement of the late '60's are being taken away. At the same time, there is rising concern among students over renewed dangers of war caused by the heightening contention between the imperialist powers, especially

the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.

Students are again in motion around these things, this time with a higher level of understanding than before. Learning from the advances of the past, the student movement is being built on the basis of consciously fighting imperialism.

By taking up the fight against cutbacks, against attacks on the gains won by minority students, and against other instances of national oppression, as well as taking up the fight against broader political questions like imperialist aggression and the growing danger of world war, students of various nationalities are beginning to forge their unity.

One of the things holding it back — in particular among minority students — is the narrow nationalism of some of the very same people who rode the waves of the student movement in the past and who still refuse to discard their nationalist baggage. They want to go back to the old period, with each nationality going to its own corner, struggling alone and separated. Often their motives have become simply to preserve their own position as "leaders" of "their" movement, or their post in administering this or that "ethnic program."

While these people and their influence may cause some confusion for awhile, the masses of Chicano students and students of other nationalities who are coming forward in struggle want to and will unite with all those who are fighting their common enemy and the enemy of all working class and oppressed people.

In summing up tendencies that have held back the struggle of Chicano students and their contributions to the student movement and the struggle against imperialism as a whole, the necessity for working class leadership becomes more clear. The reality of national oppression provides some soil for nationalist and separatist ideas among all classes of Chicano people, but the bourgeoisie has a much harder time cultivating these weeds among Chicano workers.

The soil is much more fertile among petty bourgeois and even bourgeois elements because these are the people who are in the best position

to "cash in" on reformist struggles, which is all that separatist schemes amount to. It is from these classes that individuals arise who vow that national oppression can be "elected away" if only Chicanos band together and vote for them; that a Chicano judge rather than an "Anglo" judge passing sentence is "liberation"; that a Chicano finger on a police revolver is "freedom"; that working for a Chicano boss rather than an Anglo boss is "emancipation." These "bigger pieces of the pie" reforms are most actively put forward by people who seek to use the Chicano masses as stepping stones for their own careers.

But reforming the capitalist system can never do away with class exploitation itself, which is the main problem in society and the one Chicano workers and all workers face most fundamentally. Nor can it do away with national oppression, which is rooted in the capitalist system of exploitation. Only the overthrow of the capitalist class by the working class and its allies can do that.

As the revolutionary workers movement gains strength and threatens the rule of the capitalists, they will be forced to grant some reforms in an effort to pacify the people and deflate their struggle. But at the same time, as their crisis deepens and they grow more desperate, the ruling class is preparing to launch an all out offensive, taking back what they have been forced to concede.

The working class must constantly be on guard against petty-bourgeois illusions that the system works, that emancipation lies in electoral politics, or any other ideas that fog the real nature of the system and serve the bourgeoisie by derailing the struggle off its revolutionary path into reformist dead-ends. The working class fights for and welcomes any reforms that are won in the course of struggle and that increase its ability to fight back, but at the same time, it must recognize, and struggle with others to recognize, that reforms are not an end in themselves. The goal of our movement is to get to the *source* of exploitation and oppression, capitalist rule, and root it out.

In the course of participating in the student movement, the struggles in the communities and barrios, and in the working class, many Chicano

activists have summed up all these lessons and become communists, helping to aim the struggles straight at the ruling class. As the revolutionary role of the working class and its science of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tse Tung Thought is grasped by more and more people, some petty-bourgeois hustlers are forced to dress up their discredited old ideas with a thin "Marxist" cover.

This is certainly not the first time in the history of revolutionary struggles that this has occurred. In the period of the Russian Revolution, the Bolshevik party under the leadership of V. I. Lenin had to struggle sharply against some so-called Marxists who continued to try to promote the interests of their particular nationality above the interests of the whole working class. These Bundists, as they were called, were rejected by the Russian working people who recognized that workers of all nationalities have a common interest, and only through their revolutionary unity can this interest be achieved.

CHICANO BUNDISTS

Today we find a handful of modern-day Chicano Bundists who try to put a great wall between the struggle of the Chicano people and the working class as a whole. Despite their many declarations that they are "100% for the revolutionary unity of the class," they see building this unity by isolating workers of different nationalities into separate armies and talking about making an alliance on that basis. They emphasize not the common interests of workers of all nationalities including the fight against national oppression, but rather the divisions and national distinctions that exist within the class. But these Bundists will also be rejected by the U.S. working class, because their practice of splitting its ranks flies in the face of the growing understanding of the need for unity, a unity that is growing firmer each day.

Chief among the phoney "Marxists" is the so-called "Communist" Party, U.S.A. These traitors to the working class are particularly dangerous because they use the prestige the Party earned prior to its sellout to the ruling class as a cover for the reactionary trash they now try to peddle to the masses of people. They run the line that the national oppression of the Chicano people and other minority nationalities results from racist



ideas, particularly the racist ideas held by some white workers. It would be a simple world indeed if ideas caused oppression — one good high school course in “equality, what a beautiful thing it is,” and our problems would be solved!

But here in the real world, it is the bourgeoisie and capitalism that are responsible for national oppression, and it is the working class, the *entire* working class, that has no interest in national oppression, and every interest in wiping out all exploitation and oppression.

While it is true that the bourgeoisie promotes racism and white chauvinism among Anglo workers, it is also true that it promotes great American chauvinism and other bourgeois ideas among all workers. The degree to which it has succeeded in creating antagonisms between Chicanos and Mexicans is but one example of this. Racism, national chauvinism, and bourgeois influences of all kinds will be most thoroughly exposed and sharply fought against in the course of fighting against their source — the bourgeoisie.

All the while claiming to be “Marxist” and “communist,” the CP also promotes the belief that Chicano liberation can be achieved under capitalism. They promote reforms as ends in themselves, and “progressive” politicians or union officials as saviours of the people. In so doing they try to undercut the struggles that the masses take up, stealing the initiative from the people and handing it over to the bourgeoisie.

On those rare occasions when the CP is forced to admit that perhaps something must be done about capitalism after all, they put forward “peaceful transition” as the road to socialism. According to the CP, the same ruling class that conquered the Southwest by force of arms, that has consistently and viciously used violence to try and suppress every upsurge of the Chicano people, other oppressed nationalities, and the working class as a whole, that did everything in its power to drown the Indochinese people in a pool of blood, and that has committed innumerable other international crimes to maintain its power, this same ruling class will peacefully step down and allow itself to be “transitioned” out of existence!

The entire history of class society shows the complete idiocy and danger of such a point of



(right and left) Farah Strike supporters in Chicago.

view. For awhile the “Communist” Party was promoting the popular front government of Chile as a model of the peaceful transition to socialism. The subsequent fascist coup and massacres of thousands of Chileans shows how thoroughly wrong and treacherous the CP was — and is.

One thing that all these incorrect tendencies and deviations have in common is that they all deny the necessity and possibility of the working class as a whole to actually make revolution in this country.

But while all these opportunists and reactionaries continue to throw up roadblocks and detours, the working class and its allies, in this country and worldwide, are making great strides forward. Internationally, people of the Third World countries are dealing imperialism — especially the two imperialist super powers, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. — blow after blow, sending it reeling. Here at home, workers, students, oppressed nationalities, veterans, GIs, women, teachers, and other sectors of the people are stepping up the fight.



One of these great strides forward that clearly points out that the working class is becoming more conscious of its leading role is the Farah strike. (See box detailing the strike.) As the Farah strikers wrote in a letter to one of the Farah Strike Support Committees: the victory of their strike is "the first step in a significant victory for the workers of the Southwest. . . brought about by the militant unity of the strikers and the support of workers all over the country." This was indeed the case, and the Farah strike is an example that clearly points the way forward both for the further struggles of the working class and the further struggle against the national oppression of the Chicano people.

The role of the strikers, the support they received from around the country especially from the working class, the support from Chicanos, and the actual course of developments in the struggle and its victory smashed through many of the roadblocks that the bourgeoisie and its mouthpieces in the workers movement tried to set up.

It struck a blow against the mouthings of the separatists and bundists, who try to keep the

working class divided. Early in the strike, communists who recognized the importance of the strike, in unity with the Farah workers, began building support for the strike through leafletting, pickets and boycott work. They set up the Farah Strike Support Committees, which involved workers of all nationalities, as well as students and others who were won over to supporting the struggle. In the course of the next year, by June of 1973, 20 of these Farah Strike Support Committees had sprung up around the country. The Farah strikers themselves saw that in unity there is strength, and that this meant not only unity with other Chicanos, but unity within the whole working class. The importance, the possibility, and the development of multinational working class unity was a theme they constantly reiterated in their speaking tours. As one woman striker said at a rally in El Paso, "We were told that Chicanos could never get together, but he (Willie Farah) was wrong because we are here. We are few, but we represent many, not only Chicanos. We now have many friends — Japanese, Puerto Ricans, Filipinos, Chinese, Black and

White. No matter what nationality, they are on our side 'til the end because we are going to win this strike. We were told if you go out on strike you'll starve. We are going to teach him he was wrong!"

The struggle of the Farah strikers also dealt powerful blows to the reformists and all the illusions they try to lay on the masses of people. Some Farah strikers, in the course of the struggle, came to recognize that they weren't just fighting Willie Farah, who was this wicked perverted individual, but that they were fighting a whole system, with a ruling class of capitalists and its courts, cops and jails. Through their militant actions and constant defiance of injunctions and the cops, they laid waste to the "you have to work within the system and obey its laws" garbage that the "progressive" union officials put out. Some learned that just having a union, while an important gain, is not the end of the struggle at all, but mainly a way to get into a better position to wage a bigger struggle against the bosses.

The Farah strike reflected both the developing class struggle and the further development of the national struggle of the Chicano people against oppression. It demonstrated the powerful basis of unity between these struggles. Not only did the strike and the struggle of the Farah workers reflect these rising struggles, it also sparked and inspired them, especially in the Southwest where it ignited a number of other strikes. And it encouraged all sectors of the Chicano people to step up the fight against national oppression, which was clearly a major part of the strike. Further, the fact that a majority of the strikers were women, was also an inspiration to women workers around the country, in terms of genuine, not paper, equal rights and the ability to organize and unionize.

Finally, the strike was important as a school of war, a training ground in the battle against the capitalists. Workers learned a lot about the system, and their consciousness was raised.

But also, wherever support for the strike was taken up and education done around it, people learned important political lessons from the strike. It especially demonstrated the importance of basing struggles on the working class. It further

showed the importance and the possibility of mobilizing the entire working class to take up struggles, build support and popularize them, and use them as sparks to ignite other struggles.

It is battles like the Farah strike and the support work done around it, the mobilization of the whole working class together with broad sectors of other oppressed people, especially the oppressed nationalities, that point the way forward to building a revolutionary workers movement that will end all oppression and exploitation.



Farah strikers in El Paso, Texas.

CHICANOS STRIKE AT FARAH

In 1972, the workers at Farah Mfg. Co. in Texas, largest men's slacks company in the U.S., began a strike that was a giant step forward in the struggle of Chicano people and of the entire working class. Texas is notorious as one of the many states, in the southwest and south, especially, where the ruling class has been able to use anti-union "right-to-work" laws to keep down the struggle of the working class. This is historically rooted in the oppression of Black people in the South and Chicanos in the Southwest, and the maintenance of those areas as oppressed regions. With the low level of unionization and depressed wages, the bourgeoisie uses Texas, as well as other states, and the entire area along the Mexican border as a haven for runaway shops.

Organizing at Farah, which started in 1969, was extremely difficult under the watch of Farah's supervisors and company spies. But nothing could stop the workers from organizing and winning their union. Trembling in fear, Farah at one point called a workers' meeting and warned them to stay away from the organizers, saying:

All of this Chicano, La Raza thing isn't going to help you at all, don't believe anything they say. It is we the Americano (pointing to the supervisors) who have done more and will do more for the Mexican.

In May, seven workers were fired at one of the San Antonio plants. That was it — without union sanction 500 workers wildcatted. The Strike Was On! On the 9th the El Paso walkouts began with thousands of workers pouring out of the plants, pushing aside foremen who tried to stop them. Soon the strike spread until Farah's plants in El Paso, San Antonio, and Victoria in Texas were on strike as well as his plants in Las Cruces and Albuquerque, New Mexico. Over 4000 workers were out on strike.

Farah was typical of non-union shops in the southwest. Starting pay was \$1.70/hr., there was no maternity leave, and if women took off to have a child they could lose their seniority and have to return to work at \$1.70. Despite Farah's self-proclaimed retirement plan, not one person had retired from Farah's in 53 years. They were always fired or forced to quit before they qualified. In Farah's El Paso plant which employed 5,000 workers, 98% of them were Chicanos or Mexicans, yet there were no Chicano supervisors before the strike.

Two weeks after the walkout Farah got an injunction requiring picketers to stand fifty feet apart. 800 strikers were arrested for breaking this law, but as soon as they were bailed out they would return to the picket lines. Farah built a high fence and tried to use guard dogs against the strikers. All to no avail.

On February 25, 1974 the ACWA announced the settlement of the strike. The workers had won most of their demands. Although recognition that the union leadership watered down the final settlement, the workers realized that this was just the start of the struggle — union recognition was just one step in the fight for a better life.

Many important gains were made in this strike, which was led by rank-and-file forces,

mostly Chicanos. And even more importantly, valuable lessons were learned. As rank-and-file Farah strikers said in a statement to the Farah Strike Support committees that had been formed in many cities and had spearheaded boycott activity, Farah's capitulation is "the first step in a significant victory for the workers of the Southwest . . . brought about by the militant unity of the strikers and the support of workers all over the country." These strike support committees helped build the boycott against Farah pants all over the country, leading many workers, large numbers of Chicanos, and people of other oppressed nationalities in taking up support of the Farah strikers struggle. The Farah strikers learned through the course of their strike the importance of uniting with the rest of the working class, and learned, too, that they were a part of this class and what that means for the struggle.

Also, in taking their struggle out to the Chicano communities they learned the importance of linking their struggle with the broader fight against national oppression, and against the oppression of women. As the pamphlet "Chicanos Strike at Farah" pointed out:

in reaching out for support in the Chicano community in El Paso, the strikers themselves have helped to unite the city's Chicano movement. They are linking their struggles as workers with demands for the rights of all Chicanos. When 11-year-old Santos Rodriguez was murdered by police in Dallas in August, 1973, a group of strikers got together with Chicano groups and organized a protest demonstration in El Paso. . . . Most of the four thousand strikers at the Farah plants are Chicanas (Mexican-American women). Their long strike had blasted the myth that "women can't be organized" and is a powerful example to all working women that they don't have to stand for low wages, discrimination, and no unions.

Strikes like the one at Farah are a great school that builds political consciousness among the strikers and among workers and other oppressed peoples in general. As one Farah striker explained it:

We thought our only enemy was Willie Farah. But we found out that it was also the press, the police, the businessmen, the whole state. We learned a lot of lessons from this experience. This strike was not just for union recognition.

The battle at Farah was won, but the fight goes on. Workers still face layoffs, harassment, and miserable working conditions — further showing the need to carry the fight forward as part of the overall struggle of the working class to end capitalist rule. A part of that ongoing struggle is fighting the sellout policies of the union hacks. While gaining union recognition was an important step forward, it is only through continuously carrying on rank and file action and jamming the union leadership that they can force the union to fight in their interests. Victory was just one step on the path to revolution. And it is only through proletarian revolution that the capitalist class and people like Willie Farah who are part of that class will be dealt with once and for all.

Liberation Will Come Through Socialist Revolution!

To achieve the goal of eliminating all exploitation the working class, led by its party, must unite its forces, rally its allies around it, rise up in millions to overthrow and smash the dictatorship of the capitalists and their police, army, courts, bureaucracies, etc., and establish the rule of the working class itself — backed up by the armed power of the masses of people. But while a great step forward, this is only the first step. Having seized power from the capitalists, the working class must suppress all attempts at restoring capitalism and continue the struggle to build socialism and advance to communism — where there will no longer be a basis for capitalism or any form of exploitation or oppression.

Socialist society will mean tremendous improvements in the life of all working people. Society will be controlled by the working class through the state, the dictatorship of the proletariat. This state is fundamentally different from all previous forms of state. All states represent the rule of one class over another, but for the first time in history, the proletarian state represents the rule of the majority, the working class, over the minority, the bourgeoisie. It makes possible for the first time real democracy and political power for the masses of people. Its purpose is not to enforce exploitation, but to end all exploitation and oppression and to develop society into a community of working people without classes — communism.

The proletarian dictatorship will eventually eliminate the bourgeoisie as a class, making the

capitalists who remain become workers. While the capitalists cannot eliminate the working class, the working class, on the other hand, can run production and all of society much better without the capitalists. Other non-proletarian strata in society will also be transformed, step by step, into workers during the period of socialism, in order to enable the eventual transition from socialism to completely classless society.

In socialist society the anarchy and crises of capitalism will be ended through rational, collective planning by the workers' state to produce for the needs of society. Through developing an overall planned economy, the working class will put an end to unemployment and make full use of the talents and capabilities of everyone in the society. At the same time, new machinery and scientific methods to expand production will be introduced and developed to decrease the hardships and difficulty of work.

The working class has no need to set workers competing against one another — dividing people by nationality, sex, and age. And once it has won power and taken control of the factories and other means of production it has created, the working class will do away with such competition. This competition among workers serves to increase the profits of the capitalist under capitalism, and is of no benefit to the working class and its socialist system.

In socialist society the nature of work itself will change completely, because the labor of the workers will no longer go to enrich the capitalists

and further enslave the working class; but, instead, it will go to improve life today, while providing for the future. The pride that workers have in their work will be unhindered by any sense that they are working themselves or someone else out of a job; or, that they are working their life away just to make profit for the private benefit of a few fat cats. Machines will become weapons in the hands of the working class in its own struggle to revolutionize society and conquer nature.

The organization of work and the administration of all spheres of society will be the province of the working class itself. Work will become a joy and enrichment of the worker's life, instead of a miserable means to barely sustain existence, as it is under capitalism.

In reorganizing society to be based on the needs of the people as a whole, the working class will be able to overcome, and do away with, the poor living conditions that the masses of people face under capitalism. Socialism will make it

possible to build well-constructed housing. Good health care, today a mere dream for the majority of people, will be available for all.

Under capitalism children are only taught what is in the interests of the bourgeoisie. Their children learn whatever is needed to be members of the ruling class, while working class children often barely learn to read and write. And education for oppressed nationality children is usually even worse. But beyond that, the bourgeoisie fills children with the poison of its ideology, distorting history, teaching that it is the great mover of history while the masses are nothing. Under socialism, children will be given free education in the skills they need, as well as learning about their own history and the history of society, from the viewpoint of the working class. They will learn that the laboring people throughout history have been the backbone of society and the source of its development.

The United States is made up of many nationalities from all parts of the world. This



provides a great potential wealth of culture. The working class and its socialist society will unlock this great treasure so that workers of all nationalities can learn from each others cultures, and through many different forms stress the common class bond and common content of revolutionary struggle that they have.

Special attention will be paid to overcoming the depressed conditions in the regions, areas and communities where capitalism has subjugated minority nationalities. Discrimination in work and all areas of society will be wiped out. Suppression of the languages and cultures of minority nationalities will be abolished, and the working class will devote great effort to assisting the development of those cultures and languages.

For all working people socialism will surely mean an end to the misery caused by capitalism. The Chicano people and other minority nationalities, who suffer both class exploitation and national oppression under capitalism, will be freed from both under socialism. Where there have been divisions and inequality among the class and between different nationalities, in their place the working class will build cooperation and mutual respect between peoples of all nationalities.

In areas like northern New Mexico and southern Colorado, as well as parts of Texas, where there are sizable historic concentrations of

Programmatic Demands

The unity of the workers of all nationalities can and will be built in the common struggle against oppression and exploitation. For the working class, the fight for equality among nationalities is not a fight to "suffer equally under capitalism," but it is a crucial part of the struggle to eliminate capitalism and the misery it forces on the masses of people.

With this goal, the working class and its party will raise and fight for the following demands in the struggle against national oppression:

End all discrimination in hiring, promoting, and firing.

Equality in education and all social services.

Smash segregation in housing and the extortion

Chicanos, autonomy in administration of local affairs and other aspects of society within the framework of the overall socialist state may prove to be an important part of achieving equality for Chicanos and uniting the Chicano people most powerfully with the working class as a whole in building socialism. The working class firmly upholds the right of Chicanos to this autonomy in such areas.

The working class will place great importance on eliminating the underdevelopment of these areas, a legacy of imperialist domination. Chicanos who have been deprived of the right and ability to develop the resources of these areas will now be able to put their skills, talents, and aspirations wholeheartedly into developing these areas as part of the overall plan of the socialist state, in cooperation with the other peoples who have historically lived and worked in these areas.

In socialist society the police will no longer terrorize working people and working class communities, as they do now, because the police as such — a military arm of the bourgeoisie — will no longer exist. They will be smashed along with the class they serve. Instead, public security will be carried out by armed organs of the working class. And the people themselves will be armed to defend their socialist society against all attempts by the overthrown capitalists to regain power.

of higher rents, taxes, prices and credit and insurance rates in the minority communities. Equality in culture and language, no privileges for one nationality over another.

End police terror against the oppressed nationalities, stop police murder, brutality and harassment.

These basic demands are directed against the common oppression of all minority nationalities. But different oppressed nationalities have their own histories and particular forms of oppression. It is essential that the working class takes up these questions so that the strongest unity can be built among the different nationalities together with the working class as a whole.

The following are key demands for the entire working class and its allies to take up in the fight against the oppression of the Chicano people:

Full equality for the Spanish language, education in Spanish and English in all areas of significant Spanish-speaking population.

Restore the communal land grants guaranteed by the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo.

End deportations, stop government harassment of the Chicano communities in the manhunt for workers without documents, abolish any "illegal" status for workers in the U.S., end "La Migra's" terror campaign.

The working class takes up all these demands in the fight against national oppression, as a vital part of its overall struggle to end exploitation and all oppression through proletarian revolution.

It is becoming clearer every day to more and more people that socialist revolution here in the United States, led by the working class and its party, is inevitable. Revolution in this or that particular country can be impeded and even temporarily side-tracked, but it cannot be stopped, any more than a hand can stop the ocean tide. A new day is dawning, the dark night of capitalist and reactionary rule is coming to an end.



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The development of a correct understanding of the relationship between the struggle of the Chicano people and proletarian revolution is extremely important. This book is the result of several years of research and summation done by a good number of people under the leadership of the Revolutionary Union. It is a first, but very important, step. This bibliography lists a number of books and articles that were useful. But very few of them even attempted to examine the oppression and resistance of the Chicano people from a working class viewpoint. There has not been a single work that makes an overall Marxist-Leninist analysis of the Chicano national question. This book was started "from scratch" to develop such an overall analysis. Hundreds of books, population reports, studies and other articles were combined to develop a scientific understanding.

In addition to the works listed below and other readings done, a number of interviews were conducted. Some of these were with linguistics experts, experts in the culture of the Mexican and Chicano peoples, and other "specialists." What these specialists had to say actually did help. But, by far the most valuable "interviews" were discussions with the people themselves. Several "old timers" contributed a great deal out of their very real understanding as a part of this history and this resistance. The experiences and insights of the masses of people in their millions are the only real basis for a correct understanding of this or any other question.

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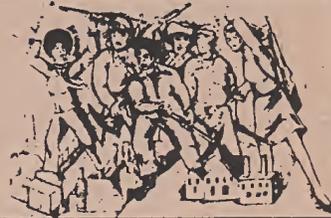
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