

# New International

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## IN THIS ISSUE

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**T**HE LEAD ITEM in this issue of *New International* is a resolution of the Socialist Workers Party, “The Revolutionary Perspective and Leninist Continuity in the United States.” The resolution has undergone some six months of organized discussion since a draft was first submitted to the SWP membership leading up to the party’s August 1984 convention. The final edited form that appears in these pages contains extensive changes based on those discussions—in the SWP written discussion bulletin, in party branches, in the SWP National Committee, and at the August 1984 and January 1985 party conventions. Delegates at the January convention adopted the resolution and voted to submit it to the 1985 World Congress of the Fourth International.

Simultaneous with its publication in English in this issue of *New International*, the SWP resolution is also being published in Spanish in *Perspectiva Mundial*, the biweekly Spanish-language voice of revolutionary Marxism in the United States. Both publications are read by revolutionary-minded workers and farmers not only in the United States, but also in Canada and elsewhere in

the Americas, in Europe, in New Zealand and Australia, and in other parts of the world.

A central question for the U.S. workers movement discussed in the SWP resolution is the need to mobilize the largest possible opposition in the streets to the expanding U.S. war against the workers and peasants of Central America and the Caribbean. "Revolutionists actively participate in such protests," the resolution states, "and seek to build them and guide them insofar as possible along lines that can maximize drawing in union forces and oppressed nationalities. Such an orientation is essential for a revolutionary workers party if opportunities are to be utilized to deepen and broaden the fight in the labor movement against the U.S. war, and build an antiwar movement that will become increasingly proletarian and multinational in its composition and leadership."

**A**S THIS ISSUE goes to press, antiwar forces in the United States have begun mobilizing support for an April 20 march on Washington, as well as demonstrations in San Francisco and other cities on that date. Protesters will demand a halt to the U.S.-engineered war in Central America. In Canada, opponents of the U.S. war are discussing holding demonstrations the same day.

The call for the April 20 actions also demands an end to U.S. support to the apartheid regime in South Africa, to Washington's escalating war budgets and nuclear arms buildup, and to racism and unemployment.

A national coalition has been launched to coordinate plans for the April 20 actions, and local coalitions are under way in many cities. Supporters of these demonstrations will be participating in these coalitions, and working in the offices they establish, in order to reach out to

involve more and more organizations and activists in the spring antiwar actions.

Much more so than at a comparable stage of the U.S. intervention in Indochina, the potential exists today to draw into this important demonstration sections of the labor movement, Black, Chicano, and Puerto Rican organizations, women's rights groups, and organizations of working farmers. The April 20 march has already been endorsed by two large industrial unions, the International Association of Machinists and the United Food and Commercial Workers. Civil rights organizations such as Operation PUSH, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the League of United Latin American Citizens, and the American Indian Movement also back the action.

Efforts to mobilize support for the April 20 demonstration will help deepen the discussion within the labor movement about Washington's Central America policies. It provides a focus for activity by unionists seeking to convince others in the labor movement that opposition to the war moves of the employing class is a union issue, and that labor must reject the proimperialist, prowar policy of the top AFL-CIO officialdom. Union members will be organizing to bring their co-workers to the demonstration; to raise it for discussion and, where possible, support in their union locals; and to reach out to other locals and to labor officials to broaden union participation in the action and in the coalitions that are building it.

Mobilizing participation in the April 20 march on Washington will also be an important focus of activity for units of the National Black Independent Political Party, for the National Organization for Women and Coalition of Labor Union Women, and for organizations of farm workers and working farmers.

The April 20 actions are of such importance because of Washington's determination to crush the advances for worker-farmer power in this hemisphere opened in 1979 by the Nicaraguan and Grenada revolutions. The U.S. rulers know the attractive power of the example set by socialist Cuba for the oppressed and exploited throughout the Americas, and they do not intend to sit back while working people in other countries overthrow tyrannical regimes so that they too can open their own road toward national liberation, land reform, and expropriation of the landlord-capitalist exploiters.

A second article in this issue continues the discussion in the pages of *New International* of the fight for workers and farmers power as the axis of revolutionary working-class strategy. The article is based on a report by Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes that was adopted by the party's August 1984 convention.

The last issue of *New International* featured an article by Mary-Alice Waters focusing on the lessons that revolutionary Marxists have learned about the struggle for state power from the democratic revolutions in Europe in 1847-48, through the Paris Commune of 1871, to the Russian revolutions of 1905 and February and October 1917. That issue also contained articles by Cuban Communist Party leader Manuel Piñero and Sandinista Commander Tomás Borge dealing with aspects of this question from the vantage point of the revolutionary class struggle in the Americas since 1959.

The article by Jack Barnes in the current issue concentrates on the fight for a workers and farmers government in the *United States*, and on the alliance of two exploited producing classes that plays an irreplaceable role in that struggle. Along with it, we are also publishing an article by Doug Jenness on the worker-farmer alliance in the

United States. Based on reports adopted by the SWP National Committee in 1979 and 1982, the article by Jenness incorporates the experience and further thinking of the party since then through its increasing involvement in the struggles of working farmers, farm workers, and their organizations. (On January 21, the day before this introduction was written, some 10,000 working farmers and their supporters demonstrated at the Minnesota state capitol, and 300 farmers from sixteen states at the Chicago Board of Trade, to protest the policies of the government and the capitalist monopolies that are driving growing numbers of farmers off the land.)

The accomplishments of the Cuban socialist revolution and its Marxist leadership over the past quarter century are the best example so far in history of a successful application of the worker-farmer alliance. For this reason, we round out this issue of *New Internationalist* with three Cuban documents from the past decade dealing with these questions. One of them, a resolution adopted in 1975 at the First Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba, appears here for the first time in English.



# The working-class fight for power

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JACK BARNES, LARRY SEIGLE,  
STEVE CLARK

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# THE REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVE AND LENINIST CONTINUITY IN THE UNITED STATES

**T**HE CAPITALIST CLASS in the United States is driving to alter fundamentally the relationship between labor and capital that was established following the end of the post–World War II strike wave. That labor upsurge held off the attempts by the U.S. imperialist victors in the war to deal the kind of blows to the union movement that they had dealt at the end of World War I.

The current offensive of the employing class began a decade ago, with the 1974–75 world recession, and has been building since that time. It is taking place under the lash of intensifying international capitalist competition and in the framework of the stagnation of the world capitalist economy and the imposition of a crushing debt

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*This is a resolution of the Socialist Workers Party. It was approved in draft form by the SWP's Thirty-second National Convention in August 1984. Following that convention, the party organized further discussion on the draft resolution, both written and oral, among the entire party membership. The SWP National Committee considered the resolution further at its meeting in December 1984. Finally, a version edited in light of these discussions was taken up and adopted by the January 1985 special convention of the SWP for submission to the 1985 World Congress of the Fourth International. The resolution is printed here in its final form.*

burden on the semicolonial countries.

This onslaught, its effects, and the emerging resistance to it by the ranks have moved the industrial working class and its unions to the center of politics in the United States for the first time in almost four decades.

A growing number of class battles, combined over time with a deepening social crisis, uprisings in the colonial and semicolonial countries, and imperialist wars, will transform politics and the labor movement in this country. We have entered the initial stages of a preparatory period, which will lead in coming decades to a prerevolutionary upheaval marked by revolutionary struggles of a kind that workers and farmers in the United States have not waged in more than a century.

There is today a gap between the current experiences and consciousness of the working class, and the radically transformed conditions and methods of struggle that will emerge as social, economic, and war crises tear apart the current framework of relative social stability and bourgeois democracy.

Combative workers today see no political perspective that bridges the gap between today's conditions and the qualitatively changed situation in which the revolutionary battles will be fought that will culminate in the establishment of a workers and farmers government in the United States.

Nonetheless, as young workers go through experiences in struggle of setbacks and advances, of victories and defeats under those radically altered conditions, a growing number will acquire revolutionary combat experience and their consciousness will be transformed. A new class-conscious political vanguard will emerge, whose composition will reflect the changed composition of the work force, and the weight of Blacks, Latinos, and women

within it. These workers will carve out a class-struggle left wing within the labor movement. They will chart a course toward transforming the unions from instruments of class collaboration with the employers and their government into instruments of revolutionary struggle for the interests of working people of city and countryside, and of all the oppressed. They will *think socially* and *act politically*, and they will use *union power*. Under these conditions, and only under these conditions, will the *mass* revolutionary working-class party be built that is needed to lead the struggle for a workers and farmers government.

Today, a worker who understands that the course of the current labor officialdom is gutting union power and leading to a dead end still must make an individual leap in consciousness in order to see the strategic line of march of the proletariat toward power. But even under the impact of today's initial experiences, these leaps can and are being made. Opportunities are being created for the Socialist Workers Party to influence a still small but important layer of the working class and the labor movement, and to recruit to the party the most politically conscious workers. This deepening proletarianization and political education of the party is decisive not only in rising to today's challenges and meeting its pressures, but in preparing for what is coming.

## I. THE TURN TO THE INDUSTRIAL UNIONS

### 1. Ruling-class offensive

**F**OR TWENTY-FIVE YEARS, beginning in the second half of the 1940s, prolonged capitalist economic expansion made it possible for broad layers of U.S. working people to wrest significant concessions from the exploiters. That

quarter century, however, was also marked by the institutionalization of the class-collaborationist methods of the union bureaucracy, and a political retreat of the labor movement. The result was a terrible weakening of the unions. But this fact was hidden, since workers were able to continue wresting gains from the employers despite the obstacle of the class-collaborationist policies followed by the union misleaders.

The officialdom focused attention on the slow but steady improvement in real wages of those sections of the working class already in the strongest unions. The bureaucracy sought to convince layers of relatively better-off workers that it was in their interests to support the class-collaborationist policies through which the unions were being tangled in red tape and their fighting power was being sapped. It did not talk about the trade-offs it made, which further weakened union power. There was no sustained effort to organize the unorganized, including workers in the South. Control over job conditions, line speed, and safety was increasingly relinquished. The bureaucracy turned its back on any fight for nationwide government health care and improved retirement and unemployment benefits for the working population as a whole. Instead, it sought to negotiate industry-by-industry "fringe benefits," more and more tied to the profits of individual industries and companies. The ties that were being forged between the rising union movement in the 1930s and fighting farmers were ruptured, and replaced by efforts by the union bureaucracy to line up farm organizations in the Democratic Party camp. There was no support by the labor officialdom to efforts to organize farm workers until the late 1960s, when the struggle led by the United Farm Workers in the California fields forced a measure of backing

from the AFL-CIO tops.

The misleaders of the industrial unions collaborated with the bosses in helping to keep Blacks, Latinos, women, and other discriminated-against sections of the working class restricted to the lowest-paid and dirtiest jobs, with the fewest opportunities for training and upgrading. When the struggle for Black rights burst forward with renewed force in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the union bureaucracy refused to use the enormous potential power of the unions to aid this growing fight. Instead, the class-collaborationist course of the officialdom all too often led to its denunciation of the most combative and uncompromising vanguard in the struggle for civil rights. All the while, the ranks of the labor movement were becoming more heavily Black, Latino, and then, female.

**T**HE BUREAUCRATIC MISLEADERS of the Congress of Industrial Organizations drew support for their procapitalist and class-collaborationist policies from the better-paid and highest-seniority layers of the CIO industrial unions. This new labor aristocracy, which had developed within the CIO unions themselves, became the base on which the bureaucracy rested, following the pattern that had previously been established in the craft-divided unions of the American Federation of Labor (AFL).

The labor bureaucracy's class-collaborationist course also found expression in its support for the bipartisan foreign policy of U.S. imperialism and the growing attacks on democratic rights at home. The bureaucracy backed the capitalists' anticommunist witch-hunt, including going along with measures that were aimed directly at restricting the rights of the unions, such as those contained

in the Taft-Hartley Act. It backed the U.S. war against Korea. The labor officialdom became a mainstay of support for Washington's massive military budgets. It backed the growing protectionism of sections of the capitalist class as the competitive advantage of U.S. industry slipped in the face of stiffening competition from other imperialist powers.

The big majority of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy supported Washington's war against Vietnam. It condemned revolutionary Cuba and supported the efforts by the U.S. government to bring the workers and farmers of Cuba to their knees. It backed the policies of the imperialist government of the United States in seeking to crush the struggles for national liberation by the oppressed throughout Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

The 1974–75 international recession signalled that the capitalist class no longer had the margin for the kind of economic concessions to working people that had established the framework for U.S. politics for the previous two and a half decades. The years since have seen a bipartisan shift to the right in capitalist politics, accompanying the escalating assault against labor and its allies. There have been more and more takeback contracts. A growing number of these include provisions that for the first time introduce permanent divisions within the union by establishing lower wages and less protection for new hires than for those already working. These “two-tier” contracts mark a significant step toward institutionalization of new divisions that undermine the unifying character of the industrial union structures—a major advance over craft union structures—that were won in many industries through the battles that gave rise to the CIO in the 1930s.

There has also been an increase in open union bust-



ing and in foreclosures and brutal dispossessions of farm families. We have seen cutbacks in government social programs; escalating attacks on past gains of Blacks, Latinos, and women; and a sustained chipping away at democratic rights.

These have gone hand in hand with an escalation of the imperialist war in Central America and the Caribbean, and other threats and preparations for the use of U.S. military power against workers and farmers abroad.

### ***Class polarization***

During the quarter century of relative economic expansion and stability following the post-World War II labor upsurge, social conflicts were widely viewed solely in terms of conflicts between the “haves” and “have nots,” or between Blacks and whites.

Today these social conflicts can more easily be seen as expressions of the fundamental class struggle between capital and labor—between the exploited producers and those who exploit them. Social and political struggles have a more direct and rapid reflection within the labor movement. A broader layer of workers understand that solidarity with farmer’s struggles, Black rights, women’s rights, and fights against U.S. military intervention abroad are labor issues. These issues should be raised in the unions for action, not just talk.

The ruling-class offensive—carried out both by the employers directly and by their government—will result in a growing tendency for the irreconcilable conflict between the capitalists and working people to find expression more openly in political life and for the unions to be drawn into involvement in these struggles.

Class polarization gives an impulse to the radicaliza-

tion of the most combative workers. At the same time, it emboldens rightists to make probes, to become more “radical” themselves. Wind is put in the sails of proponents of right-wing views on such issues as Black rights, women’s equality, the rights of unions, the rights of immigrants, government social programs, and military intervention by imperialism abroad. Their reactionary propaganda falls on particularly receptive ears among the tens of millions in the middle-class and professional layers who directly benefit from the current policies of the government and big business. For these layers, which have been substantially increased by the recent evolution of the structure of the economy, 1975–85 has not been a bad decade; their economic position has significantly improved.

There is also a growing ideological differentiation among working people—workers and farmers alike. More rank-and-file workers become combative and more politically class conscious, in spite of the trade union officialdom’s failure to chart any class-struggle way forward.

But a minority, especially among the relatively privileged layers, the aristocracy of labor, are misled into thinking that various rightist solutions offer a way out for themselves and the section of the working class with which they identify. They look toward collaboration with the capitalist class as it pursues its goals at home and abroad, rather than toward class struggle as the way forward. Those workers who respond to the pressures of the capitalist offensive in this way identify more firmly with the interests of “their” country, “their” industry, “their” company. They become even more susceptible to the ideological weapons that the rulers use, especially all the varieties of national-chauvinist, racist, anti-woman prejudices, and other reactionary

ideas that cover up opposing class interests. A similar political differentiation has begun to grow among working farmers.

## **2. The turn to the industrial unions and proletarianization of the party**

**A**N ESSENTIAL PART of the strategic line of march toward the establishment of a workers and farmers government in the United States is the fight for the transformation of the industrial unions—the most powerful existing organizations of the working class—into revolutionary instruments of class struggle for the interests of the exploited and oppressed.

During the long postwar period of capitalist expansion, political conditions in the United States stood in the way of effective revolutionary work by socialists in the industrial unions. The political and economic situation that opened in the mid-1970s made it possible once again for communists to advance this fight from within the industrial unions. This dictated a sharp turn. The SWP decided to get a large and stable majority of its members into the industrial unions and to build national fractions of its members in these unions.

Without such a turn to the industrial unions a retreat from the struggle for a proletarian party would have been unavoidable. The party's internationalism, its political homogeneity and centralization, and its revolutionary centralist character would have been eroded. The working-class composition of its milieu, its membership, and its leadership would have been diluted instead of strengthened. It would have become more white and anglo. There would have been even greater pressure on party members who are female to retreat from the

demands of political leadership and lose their political self-confidence. The party would have been more susceptible to the pressures of a growing economic and social crisis and war preparations—pressures originating in the bourgeoisie and transmitted through various petty-bourgeois layers and organizations. It would have been more vulnerable to cliquism and permanent factionalism, and therefore less democratic. If a revolutionary proletarian party does not base its membership in the industrial working class and industrial unions when it is politically possible to do so, this inevitably results in the erosion of its program.

The Socialist Workers Party's proletarian orientation and perspective of the development of a class-struggle left wing in the labor movement constitute a permanent strategic axis, which we seek to advance whatever the political situation may be. Under the present conditions in the United States, as in the rest of the capitalist world, the sharp turn to the industrial unions is necessary to advance this perspective.

### ***Structure and organization of the party's turn***

The goal of the turn is a large majority of party members and leaders in industrial union jobs and effectively functioning national industrial union fractions.

Over the last six years the party has succeeded in establishing nine national fractions: United Auto Workers; United Steelworkers; United Mine Workers; International Association of Machinists; International Union of Electronics Workers; Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers; United Transportation Union; and, most recently, the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union and the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union. In those cases where union structures encompass workers

in both the United States and Canada, we are building joint fractions with our comrades of the Revolutionary Workers League, the Canadian section of the Fourth International.

These nine national industrial union fractions have become a basic part of the structure of the SWP. National fractions strengthen the party as a nationwide, politically centralized force. Party members who belong to each of these industrial unions meet together regularly as a fraction in the local area, and hold frequent meetings of the national fraction. Local industrial union fractions elect a fraction leadership. The party's goal is for all of the national industrial union fractions to be able to develop sufficient size, stability, and common experience to elect their own national leaderships. This process requires direct attention to the work of the fractions by the central leadership of the party, as well as continuing steps to advance the integration of the comrades in the industrial union fractions into the leadership of the party's work as a whole.

Members of the industrial union fractions help lead not only the party's work in the labor movement, but its political work in general. They lead the party's participation in broader social protest struggles and take responsibility for the committees that organize the party's propaganda work, finances, education, and other tasks. The party's collective experience in industry and the leadership of the work of our national industrial union fractions are increasingly reflected in the composition of the elected leadership bodies from the branch level to the National Committee.

From the beginning, building national fractions in the industrial unions has been linked to efforts to deepen the education of the party in our political continuity with the modern communist workers movement—from

its founding in the middle of the last century to its most recent qualitative strengthening with the emergence of the Cuban Marxist leadership, and its further reinforcement by the leaders of the Nicaraguan revolution and the team that was led by Maurice Bishop in Grenada.

Simultaneously with the turn, the party relaunched its leadership school, which focuses on studying the birth and development of the working-class political program and the efforts by Marx and Engels to build proletarian parties and a proletarian International. The party also projected the publication of a political magazine, *New International*, in collaboration with the Revolutionary Workers League of Canada. In 1981 the branches began organizing classes on the political works of Lenin as the central axis of our branch educational activities.

The increasingly multinational character of the working class in the United States, which is reflected in our own recruitment of more members whose first language is Spanish, has posed more sharply the need for the party as a whole to be able to function politically in Spanish as well as English. Circulation of *Perspectiva Mundial*, the biweekly Spanish-language voice of revolutionary Marxism in the United States, has become a regular aspect of sales on the job and at plant gates, as well as at political events and elsewhere. Learning Spanish is a daily part of the leadership school. Many branches have found ways to help us study and improve our ability to speak Spanish. Bilingual leaflets and translation of forums and election campaign meetings into Spanish have become regular features of party functioning in a number of branches.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. Political axis of party work in the industrial unions

THE PARTY'S POLITICAL WORK in the industrial unions takes as its starting point the world class struggle, the crisis of the international capitalist economy and imperialist world order, and their manifestations in this country. It is these forces that establish the conditions under which the struggle to defend, strengthen, and transform the unions takes place. It is only with this broader perspective—not the narrow framework of union politics—that the road can be charted toward constructing a class-struggle left wing in the labor movement, whose goal will be the transformation of the unions into instruments of revolutionary struggle against the employers and their government.

Members of the SWP in the industrial unions function on three different levels.

First, they are members of the revolutionary party. Like all party members, whether in unions or not, they are constantly seeking ways to promote knowledge about the party and its activities, to involve others in its work, and recruit them to membership. This includes everything from selling subscriptions to *Perspectiva Mundial* and the *Militant*, to strengthening the internal party committees and branch institutions, publicizing an election campaign rally or forum, and explaining the party's views on political events to those who are interested.

Second, as workers, they seek to involve other workers in political activities. They encourage their co-workers to come down to the party headquarters to attend a forum, to join a demonstration that the party is helping to organize against the war in Central America, to get involved in protests against police brutality or other racist attacks,

or to read the program contained in the charter of the National Black Independent Political Party.

Third, they are union activists with a revolutionary perspective for the unions. The union fractions of the SWP strive to develop the ability to function as effective units that are integrated into the labor movement. In this sense, our fractions function collectively as union politicians. Their goal, as part of nationwide fractions, is to help forge a new union leadership, which will come forward from the ranks and will fight to unleash union power to defend the workers' interests. They operate within the union structures and realities of today, with a clear view of the revolutionary transformation that will occur tomorrow.

Our union fractions have begun to accumulate important practical experiences in functioning on all of these levels, each of which is essential to carrying out communist work in the unions. We have confronted a wide variety of tactical questions on the shop floor, in skirmishes with bosses and right-wingers in the unions over our right to freely express our views, in union strike situations, and in dealing with the bureaucracy on the local and national levels. We defend our right, and develop our ability, to function on the job and within the unions as political activists with a world view and a program for our class to defend its interests against the rulers' offensive at home and abroad.

The political axis of our work in the industrial unions centers on the fight for solidarity, union democracy, and independent working-class political action.

### *Working-class solidarity*

Competition among individual workers is the basic condition inherent in the existence of the proletarian class under capitalism. Counteracting this by collectively or-



ganizing the workers to defend their common interests against the employers is the fundamental historical role of the unions. This is why unions arose and why this form of working-class organization will never disappear as long as capitalism exists.

Thus, solidarity is a life-or-death question for the labor movement. Solidarity of workers with other members of their own class is the opposite of collaboration with the exploiting class—whose interests lie always in dividing the working class, as well as dividing workers from their allies.

The employers' offensive adds even greater importance to solidarity among the workers within each industry and each union, as well as to active solidarity by the entire labor movement with the struggles forced on individual unions. The need for classwide solidarity as the struggle sharpens reinforces the responsibility of the unions to take the lead in organizing the growing nonunion sector of the working class and fighting for jobs for the unemployed.

The unions should also take the lead in organizing working-class solidarity with other producers exploited by the capitalist class. Labor should mobilize support for working farmers in their struggle for a living income against the tightening squeeze by capitalist landlords and owners of the banks, grain monopolies, and big farm equipment and supply companies. The unions also have a stake in backing the struggles by owner-operator truck drivers against the capitalist owners of the giant trucking companies, oil monopolies, and the banks.

Solidarity includes mobilizing the broadest possible layer of the labor movement and the farmers' organizations to support the struggles, and champion the demands, of the superexploited layers of the working

class—Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, immigrant workers, women workers, and young workers.

This means supporting demands for affirmative action in hiring, training, and upgrading; for parallel seniority lists to combat discriminatory layoffs; against deportations and threats against foreign-born workers; and other demands of the oppressed both on the job and within the unions themselves.

Solidarity also means active participation and leadership by the labor movement in struggles for school desegregation and busing, against police brutality and capital punishment, for women's right to abortion, for adequate child-care facilities, against rape and other acts of violence against women, for the right of political asylum for refugees from U.S. backed dictatorships, and for bilingualism in education and public affairs.

The need for the U.S. labor movement to aggressively champion the international solidarity of working people is becoming more urgent as the ruling class seeks to place the blame for the growing ills of capitalism onto other countries and the workers of those countries, and as it increasingly drags U.S. working people into a war in Central America and the Caribbean.

The unions are endangered by the increasingly open racist and chauvinist propaganda against Japanese and other peoples of color, which is central to the boss-inspired "Buy American" campaign. The labor movement needs to take the lead in combating the violence and abuse against Asians in this country that is reinforced by these reactionary appeals.

Solidarity means advancing our common class position against our common class enemy on a world scale, refusing to allow them to divide us and set us against each other. The unions should organize support for the

struggles by union workers in other countries—miners in Britain and South Africa; garment and textile workers in Hong Kong and South Korea; trade unionists in El Salvador, Grenada, Honduras, and Guatemala; auto workers in Mexico, Germany, Canada, and Japan. U.S. labor should back demands for a living income by working farmers and struggles for land and against unbearable conditions by agricultural laborers and farmers worldwide.

The labor movement must place itself in the forefront of the struggle against the escalating U.S. military intervention in Central America and the Caribbean. The labor movement needs to stand in solidarity with working people in all nations oppressed by U.S. imperialism, and oppose every move by Washington to use its economic power and military might to crush their struggles for national liberation, democratic rights, economic development, and socialism.

Only along these lines can the common interests of workers here and abroad be effectively advanced, and the ability of the labor movement to fight for its interests and those of its allies be strengthened.

### *The fight for union democracy*

The capacity of the unions to function as instruments of class solidarity and struggle is sapped by the bureaucratic stranglehold of the class-collaborationist officialdom. The fight for rank-and-file control of all union affairs and policies is necessary in order to mobilize union power to combat the employers and the capitalist government. There must be democracy in the unions so that the workers themselves can use the unions to fight for their interests. In the course of their resistance to mounting attacks by the employers, the militant workers will learn that in order to be able to *act* effectively as a fighting unit, they

must have democratic control over their organization. They must have the right *to know* all information relevant to deciding on union policy; they must have the right *to vote* on union contracts; they must have the right *to elect* union officers.

Only with this kind of democratic control by the membership over the unions can common experience in struggle against the employers lead to strengthening the unions by forging a more solidly united combat formation, a more homogeneous fighting machine. This was a cardinal lesson of the rich experiences of the Teamsters union in Minneapolis in the 1930s, and of the organizing drive in the Midwest it spearheaded, guided by a revolutionary union leadership.

The fight for union democracy is inseparable from the fight for affirmative action to upgrade jobs and skills, to improve opportunities for Blacks, Latinos, and women, and to end discrimination within the unions. Union democracy cannot be won when members are treated as second-class citizens on the job or in the union. And, to the extent that union democracy is lacking, those democratic rights that have been won by Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and women are less secure and more vulnerable to reversal, since the labor bureaucracy's class-collaborationist policy inevitably leads to sacrificing union solidarity with the most oppressed, and to allowing the employers to deepen divisions within the working class.

### ***Independent working-class political action***

The unions must chart a course that advances the interests of the working class and the oppressed regardless of the profits and prerogatives of the propertied class. That is, they must break from bourgeois politics. Independent working-class political action is the class-struggle alter-

native to the union officialdom's current class-collaborationist course of subordinating labor's interests to the framework imposed by acceptance of the profit system.

The labor movement can pursue a consistent class-struggle course only by breaking through the illusion that the problems confronting working people can be resolved within the bourgeois electoral setup. This electoralist illusion is promoted by the bourgeoisie and its labor lieutenants, who argue that "real" politics is synonymous with election campaigns for public office.

Real politics is the opposite, however; it is concentrated and generalized economics. It is reflected in all the institutions of capitalist society. But it originates in what goes on every day in the clash of class forces in the factories, in the fields, in the streets, and on the battlefields of war. That is where the basic relationship of class forces is decided. Only by recognizing and acting on this reality can a union leadership unleash labor's political power, and alter the political course of the United States.

Such a union leadership will think socially and act politically. It will give a revolutionary direction to working people of city and countryside, confident that out of the determined struggle to defend our own class interests a new society will emerge.

Independent working-class political action points above all toward the workers and our allies establishing a government that acts to advance our interests, not those of our exploiters—a workers and farmers government. Taking political power out of the hands of the exploiters is the only way to halt once and for all the escalating attacks against the unions and against every struggle by working people and the oppressed. It is the only way to end the use of government power to advance the class interests of the exploiters at the expense of working people.

It is the only way to end imperialist war, racial oppression, and discrimination against women.

The struggle to meet the most elementary needs of the working class and to defend the unions' right to exist as fighting workers organizations requires a political instrument independent of the capitalist parties that administer the state for the exploiters. The unions must break from the capitalist two-party system and forge an independent labor party that can mobilize the producers to fight for a workers and farmers government. And they must support every initiative by the exploited and oppressed that is an advance along this road.

#### **4. Strategic perspectives in the labor movement**

**H**OW DOES the Socialist Workers Party advance these strategic perspectives, this program, in the labor movement?

We start from the recognition that an understanding of this class-struggle strategy among broad layers of workers can be advanced only in the course of battles against the employers and the government to defend their conditions of work, their livelihood, and their unions, and through participation in political struggles around such fundamental issues as imperialist war, national oppression, the oppression of women, and attacks on democratic rights. We actively participate in struggles on the job where we work, in battles waged by workers in other cities and industries, and in progressive protest actions initiated inside or outside the unions. We participate in and champion all working-class fights for demands for immediate relief from the effects of the capitalist crisis and for better conditions of work and life. We take these struggles to our unions in the most effective ways we

can—be it raising them in our union committees, with our elected officials, or at our union membership meetings. We seek to mobilize union support and broaden the discussion on what is at stake for the labor movement in each of these battles.

As participants in these struggles, we advance broader social and class demands, explaining them through our socialist election campaigns, through the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*, through weekly public Militant Labor Forums in every city where SWP branches exist, and through discussions with other activists in these battles.

We pose the need to fight for greater workers control, exercised through the unions, over working conditions and decisions that affect workers on the job.

We explain the need for the labor movement to fight for social rights such as health care and adequate pensions for all working people. These should be government-financed on a nationwide scale, not tied to the bosses' profits on an industry-by-industry basis. The unions should take the lead in resisting the continual drive by the government and employers to make meeting these life-or-death needs the responsibility of individuals and their families.

We advance immediate, democratic, and transitional demands in different ways and combinations, depending on the concrete political situation. At all times, we seek to explain them in such a way as to increase understanding of the need for a change in which classes govern. Without the axis of our fight being to advance toward the establishment of a workers and farmers government, no series of demands, no program—no matter how far-reaching and radical—can be in fact a revolutionary program.

As we go through battles side by side with other workers, we take advantage of every experience in the inter-

national and national class struggle to explain that the capitalist system is the source of the crisis facing our class and its allies. We present a socialist perspective to those in the working class who are thinking about how to organize and lead an effective fight to advance the interests of the exploited.

In presenting this perspective, we can be very concrete, pointing to the achievements of revolutionary Cuba, where the workers and farmers took power into their own hands and used that power to uproot capitalism and begin the construction of a socialist society. We can also point to what is being accomplished by the workers and farmers government in Nicaragua today. These examples show what is possible when a government of the exploiters, which defends the interests of the capitalists and landowners, is replaced by a government of the exploited. How much more will be possible in the United States, given its great wealth and industrial and agricultural capacity, not only to benefit U.S. workers and farmers, but to help feed and raise the living standards of working people around the world!

### ***The coming class battles***

Workers will come to these conclusions in large numbers only through experiences in major class battles. These will include pre-revolutionary and revolutionary confrontations with the employers and their government in which the question of which classes shall rule will be placed on the agenda. As its combativity grows, the working class will test in action, and strip through layers of, liberal, reformist, and centrist political alternatives before coming to the conclusion that revolutionary political action is both possible and necessary. In the course of doing this, millions of workers will reject the class-collaborationism



(including bourgeois electoralism) that is promoted by the union bureaucracy and other misleaders of the oppressed and exploited.

There is a qualitative difference between today's conditions—marked by relatively broad bourgeois-democratic rights—and the conditions under which class conflict in this country will be resolved through a successful revolutionary struggle for power.

Every modern social revolution has resulted from rebellion against some combination of war, social crisis, economic breakdown, and political tyranny. Masses of working people will not start a battle of revolutionary proportions so long as there appears to be another, less demanding road to basic solutions. So long as such an alternative appears realistic, electoral illusions will retain their hold on the working class. This will change qualitatively only as gigantic political and economic crises undercut the capacity of the U.S. capitalist class to maintain its rule with its current methods of bourgeois democracy.

As the social and political situation heads toward such a showdown, life under capitalism will become more and more intolerable. Working people will wage mighty class battles, which will be met by the rise of mass fascist movements and a drive toward dictatorial solutions by the rulers. Under such conditions, tens of millions among the oppressed and exploited will turn for leadership to a proletarian party with a strategy to lead the workers and farmers to conquer power by whatever means necessary.

Between now and then, many other alternatives will be tested and exhausted as workers radicalize, suffer setbacks, regroup, and fight again. Illusions will be shed—including exaggerated expectations about what individual socialists can achieve, whether as leaders of a trade union,

some other mass organization, or as elected public officials. These illusions will be replaced by an understanding that only the mobilization of the ranks themselves, with proper leadership, can accomplish what the given relationship of class forces makes possible.

To further this process, our industrial union fractions are growing more experienced in keeping the main line of fire on the bosses. We press for official adoption, or at least toleration, of policies that will strengthen the unions and enable the workers to fend off more effectively the capitalist assault on their living standards and rights. We take advantage of opportunities presented by the officialdom, or of any divisions within it, to bring a layer of rank-and-file workers into discussions and into action against the bosses. We refuse to be drawn prematurely into confrontations with the labor bureaucracy. Under current conditions, such clashes between our small forces—whose ideas and proposals are only beginning to get a hearing and to be understood by broader layers—and the labor bureaucracy would make it easier for the officialdom to isolate our current from the ranks.

Our fractions in the unions respond to proposed union contracts and other questions put to the ranks for a vote by the union officialdom from the standpoint of advancing the interests of the union. We urge a vote for those union contracts that would put the union in a stronger position in relation to the employers than would be the case if the contract were voted down—given the existing conditions in the union, the caliber of its current leadership, and the relationship of class forces it must contend with. Revolutionary workers judge such questions from the point of view of advancing the objective interests of the union, not of passing judgment on the subjective intentions, or the propaganda campaigns and other actions,

of the bureaucracy. Workers vote on a contract, not on the overall policy of those officials who negotiated it.

It is also from this vantage point that we approach the question of union elections and posts. We view the election of a revolutionary worker to a union position as a byproduct of important strides toward transforming some section of the labor movement along class-struggle lines, not as a lever to initiate this transformation. It can be one result of deepening struggles and combat experiences during which revolutionary workers have demonstrated their leadership capacities. Participation in various union committees can, under certain conditions even today, help advance the work of guiding the ranks of the union to a class-struggle point of view through their own experiences.

**E**LECTION OF A REVOLUTIONARY WORKER to a position of general leadership or administrative responsibility in a union, however, does not in itself advance the fight to transform the labor movement.

Such an advance requires a union membership with a certain common experience in struggle and level of consciousness. In and of itself, taking a post has no power to advance the working class in this direction. Acting as though it does is an obstacle to accomplishing what can and must be done today to help bring to bear the power of the ranks in deciding the course of the unions and acting collectively on that basis. Such an approach inevitably leads to prettying up the political character of the "team" a revolutionary worker who takes a post is part of, and condemning the ranks for their lack of appreciation for the efforts of these officials.

We base ourselves among the young workers especially,

those who are most combative and politically conscious. We look toward the mobilization, organization, and heightened class awareness of these workers.

### *Tasks of the party*

Workers cannot develop revolutionary political conclusions by generalizing from their own struggle and experiences alone. That is why the party has an indispensable role to play. As we go through struggles along with other workers, we present an outlook that generalizes from experiences in different industries, regions, countries, and periods in the history of the modern international class struggle.

Our strategy starts with the actually unfolding line of march of the working class in the leadership of its exploited allies. We do not start with utopian blueprints, electoral schemes, or any other nostrums. We have no unique “identity” that sets us apart from this line of march. We present a course that leads toward the transformation of the unions, and we seek to advance the development of a class-struggle left wing in the unions to fight for this goal. Today we are building our tendency in the industrial unions among those workers who can be won to this course and to the revolutionary party.

Today there is already a layer of workers around the country who have gotten to know and respect party members and the SWP. They are attracted to our press and other activities, and agree with many of our views. Most initially see no road, however, connecting what we do and say today with a winnable fight for a workers and farmers government. Seeking to win those politicized workers to see that road, and to act on those convictions by joining our movement, is a task of the party as a whole, not just the industrial union fractions. It is the branches that have the responsibility to recruit work-

ers, integrate them into the party, and educate them as worker-Bolsheviks. This underlines the importance of branches as politically rounded units in a party increasingly composed of industrial workers organized in national union fractions.

It is the task of the party as a whole, not just the union fractions, to implement our perspectives and organize our participation in political struggles against imperialist war, for Black rights, for women's emancipation, and around the broad range of other social and political questions facing working people. Without this our national union fractions could not function as *political* units. Our fractions in each area could not have a prioritized set of political campaigns to implement, as local units of national fractions. Party campaigns would become narrowed to what the fractions alone could do, and unbearable strains on the fractions would develop.

The party carries out this political task on four fronts.

First, through participation in propaganda actions. This includes not only participation in demonstrations, protest rallies, and action coalitions, but also in national and local gatherings of organizations such as the National Black Independent Political Party, National Organization for Women, Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, and the Coalition of Labor Union Women. Party members join these organizations, and branches and leadership bodies participate in carrying out our political work with these organizations.

Second, the party organizes and sustains a variety of propaganda institutions to help bring socialist views to the widest possible layers of working people. These include the weekly Militant Labor Forums sponsored by the branches, as well as our branch bookstores. Our national, state, and local socialist election campaigns provide an important way to reach larger numbers of working people.

Third, the party organizes weekly circulation of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*, which tell the truth about major national and international developments, and advance our class proposals to working people about how to move forward.

Fourth, the party aids the union fractions in implementing this perspective and carrying out these activities in the plants and in the unions.

### **5. Deepening the turn to the industrial unions**

**B**ASED ON THE INITIAL EXPERIENCES of our industrial union fractions since 1978, the party has taken several new steps over the past few years to deepen the turn.

One of these new steps was adopting the goal of organizing weekly plant-gate sales of *Perspectiva Mundial* and the *Militant* as a norm of membership.

Our goal is to achieve regular weekly contact by every party member with industrial workers, especially those in unions where we are building national fractions. This is another step toward integrating the entire party into the turn—those who are part of industrial union fractions and those who are not, those employed and those laid off—and thus deepening our proletarian orientation. The weekly plant-gate sales are an important way to influence and recruit industrial workers, which is the only way to establish the party as a tendency in the labor movement over the long run.

These plant-gate sales are carried out by teams of branch members. They are part of the weekly rhythm of party activity in every branch. Regular sales at the plant gates help the branches to become familiar with industrial worksites other than those where we currently have members working, as well as to find out about possible

job openings. They can help inspire and convince new layers of the membership to join the jobs committees and become part of our industrial union fractions. They enable the party to keep in touch with workers in factories where all or many of our members have been laid off for the time being, or where we have not yet been able to get members hired. And they make it easier to learn of plans for hiring in these plants, facilitating the work of branch jobs committees.

Weekly sales at plants where we already have members employed are an important complement to the political work of the fractions. The regular circulation of our press to the workers at these workplaces is the collective responsibility of the party, not just the industrial union fractions. Only fraction members sell on the job, carry out day-to-day political work there, and participate in union discussions and activities. They are not the only party members, however, who sell the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* at the factory gate, talk to workers about politics, and bring them to party events and other activities that we are participating in and supporting. In addition, it is valuable for party members in one industrial fraction to get to know workers in other industries by selling at another factory.

A second aspect of deepening the turn has been the establishment of two new industrial union fractions, in the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union and the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union. These new fractions advance the proletarianization of the party. The ILGWU and ACTWU are two of the largest industrial unions in the United States, and they play an important role in the labor movement in both the United States and Canada. Through our orientation to these unions, we are becoming part of a section of the working class that is composed of many recent immigrants and

members of oppressed nationalities, and is generally paid wages lower than workers in other industrial unions.

A third product of the turn to industry has been the party's growing knowledge about and orientation toward the struggles and organizations of working farmers. We have begun to meet farmers who hold industrial jobs in order to make a living income and try to keep their land. Over the past few years, we have developed ties with farmers through our election campaigns and other propaganda vehicles, through participation as party members in their struggles, and also as members of industrial unions seeking ways to strengthen links of solidarity and united action between the labor movement and farmers' organizations. We have expanded our contact with, and knowledge about, organizations of working farmers. And we have recruited to the party the first of a new generation of farmers who are revolutionaries.

Most recently, we have broadened our political contact with agricultural wage laborers, especially in California, Texas, and throughout the Southwest. We are increasing our political attention to farm workers' struggles there today. The big majority of these workers are Spanish speaking, many are immigrants, and all work for low wages and under arduous conditions.

## **6. For a workers and farmers government**

**T**HE GEOGRAPHICAL EXPANSION of the party parallel with the turn to the industrial unions expanded our knowledge about the class structure of the United States. This has encouraged us to learn more about the important place that independent commodity producers occupy in the production of food and fiber in this country. As a result, we have begun to reconquer what previous genera-



tions of Marxist revolutionists had explained about the ways in which working farmers are exploited by capital, and the foundation this lays for a fighting worker-farmer alliance against the exploiters.

These experiences led to the decision by the SWP National Committee to propose that the August 1984 convention change the party's transitional governmental slogan from "For a workers government," to "For a Workers and Farmers Government." This change had been adopted by the National Committee in 1982, when it approved the general line of the report, "For a Workers and Farmers Government in the United States." This report was then adopted by the August 1984 party convention.

Our discussion of this proposed change helped us to better understand the need to make the alliance between the workers and the farmers central to our governmental perspective, and to see more clearly how this governmental perspective is integrally tied to our political response to the capitalist offensive against working people at home and abroad.

A second decision, related to the first, is the change in the SWP's statement of purpose. Article II of the Constitution of the Socialist Workers Party has up to now read: "The purpose of the party shall be to educate and organize the working class for the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a workers government to achieve socialism." In adopting the document, "For a Workers and Farmers Government in the United States," the National Committee approved changing this wording in the party's constitution.

The amended statement of purpose, adopted by the August 1984 convention, reads: "The purpose of the party shall be to educate and organize the working class in order to establish a workers' and farmers' government,

which will abolish capitalism in the United States and join in the worldwide struggle for socialism.”

This change accomplishes two things. First, it brings the sequence of events into an order that cannot be misread as projecting the abolition of capitalism before the establishment of a workers and farmers government. The amendment makes it clear that the abolition of capitalism is a task of the new workers and farmers government. We need to establish a revolutionary government before the abolition of capitalism can be carried out.

Second, the new version places the proper emphasis on the fact that the workers and farmers government in the United States will advance toward socialism *along with* the workers and farmers of the whole planet, not ahead of them. The revolutionary government in the United States will place the vast productive power of the U.S. economy at the service of the peoples of the world, especially those in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. By emphasizing that the construction of socialism in this country will be part of this worldwide battle, the amendment underlines the internationalist perspective that guides our party.

## II. WAR AND REVOLUTION IN CENTRAL AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: THE CENTER OF WORLD POLITICS

### **1. Revolutionary victories in Central America and the Caribbean**

**T**HE TRIUMPH in 1979 of the Grenada and Nicaraguan revolutions came after the SWP had decided to make the turn to get a big majority of our members into the industrial unions. The decision on the character and tim-

ing of this turn was not, and could not have been, built around anticipation of these revolutionary victories in Central America and the Caribbean, nor of the advance of the Cuban socialist revolution that was accelerated by these new triumphs in the Americas. Rather, the turn flowed from the concrete evolution of the class struggle on a world scale and its manifestation inside the United States, which portended intensified class battles nationally and internationally.

While the turn was not begun in response to these revolutionary advances, the concrete working-class outlook we gained by being based in industry oriented us to respond as a proletarian internationalist party to the revolutionary advances being registered by workers and exploited rural producers in the Americas. As a party whose energies were focused on constructing fractions in the industrial unions, we could see more clearly and respond more fully to new opportunities to move forward in resolving the historic crisis of proletarian leadership. The turn helped us to recognize enthusiastically, and without sectarian hesitation, the revolutionary capacities of the leaderships that were being forged in Central America and the Caribbean.

The turn to the industrial unions has been equally decisive to placing the party in a position to act effectively in the class battle in the United States over the deepening imperialist war against the workers and peasants of Central America and the Caribbean. The triumphs in Grenada and Nicaragua, and the battles being waged in El Salvador, have deeply affected class-conscious working people in the United States. This is true despite the imperialists' efforts to hide the truth about these revolutions—and despite the souring toward these revolutions and toward Cuba by a layer of petty-bourgeois critics as

imperialist war pressures mount. The pessimism of these faint-hearted radicals about the course of events in Central America and the Caribbean reveals their own recoiling from the fight in the face of Washington's power and deadly intent.

The governments in Nicaragua and—until its overthrow in October 1983—in Grenada have provided workers and farmers in the United States with inspiring new examples of what can be accomplished once the alliance of workers and rural producers succeeds in overthrowing a landlord-capitalist regime and placing power in the hands of the working people of the city and countryside, organized by a revolutionary regime. These examples have taken their place beside and have reinforced the powerful beacon that Cuba represents, illuminating the road forward for all the exploited and oppressed.

The multinational character of the U.S. working class magnifies the impact of these revolutions on working people in this country. Working people who are Black, and the growing number of workers who are Latino, are particularly inspired by the courage and accomplishments of the Central American and Caribbean peoples. They have seen working people of their color, and who speak their language, establishing popular revolutionary dictatorships in nearby countries and using that power to win genuine national liberation, to defend and advance the class interests of those who labor for a living, and to begin transforming economic and social relations. They can see more clearly what a revolutionary worker-farmer alliance means for their own struggles in this country.

A party with its roots in the industrial working class can take advantage of these living examples of revolutionary conquests to strengthen the organized working-class vanguard in the United States, and to deepen the conscious-

ness of those workers and farmers who are attracted to and encouraged by the revolutions in Central America and the Caribbean. It can explain the importance of the Cuban revolution, and the turning point it represented in modern history for the continuing development of Marxist leadership.

***Working-class axis in the fight  
against imperialist intervention***

Basing the party in the industrial unions is essential to meet the political challenge posed by the need to draw the labor movement into a fight against the war U.S. imperialism is waging today.

The Vietnam War took place during a period of prolonged economic expansion, when there was substantial improvement in living standards for large sections of the U.S. working class. The opposite is now the case. The Central American war is being escalated at a time when the offensive against the working class is producing a deepening class polarization, making it easier to see the class forces that will confront each other in coming battles.

Part of the labor movement has been involved from the beginning in opposing Washington's war moves and will become increasingly so. This will be the case even though the initiative in organizing antiwar actions will initially be held by pacifists, solidarity groups, and others with no particular orientation to the labor movement or the working class.

Under current conditions, calls for action in the streets against the imperialist war will be initiated largely outside the labor movement. Revolutionists actively participate in organizing such protests and seek to build them and guide them insofar as possible along lines that can maximize drawing in union forces and oppressed na-

tionalities. Such an orientation is essential for a revolutionary workers party if opportunities are to be utilized to deepen and broaden the fight in the labor movement against the U.S. war, and build an antiwar movement that will become increasingly proletarian and multinational in its composition and leadership.

By actively participating in all initiatives that mobilize opposition in the streets against the U.S. war in Central America and the Caribbean, the party sets a leadership example for all opponents of that war. We will attract to our ranks young fighters, both inside and outside the unions, who become politicized through the experience of taking to the streets in opposition to a war being waged by their own imperialist government.

### *Proletarian strategy in the struggle for power*

The turn to the industrial unions has also been essential in placing the SWP in a position to be able to learn from the revolutionary experiences in Central America and the Caribbean, and to relearn and absorb the lessons from twenty-five years of experience of socialist revolution in Cuba. These lessons have helped to enrich our own understanding of how the working class will advance along its line of march toward power in the United States and on a world scale. They have helped us more firmly reknit our continuity with the early years of the Communist International, when the Bolsheviks sought to advance the construction of parties in each country oriented to leading the working people in the fight to take power.

In doing so, we are clarifying our understanding that the strategic questions the Cubans, Nicaraguans, Grenadians, and Salvadorans have had to confront are also questions that a revolutionary party in the United States

must answer: How does the proletariat solidify and make lasting its alliance with other working people, especially the exploited farmers? With what kind of government do we propose to replace the capitalist government now in power? How do we prevent day-to-day tactics from becoming separated from, and over time counterposed to, the strategic objective of leading working people in a revolutionary struggle for power?

## **2. Imperialist war drive in Central America and the Caribbean**

**W**ASHINGTON'S EFFORTS to hold back the world revolution now focus on Central America and the Caribbean. This region is today at the center of the battle of our epoch—the battle between the efforts by workers and farmers to establish their own revolutionary regimes in new countries, and the imperialists' determination to prevent this.

In Nicaragua the workers and peasants have taken power away from a landlord-capitalist tyranny, and have established a workers and peasants government. They are advancing—as Cuba did twenty-five years ago—toward the expropriation of the capitalist class, which will open the socialist revolution. That is the road the exploited producers of El Salvador are also fighting to embark on. It is in Central America and the Caribbean that the political example of the revolutionary Marxist leadership of socialist Cuba has its greatest influence among fighters for national liberation, land reform, and workers' rights.

It is for these reasons that Central America and the Caribbean are at the very center of world politics today. The imperialists have no alternative but to fight to reverse

this altered relationship of class forces brought about by the revolutionary advances in the region.

With the support of both political parties of U.S. imperialism, the Pentagon is steadily deepening its military intervention in El Salvador, attempting to defeat the forces of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front and block a revolutionary victory by the FMLN and Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR). The U.S. government is fielding a *somocista* mercenary army to weaken and if possible overthrow the workers and peasants government in Nicaragua. Advances and setbacks for either side in either country deeply affect the struggle in the other.

Washington is trying to convert Honduras into a virtual U.S. military base. It is pushing to transform the entire region, including the U.S. colony of Puerto Rico, into a military staging ground for its counterrevolutionary war.

The October 1983 invasion of Grenada, which followed the overthrow of the Bishop-led workers and farmers government by the Stalinist forces headed by Bernard Coard, marked the first direct use of U.S. military power in the Americas in nearly twenty years. Not since U.S. Marines landed in the Dominican Republic in April 1965 to put down a popular revolution had Washington sent large numbers of U.S. troops into combat in the Americas.

The Coard coup, culminating in the murder of Maurice Bishop and other revolutionary leaders, overthrew the workers and farmers government and handed Grenada to Washington on a silver platter. This was a harsh defeat for the workers and farmers of the entire hemisphere. The reconquering of Grenada by imperialism marks the most important victory Washington has attained in the sustained offensive it has been waging since



the 1979 victories for worker-farmer power in Grenada and Nicaragua.

In the half-decade since 1979 there has been no new revolutionary conquest of power by the workers and farmers anywhere in the world. The pace of the advances in the international struggle against imperialism that marked the latter part of the 1970s—from Indochina to Iran, from Zimbabwe to Nicaragua and Grenada—has not continued. Moreover, in a number of cases the imperialist counteroffensive has registered gains, pushing back earlier advances. In Central America, for example, the 1979 victories initially impelled a step-up in mass struggles by the Guatemalan workers and farmers, as well as progress toward unification of revolutionary forces there. In recent years, however, the escalation of U.S.-backed repression by the Guatemalan regime has resulted in important setbacks for the mass movement in city and countryside.

Nonetheless, Washington has not accomplished its goal of restoring the relationship of class forces that existed prior to 1979 in Central America and the Caribbean. The easy victory for the imperialist invaders of Grenada will not be duplicated in Nicaragua, let alone Cuba. Despite the massive military aid being poured into El Salvador to prop up the regime there, the revolutionary forces—now organized in the FMLN-FDR—remain stronger than they were before the Nicaraguan victory opened a new and more favorable political situation for the Salvadoran workers and peasants.

### *Imperialism's escalating intervention in El Salvador*

The imperialists are determined to prevent a revolution in El Salvador that smashes the landlord-capitalist forces and brings to power a popular revolutionary dictator-

ship—a workers and peasants government. Washington is escalating its intervention in El Salvador to prevent another such historic advance in national liberation from imperialist domination. The U.S. government is propping up the tyranny with arms, military advisers, and money to prevent just such an anticapitalist revolution. It has drawn the Honduran regime into this counterrevolutionary effort. The Israeli government is also a major supplier of arms and ammunition to the Salvadoran generals, serving as a conduit for Washington and at the same time advancing its own imperialist interests in that part of the world.

U.S. imperialism has put to work a team of public relations experts whose job is to paint a democratic mask on the face of the bloody Salvadoran regime. The essential character of this dictatorship has not changed despite the U.S.-organized elections—in which the popular forces are excluded from participation by state-organized terror, and the people are compelled to vote by law backed by assassination squads—and empty pledges by U.S.-picked President Napoleón Duarte to end repression.

The imperialists' surrogate armies cannot do the job. Nor can all the most advanced military technology at their disposal. Nor can faked elections or "land reforms" carried out against the peasantry. The democratic electoral facade imposed by Washington on the Salvadoran oligarchy is part of the political preparation for more direct U.S. military intervention—with more arms and, when necessary, U.S. combat troops.

***Somocista armies incapable of accomplishing objective***

The U.S. imperialists are escalating their efforts to weaken and eventually overthrow the Sandinista-led workers and peasants government in Nicaragua. They are intensify-

ing their diplomatic pressure and blackmail against the Nicaraguan government, with increasing help from their imperialist allies in Western Europe and compliance from neocolonial bourgeois regimes in Latin America. They are organizing and financing the self-proclaimed “democratic” and “labor” opposition forces inside Nicaragua, especially those that rally around the Catholic church hierarchy and the reactionary newspaper *La Prensa*. And they are arming, financing, training, and supplying a large mercenary army of counterrevolutionaries.

The imperialists, however, are face to face with the fact that their hired army of *somocista* forces has failed to take and hold a single city or town that it could use as a center for declaring a provisional government. They have not succeeded in mobilizing a mass following in the urban areas. They have not even been capable of maintaining anywhere in Nicaragua a base of operations in a section of the countryside where they exercise control and can move at will. In short, the imperialists have failed to accomplish their objective of transforming their mercenary war into a civil war that could bring down the Sandinista government.

The CIA-backed *contras* have been prevented by armed workers and peasants from accomplishing any of these objectives, despite abundant U.S. arms and supply shipments, and despite the military advantage of being able to operate with impunity from staging grounds in Honduras and Costa Rica within striking distance of a number of Nicaraguan population centers.

Instead, the *contras*' activities revolve around terrorist raids on economic targets, inflicting heavy economic damage on the Nicaraguan people. The cost in lives and economic resources has been high, but the *somocista* army is being defeated militarily, while failing politically.

The bourgeois opponents of the revolution inside Nicaragua have been emboldened by imperialist support. But they have been unable to take and hold the political offensive, despite the severe economic problems imposed by the CIA-organized terror attacks and the massively financed “disinformation” and destabilization campaigns carried out by the bishops, in the pages of *La Prensa*, and in other ways.

This relationship of forces was clearly registered in the Nicaraguan elections of November 1984. Despite the fact that the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie retains significant property in land and industry and the economy is one in which capitalist property relations remain predominant, it is the workers and peasants who hold the political initiative. As part of its efforts to carry out the bourgeois-democratic tasks of the revolution, the FSLN-led government organized elections for a president, vice-president, and constituent assembly. The Sandinistas challenged the proimperialist forces on the terrain these forces claim as their own, that of liberal bourgeois democracy, and won. The capitalist opposition forces who refused to participate were discredited further. The confidence and organization of the workers and peasants were strengthened.

Defeating the U.S. imperialist aggression remains the overriding task confronting Nicaraguan working people today. The FSLN continues to make advances in organizing the workers and peasants to maintain production, combat the effects of the war, and defend their revolution. The vanguard Nicaraguan workers and peasants are displaying iron determination. They are defending the gains of their revolution against the efforts of their class enemies to restore the rule of the landlords and capitalists, whose hated regime they over-

threw on July 19, 1979. And they are prepared to fight to defend their country—as their parents and grandparents did—against any invasion by the armed forces of U.S. imperialism.

***Cuba: permanent target of imperialism***

The imperialists retain their goal of reversing the socialist revolution in Cuba. That island remains a permanent target of U.S. economic warfare and military might. The Cuban people are subjected to a continuing economic blockade, assassinations and other acts of terror against Cubans abroad, internal sabotage, biological warfare, destabilization efforts organized and inspired by the CIA and their gangs of hired counterrevolutionary Cuban *es-coria*, and military provocations and pressure from Cuban territory still occupied by the United States government at Guantánamo. At all times the Cubans face the reality of this overwhelming military power of Washington, including its nuclear arsenal.

Despite these pressures, the Cubans have refused to retreat from their course of extending aid and solidarity to the peoples of the region who are fighting arms in hand to defend their country, as in Nicaragua, or to overthrow the tyranny under which they live, as in El Salvador and Guatemala. The Cubans understand that every victory against imperialist domination and landlord-capitalist oppression—whatever countermoves by imperialism may be entailed—strengthens the Cuban revolution as well, and enables it to play an even stronger internationalist role.

***War and revolution***

The imperialists will fail in their efforts to turn the tide in Central America and the Caribbean in their favor short

of using U.S. combat troops. But Washington fears the political consequences of this move as long as the revolutionary forces continue to advance, making a quick military victory, such as that in Grenada, unobtainable. A protracted ground war, pitting U.S. troops against the mobilized workers and peasants of Nicaragua or El Salvador, will set uncontrolled forces in motion throughout Latin America and the Caribbean—and right here in the United States.

Such a war will not be restricted to a single country. It will become regional, with unpredictable consequences for imperialist-dominated regimes throughout the Americas. It will become, as the revolutionary leaders of Central America and the Caribbean have warned U.S. imperialism, another Vietnam War.

What is more, as the dead and wounded U.S. soldiers are shipped home, the class conflicts inside the United States over this war will sharpen rapidly and become polarized and radicalized in a way never before seen here in this century.

In addition, the pace of revolutionary struggles elsewhere in the world directly affects what Washington can accomplish in its drive to crush struggles by the workers and peasants of Central America and the Caribbean. As the Cuban leaders explain, their revolution survived its first decade in large part because of Vietnam's tenacious revolutionary struggle against U.S. imperialist domination, which bought crucial time for the Cubans. A worker-farmer victory or major advance by revolutionary forces in Asia, Africa, or elsewhere in the Americas today would again force U.S. imperialism to devote more of its energies and resources to other fronts of the international class struggle.

The imperialists must take these factors into account

as they push forward their war drive against the revolutions in Central America and the Caribbean.

### **3. Objective changes brought about by 1979 victories**

**T**HE 1979 VICTORIES in Grenada and Nicaragua, the deepening of the Cuban revolution in response to these triumphs, and the gains in El Salvador have changed the relationship of class forces in the Americas.

The existence of the Nicaraguan bastion of worker-peasant rule right in the middle of Central America is an impulse to revolutionary organization and action throughout the entire area—from Panama north to Guatemala. It is an inspiring example to anti-imperialist fighters throughout the Americas. While the objective conditions and subjective factors in each of the countries of Central America vary widely, the existence of the Sandinista workers and peasants government on the Central American isthmus changes the framework in which each of these struggles will unfold. The conquest of state power by the Nicaraguan workers and peasants, led by the Sandinista National Liberation Front, means that in order to push back the revolution the imperialists have to do more than just isolate or wear down a mass movement—they must succeed in *overthrowing a state power*, a mighty weapon in the hands of the exploited classes of Nicaragua.

There has also been an objective change in the Caribbean, progress that has been pushed back but not eliminated by the overthrow of the workers and farmers government in Grenada. An advance has been registered in beginning to tie together revolutionary developments in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean with struggles in the English- and French-speaking islands, whose populations

are predominantly Black or East Indian. The Grenada revolution was the biggest single factor in this process.

This transformation has brought to bear the revolutionary influence of the Cuban revolution in a new way on a part of the world previously less affected by it than the Spanish-speaking Americas. The blockade of revolutionary Cuba has been breached at another spot.

The Coard faction's betrayal of the Grenada revolution and imperialism's subsequent invasion and occupation of the island have set back this progress in the Caribbean. Nonetheless, the economic squeeze of international capital on the Caribbean nations will continually undermine social and political stability for proimperialist regimes such as those in Jamaica, Barbados, and throughout the region. As working people resist their imperialist and domestic oppressors and exploiters, the most class-conscious fighters will continue to learn from the lessons of the Grenada revolution and the example of Maurice Bishop. They will look to socialist Cuba.

The advances in the Caribbean have also led to new interest within the United States in the revolutions in the Americas. Through the Caribbean peoples living in the United States, and because of the interconnections between the U.S. Black movement and the struggles of the Black people of the Caribbean islands, these struggles have had greater impact in the United States.

### ***Reaffirmation of the Cuban road***

The 1979 victories in Nicaragua and Grenada were led by forces that shared the revolutionary perspective advanced by the leadership of the Cuban Communist Party: that the road forward is the road to workers and farmers power. The result has been to establish on a broader scale throughout Latin America and the Caribbean the



political authority and attractiveness of Marxism among revolutionary-minded fighters who are striving to find a proletarian strategy.

These victories have been widely seen as a reaffirmation of the “Cuban road”—the revolutionary mobilization of the workers and peasants, led by a conscious vanguard formation, to resolve the central question of every popular revolution in our epoch: the seizing of power and the inauguration of a revolutionary government of the workers and farmers.

For its first twenty years, revolutionary Cuba stood alone in the Americas, the first government to emerge from a successful anticapitalist revolution in this hemisphere. This changed with the victories in 1979. Cuba now stood with Grenada and Nicaragua, and together the “three giants” pointed the way forward for the peoples of all the Americas. This weakened the position of the social democrats, who condemn Cuba as “totalitarian” while trying to dismiss the revolutionary victory there as an exception. It was also a blow to the Stalinists, who combine fulsome public praise for the Cuban revolution with advice to the workers and peasants of their own countries to follow a different road. They also say that the Cuban revolution was possible only due to exceptional circumstances.

The imperialists deliberately seek to misrepresent the influence of revolutionary Cuba’s *example* on workers and farmers beyond its borders, and its unselfish *aid* to many in other countries, as efforts by the Cuban government *to export* its revolution. This lie, used by the imperialists to justify their aggression toward Cuba, was forcefully answered in the Second Declaration of Havana in 1962:

“To the accusation that Cuba wants to export its revolution, we reply: Revolutions are not exported, they are

made by the people.

“What Cuba can give to the people, and has already given, is its example.

“And what does the Cuban revolution teach? That revolution is possible, that the people can make it, that in the contemporary world there are no forces capable of halting the liberation movement of the peoples.”<sup>2</sup>

#### **4. Strengthening proletarian internationalist leadership**

**T**HE VICTORIES in Central America and the Caribbean in 1979 have shown that the Cuban revolution was not unique, but rather the first successful conquest of power by the workers and farmers in the Americas. So too they have shown that the leadership forged by the Cuban revolution was not a historical exception, but a vanguard component of a new leadership of the working class, fighting to apply in practice the principles of communism, converging historically with all those who have attempted to continue along the road charted by the Comintern under Lenin’s leadership. Other parties have now emerged from the revolutionary struggles of the masses of workers and peasants and have proven their capacity to lead those forces to power.

These events have confirmed the historic character of the turning point signaled by the development of the Cuban leadership team. For the first time since the degeneration of the Russian revolution, the world revolution made a mighty advance under the leadership of revolutionary forces that developed outside the Stalinist Communist parties. The battle against the class-collaborationist policies of the Stalinists that the leaders of the July 26 Movement began when they launched their

revolutionary struggle more than thirty years ago has continued to this day. The development of internationalist leaderships in Grenada, Nicaragua, and El Salvador has confirmed that the leadership breakthrough represented by the Cuban victory was—like the Cuban revolution itself—not an exception. A historic stride is being taken toward resolving the crisis of proletarian leadership on a world scale. As the Fourth International anticipated at its founding in 1938, new revolutionary leaderships are developing outside of, and in political counterposition to the strategy of, Stalinist-dominated organizations.

The victories in Cuba, and then in Nicaragua and Grenada, ended the period in which the only parties in power claiming to be proletarian and internationalist were Stalinist parties. This has made it qualitatively harder for the Stalinist movement on a world scale to claim the sole continuity with the revolutionary leadership of the Bolsheviks and the Comintern in Lenin's time. The breach of this claimed monopoly has opened the door to our movement, and to others, to be recognized as legitimate components of the worldwide communist movement that must be built. There is a political convergence between our world current and other revolutionists in the Americas, in the first place the leadership of the Communist Party of Cuba, who are charting a course in practice that leads to reestablishing continuity with the internationalist program and strategy of the Communist International in Lenin's time.

The emergence of these leadership forces has dealt a blow to the imperialists' anticommunist propaganda, which equates communism with Stalinist repression of the workers and farmers, and with the narrow national interests that the Stalinist regimes and parties take as

their framework.

In Nicaragua, the FSLN, with its immense mass support has won authority among a wing of former and some current members of the Nicaraguan Socialist Party (PSN—the traditional Stalinist party in Nicaragua). In El Salvador, a component of the Communist Party there has integrated itself into the FMLN. These processes are similar in some ways to what happened earlier in Cuba, when a majority of the Cuban People’s Socialist Party was politically won after the revolutionary victory to recognize the unchallengeable authority of the central leadership of the July 26 Movement.

These gains in the fight for revolutionary leadership have been furthered by the Cubans’ policy. They have set an example of proletarian internationalism in action in order to point the way forward and mobilize maximum support for revolutionary struggles and regimes.

At the same time, the Cubans have resolutely combated those, even among their “friends,” who fail to understand the decisive role of economic and military aid to the Cuban revolution from the Soviet Union and other Warsaw Pact countries. They have refused to allow a wedge to be driven between Cuba and the Soviet and Eastern European workers states.

### *Deepening proletarianization of leadership*

In the first two years following the January insurrectionary triumph in Cuba, the leadership there successfully mobilized and educated the broad popular masses, leading the revolution forward to the expropriation of capitalist property—the decisive step in consolidating a durable worker-farmer alliance. Since then, the Cuban leadership has gone through a process of deepening proletarianization. It has gained greater political clarity on communist

strategy in the fight of the workers and peasants to take power and then institutionalize it, as they advance the construction of socialism in their own countries and carry out a selfless internationalist course.

Part of this process in Cuba was the fusion of revolutionary proletarian forces, as well as differentiation from those whose trajectory led in a nonproletarian direction. The July 26 Movement went through a number of splits with petty-bourgeois forces who had earlier supported the revolution but who later turned against it, and then politically defeated and split with the petty-bourgeois Stalinist forces around Aníbal Escalante.

The FSLN and the FMLN have had the advantage of benefiting from the earlier experiences, including mistakes, that the Cuban leadership lived through and learned from.

In Nicaragua, the fusion of the three wings into which the FSLN had split was an essential prerequisite for the successful leadership of the insurrection and revolution. The FSLN, too, has seen petty-bourgeois components break away and turn against the revolution. The best known of these is the traitor Edén Pastora, who has been notably unsuccessful in his attempt to lead a “*non-somocista*” counterrevolutionary army to drown the revolution in blood. There will be more defections as the Nicaraguan revolution advances and the class polarization deepens.

In El Salvador, there has been progress toward the fusion of the five groups making up the FMLN. This process was advanced with the decisive rejection by the FMLN of the political and organizational trajectory of Salvador Cayetano Carpio (Marcial). Carpio’s followers have now split from the FMLN, and are hostile to it.

In each case these fusions and the splits necessary

to accomplish them have been part of deepening the roots of these vanguards in the working class, making them more proletarian in composition as well as orientation.

This process has also been part of developing a more thoroughly and consistently proletarian strategy. This includes greater clarity around the need for the working class to lead the broadest possible forces in fighting for a revolutionary democratic program, participating in the daily struggles of the masses with a constant orientation of advancing toward the conquest of power.

In Nicaragua, the Sandinista leaders have deepened their understanding of the lessons to be learned from the experiences of other proletarian revolutionaries in power. They have learned from the experience of the Cuban revolution in the 1960s, including what Fidel Castro has aptly called the “utopian” errors that were made by the Cuban revolutionaries. In correcting these errors, the Cubans absorbed and generalized lessons that have similarities to those the Bolsheviks drew from the period of “war communism,” including the mistakes that were analyzed and corrected when the Bolsheviks adopted the New Economic Policy in 1921. The Nicaraguan revolutionaries, too, have sought to benefit from the lessons of the NEP; the Sandinista-led trade unions have printed and circulated pamphlets containing some of Lenin’s articles and speeches from this period.

By absorbing these lessons, the Cuban leadership, and now the Nicaraguan leadership, have deepened their understanding of the importance of maintaining and strengthening the class alliance between the workers and other exploited producers, especially the peasants.

Proletarianization has also meant a deepening inter-

nationalism. Such an internationalist policy includes understanding the importance of workers and farmers governments establishing solid links with the Soviet Union and with the other workers states. The Cuban leadership has repeatedly and publicly insisted on the responsibility of the more economically developed workers states to provide generous material aid and preferential terms of trade to the workers and farmers governments and workers states that are fighting to overcome the legacy of imperialist domination and develop their national economies, as well as to other countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America that are suffering economic blackmail by international finance capital.

Proletarian internationalist policy is, above all, built on subordinating the narrow national interests of any single country to the advance of the world revolution. It is built on the repudiation of any form of national chauvinism, of selfishness with regard to the struggles of the workers and farmers in other countries, and of efforts to purchase détente with imperialism at the price of renouncing active solidarity with revolutionaries fighting to defeat imperialism.

### **5. Objective weight of the leadership question— El Salvador and Grenada**

**A**T THE CENTER of this deepening proletarianization is a consciousness of the importance and weight of revolutionary working-class leadership. The construction of a proletarian internationalist leadership is essential for the success of the revolution in overturning capitalist political rule, bringing to power a workers and farmers government, and subsequently carrying through the decisive and irreplaceable steps necessary to establish a workers

state through the expropriation of the capitalist class and the establishment of a planned economy. Without a sufficiently strong vanguard, united around a proletarian strategy, revolutionary opportunities will be lost.

The experiences of the revolution in El Salvador and in Grenada provide graphic illustration of the decisive weight of leadership in the advance of the revolutionary process.

In El Salvador, the different groupings that united to form the FMLN have set the goal of creating a single, united vanguard party committed to the mobilization of the workers and peasants behind a revolutionary democratic program in a struggle to topple the landlord-capitalist government. The goal of the guerrilla struggle being waged by the FMLN is to maximize the conditions for a mass insurrectionary upheaval in which the workers and peasants will overthrow the government, destroy its repressive apparatus, and bring to power a popular revolutionary regime, one representing their class interests.

This strategic perspective is the same as the one that guided the central leadership of the July 26 Movement in Cuba. The guerrilla struggle waged by the Rebel Army there helped set the stage for a mass mobilization of the population when the army of the Batista dictatorship began disintegrating as a result of its inability to continue a losing war against the rebel fighters.

In Nicaragua, the armed struggle in the countryside rallied mass support for the FSLN and showed that armed action against the dictatorship was possible. It opened the door to broader urban organization. This prepared the way for the insurrection, when the Nicaraguan masses took history into their own hands and overthrew the government.



Implementing this perspective in El Salvador necessitates a vanguard organization of the working class—a revolutionary party—that is united around this perspective and capable of clearly projecting the road forward to the conquest of political power, while leading the day-to-day struggles of the peasants and workers to constantly clarify and advance toward this objective.

### *Clarification of the differences with Carpio*

An essential step forward in the process toward unification of the big majority of the leadership and cadres of the FMLN into a united vanguard with a revolutionary proletarian perspective has taken place in the last two years. The majority of the People's Liberation Forces (FPL), the largest of the components that formed the FMLN, rejected the political line defended by Salvador Cayetano Carpio, the FPL's central founding leader. Two groups, the Revolutionary Workers Movement (MOR) and the Clara Elisabeth Ramírez Front, which still cling to Carpio's line, subsequently responded to their political defeat by splitting from the FPL and FMLN.

The strategic orientation of the Carpio supporters who have split from the FMLN is to prepare for decades of guerrilla war against the regime. In contrast, the FMLN leadership, while recognizing that an insurrection that can topple the regime is not an immediate prospect, rejects the notion that preparation by the workers and peasants to achieve this goal should be put off to the remote and distant future. It seeks to carry out activity on a day-to-day basis, including renewing mass activity in the urban areas, in order to advance toward the insurrectionary upheaval that can overthrow the U.S.-backed dictatorship.

The Carpio supporters reject this strategy as a guide

to action today. They warn against what they call the FMLN's "short-termist" strategy toward taking power prematurely, before the masses can be organized and educated sufficiently to prepare them to run the country. They counterpose to it what they refer to as the strategy of "prolonged people's war." This term has been used by various organizations in many different countries to refer to quite distinct strategies, but the content given to it by the splitters from the FMLN is an ultraleft and sectarian one. It points away from implementing a strategy today that will hasten the resolution of the central question of the revolution in El Salvador: leading the workers and peasants in an insurrectionary struggle to bring a workers and peasants government to power.

The Carpio loyalists also accuse the FMLN and FDR of preparing to sell out the revolutionary struggle by negotiating a deal that would keep in power a bourgeois government in San Salvador.

On the organizational plane, Carpio and his supporters fought against the process of fusion within the FMLN. While giving lip service to the need for unity, in practice they insisted on maintaining their own political organization and military forces at the expense of the fusion process, thus becoming a barrier to actually moving toward unity. A small layer of these factionalists went so far as to organize the brutal and sadistic assassination of Mélida Anaya Montes (Commander Ana María), who had broken politically with Carpio and was helping to lead the fight for unity of the revolutionary vanguard.

Carpio subsequently committed suicide, after being confronted with the fact that the Nicaraguan government had proof of his involvement in the murder. The FMLN's repudiation of these acts and this line of Carpio's followers marks an advance for the FMLN in

clarifying its political line and progress in the unification of its forces.

***Grenada: the decisive weight of leadership***

The experience of the Grenada revolution from 1979 to 1983 also confirms the decisive weight of revolutionary leadership for the working class and its allies. The example provided by the leadership of Maurice Bishop has not been diminished since his assassination by the betrayers of the Grenada revolution, headed by Bernard Coard. Bishop was both a genuine popular leader of the working people and a Marxist whose political understanding of the line of march of the Grenadian workers and farmers was a decisive element in the victory over the dictatorship of Eric Gairy, and in leading the revolution forward for four years.

In contrast, the political line and practice of the Coard faction within the New Jewel Movement was Stalinist. This faction favored use of bureaucratic and administrative measures in place of the organization and mobilization of the working people, in an attempt to leap over objective problems facing the revolution. It built itself on and attracted those who had lost, or never had, confidence in the capacity of the toilers of Grenada to defend their revolution and those for whom revolutionary victories elsewhere appeared an increasingly remote possibility.

The Coard group functioned as a secret faction, consolidating its position through favoritism and distribution of material privileges. It based itself not on the most oppressed and exploited layers of the working people of the towns and countryside, but on a layer of the governmental and army apparatus and a milieu of their hangers-on.

More than a year prior to the October 1983 events, Coard and his backers had begun engineering the re-

moval of central NJM leaders from leadership positions in the party, replacing them with individuals from their faction. This grouping also fastened its hold on the leadership structures of the National Women's Organisation, National Youth Organisation, and sectors of the trade union movement.

In order to discredit those in the party leadership who resisted their bureaucratic course, Coard's faction claimed that the Grenada revolution under Bishop's leadership had reached a point of perilous social, economic, and political crisis.

Of course, as a former colonial nation oppressed by imperialism, the revolution faced substantial objective difficulties. These included the small size and relative lack of revolutionary political experience of the working class in Grenada; the economic vulnerability of the island to the imperialist-orchestrated campaign to deny loans and financial aid and to curtail important economic income from tourism; the world economic crisis, which compounded the problems of economic development essential to the advance of the revolution; and the calculated work of the CIA to discredit and corrupt.

**D**ESPITE THESE OBJECTIVE OBSTACLES, however, the Grenada revolution was not sliding into a social catastrophe. Actually, the revolution was making important progress. Its economic growth rate was among the highest in the Western Hemisphere, and unemployment was declining. The social conditions and living standards of the working people were improving. Bishop and other revolutionists in the NJM were seeking to institutionalize further the mass organizations and other forms of democratic participation that had emerged in the first years of the

revolution. The revolutionary government enjoyed broad popular support as a result of these achievements.

Nonetheless, the narrow political outlook and administrative methods employed by Coard's followers in the New Jewel Movement and in the mass organizations, together with their bureaucratic practices in various government departments and programs, were taking a mounting toll on the workers and farmers, especially during the last year of the revolution. Sectors of the population, including revolutionary activists, began to become disoriented and demoralized. Participation in the mass organizations began to stagnate or decline, as did the level of popular mobilization in support of the revolution.

In the weeks leading up to its counterrevolutionary bid for power, the Coard faction sought to pin the blame for these problems on Bishop. At the same time, Coard recognized that the big majority of workers and farmers supported the revolution, and that they associated their own conquests and interests with the policies advanced by Bishop.

Thus, Coard's followers systematically organized ways of further demobilizing the revolutionary masses, regardless of the domestic and international consequences for Grenada. They used their position in the army, government, and party to accomplish this, including—in the final weeks before the coup—disarming the militia. Having taken these steps, the Coard faction on October 12, 1983, carried out the coup, placing Maurice Bishop under house arrest. When other leaders of the revolution organized popular resistance, they too were placed under house arrest.

Though demobilized, the working people who had made the revolution were not yet defeated. Protests began to be organized in the streets against the Coard faction's

moves. On October 19, 25- to 30,000 people, more than a quarter of Grenada's population, turned out to demand Bishop's release—proof of the mass backing for the revolution and Bishop's political course. A section of the crowd freed Bishop from house arrest.

Bishop and the leaders who looked to him made an effort to lead this uprising of the people in order to call the Coard clique to order and restore to office the women and men who had led the workers and farmers government and had inspired the construction of a new Grenada. But this effort was drowned in blood. The Coard faction ordered armed units to fire into the crowd, killing many. Then in cold blood it murdered Bishop and other leaders of the revolutionary government.

The workers and farmers government that had come to power in March 1979 was overthrown.

**T**HE COARD COUP, with its heinous culmination, was the decisive act that opened the door to the U.S. invasion of Grenada and the ongoing imperialist occupation of that country. The imperialists' goal was to establish their domination of the island and claim a "victory" that would make it politically easier to introduce U.S. troops into combat in Central America in the future. Without the Coard-organized counterrevolution, the U.S. rulers could not have achieved this goal in October 1983. Had the workers and farmers government not been overthrown from within, a U.S. invasion as part of the deepening imperialist war in the region would have met the resistance of Grenada's working people and their internationalist Cuban allies.

The Coard faction, in pursuing its counterrevolutionary course, had gained room to maneuver because of

the relatively small size of the revolutionary proletarian leadership team around Bishop in the New Jewel Movement.

This limitation could have been overcome only by drawing into the leadership of the government and the party the most conscious and combative leaders stepping forward in the mass organizations and in the workplaces. However, the Coard faction organized to block this by imposing drastic restrictions on recruitment to the party. This had prevented the party from growing much beyond 300 full and candidate members at the time of the overthrow. The Coard group thus guaranteed that the emerging revolutionary vanguard of the workers and farmers would be only minimally integrated into the leadership of the revolution, thereby consolidating its own position in the party and government apparatus.

The overthrow of the government and the subsequent invasion by the imperialists was not the necessary outcome of the revolution. The Grenada revolution was not a utopian adventure that could have ended only in defeat. It is precisely because the outcome was not inevitable that vanguard fighters have emphasized so strongly the criminal role played by the Stalinist faction headed by Bernard Coard, whose treachery was decisive for the imperialist victory.

However, once the Coard faction carried out its counterrevolutionary coup against the workers and farmers government, almost completely demobilizing and demoralizing the big majority of the Grenadian workers and farmers, it *was* inevitable that the imperialists would invade the island. They succeeded in brutally putting down the scattered, unorganized, and ineffective resistance from the courageous but leaderless Grenadian defenders of the revolution, as well as the heroic and disciplined

resistance of the Cuban construction workers.

The current preparations for a show trial of Coard and other former members of the New Jewel Movement by the U.S.-backed government of Grenada are aimed at discrediting the Grenada revolution, justifying the criminal invasion and occupation, and strengthening the legitimacy of the puppet government.

### *Acid test for revolutionaries on a world scale*

The events in Grenada have been an acid test for all revolutionaries on a world scale. For many petty-bourgeois radical currents in the imperialist countries, the events in Grenada are of passing interest at most. This giant revolution in a small island inhabited by Black people did not appear to them to have much to do with the main line of march of the world revolution. They could not have been more mistaken. They reacted to the overthrow of the workers and farmers government led by Maurice Bishop as unfortunate confirmation of their view that not much could be hoped for from the Grenada revolution.

Some Stalinist parties in the Americas responded to the Coard coup and the murder of Bishop and other Grenadian leaders by defending the course of the Coard faction, with which they were identified politically and which they had helped to promote and organize. Some even identified themselves with the anti-Bishop slanders used to cover up the assassination of the leadership. Others remained cautiously silent for a number of days.

In face of the revulsion among the international working-class vanguard at the murder of Bishop, however, these forces have shifted their approach. While still echoing the charges against Bishop and covering up the role played by the Coard faction, they now seek to identify themselves with the legacy of Bishop.



In sharp contrast, the Cuban leadership has spread the truth about the events in Grenada on a world scale. They have explained the role played by the Coard faction. They have educated about the accomplishments of the Grenada revolution under the leadership of Bishop.

At the same time the Cubans have taken the lead in organizing a united-front campaign to demand that U.S. imperialism end its occupation of Grenada. They have worked to prevent even the deepest disagreements over evaluation of the events in Grenada from being used to precipitate the kind of public clashes that would narrow this united front.

The Cubans have provided leadership to the defenders of the Grenada revolution in helping them to understand and draw political lessons from the defeat, and helping to provide a perspective for continuing the fight, beginning with opposition to the continuing U.S. occupation of the island. In Grenada itself, this political course by the Cuban Communists has been important for those survivors of the New Jewel Movement leadership team around Bishop who are today organizing to build the Maurice Bishop Patriotic Movement. This organization places the demand for an immediate withdrawal of all U.S. forces in the forefront of its program.

Central to the considerations of the Cuban leadership in responding to the U.S. invasion was exacting the biggest political price possible from the imperialists for their invasion. The goal was to buy time for the fighters in El Salvador, for the revolutionary government in Nicaragua, and for Cuba itself, by slowing down the imperialist move toward direct military intervention in Central America and the Caribbean. The Cuban workers on Grenada fought heroically to accomplish this objective. They refused to surrender even though they were hope-

lessly outnumbered and outgunned. They gave up their lives in order to give the imperialists—and the world—a taste of what U.S. forces will face should they decide to invade Nicaragua or Cuba, where workers and farmers governments are organizing and leading the revolutionary population in arms.

### ***Echo of early years in Cuba***

The functioning of the Coard faction was similar to that of a Stalinist faction that had been formed in the early years of the Cuban revolution. Headed by Aníbal Escalante, it had tried to seize control of the party and government apparatus, using bureaucratic and administrative methods against the workers and peasants, and dispensing privileges to its supporters. Had the Cuban revolutionary leadership not been able to smash this factional operation, what happened in Grenada would have happened in Cuba twenty years before.

The importance with which the Cubans view this political question is indicated by the unusual step taken by Fidel Castro in publicly criticizing the Cuban embassy staff in Grenada for failure to accurately assess and report what was happening in Grenada. In an interview with a *Newsweek* reporter, Castro said that “with all the personnel we had in the embassy there, we did not know the split was taking place. That is the greatest criticism that we must make of our own political, diplomatic, and military aid personnel. We did not have any idea what was happening.”<sup>3</sup>

As a result of their response to the Grenada events, the Cuban leaders won international respect and admiration. Many working people today, especially throughout the Caribbean, understand more clearly than before the revolutionary role of the Cuban leadership in world politics.

This has increased the authority of the Cuban revolution in the Caribbean, in sectors of the Black movement in the United States, and among internationalist workers everywhere.

Pathfinder Press included the major public statements on the Grenada events by Fidel Castro and the Cuban CP in the book *Maurice Bishop Speaks*, published in December 1983. Our movement acted rapidly to get out this collection and circulate it as widely as possible, in order to provide a political weapon for all those working to explain the truth about Grenada. In addition to speeches by the outstanding central leader of the revolution, the book also contains an introduction explaining the accomplishments of the Grenadian workers and farmers government and some key lessons to be drawn in light of its overthrow.

In the latter half of 1984, Coard's apologists stepped up their political offensive aimed at rewriting the history of the Grenada revolution and distorting its actual lessons. In the Caribbean the lead is being taken, as it has been since October 1983, by the Workers Party of Jamaica. In Grenada, a pro-Coard organization has re-emerged declaring itself the true continuator of the New Jewel Movement.

In addition, in Britain a group of Grenadians, other Caribbean radicals, and members of the Communist Party of Great Britain have joined in the effort to propagate Coard's line. Among other things, they have published another collection of Bishop's speeches, entitled *In Nobody's Backyard* (London: Zed Press, 1984). Unlike *Maurice Bishop Speaks*, this volume contains none of the statements by the Cuban CP and its leaders, and the introduction does not even inform readers of the Cuban CP's position. Instead, while claiming to hold Bishop in

high esteem as a revolutionary figure, the introduction repeats the Coard faction's slanders against him.

This underlines the importance of continuing to broaden circulation of *Maurice Bishop Speaks* to revolutionary-minded workers and farmers in this country, in the Caribbean, and around the world. This will aid us in our work of mobilizing the broadest possible opposition to the U.S. imperialist war drive in Central America and the Caribbean, including opposition to the continuing U.S. occupation of Grenada.

### III. THE CARTER-REAGAN TAKEBACK DECADE: EVOLUTION OF THE BIPARTISAN RULING-CLASS OFFENSIVE SINCE THE 1974–75 RECESSION

#### 1. The attack on the labor movement

**O**VER THE PAST DECADE the employers' antilabor offensive has escalated from selective assaults on particular unions—for example, the probe against the United Mine Workers in 1977–78, which was rebuffed; the takeback contract imposed by the owners and the government on United Auto Workers members at Chrysler in 1979; and the successful bipartisan union-busting attack on the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Organization two years later—into a sustained, generalized attack on the largest and strongest industrial unions.

Picking a fight to impose a takeback contract has become standard operating procedure for the employers as they cut ever more deeply into past union gains. Two-tier contracts institutionalizing permanent divisions among workers within the unions are becoming more frequent. Work rules codifying what little workers control the ranks

have won over job conditions are being gutted. Moreover, as growing numbers of workers have begun to recognize, the aim of the bosses is not just to ram concessions down their throats but to cripple their unions—and where the relationship of forces allows, to break them. If the bosses cannot yet get rid of the union, they try to act most of the time as if it did not exist.

Setbacks and defeats for the unions continue to outnumber advances or victories. Nonetheless, this mounting onslaught by the employers has not gone unchallenged. There have been strike battles—some, such as the Greyhound strike and the strike against General Motors in Canada, that have pushed back the degree of success of the bosses' offensive; others that have ended in setbacks or defeats, such as the strike against the Phelps Dodge copper mines in southern Arizona and the strike against AP Parts in Toledo, Ohio. These strikes have been marked by militant mass actions by the workers and by their courageous efforts to defend themselves and to seek active solidarity from other workers and union members. Whatever the outcome, these struggles have shown both the combativity of the ranks and their capacity to fight.

It is not only those directly involved in these defensive battles who are learning a little more about the coming ferocity of the class struggle. Millions of workers—whose own unions, wages, and job conditions are under fire—follow news of the most explosive struggles and their outcomes. They feel solidarity with these fights and think about the implications these fights have for themselves.

The response in the ranks has demonstrated a readiness to undertake solidarity actions whenever given a way to do so through their unions. What is lacking is a labor leadership capable of using the power and resources of

the unions to organize solidarity.

Another front of the capitalist austerity offensive has been the bipartisan cutbacks in government social spending. These measures have further reduced the real income and social security of working people. This brutality is felt especially in the most weakly unionized and unorganized sectors of the working class. The cuts deepen differentiations and inequality among workers, coming down hardest on working-class women; Blacks, Latinos, and other oppressed nationalities; and retired working people.

### *The struggle of farmers*

Working farmers are targeted by the rulers' drive to make them shoulder the burden of capitalist stagnation and of the market anarchy faced by small producers. Income from farming remains too low to enable family farms to meet the rising costs of land, equipment, seeds, fuel, fertilizer, and loans. The squeeze on these debt slaves is being tightened by the banks; the land speculators and real estate sharks; and the seed, fertilizer, food processing, farm equipment, and energy monopolies. Washington's policies are designed to benefit the capitalist farmers and big food processors and merchants. They do little or nothing to free exploited working farmers from the scourge of foreclosures, land dispossession, and repossession of tools, livestock, and machinery.

The working class has a direct stake in the resistance of exploited farmers against this ruinous proletarianization. The larger the number of working farmers who succeed in this struggle, the stronger will be the worker-farmer alliance, which is essential to the advance toward a socialist revolution in this country. The more solid this alliance, the easier it will be to feed and clothe the popu-

lation in a socialist United States. And the firmer will be the foundation on which to increase farm output to meet the needs of working people worldwide.

The goal of communists is not the transformation of exploited independent commodity producers into proletarians, either before or after the revolutionary conquest of power and expropriation of the bourgeoisie. Our goal is the voluntary collaboration of all producers in discovering and developing the most labor-efficient and environmentally sound methods of cooperative and collective agricultural production, as part of constructing a socialized economy.

### *Who has gained*

Not everyone in the United States is suffering from the changing structure of the capitalist economy and the union-busting and cutback policies of the employers and their two parties. It is not only the tiny handful of America's ruling "sixty families" who are profiting, nor even just the broader class of capitalists. Tens of millions of people in the middle-class and professional layers also directly benefit from government social policies, tax breaks, and support for the employers' antilabor offensive. The evolution of the more and more parasitic capitalist economy in the United States—whose rulers have become the world's usurers—has bred millions more lawyers, business executives, supervisory and management personnel, insurance and banking executives, real estate speculators, medical profiteers, high-salary salesmen, and specialized merchants pandering to the expensive tastes of the newly well-heeled.

These layers have done well during the past decade. There has been a shift in the distribution of income and wealth to their advantage relative to working people.

For the working-class majority, on the other hand, real wages have been declining for more than a decade, with no prospect of any sustainable turnaround. Long-term unemployment and underemployment hovers at the highest levels since the beginning of World War II, even with the significant creation of jobs during the current rising phase of the business cycle. There remains an enormous gap between the average income of Black and white, and between the average wages of male and female. Within many different industries and among many different employers, the gap between wages for men and women doing comparable work remains wide.

The growth and self-confidence of the large middle-class layer provides a social base of support in the United States to the bipartisan rightward shift of capitalist politics. It is among this layer that the big coupon clippers find the firmest backing for union busting; attacks on affirmative action; slashing welfare and social payments; cutting back funds for public education, health care, and housing; and shifting more of the tax burden onto working people.

### ***The labor aristocracy***

A layer of workers who have relatively high incomes and high seniority or job-trust situations can also be won to support such reactionary policies. This variegated layer exists in the industrial unions themselves—from steel mills to garment shops. Unlike the middle-class and professional layers, however, the class interests of this labor aristocracy are in contradiction to the interests of the bosses. While these workers enjoy relatively short-term and temporary privileges and benefits when “their” employers do well in relation to capitalist competitors at home and abroad, the course of the capitalist govern-



ment and the inexorable laws of capitalist competition run counter to their longer-term interests and to the historical interests of their class.

For some workers who are part of this labor aristocracy, however, their *temporary* interests can last a long time. This makes them vulnerable to accepting the illusion spread by the bosses and their lieutenants in the labor bureaucracy that the workers' interests lie with the fate of "their" company, "their" industry, and "their" government. Nonetheless, along with the rest of their class, these workers are exploited. Their jobs remain insecure. Attacks by the government and the employers against the less-privileged, more easily laid-off sections of the working class drag down the wages, conditions, and job security of all workers over time, and weaken their unions.

Today, the bosses' antilabor offensive is posing these facts of the class struggle in stark and sometimes brutal ways for growing numbers of the relatively better-off workers whose aristocratic position in the labor movement provides the material foundation for their being the stable base of support in the unions for the bureaucracy and its class-collaborationist policies. The bosses' offensive and the combative response to it by the younger workers will shake up these labor aristocrats. The various "middle class" illusions of many of these workers will be weakened, as fringe benefit concessions, automatic wage hikes, and job security that many had come to expect and rely on are pulled out from under them. Such changes will lead to divisions within these layers. Some will become convinced that their interests and those of their class lie in supporting struggles against the employers, based on solidarity among all the exploited, rather than in continued support for the bureaucracy's collaboration with the exploiters, which is based on deepening

the divisions among the workers.

Above all, it is important to understand that in this process it is the initiatives of the young and oppressed workers—those whose temporary and historic class interests much more closely coincide—that will be decisive, and it is to them that revolutionaries in the unions turn their attention. Decisive actions by these workers will be the source and driving power for the class-struggle unity and solidarity that must be forged.

## 2. The ruling-class offensive abroad

**E**FFORTS BY the U.S. capitalists to increase their long-term rate of profit do not stop at this country's borders. Backed by the enormous size of the U.S. economy and Washington's massive military power, the owners of big banks and monopolies and their government wield economic policies as weapons in the intensifying inter-imperialist competition with Japanese, German, and other capitalists. Finance capital is a growing parasite on the peasants and workers of the colonial and semicolonial world, as it sucks an increasing portion of the wealth they produce out of their countries and into the vaults of the U.S. ruling families.

The imperialist debt squeeze—organized through the banks themselves, the International Monetary Fund, and other agencies—presses the capitalist and landlord rulers in the semicolonial countries to impose increasingly brutal austerity measures to extract additional surplus value from the producers, and to stiffen repression and terror against any resistance by peasants and workers. The U.S. imperialists' goal is to turn the toilers of the world into the debt slaves of finance capital.

The foundation of the bipartisan foreign policy of

the U.S. ruling class is the determination to crush peasant and worker rebellions against the devastating effects on their lives of such imperialist usury and profiteering. This is true above all where insurgency threatens to develop into popular insurrections that can overthrow the landlord-capitalist oligarchies that guard imperialist interests.

### ***Bipartisan war policy***

Nowhere today is the bipartisan character of U.S. foreign policy more evident than in the rapidly growing U.S. military intervention in Central America and the Caribbean.

As shown by repeated votes in the Senate and House of Representatives, the Democrats and Republicans stand united in their commitment to halt any further conquest of state power by the workers and peasants. With congressional support, both the Carter and Reagan administrations have taken steps to try to prevent a revolutionary victory in El Salvador and to weaken, subvert, and, if possible, overthrow the workers and peasants government in Nicaragua. There is bipartisan agreement that the October 1983 invasion of Grenada, and the continuing occupation of that country, have been "necessary."

In addition, the two capitalist parties team up to adopt budgets to finance the massive nuclear and nonnuclear arms build-up. They back deployment of land and naval forces to Lebanon and elsewhere in the Middle East. They continue to finance the economic blockade and mercenary attacks on the peoples of Vietnam, Kampuchea, and Laos. And they continue to back the apartheid regime in South Africa and cover up for its aggression.

Liberals and reformists attempt to obscure this bipartisan character of U.S. foreign policy by pointing to

divided votes in Congress over one or another war appropriations bill or weapons system. The scam is to draw attention to something that some capitalist politicians did not vote for, in hopes that people will not notice what the two capitalist parties *did* vote for. Some politicians vote against sending a particular number of additional troops to Honduras right now, but in favor of sending a slightly smaller number—and later vote for an appropriations bill to finance the whole thing. They vote against one weapons system, but for another one.

The bipartisan framework leaves ample room for individual “progressive” and even “socialist” Democrats, who sometimes vote contrary to the big majority of their colleagues. In fact, the capitalist parties hold up such “mavericks” as proof of the legitimacy of their rigged political setup.

Within this framework, tactical cleavages in the ruling-class parties help increase opportunities to mobilize opposition in the streets to imperialist war moves. Antiwar demonstrations, which in their large majority will be initiated by groups and coalitions outside the unions, will play an increasingly vital and irreplaceable role in advancing the fight against Washington’s bipartisan war policy in Central America and the Caribbean. Such street actions are objectively anti-imperialist. They provide an opportunity for all opponents of the war to help bring the working class and oppressed nationalities into the leadership of the battle to defend the right of the Central American and Caribbean peoples to determine their own future, free from domination by the United States rulers.

As a by-product, such demonstrations will also generate the most effective political pressure on the Democratic and Republican warmakers in Congress and the

White House. However, the strategy of subordinating such mobilizations to lobbying to try to affect the outcome of votes in Congress, and tailoring demands to fit the program of capitalist “peace” candidates, can only be an obstacle to the fight against the deepening imperialist war.

### **3. Attacks on democratic rights and equality**

**T**HE CAPITALIST AUSTERITY OFFENSIVE and drive toward war in Central America go hand in hand with assaults on democratic rights and on any progress toward social equality in this country.

But these attacks run up against the gigantic conquests that the working class and the oppressed nationalities achieved through determined struggles from the second half of the 1950s through the early 1970s. These conquests began with the rise of the civil rights movement nearly thirty years ago, and continued through the fight against the Vietnam War from the mid-1960s through the early 1970s and the rise of the women’s movement toward the end of the latter period.

Through these struggles, the workers and farmers destroyed the legalized structure of Jim Crow segregation. Democratic rights—such as free speech, the right to equal protection under the law, the right to organize political associations free from government interference and regulation, and the right to protection against arbitrary cop searches and arrests—were strengthened and codified in a series of court rulings reinforcing the Bill of Rights. The right to privacy was extended as a constitutional right, most notably in the 1973 Supreme Court decision establishing the right of women to abortion. Affirmative action—a new conquest previously consid-

ered unthinkable—was institutionalized to one degree or another in many industries, in education, and in government employment.

These conquests transformed the relationship of forces in the United States between the rulers and the exploited and oppressed. They changed the consciousness of tens of millions.

A Jim Crow army, where Blacks fought and died but were segregated into second-class units, often service battalions assigned the dirtiest and, frequently, most dangerous duties—a social reality that continued right up to the Korean War—seems so remote as to be inconceivable today.

As recently as the mid-1960s, members of the Young Socialist Alliance were put on trial for the “crime” of organizing a meeting in Bloomington, Indiana, to hear a speech on the fight for Black rights by a YSA leader. They were charged with conspiring to overthrow the state of Indiana by force and violence. Around the same time, leaders of the Communist Party were still facing charges for refusing to register the CP with the government as a “subversive” organization and turn over the names of all Communist Party members. Even as recently as the early 1970s, government workers, such as Post Office employees, could still be fired from their jobs for being members of the SWP or other socialist organizations.

**T**HE VICTORIES FOR DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS won beginning in the latter part of the 1950s have transformed this country. All of these gains are under attack, but they have not been reversed. Mighty class battles will take place before that can be decided.

Women’s right to abortion is being increasingly re-

stricted, including through right-wing terrorist violence against abortion clinics, fueled by the antiabortion and anti-women's rights propaganda of the capitalist politicians and the Catholic church hierarchy. But the Supreme Court ruling affirming the right to abortion has not been overturned. School desegregation through busing and other means is under attack in many cities, but the bulk of the gains won in the past three decades have not been reversed. The rights of prisoners and those accused by the cops of crimes have been pushed back, but they still remain stronger than before the 1960s. Open housing ordinances and employment codes banning discrimination against homosexuals have been rescinded in numerous cities, but victories have been won in others, and class consciousness concerning gay rights has been qualitatively transformed.

The past decade has been marked by rising anti-working-class police brutality, especially against Blacks and other oppressed nationalities, as well as by the increased use of cops and other government armed forces against striking workers. Employers increasingly use scabs and professional strikebreaking outfits. The rightward thrust of capitalist politics encourages national chauvinism, racism, and anti-Semitism, and gives an impetus to violent attacks by racist, anti-women's rights, and ultraright groups.

The adoption of new anti-immigrant legislation such as the proposed Simpson-Mazzoli bill would rationalize and encourage intensified superexploitation of immigrant workers and stepped-up deportations aimed at intimidating the foreign-born. This reactionary legislation would be a blow to the United Farm Workers and other agricultural laborers' unions. It will also increase racist discrimination, especially in hiring, against Latino, Asian, and Caribbean workers, those who speak a lan-

guage other than English, and those who speak English without an “American” accent. Enactment of such a bill would also be a step toward a mandatory worker identity card that would give the bosses and the political police an additional weapon to use against every union activist and against the labor movement as a whole.

This assault on the rights of workers who are immigrants or whose first language is not English is accompanied by a sustained effort to cut back funding for bilingual, bicultural education.

Another racist attack was the recent federal court decision blocking attempts by Japanese-Americans to finally win some redress for the rounding up of tens of thousands of West Coast Japanese-Americans during World War II; the expropriation of their homes, businesses, and farms; and their internment in concentration camps.

The U.S. government denies the right of asylum to tens of thousands of refugees from U.S.-backed dictatorships around the world. Washington insists on its right to deny foreign-born opponents of U.S. policies—such as Héctor Marroquín, a leader of the SWP who is fighting deportation—the right to live and work in the United States.

The government increasingly uses discriminatory provisions of the immigration laws to deny visas on political grounds. Along the same lines, the Supreme Court has upheld the denial of the right of U.S. residents to travel to Cuba, openly justifying such restrictions as necessary to imperialist foreign policy.

In addition, the ruling class has reinstated the death penalty. It is once again employing this barbaric weapon to terrorize working people, especially Blacks and other oppressed nationalities.

The government has concocted a series of highly publicized trials of accused “spies”—the greatest number



of espionage cases at any one time in the history of the country. The purpose of these cases is to bolster the rulers' anticommunist propaganda, to intensify prejudices against foreign-born people, and to set additional legal precedents for denying to the accused such constitutional guarantees as the right to bail. These indictments and trials are also aimed at paving the way for further restrictions on the rights of workers and their unions in plants producing weapons and other material for war. These plants are governed by undemocratic "security clearance" provisions that weaken the labor movement and give the bosses, in collaboration with the political police, greater leverage to single out militant workers for harassment and firing and to restrict union say over workers' rights and conditions on the job.

All the while, the world's greatest terrorist, Washington, is moving ahead on multiple fronts at home to reassert its "right" to spy on, harass, and disrupt unions, Black organizations, antiwar and solidarity coalitions, women's rights organizations, socialist groups, and other opponents of ruling-class policies—all under the banner of fighting "terrorism."

**T**WO CENTRAL LEGAL BATTLES in the fight for democratic rights are ongoing cases in which the SWP is directly involved. The first is the party's lawsuit against the FBI, CIA, INS, and other government secret police agencies. The suit demands a halt to decades-long government attempts to disrupt the functioning of the party, to the use of government stool pigeons to infiltrate the party, and to cop spying on and harassment against members and supporters of the party and the Young Socialist Alliance. The party is also demanding that the judge declare a wide

range of repressive legislation used against the SWP—including the thought-control Smith Act, the Voorhis Act, and the anticommunist provisions of U.S. immigration laws—to be unconstitutional. Despite the fact that this case went to trial in 1981, the judge has still refused to rule. The ruling in this case will set an important precedent on a broad range of constitutional questions.

The second ongoing case, in which the SWP is a defendant, involves a disruption operation carried out against the party by a lawyer for Los Angeles County, Alan Gelfand, in collaboration with his backers in a British outfit known as the “Workers Revolutionary Party,” and its U.S. operation, the “Workers League.” The WL-WRP operation is being carried out with the connivance of the Los Angeles law firm of Fisher & Moest, and the acquiescence of federal judge Mariana Pfaelzer. With their help, Gelfand and the WL-WRP are using a disruption lawsuit, claiming that the SWP has been taken over by the FBI, to tie up the party in court—so far for five years. Through this lawsuit they are draining party finances and seeking to establish the right of the courts to supervise the internal decision-making processes of a voluntary political association, including its right to elect its own leadership and determine its own policies. Despite the fact that Judge Pfaelzer was compelled to admit in March 1983, after Gelfand had put on his entire case, that he had failed to offer “a single shred” of evidence to substantiate his slanderous accusation, she still has refused to rule on the case, including on the SWP’s motion to force Gelfand and Fisher & Moest to pay the party’s attorney fees and legal expenses.

The future course of both of these cases will affect the rights not just of the SWP and the YSA, but of all those fighting against imperialist war, for social equality, and

democratic rights. The party will continue its efforts to mobilize support both throughout the United States and internationally for these ongoing battles.

#### **4. Political and ideological reflections in the petty-bourgeois liberal and radical left**

**A**S THE CAPITALIST PARTIES and politicians have moved to the right over the past decade, they have dragged in their wake the big majority of the petty-bourgeois liberal and radical left wing in the United States.

One example of this phenomenon is the noisy rallying to open anti-Sovietism and anticommunism by well-known liberal and radical writers, professors, and journalists. In various combinations, those in the “democratic left” milieu have lent their voices to the rising chorus warning of the alleged Soviet threat to U.S. “interests” in Central America and the Caribbean. They are more and more lining up against the Nicaraguan revolution and in support of the “democratic” wing of the anti-Sandinista opposition and even, in some cases, the *contra* mercenary army.

These “democratic socialists” have placed themselves firmly in the camp of “democratic” imperialism against all the workers states and workers and farmers regimes. When they oppose aspects of U.S. foreign policy in Central America or elsewhere, they are quick to explain that their chief concern is to better defend U.S. “national security” against the “totalitarian enemy.” Many have sought to give renewed legitimacy to the spy scare trials of the 1950s that led to the legalized murder of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg and the imprisonment of Alger Hiss.

Most have turned their backs on the Cuban revolution, writing it off as little different from the bureau-

cratized regimes in the Soviet Union and China, which they see as worse than “democratic” imperialism. They deplore the supposed restrictions on democratic rights of Nicaraguans attempting to overthrow the Sandinista regime. Many openly state that Iran was better off under the shah. They refuse to campaign against “democratic” imperialism’s efforts to economically strangle and militarily harass Vietnam, Kampuchea, and Laos.

Those on the petty-bourgeois left who seek to rebut these reactionary positions have also been pulled to the right under pressure of the sustained bourgeois public opinion offensive and the deepening class polarization. Many are unwilling to defend the Cuban revolution and its proletarian leadership, echoing in less extreme forms charges leveled by its open enemies. These radicals refuse to take the “national security” question head on. They refuse to explain that U.S. working people have no common interests whatsoever with the imperialist rulers of this country, but instead have a direct class interest in defending the Soviet Union and other workers states against imperialist pressure and threats, and are class allies of the working people and revolutionary leaderships of Cuba and Nicaragua.

**T**HESE MIDDLE-CLASS RADICALS are less and less inclined even to try to combat anti-Sovietism and anticommunism. Most refuse to distinguish in any way between the bureaucratic misleaders of the Soviet workers state, and the workers state itself, which remains a mighty conquest of the international working class.

They support anticommunist pacifism in the USSR and Eastern Europe, and more and more present the church as a progressive force in these workers states. They call

for the imperialist powers of Europe to adopt a “neutral” stand between the Soviet Union and the United States, rather than seek to advance the fight of the workers and farmers—from Britain to Austria, and from Portugal to Sweden—to *overthrow* the capitalist rulers in their own countries.

At best they place an equal-sign between what they call the two “superpowers”—the Soviet workers state and the imperialist United States—calling “equally” on each to unilaterally disarm their nuclear arsenals. These pacifist and “third camp” positions play into the hands of the imperialist warmakers.

In the same vein, most of those on the U.S. left who have sought to rebut the anticommunist ideological offensive around the “spy trials” of the McCarthy era have themselves ended up lending credence to the capitalists’ own framework of patriotism, loyalty, “national security,” and the proclaimed class neutrality of the courts. In this they echo the ruling class’s current propaganda campaign around the spate of espionage cases now going on.

Where the capitalists and their apologists insist that the Rosenbergs were “guilty,” the middle-class radicals accept the rulers’ framework that in order to defend the victims of the witch-hunt they have to be “proven” innocent. They thus retreat from defending even the bourgeois-democratic guarantee that we are innocent *until proven guilty*. These radicals, especially the large number who earn their living as academics or journalists, cover this political retreat with the claim that they are simply following the search for objective history—as though “History” is an eternal truth standing above and separated from contending class interests and the struggle between them, and as though writing about it releases the author from political responsibility.

What gets covered up in the process is that these trials were political trials aimed at intimidating and terrorizing opponents of the U.S. invasion of Korea and silencing class-struggle militants in the unions, supporters of Black equality, and all other opponents of imperialist policies. They were aimed at outlawing the political position that working people in the United States have a stake in the defense of the Soviet Union against imperialism.

These truths about the Rosenbergs' trial lead to conclusions that are too far-reaching for the petty-bourgeois left. They try to meet the accusers, prosecutors, and executioners of the Rosenbergs on the capitalist rulers' own terms, and as a result the true guilty party—the anti-working-class, anti-Bill of Rights bourgeois legal system—gets off the hook. Elementary questions such as the right to a trial by one's peers, working-class solidarity with *all* victims of class justice, and the function of the capitalist courts as instruments not of justice but of capitalist repression—barely get raised, if at all.

A sign of how far the petty-bourgeois radicals have retreated from solidarity with all victims of capitalist “justice” is the stunning fact that the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* have been virtually alone on the left in this country in their consistent defense of Kathy Boudin and the other Brink's case defendants. The defendants' democratic rights to a fair trial, including the right to bail, have been systematically denied as the capitalist prosecutors, cops, and judges—joined by the press—engaged in an orgy of “terrorist”-baiting and worked overtime to set legal precedents for denial of rights to politically active defendants. The FBI and local cops have tried to extend their “terrorist” smear to the SWP as well. The very day of the Brink's arrests saw a highly publicized attempt by the FBI to directly link the SWP to this case, falsely claiming

that one of the alleged participants in the robbery was a prominent member of the SWP.

The cops and the courts have also systematically persecuted supporters of independence for Puerto Rico, using everything from sedition indictments to grand jury inquiries to railroad dozens to long prison terms. The revolutionary movement in the United States places a special priority on defense of all fighters for Puerto Rican independence. Only by firm and unyielding championing of independence for the most important direct colony of the United States, and unconditional defense of the rights of all those who fight for Puerto Rican independence, can the revolutionary party in the United States strengthen the fight against our own imperialist rulers.

### *Prettying up the church*

There is also a growing trend among middle-class radicals to discover or rediscover religion for themselves, or to become apologists for religion and make political peace with the church. Some paint up the virtues of so-called liberation theology as if it were a revolutionary theory deserving workers' consideration.

Marxists reject the notion that religious institutions play a historically progressive role in the revolutionary struggle of the working class and oppressed to replace capitalism with socialism. Religious institutions today are instruments of class oppression.

Systems of religious dogma are reactionary and mystifying. They serve to keep the oppressed and exploited subservient and ignorant of their own class interests. They are an obstacle to working people understanding the nature and role of the ideology of their class enemies, which includes religion.

Deepgoing class conflicts, national liberation strug-

gles, and revolutionary upheavals transform the thinking of broad layers of society, including working people who retain elements of their religious beliefs and even individual members of the clergy closest to the toilers in their own class origins and day-to-day life.

Workers and farmers often carry religious beliefs, along with other ideological obstacles, into struggles against the landlords and the capitalists, but this does not make these religious struggles. They are *class* battles. Revolutionary aspirations of the oppressed are sometimes cloaked in religious forms, but that cloak remains an obstacle to the development of the political class consciousness necessary to battle all the way either to national liberation from imperialist domination or to the elimination of capitalist exploitation and oppression.

Working people develop political class consciousness not because of, but in spite of, religious beliefs. Through their class-struggle experiences they shake off the various forms of mystification that are rampant under class society in which commodity fetishism is generalized. Scientific socialism is not beyond the understanding of workers and farmers. To the contrary, it is the expression of, and a necessary tool in, their line of march toward political power.

In Nicaragua, for example, the FSLN has won the backing of the big majority of the workers and peasants who still hold onto elements of their Catholic beliefs. The Sandinistas have successfully integrated many of these working people into positions of responsibility in the mass organizations and the government. Some individuals who belong to religious orders even hold government posts.

At the same time, the Sandinistas are waging a systematic and successful political campaign against efforts by the church to place its prerogatives above revolutionary law. They are advancing the separation of church and



state in the schools and other aspects of public life. The class polarization is being deepened as a result. In the process, the Sandinistas are laying the foundation to advance the Nicaraguan toilers' scientific understanding of class society.

Working people who move into action against the exploiters strengthen their own class understanding in the process, and advance the revolutionary struggle regardless of their religious beliefs. But the opposite is the case with those radicals who, having begun to lose their own political moorings, seek personal salvation and comfort in some form of "liberation theology." They cover up their retreat from scientific socialism by prettifying the church and offering explanations for revolutionary struggles based on the religious views, rather than the class interests, of the exploited and oppressed. They become obstacles to the advance of the class consciousness of working people.

### ***Blacks and Jews***

Another ideological reflection of the current class polarization within the petty-bourgeois left wing of capitalist politics became a topic of much public discussion during the 1984 presidential election campaign and is continuing in 1985, in the New York City mayoral campaign and other local races. Many liberals and middle-class radicals have joined in the rulers' campaign against the Black nationalist agitation and education by Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan. Farrakhan, who campaigned for Jesse Jackson during the 1984 Democratic Party primaries, became the target of a ferocious smear campaign by the capitalist media and politicians. The capitalists' goal is to whip up the specter of "Black anti-Semitism" in order to justify their class rule, which is intertwined with the

racist oppression of the Black nationality.

Many radicals who backed the Jackson Democratic Party primary campaign responded to the racist campaign against Jackson by joining in the gang-up against Farrakhan. In doing so they have promoted the myth that Blacks, who suffer racist victimization as a group, and Jews, who suffer anti-Semitic prejudice as a group in the United States, share a common oppression and thus have common interests. This is false. It ignores the evolution of the class composition of Blacks and Jews in the United States since World War II. In the closing decade of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, a substantial majority of the Jewish population in this country were workers. This is no longer the case. Today the Jewish population in the United States is made up overwhelmingly of middle-class and professional layers. Blacks, on the other hand, remain overwhelmingly proletarian. They are a nationally oppressed and super-exploited section of the U.S. working class, and the most class conscious and militant vanguard of that class.

The spokespeople for the major Jewish organizations in the United States today do not speak in the interests of the fight against anti-Semitism or persecution of the Jews when they condemn affirmative action quotas or denounce Louis Farrakhan and Jesse Jackson. Instead, they speak as representatives of the middle-class and professional layers of all creeds and national origins who benefit from the racist and anti-working-class policies of the U.S. capitalists at home and abroad.

The change in the class makeup of the Jewish population in the United States since World War II is the basis for the rightward political direction of the major Jewish organizations, and major sections of the Jewish population. Within this class framework, Zionism and defense

of the national dispossession of the Palestinians by Israel provide an added impulse to the adoption by many Jews of right-wing positions against national liberation struggles, apologies for racial discrimination against peoples of color, and support for U.S. imperialism.

Although the U.S. capitalist rulers today cynically posture as defenders of the Jews, they are thoroughly anti-Semitic, as the makeup of their highest councils and transcripts of their private discussions indicate. The ruling class will turn on the Jews tomorrow by tolerating or supporting ultrarightist groups who explicitly scapegoat Jews for the ills inherent in the evolution of capitalism. As the world capitalist crisis and class polarization leads to a further breakdown of democracy in this country, Black workers will occupy a vanguard position in the fight by their class and its allies for a workers and farmers government, the only kind of government that will guarantee the right to self-determination of the oppressed Black nationality.

That revolutionary class leadership will battle uncompromisingly against the anti-Semitism, pogroms, and other forms of murderous bigotry promoted by the capitalists and their ultraright shock troops. The perspective of proletarian revolution and internationalism is the only way out of the death trap that capitalism has in store for the Jews and that the petty-bourgeois official spokespeople for United States Jewry are leading them into.

### ***Response of the trade union bureaucracy***

Within the trade union bureaucracy, there is no motion by any wing or layer of officials away from their class-collaborationist course that has been institutionalized over the past 45 years. Their policy assumes the permanence of the profit system in the United States. They promote capitalist elections as the most important arena of

political activity for the unions, and the bourgeois political parties as effective vehicles for advancing the interests of working people.

Under the pressure of the ruling-class offensive, the labor officialdom has tried to move the U.S. union movement toward still deeper identification with the bosses and their government. It argues that the unions should cooperate with management in raising profit rates by improving “labor productivity.” It accepts the bosses’ insistence that workers must today live with a trade-off between declining wages and deteriorating working conditions in return for will-o’-the-wisp promises of job security. The bureaucracy also operates as the most vocal advance men for the protectionist drive of the employers, demanding “domestic content” legislation and import barriers.

The class-collaborationist course of the North American trade union officialdom has weakened ties between unionists in the United States and Canada, as highlighted by the December 1984 division of the United Auto Workers. This further weakening of the UAW was the payoff for four and a half decades of collaboration with the bosses by the UAW bureaucracy.

**U**NION MERGERS are one of the officialdom’s administrative answers to the declining percentage of organized workers in the U.S. labor force today and its own declining dues base. But these do nothing to organize the unorganized, or to slow down the employers’ drive to open up nonunion shops in previously solidly organized industries such as auto, steel, garment, and meat-packing. Like the bureaucrats’ other schemes to increase dues income, these mergers usually dilute the strategic base and focus of the union within the industrial sector

of its origin, and weaken its striking power.

The top AFL-CIO misleaders continue to do their part to advance imperialism's bipartisan drive against the workers and peasants of Central America and the Caribbean. AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland took part in the Reagan administration's bipartisan commission to whitewash U.S. policy in El Salvador. The federation's misnamed American Institute for Free Labor Development moved into Grenada on the heels of the U.S. invading troops to help the CIA subvert trade unions there, hoping to replace revolutionary-minded leaders with bureaucrats subservient to the bosses, U.S. imperialism, and the new puppet government.

The AFL-CIO officialdom promotes the two small labor federations in Nicaragua whose leaderships are tied to the bourgeois opponents of the revolution, while slandering the Sandinista-led federation that has the support of the big majority of Nicaraguan workers. It backs Washington's economic blockade against Vietnam, Kampuchea, and Cuba, and the U.S. government's support to Israel's wars against the Palestinians and other Arab peoples.

Crowning these proimperialist policies, the AFL-CIO misleaders refuse to lift a finger to combat the even bigger war in Central America and the Caribbean that the Democrats and Republicans are heading toward.

The U.S. labor officialdom, with its white job-trust mentality, refuses to advocate the establishment of parallel seniority lists to combat discriminatory layoffs and preserve the inadequate but important gains that oppressed nationalities and women have made through affirmative action programs. The bureaucracy does little to bring the power of the unions into action to fight for the demands of Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and women. It advocates stepped-up deportations of immigrants and

reactionary legislation against foreign-born workers.

At the same time, tactical divisions continue to emerge within the U.S. labor officialdom. These reflect the pressures from the offensive of the employing class; the greater numbers of oppressed nationalities and women in the industrial unions; and the changed attitudes in the working class on U.S. military intervention abroad, on racism, and on women's rights. These divisions open important new opportunities to reach, educate, and mobilize the ranks in opposition to ruling-class policies.

Despite such tactical differentiations, there is not yet even a crack in the solid wall of class-collaborationism behind which the top officialdom hides from real battle with the employers and their government.

Within the ranks of the unions, many workers still see no way to express their dissatisfaction and anger with the current officialdom other than by voting out the "ins" when they have a chance during union elections. This sometimes includes ousting officials who identify themselves as progressive. In sending such a message, workers surprise and often shock those radicals in the unions who orient toward these "progressive" officials rather than toward the ranks.

### ***The class-collaborationist socialists***

The social democrats of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) operate entirely within the framework of U.S. imperialism and the goal of reforming the capitalist system. They seek to bolster the bourgeois-liberal pole inside the Democratic Party. They function as advisers, propagandists, and apologists for that section of the labor officialdom most closely aligned with liberal Democrats. DSA members orient toward getting positions as paid union functionaries, full-timers for community

and welfare organizations, and on staffs of liberal politicians. The DSA has few industrial workers as members and makes no sustained effort to recruit them.

The U.S. Communist Party also advances a class-collaborationist course for U.S. labor. Unlike the DSA, however, the CP's starting point is not defense of "democratic" imperialism. Neither does it start from the need to defend and extend the world revolution. Instead, the CP fashions its policies after those of the bureaucratic caste in Moscow. It orients politically to those liberal Democrats who it hopes will be better disposed to the Soviet bureaucracy's proposals for diplomatic deals with Washington, which the Stalinists present as the primary road to peace and justice in the world. As a result, the CP often ends up marching to the same beat as liberals and middle-class pacifists.

Unlike the DSA, the CP does seek—and successfully—to recruit industrial workers. However, the CP orients politically toward a section of the labor bureaucracy, especially at the district and local level. It urges support for liberal Democratic Party candidates. It used its 1984 presidential ticket to campaign for a victory for Mondale and Ferraro. The CP praised the AFL-CIO officialdom for its decision to campaign for Mondale in the primaries rather than waiting until after the Democratic Party convention, calling this a step toward "independent labor political action."

### 5. Stranglehold of electoralism

**B**OURGEOIS ELECTORALISM pervades politics in the United States. Class-struggle militants need to find ways to break through this obstacle.

Independent working-class political action is an es-

sential element of a class-struggle strategy to advance the organization and mobilization of the ranks of the working class and its allies.

This is the perspective that SWP candidates for federal, state, and local office around the country popularize and present in their election campaigns.

They explain that it is necessary to move *in action* toward a program and strategy that advances the interests and demands of the working class and exploited farmers. In order to represent a real step forward for labor and its allies, independent working-class political action cannot be reduced to the question of organizational separation from the Democratic and Republican parties.

A labor party in the United States will emerge as a by-product of advances in class combat by the unions against the bosses and the policies of the bosses' government. The call for an independent labor party will be part of the program of any class-struggle left wing in the unions forged in the course of these battles.

Advances in this direction will produce cracks in the officialdom's participation in and support to the Democratic and Republican parties, as the capacity of the bureaucrats to confine the labor movement within the framework of the current bourgeois two-party setup erodes. But such electoral shifts will be the consequence, not the origin, of moves toward genuine labor political action.

Moreover, this does not mean that reformist or centrist sections of the officialdom will dominate a labor party based on the unions, or determine its program. That will be determined in struggle. Workers leading the fight for a class-struggle left wing in the union movement will strive to create a political instrument with a program that uncompromisingly champions the interests of the exploited



and oppressed and points toward the establishment of a workers and farmers government.

The same is true of a mass Black party. It will be built as a result of, and as part of, advances in the consciousness and organized fighting capacity of a layer of the Black working class. It will not come into being as a product of electoral maneuvers by elected officials who are Black seeking to promote their own prospects or win greater leverage inside capitalist parties—whether in the Democratic Party or not.

### *Electoralism in the labor movement*

Promotion of bourgeois electoralism is one of the keystones of the class-collaborationism practiced by the union officialdom, and by virtually every political tendency in the U.S. labor movement. The strength of the hold of electoralism reflects the fact that no significant layer of the working class has yet reached the conclusion that a revolutionary perspective is necessary in the United States.

The class-collaborationists reinforce this hold of electoralist illusions on the workers. They do not explain that the relationship of class forces determines what the politicians must respond to. Instead, the reformists preach that elections and electioneering are what politics is based on. When all is said and done, they argue, what determines the course of the government and the society is—which candidates get elected. You get paid back for your support of a winner.

As a result, the reformists present the political importance of the unions, other organizations of the oppressed and exploited, and mass actions primarily from the point of view of the pressure they can exert to help elect those candidates most likely to promise concessions to working

people, and to then “hold them to their word.” In this strategy, the class struggle is reduced to the source of pressure for “realistic” politics, and the mass movement is reduced to a pressure group on those holding or seeking public office.

**T**HE LABOR BUREAUCRATS extol elections as the high point of political activity, the place where labor can cash in on its struggles to improve conditions for working people. But the truth is that the bourgeois election campaigns are *depoliticizing*. The endless droning of capitalist politicians that saturates the newspapers, radio, and television, the “debates” in which the fundamental bipartisan framework of domestic and foreign policy is beyond challenge, the media hype and slick advertising—all these not only divert attention from political struggles, but also camouflage the *class character* of the crucial political issues confronting working people.

In the United States, where there is no mass working-class party, support for candidates of the two capitalist parties is one of the primary forms taken by class-collaborationist politics at election time. But this is only a small part of the trap of electoralism.

A decision by a trade union official or a leader of a Black or Chicano organization to run for office outside the Democratic and Republican parties does not represent progress toward working-class politics in the absence of a program in action that marks a class step forward. A labor misleader running for office against the Democratic and Republican candidates on a program that accommodates to racism is an obstacle to independent labor political action, not a step toward it. A resolution by a chapter of the National Organization for Women to

withhold electoral support from candidates who do not support NOW's "issues," but which leaves the door open to supporting Democratic or Republican Party candidates who do, is not an advance toward a break from capitalist politics. Instead, its framework reinforces bourgeois electoralism, in which stated stances on "issues," not interests of classes, are supposedly decisive.

The Progressive Party election campaign of 1948 and the Peace and Freedom Party campaigns of the 1960s and 1970s were outside the two major bourgeois parties, but they did not mark a break from capitalist politics toward independent working-class political action. Nor do election campaigns presenting the nostrums of a socialist sect.

Opposition to voting for capitalist candidates, while an elementary principle of working-class politics, does not in itself lead to opposition to bourgeois electoralism. A worker could pass an entire lifetime without ever pulling the lever for a candidate of a capitalist party, voting in every election for socialist candidates, and never break from the framework of bourgeois electoralism.

Throughout Western Europe and much of the capitalist world there are large reformist-led parties that are up to their eyebrows in bourgeois electoralism without ever calling for a vote for candidates of openly bourgeois parties. Bourgeois labor parties, such as the British Labour Party and the New Democratic Party of Canada, which pursue such policies, are obstacles to—not vehicles for—independent working-class political action. They are impediments within the working-class movement. The vanguard can overcome them, however, only by going through the experience of fighting inside the labor movement to transform these parties into instruments of class struggle.

Similarly, the emergence of a labor party with a reformist program in the United States would place a new barrier in the path of independent working-class political action. But the *fight* to form a labor party here can be bypassed only at the peril of heading off into a sectarian dead end, removed from the line of march of the U.S. working class. And a refusal by Marxists to organize this fight would increase the odds that a labor party would not develop as a revolutionary vehicle.

Opposition to supporting Democratic and Republican candidates is merely the beginning of wisdom in breaking from bourgeois electoralism. Nonetheless, the great majority of those claiming to be socialist or communist are unable to withstand even this opportunist lure. The 1984 elections saw further retreats on this score, the most notable being the decision of the *Guardian* newspaper to break decisively from its past stand and for the first time in its history to openly endorse and campaign for the Democratic Party presidential ticket.

Even those radicals who refuse on principle to vote for a candidate of the Democratic or Republican parties are often quick to jump head over heels into bourgeois politics in the form of electoralist campaigns around initiatives and referenda, which are on the ballot in state and local elections year in and year out. These measures are touted as examples of “direct democracy” by many radicals, who sometimes even present them as vehicles for independent working-class political action.

But initiatives, referenda, and recall campaigns are part of the bourgeois electoral setup, from which they cannot be separated and within which they have to be approached. They are no more the arena where class battles are decided than are any other electoral contests. If they are viewed as such they become obstacles to the workers’

struggle. Campaigns around ballot measures can just as effectively as any other electoralist scheme lead away from organizing the working class and the oppressed in struggles to break from all dependence on the interests, prerogatives, and framework of ruling-class policies.

**A** SIMILAR APPROACH leads to participation in various radical and left electoral coalitions, often in elections that are officially “nonpartisan” but stay in the framework of capitalist or petty-bourgeois politics. Such campaigns, which maintain formal independence from the capitalist parties, are simply another variation of electoralism that accepts the framework of capitalist politics.

The history of the United States has demonstrated the capacity of the capitalist government and parties to absorb social and political movements that could—if allowed to break away from electoralism and the perspective of forcing imperialism to reform itself—pose a threat to the employing class. It is more difficult for the bourgeoisie to accomplish this when such struggles are on the ascent. Under these conditions implementing reforms in an attempt to contain these movements is often the tactical course forced on the rulers. As long as these movements have not broken from the class-collaborationist framework—no matter how radical a stamp they try to put on it—toward a revolutionary class perspective, they remain vulnerable to such maneuvers.

When movements of social protest are in recoil and retreat from the difficulties they run up against in accomplishing their objectives, the rulers’ parties and their governmental machinery have often been able to coopt and incorporate their individual leaders and symbolic trappings.

Imperialist powers in this century have had female heads of state and prime ministers, Socialist premiers, and Communist members of cabinets. In this country today the few thousand elected officials who are Black include mayors of major cities and members of Congress.

As the moves by Mondale and the Democratic Party in the 1984 election campaign made clear, it is no longer “unthinkable” that the U.S. rulers could pick a Black or a woman to be vice-president—or even president—if that were to fit their needs in combating the advance of the class struggle.

### ***‘Gender gap’ myth***

Electoralism is so pervasive in the United States that all political and social struggles have their reflection in tactical adjustments and public relations scams aimed at protecting the viability of the two-party system.

A current example of this is the “gender gap” myth advanced by Democratic Party “profeminist” politicians, pushed by the leadership of NOW, and echoed by some radicals. According to this myth, women in general are more politically progressive than men. The basic evidence for this proposition comes down to opinion polls showing that more women than men state they vote for Democrats.

Which capitalist party you vote for is not a measure of how “progressive” you are, however. Workers who vote for a liberal capitalist candidate today are no more likely to lead or participate in struggles for working-class demands as class struggles unfold than are workers who vote for a conservative capitalist candidate. Those who vote for a Republican are no less likely to make a break from capitalist politics under changed class-struggle conditions than those who vote Democrat.

But there is a more serious error made by those promoters of the “gender gap” theory who call themselves Marxists. They throw overboard any materialist understanding of the oppression of women and the road to its eradication.

A common mistake by petty-bourgeois radicals is to draw a false parallel between Blacks in the United States and women, since both suffer special forms of oppression and discrimination. What is overlooked is that while women as a sex are *not* more proletarian than men, Blacks as a nationality *are* substantially more proletarian than whites. Moreover, Blacks are an oppressed nationality and among the most exploited sections of the working class. For these reasons, Blacks are in general more progressive than whites. This has been proven, not in opinion polls but in practice, by the fact that they are the most class-conscious and militant vanguard of the working class.

Historically, women are less likely than men to have the opportunity to work a job, or to participate in working-class organizations and class battles out of which progressive ideas are formed and take hold. Today, the majority of adult women in the United States still pass many years confined in individual homes, relegated to the drudgery of household chores carried out in mind-deadening isolation, and constricted by the needs of family life. Working-class women who work are still denied opportunities equal to men to participate in the unions or to learn from and be part of the class struggle against the employers on the job.

As a result of these objective factors, a higher percentage of women than of men are susceptible to reactionary “solutions” and right-wing demagoguery, which is aimed against the class interests of the proletariat. This point

was stressed in the resolution “Socialist Revolution and the Struggle for Women’s Liberation,” adopted by the Socialist Workers Party in 1979. (This resolution was also adopted by the 1979 world congress of the Fourth International.) As this resolution explained:

“Because women’s place in class society generates many deep-seated insecurities and fears, and because the ideology that buttresses women’s inferior status still retains a powerful hold, especially outside the working class, women are a particular target for all clerical, reactionary, and fascist organizations. Whether it is the Christian Democrats, the Falange, or the opponents of abortion rights, reaction makes a special appeal to women for support, claiming to address women’s particular needs, taking advantage of their economic dependence under capitalism, and promising to relieve the inordinate burden women bear during any period of social crisis.”<sup>4</sup>

Over the past thirty years, big changes in the percentage of women in the work force, and the more recent impact of the women’s liberation movement, have begun to create the conditions for more and more women to step forward in social and political struggles in the United States. Women who fight their way into industry are often in the vanguard on social and political questions in the unions and on the job.

These objective changes in women’s economic and social position, and the changes in consciousness and attitudes that this has brought about, make it more difficult for fascists and other reactionary organizations to mobilize support among women. Moreover, the growth of the percentage of women in the work force and in the unions has strengthened the labor movement, making it more difficult for the bosses to pit male against female workers. The bosses are less able than in the past to mobi-



lize support among wives and families of union members for “back to work” movements during strikes.

But the challenge still remains before the labor movement to combat the discrimination that women face throughout society. Unless the workers movement puts forward and fights for a program and revolutionary perspective answering the needs of the masses of women, many middle-class and even working-class women will either be mobilized on the side of reaction as the class polarization deepens, or will be neutralized as potential supporters of the proletariat.

**R**EVOLUTIONARY MARXISTS participate as activists and leaders in struggles of women against discrimination and oppression—from fights for affirmative action and the Equal Rights Amendment to defense of the fight for abortion. We participate as members of organizations whose stated purpose is to fight for the interests of women, such as the National Organization for Women and the Coalition of Labor Union Women. In the course of this activity, SWP members explain that the road forward in the fight for women’s emancipation lies in the direction of class-struggle action with labor and the oppressed nationalities against the capitalist class and its government. We take advantage of opportunities to advance our perspective of the need for independent working-class political action.

The struggle against the oppression of women is a life-and-death matter for the workers movement, especially in a period of sharpening class polarization. Marxists campaign for the labor movement to fight to close the real “gender gap”—the discrimination against women that pervades capitalist society—by fighting for the rights

of women workers, and championing the progressive demands of the women's movement as a whole.

### ***The Jesse Jackson Democratic Party primary campaign***

The Jesse Jackson campaign for the Democratic Party presidential nomination was another example of how the capitalist electoral system operates to blunt, disorient, and absorb social struggles.

The fact that a Black candidate ran for the presidential nomination of the Democratic Party is a reflection of the progress in this country over the past quarter century in the long-term battle against the use of racism by the ruling class to divide the working class. The fact that Jackson attempted to present a bourgeois-liberal social program as a progressive alternative to that of the other candidates, and has sought to portray himself as the spokesperson of a Black-Latino-working people's alliance (the "Rainbow Coalition"), is a gauge of the pressures bearing down on Blacks and other working people from the employers' offensive. The enthusiastic response Jackson gets from Black audiences is testimony to the strength of the nationalist determination to leave no position in U.S. society reserved for whites only.

Jackson's campaign within the Democratic Party, however, was an obstacle to independent Black and labor political action.

We condemn the racist attacks that Jackson was subjected to by the bourgeois press, politicians, and right-wing bigots throughout his campaign. We speak out against the racist victimization of Black elected officials, such as the campaign waged against Chicago Mayor Harold Washington, or the sensational "corruption trials" that have been used against Blacks in Congress, Black judges, and other Black officials. We condemn the force and

fraud that continues to deny the right to vote for Blacks in parts of the South.

Our support for the democratic rights of individuals to run for and hold public office free from persecution due to their nationality or gender, however, should not be mixed up with the false notion that the election of more Blacks, Latinos, and women as candidates of the two imperialist parties advances the fight for greater freedom and social justice.

### *The SWP's revolutionary alternative*

The goal of the Socialist Workers Party is the construction of a mass revolutionary party to lead the working class and its allies in the struggle for political power—for the establishment of a workers and farmers government. As the statement of purpose in the party constitution explains, such a government will “abolish capitalism in the United States and join in the worldwide struggle for socialism.”

Our socialist election campaigns are an important political tool to help advance class consciousness by explaining the need for independent political action of labor and its allies.

As Marxists, we recognize that the fight by a revolutionary workers party to function as a legal organization in a capitalist state is a continual battle, one that can never be won in full or permanently. The SWP fights to maintain its legality. We organize to bring about political change under the rights guaranteed by the Bill of Rights. Our socialist election campaigns and defense of the right to run for office, including the right to be on the ballot, are an important part of the political defense of the party against the capitalist state's never-ending efforts to restrict our legality, as well as the legality of other working-class

parties, and of organizations of Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, women, and working farmers. Our continuing battle against government efforts to compel the SWP to disclose to the government the names of individual donors to the party's election campaigns helps advance the fight to protect freedom of association and the right to privacy. Professionalism in carrying out our election campaigns, including the fight for a place on the ballot, is a characteristic of a revolutionary proletarian party that takes seriously the defense of its own rights, and the rights of others, against the capitalist state.

The elections provide a platform from which to explain our revolutionary perspectives and proposals to working people. We help spread the truth that genuine social change will not be brought about through the elections.

SWP campaigns provide a platform from which our candidates urge participation in demonstrations against Washington's war in Central America, oppose racist attacks on Blacks, champion women's rights, campaign for independence for Puerto Rico, support farmers fighting foreclosures, and campaign for solidarity with striking copper workers in Arizona, auto parts workers in Toledo, or nurses in Minnesota.

Our candidates explain various immediate, democratic, and transitional demands, presenting these in such a way as to respond to the pressing immediate needs of the exploited and oppressed in this country, while pointing toward a revolution to establish a workers and farmers government in the United States.

SWP candidates explain that the union officialdom and other misleaders who keep working people mired in electoralism are reinforcing the impediments to breaking through the framework of bourgeois politics, in order to

reinforce their own class-collaborationist course. Above all, our candidates—true to the Comintern’s 1920 resolution on electoral activity—*explain revolutionary ideas*.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Strategy for independent working-class political action***

What is most difficult for broad layers of our co-workers and other working people to accept as realistic about our political strategy today is not the need for a mass independent Black party or labor party based on the unions, but the *revolutionary task* we propose for such an independent Black party or labor party.

The lack of a mass Black party or labor party in the United States today reflects the more fundamental absence of revolutionary leadership of labor or the Black nationality, not vice versa.

Only as a result of the development of a vanguard through the experience of a series of revolutionary class battles will the hold of electoralism and capitalist politics on a significant layer of working people begin to be weakened. Those Black workers in the 1960s who were most attracted to the revolutionary perspective presented by Malcolm X, for example, understood Malcolm’s thoroughgoing opposition to any support for candidates of the Democratic and Republican parties, because they supported the revolutionary perspective he projected. Malcolm began with clarifying a revolutionary course, not debating about how to be more “militant” within the framework of “realistic,” i.e., bourgeois, politics.

Today there is no current of substantial size in the labor movement or Black community advancing such a perspective. The National Black Independent Political Party represents an important nucleus organized around the perspectives of a charter that puts forward a program for Black self-determination and against racist oppression,

capitalist exploitation, and imperialist domination. The existence and activities of the NBIPP help keep this perspective of independent political action by the exploited and oppressed part of the discussion among vanguard fighters in the midst of the deepening ruling-class attacks and class polarization.

The NBIPP itself is a small vanguard grouping, feeling the full weight of the pressures from the employers' offensive and the pervasiveness of electoralist illusions. Some have abandoned the NBIPP altogether to return to Democratic Party politics, including the "Rainbow" variety. Others have remained active in the NBIPP but are trying to drive out of the organization those who resist their attempts to steer it away from attracting young workers and engaging in independent political action. At the same time, however, a small layer of fighters are determined to maintain the NBIPP on the course laid out in its charter.

**A** CLASS BREAK from the two-party system in the United States will not come primarily from disillusionment with the ability of the bosses' parties to produce results for working people. By itself that can simply reinforce lesser-evilism, cynicism, and despair. A break by a significant layer of the labor movement toward political action on a class basis will be the result of confidence and clarification arising out of mounting class combat by workers and working farmers, combined with the consistent and energetic work of revolutionists explaining the road forward, in advance of and throughout this unfolding process.

The capitalist two-party monopoly will shatter in the course of these battles. Electoralism will be weakened as millions of working people form a working-class party

to fight uncompromisingly for their interests, and as a growing number of them begin to look toward the goal of revolution rather than seeking to reform the capitalist state. This sharpening of the class polarization will inevitably be accompanied from the beginning by the growth of rightist forces, stepped-up government repression and extralegal violence against labor and its allies, and an acceleration in the breakdown of bourgeois democracy.

Contrary to the hopes of those fighters among the oppressed and exploited who are still influenced by the arguments of the class-collaborationist misleaders, efforts to “dump Reagan” did not advance the struggle against the rightist direction of capitalist politics. The surest way to leave the working class and its allies defenseless as the employers’ offensive intensifies is to continue to reduce their organizations to pressure groups for electoral goals in the capitalist framework. This course will not only fail to stop “Reaganism” and the bipartisan drive toward war and austerity, but will guarantee much worse ruling-class attacks on working people and the oppressed in the future.

Instead, revolutionary-minded fighters need to explain that the labor movement can lead its allies in the fight to take power out of the hands of the exploiters and establish a government of the exploited classes. In explaining this perspective today, the example of what the revolutionary-led workers and peasants governments in Cuba and Nicaragua have actually achieved is a way of making more concrete and therefore richer the strategic line of march of the working class. The example set by these revolutions can help make propaganda for independent working-class political action more effective. Those who are inspired by these revolutionary examples will be better able to understand the kind of mass Black party and

labor party that the working people in this country need, because they will better understand what such a party will have to accomplish.

#### IV. THE TURN TO THE INDUSTRIAL UNIONS AND THE PARTY'S POLITICAL CONTINUITY

**T**HE IMPLEMENTATION of the turn to the industrial unions has resulted in some of the biggest changes in the Socialist Workers Party in its history. These changes are made possible by the new opportunities to take strides along the course our party set out on at its beginning.

The aim of the SWP at its founding in 1938 was to construct a proletarian communist party in this country, based in the unions of the industrial working class, which were then on the rise. The party sought to continue the course our founding leaders charted in 1928 when they were expelled by the Stalinist leadership of the Communist Party.

The founding of the SWP was seen as part of building a proletarian leadership of the world revolution, part of advancing the process in each country of constructing revolutionary workers parties committed to implementing the course begun by the Communist International in its first five years, led by the Bolshevik team around Lenin.

In line with that perspective, the SWP played a leading role in 1938 in the founding conference of the Fourth International. The program of this new world organization, James P. Cannon explained, was not based on any “new revelation.” It proposed not “a new doctrine, but the restoration, the revival, of genuine Marxism as it was expounded and practised in the Russian revolution and in the early days of the Communist International.”<sup>6</sup>



In 1933 we became convinced by the course of the world class struggle and the role of the Comintern in it that these revolutionary perspectives could no longer be advanced in this country or on a world scale by centering efforts on seeking ways to argue within the Comintern or its parties with the aim of winning a majority committed to reforming these organizations and returning them to a consistent internationalist course of aiding and advancing the fight against imperialism. The establishment of the SWP, and our party's participation in founding the Fourth International, reaffirmed this assessment that the next step forward in the development of genuine communist leadership in this country and internationally would be taken by forces emerging outside the Stalinized Comintern. It would be taken by vanguard workers and farmers generalizing their experiences in revolutionary struggles against exploitation, imperialist domination, and the tyrannical oppression of regimes upholding the rule of the propertied classes.

The correctness of this assessment, and of the political course and organizational conclusions flowing from it, was confirmed by the Cuban revolution in 1959. Throughout the previous two decades, even where parties with origins in the Stalinized Comintern stood at the head of victorious workers and farmers revolutions in Europe and Asia, their leaderships remained primarily within a nationalist framework and did not chart an internationalist course in action.

The emergence of the leadership of the Cuban revolution, however, marked a break from this pattern of "national Communism." It signaled the revival of internationalism not only in political line but in deeds. This leadership did not have its origins as a political current in Stalin's Comintern. It was forged in a political battle

against the line of the Stalinist party in Cuba. In the twenty-five years since the conquest of power, it has built a proletarian Communist party.

The development of revolutionary leadership in the Americas has been reinforced since 1979 by the Sandinista National Liberation Front in Nicaragua, which waged a political battle against Stalinist policies in the fight to overthrow Somoza and in the subsequent six years as the leadership of a workers and farmers government. The leadership team around Maurice Bishop also brought fresh forces into this process prior to the overthrow of Grenada's workers and farmers government by the Stalinist Coard faction.

Although so far there have been no parallel advances toward the construction of mass internationalist revolutionary leaderships outside the Americas, the course followed by the Cuban CP and initiated by the FSLN demonstrates the correctness of the decision forty-seven years ago to launch the Fourth International with the goal of advancing the fight to build a new mass revolutionary International.

### **1. Political foundations of the SWP**

**T**HE SWP AT ITS FOUNDING continued along the line of march charted by the Bolshevik leadership of the Comintern and by the communists in the United States who had tried to learn from, apply, and organize a proletarian party around that perspective in the 1920s. The course on which we started out can be summed up as follows:

1. The SWP's founding convention set the goal of proletarianizing the party. It decided on a turn to industry and the industrial unions as the foundation on which all

other accomplishments would be built:

The delegates decided that a “complete reorientation of our party, from the membership up to the leadership and back again, is absolutely imperative and unpostponable. . . . The energies of the party must be devoted mainly to rooting itself in the trade unions, becoming an inseparable part of the trade unions and their struggles.”<sup>7</sup> No exception was made for teachers, white collar workers, or college graduates.

“We will not succeed in rooting the party in the working class,” the political resolution adopted by that convention said, “much less to defend the revolutionary proletarian principles of the party from being undermined, unless the party is an overwhelmingly proletarian party, composed in its decisive majority of workers in the factories, mines, and mills.”<sup>8</sup>

2. This turn was essential to prepare the party to stand up against intensifying bourgeois pressure as the imperialist ruling classes headed toward war.

The coming imperialist war “will be the severest test of all organizations and policies,” the 1938 political resolution said. The party “can meet this test only by the rigid safeguarding of the Marxian principles of revolutionary internationalism upon which it is founded.”<sup>9</sup>

In contrast to the social democrats and Stalinists, the SWP refused to subordinate the interests of the working people and the oppressed nationalities, in the United States and on a world scale, to the war aims of the “democratic” imperialists. The SWP advanced the Leninist strategy of revolutionary struggle against all the imperialist regimes, whether “democratic” or fascist, first and foremost against one’s own.

“Above all it should be borne in mind,” the convention declared, “that if the party is to survive the coming war,

with its certain persecution and hounding of the revolutionary movement, if the party is to fulfill its great tasks during the war . . . the party membership must be solidly and inseparably connected with the working class.” Stressing the point that party fractions in the industrial unions would not be limited to carrying out socialist and antiwar propaganda, but would be part of the organized labor movement seeking to hasten the revolutionary transformation of the unions, the convention added: “There is no better way of accomplishing this connection than by every member becoming an active, responsible, and influential trade unionist.”<sup>10</sup>

**W**ITH THE APPROACH OF THE WAR, this line was put to the sharpest possible test. The SWP stood firm, though a petty-bourgeois minority buckled and then cracked, splitting away from the party and the Fourth International. The SWP adopted a proletarian military policy to fit the conditions it faced as a minority within the working class and the labor movement in its opposition to the war. Party members served when drafted into the army, along with the rest of their generation. Those conscripted sought all opportunities to explain their antiwar, antiracist, and prolabor views within the armed forces, and defended their democratic rights, and the rights of all citizen-soldiers, to express themselves.

For their opposition to the imperialist war, eighteen leaders of the SWP and the Teamsters union were sent to prison, convicted on charges—under the newly adopted Smith Act—of conspiring to advocate the overthrow of the government by force and violence. Throughout the defense campaign for the party and its class-war prisoners, the SWP sought to popularize the Marxist views for

which it was being persecuted, while at the same time mobilizing the broadest possible united action of the labor movement, the Black community, and other supporters of democratic rights to defend the fundamental liberties that were at stake.

3. Central to the SWP's revolutionary internationalist principles was its defense of the Soviet workers state. The convention reaffirmed the communist position that the nationalized industry and land that form the economic foundation of the Soviet Union are a mighty conquest of the world proletariat. Although usurped politically and oppressed by a petty-bourgeois bureaucratic caste, the proletariat remains the ruling class in the Soviet Union. The workers of the world have an enormous stake in defending this proletarian bastion against imperialism.

This position, adopted by the founding convention of the SWP, was challenged there by a small minority of delegates, and in the following eighteen months a full-fledged battle erupted in the party over this question. A petty-bourgeois opposition in growing panic sought to free itself from this proletarian internationalist framework, capitulating to mounting social-imperialist and anti-Soviet moods then sweeping radical middle-class circles. The proletarian cadre of the party defeated this revisionist attack, and the petty-bourgeois opposition split from the party. This political battle could not have been won had the SWP not been uncompromisingly pursuing its orientation toward basing itself in the industrial working class and advancing the application of proletarian organizational norms. The lessons of this chapter from party history are collected in *In Defense of Marxism* by Leon Trotsky and *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party* by James P. Cannon.

The SWP's understanding of what was at stake for

workers and farmers in defending the Soviet Union better armed us to draw correct conclusions from the course of events during and after World War II. We have learned that state property, economic planning, and the other historic gains established through the expropriation of the capitalist class by the workers and farmers are even more durable than we had anticipated.

The course of the international class struggle since the opening of World War II has convinced us that we can rule out the possibility, which Trotsky had left open throughout the 1930s, that a section of the petty-bourgeois bureaucratic caste can restore capitalist property relations and become a new exploiting ruling class. Despite the parasitism of the caste and its aping of bourgeois consumption habits, it is too weak to try to overthrow state property—too weak both in relation to the workers and farmers, who are committed to preserving their social and economic conquests, and in relation to the imperialist powers, who are committed to crushing the workers states when history presents an opportunity.

**I**N THE FACE of the permanently aggressive stance of world imperialism, these bureaucratic castes must defend the workers states, although they do so with counterrevolutionary and anti-internationalist methods that are self-defeating in the long run. The conquests of the workers and farmers, however, have proven strong enough to withstand the corrosive effects of the Stalinist policies of the bureaucratic castes. The imperialists have not been able to overthrow any workers state and reimpose capitalism on the workers and farmers of those countries.

The continued existence of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the Soviet Union, and the establishment

of workers states in a dozen other countries since World War II, has fundamentally altered the relationship of class forces on a world scale. It is a weighty factor on the side of all those fighting imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation. Each new blow against the world imperialist order weakens the pressure of imperialism on the workers states and strengthens the hand of the workers and farmers against the privileged bureaucratic castes in the countries where they have usurped political power from the producers.

4. The SWP refused to subordinate the fight for the independence and national liberation of India, Indochina, and other African, Asian, and American colonial possessions to the class-collaborationist bloc with “democratic” imperialist governments advocated by the social democrats and Stalinists. It supported China’s war of national liberation against Japan, in contrast to the ultraleft “neutral” position taken by those who split from the party. The party called for the immediate and unconditional independence of Puerto Rico. It championed the struggle of the colonial peoples on a world scale against imperialist oppression regardless of whether their imperialist overlord wore a bourgeois-democratic or a fascist uniform.

The Transitional Program, our basic programmatic document adopted in 1938, explained that the battle against imperialist domination and landlord-capitalist oppression in the colonial world would be waged “under the slogans of revolutionary democracy.” Only governments based on the workers and peasants “are capable of bringing the democratic revolution to a conclusion and likewise opening an era of socialist revolution.

“The relative weight of the individual democratic and transitional demands in the proletariat’s struggle, their

mutual ties and their order of presentation, is determined by the peculiarities and specific conditions of each backward country and, to a considerable extent, by the *degree* of its backwardness.”<sup>11</sup>

The SWP rejected what the Comintern in Lenin’s time had precisely summed up as “the traditions of the Second International, which, in reality, only recognized the white race.”<sup>12</sup> We embraced and acted on Trotsky’s view that our world movement “can and must find a way to the consciousness of the Negro workers, the Chinese workers, the Indian workers, and all the oppressed in the human ocean of the colored races to whom belongs the decisive word in the development of humanity.”<sup>13</sup>

5. In line with this position, the SWP fought unconditionally for the right of self-determination for the oppressed Black nationality in the United States. The party recognized the vanguard role that Black workers and the Black struggle would play in the transformation of the labor movement and the revolutionary transformation of this country. As Trotsky expressed it, Afro-Americans, because of their position as an oppressed nationality and the most oppressed section of the working class, “will proceed through self-determination to the proletarian dictatorship in a couple of gigantic strides, ahead of the great bloc of white workers.”<sup>14</sup>

Throughout World War II, the SWP joined in the fight against every aspect of racism in the armed forces—from the daily indignities Black GIs faced to the institutionalized segregation of the military. In the first years of the war Blacks were kept in Jim Crow units assigned the filthiest and often most dangerous duties. In contrast to the course of the SWP, the Stalinists and the social democrats urged that struggles against racial oppression be subordinated to the war effort, arguing that equal rights



for Blacks at home would have to wait until the “war for democracy” abroad was won.

6. The SWP recognized the need for a fighting alliance between the working class and the exploited farmers, and adopted as our governmental perspective the call for a workers and farmers government in the United States.

Initially in 1938, the SWP had adopted the slogan, “For a workers government.” That same year, however, Trotsky informed SWP leaders that he considered this slogan to be a serious mistake, and urged the party to change it to “For a workers and farmers government.” Trotsky stressed the importance of the alliance with working farmers in overthrowing the rule of “America’s sixty families.” Following a discussion, the party adopted this proposal.

**A**FTER A DEBATE in the National Committee, the SWP also adopted the call for a labor party based on the trade unions, as a way to advance the revolutionary fight for independent working-class political action. We presented the labor party as the next giant step forward in the big class battles that were forging the CIO. We explained the labor party as a political instrument of the working class to struggle for a revolutionary program in the interests of the exploited, leading to the establishment of a workers and farmers government.

Our movement’s experiences in the mid- and late-1930s as part of the leadership team of the Minneapolis Teamsters strikes and subsequent Midwest Teamster organizing drives provided valuable lessons for the party in developing our understanding of a proletarian military policy in the internationalist fight against imperialist war, the fight against rightist and fascist reaction, the alliance with exploited farmers, a revolutionary approach to ad-

vancing independent labor political action, and the fight for a workers and farmers government.

Grounded in these experiences from the SWP's founding years, we have learned that an understanding of the irreplaceable character of an alliance with the farmers is also essential to developing a strategy to combat divisions within the working class, build alliances with the oppressed nationalities and women, and on that basis construct a party that is proletarian both in program and in the composition of its membership and its leadership.

**A**RMED WITH THIS UNDERSTANDING, our members today can understand more completely Fidel Castro's explanation following the 1980 congress of the Cuban Communist Party that the growing percentage of the party made up of workers "means that our Party has become more proletarian and, therefore, more Marxist-Leninist and more revolutionary."<sup>15</sup> An important part of this advance, he explained, was the incorporation into the party and into the party leadership of more women, more farmers, and more leaders of the neighborhood-based Committees for the Defense of the Revolution. A notable step was the inclusion of the president of the National Association of Small Farmers as an alternate member of the Political Bureau, registering a further step forward in solidifying the alliance between the workers and the farmers. This registered the understanding of the Cuban leadership that the worker-farmer alliance is necessary to maintain the strength and unity of both the proletarian vanguard party and the workers state.

7. The SWP learned from Trotsky the Bolshevik lesson about the need to explain to the working class why the labor movement has to think socially and act politically. We

acted on this, seeking to carry out the imperative in the 1938 founding document of the Fourth International that its parties “should seek bases of support among the most exploited layers of the working class,” and should, “Open the road to the youth! Turn to the woman worker!”<sup>16</sup>

Our aim was to build a workers party that—in the composition of its membership and leadership, its priorities, and its daily work—oriented to the most exploited and oppressed working people in city and countryside. We combated all expressions of national chauvinism, hidebound craft-union consciousness, and social patriotism—bourgeois attitudes promoted by the petty-bourgeois labor bureaucracy within the working class, especially among its most privileged layers, the labor aristocracy.

8. The SWP saw the turn to industry and the industrial unions as the road to becoming more political, more proletarian, and thus a more politically homogeneous and centralized campaign party. This turn would lessen the influence inside the party of the traits dominating organizations with a petty-bourgeois composition—cynicism, criticism for the sake of criticism, individualistic resistance to collective effort, disdain for collective accomplishments, preoccupation with personal “roles” in the party, and moods of hysteria and despair under pressure. Proletarianization of the party would strengthen its firmness, seriousness, and democratic character as a revolutionary centralist combat organization of its class. It would lessen tendencies toward cliquism and permanent factionalism, which always diminish workers’ democracy. Members of the party leading the turn and active in the industrial fractions would be responsible for and take leadership in all aspects of party work, strengthening its professionalism and safeguarding its proletarian norms of functioning.

## 2. Impact of the 1978 turn to the industrial unions

**T**HIS PROLETARIAN PROGRAM and Leninist strategy has remained the bedrock of the SWP since its origin, in spite of the unfavorable conditions under which the party has often had to function, and despite whatever tactical adjustments and detours were necessary to continue to advance this strategy.

Beginning with the end of the post-World War II strike wave, the labor movement entered a period of political retreat. During this retreat, SWP members in the industrial unions continued to participate in union struggles and to talk socialism to fellow workers. But we were talking to fewer and fewer recruitable workers. The party's political activity and campaigns became, of necessity, more and more removed from the labor movement. The unions took fewer initiatives around broad social and political questions. There was less opportunity for carrying out party political work in collaboration with fellow workers or through the organized labor movement. This was not by choice but because of objective conditions. We were increasingly forced into a semisectarian existence.

Under these conditions, the party's permanent goal of proletarianization could not be advanced by centering our work around fractions in the major industrial unions. By the late 1950s we no longer had any national industrial fractions. Most local fractions had been dissolved as well. The basis did not exist for ongoing work in the unions by party members. Talking socialism in most sections of the labor movement found less and less response.

Beginning with the upsurge of the civil rights movement at the opening of the 1960s, which eventually mobilized hundreds of thousands, the more than decade-long generalized political retreat of the working class as

a whole came to an end. But the political retreat of the organized labor movement continued.

The SWP turned toward the rise in proletarian struggle in this country, which took the form of the upsurge in the Black movement, and to the emergence of a revolutionary working-class leadership internationally through the victory and consolidation of the Cuban revolution. Our movement gained recruits as a result of the radicalization of a layer of young people who were attracted to these struggles, some of whom could be won to revolutionary perspectives. We threw ourselves into the opportunity of joining with others in founding and building the Young Socialist Alliance.

Over the next decade the party oriented toward the rise of Black nationalism and the Malcolm X leadership, and the explosive struggles of the Black nationality. In the process, the party reaffirmed the fundamental positions adopted at our founding on the character and vanguard role of the Black nationality in the United States, and further strengthened these positions as we did so.

We turned toward and became an integral part of the movement against the war in Vietnam.

The party embraced the rise of the new women's movement and the fight for women's rights, throwing ourselves into these battles. In doing so, we incorporated into our program an important addition: our appreciation of the growing weight and role of the fight for women's liberation in the revolutionary struggle for workers and farmers power. We based ourselves on the groundwork laid in the resolutions adopted by the Communist International during its first five years, and we took the lead in drafting the first resolution of the Fourth International on this question, which was adopted by the 1979 world congress.<sup>17</sup>

Since the new radicalization did not primarily come

out of the labor movement, the new recruits to the SWP did not primarily come out of the labor movement either. Most new members during this time were students. Thus, during the period from the early 1960s through 1975, the party did not organize to achieve the goal of having a decisive majority of its members in the industrial unions organized through fractions. Under the political conditions of that period, we rejected colonization of the industrial unions as the main way to advance the proletarianization of the party. As the 1965 resolution on the SWP's organizational principles explained:

To transform the SWP into a proletarian party of action, particularly in the present period of reaction, it is not enough to continue propagandistic activities in the hope that by an automatic process workers will flock to the banner of the party. It is necessary, on the contrary, to make a concerted, determined and systematic effort, consciously directed by the leading committees of the party, to spread out into all sectors of the mass movement—civil rights organizations which are becoming radicalized and in which workers predominate; labor organizations within industry and among the unemployed; campuses where an increasing number of students are turning toward socialist ideas.<sup>18</sup>

### *The industrial union fractions*

Our political course enabled the SWP to meet the challenges posed by the next major turning point in U.S. politics. When the new situation marked by the 1974–75 world recession reopened the main road of building a revolutionary workers party based in the industrial work-

ing class, the SWP was in position to advance along it. The leadership through the necessary detour had been successful. The continuity of our proletarian orientation remained intact.

Had the SWP not responded to this new situation by making a sharp turn toward building fractions in the industrial unions, we could not have built on the political and recruitment gains of the 1960s and 1970s to advance the proletarianization of the party. The party's membership and leadership would increasingly have become composed of aging cadres based largely among relatively highly paid white collar workers and public employees.

As a result of the turn to the industrial unions in 1978, however, the majority of the party membership is today in industry and industrial unions. Including those laid off and looking for work, and those currently on full-time party assignment, the percentage of members with experience in the industrial unions is more than 80 percent.

The industrial union fractions are an integral component of the party's local and national structure. Branch activity and institutions, and their weekly rhythm, more and more reflect the needs of a party whose members in their majority are industrial workers. The entire membership, those who are in industrial union fractions and those who are not, has become more politically homogeneous in collectively organizing our work to deepen the party's contact with and political influence among young workers in industry.

The composition of participants at party forums, campaign meetings, and other public events is more proletarian today. Our fractions are beginning to bring co-workers to these events. An even greater number of

workers, however, come to these activities from workplaces where we do not have fractions—a sign of progress in shifting our general political orientation toward working-class organizations and milieus. The Mason-González election campaign demonstrated our greater capacity to attract workers, especially young workers, and to recruit them to the Young Socialist Alliance and Socialist Workers Party.

**A**S WE BECOME MORE ESTABLISHED in industry and in the industrial unions, we also increase our effectiveness as a political party that champions the demands of all the oppressed. We participate in activity around social and political questions—ranging from actions against U.S. intervention in Central America and rallies against racist attacks, to protests to stop farm foreclosures and demonstrations against assaults on women’s rights.

As a party increasingly based in the industrial working class, we have developed a more concrete understanding in practice of the vanguard role of Black workers and the Black liberation struggle in the fight to transform the unions into revolutionary instruments of class struggle. Building our industrial union fractions has strengthened the party’s ability to recruit Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican, and immigrant workers. It has enabled the party to take steps toward the development of a leadership that is more proletarian, and thus more multinational, in composition.

The fight for the emancipation of women—part of the strategic line of march of the modern working-class movement from its founding—has taken on additional social weight with the influx of women into the labor force over the past three decades, including into the fac-



tories, mines, and mills. Our industrial union fractions and their leaderships have many female members, and have collaborated on the job and in the unions with the vanguard of working-class women who have fought their way into industry. We have participated in the fight for affirmative action for women, against sexual harassment on the job, and for the unions to champion the broader social and political struggle for women's rights.

The party has established contacts with militant farmers and farm organizations. We are learning about their struggles, expanding our knowledge of the farm movement and its connections with the labor movement.

As a party with a growing majority of our members in industry, we also understand better the impact of today's deepening class polarization inside the working class and the unions. By going through common experiences with other workers we have learned how these pressures affect different layers within the class, and how they respond.

We have seen close up how the class-collaborationism of the labor officialdom deepens divisions among workers, creates obstacles to an alliance with working farmers, and blocks the unions from championing the demands and aiding the struggles of oppressed nationalities and women. This course above all weakens the unions' capacity to fight the employers.

We have gotten a small preview of the kind of class combat that will more and more be on the agenda in this country. We can see more clearly and concretely the nature of the strategic and tactical tasks that confront the labor movement in forging the solidarity and alliances necessary to defend the unions and lead a successful struggle to bring to power a workers and farmers government in the United States.

### 3. Crisis of perspectives in the petty-bourgeois left

**U**NABLE TO RECRUIT sufficiently to come close to offsetting losses, all of our opponent organizations on the U.S. left have sustained big declines in membership over the past half decade. Virtually all have faced a crisis of political perspectives.

During the 1970s most of these organizations sent cadres into the industrial unions. But incapable of developing a strategy and leadership that could sustain a consistent political presence in the unions, this turn to industry sooner or later merely accelerated the centrifugal forces within these groups.

There has been a growing retreat from working in industry and from any orientation toward the union ranks among these currents. Either individually or as a result of decisions of the organizations they belong to, more of these radicals have left jobs in industry, and fewer are seeking to get them.

Most of the surviving radical currents intend to continue functioning within the unions—especially through individual members in union posts or on the payroll. In fact, their reaction against a proletarian orientation is very often accompanied by a deepening of their course toward winning union office, getting staff positions, and toadying to a wing of the officialdom. This, in their view, is proletarian leadership.

Apart from the SWP, no political tendency in this country sees an orientation toward the ranks of young workers, Black and Latino workers, immigrant workers, and women workers as central to the struggle to transform the unions and to advance progressive social struggles. Instead, the petty-bourgeois currents seek places in the apparatus of the labor movement among the layers from

which they think advances will come, finding shelter there from the pressures of the employers' offensive and the class polarization.

Middle-class radicals head in one of two directions in their attempt to escape the challenges of going through the initial outbreaks of resistance, and to duck the blows that our class is experiencing. Some reject any pretense of building a centralized, politically homogeneous working-class party. They seek to draw together a loose collection of activists, each working on their own in some "sector" of "the movement." "Union work" takes its place alongside various other "sectors of work," approached not as revolutionary political activity, but from the standpoint of narrow union politics.

This approach inevitably draws these radicals more deeply into electoralism through a variety of its forms—such as campaigns around referenda and "left" and "radical coalition" initiatives, lesser-evil politics inside and on the fringes of the Democratic Party, and slates staying within bourgeois and petty-bourgeois politics.

The other course away from a proletarian orientation heads toward becoming an ultraleft sect—a group whose perpetual search for self-justification requires its own set of icons and shibboleths.

What stamps the ultraleft sect in particular is its doctrinaire unwillingness to see the resolution of the crisis of working-class leadership as developing out of the advance of class battles and revolutionary victories on a world scale. To the sect, communism is not the generalization of the actual line of march of a class toward the conquest of power. Instead, the class struggle is the historical working out of the "logic" of the particular nostrum that differentiates their sect from all other groups, thereby proving the necessity and irreplaceability of its

separate existence. Every new experience of working people in the class struggle, whether a victory or a defeat, is seen as significant only for its vindication of the doctrine that makes the sect unique, not for lessons that can help sharpen the theoretical tools and enrich the strategy of the working-class vanguard for battles to come.

Neither of these two trends acts on the conviction that it is the independent mobilization of the ranks that will change the unions. They each think this will be done by a more “progressive” and “enlightened” leadership—starting with themselves. Their activity in the labor movement is not *political*, but centers on what they narrowly define as “bread and butter” union issues. They believe this will make them and those “progressives” they support in the union officialdom more legitimate in the eyes of their co-workers, and help in electing more like them to union office. Their view of the ranks leads them to orient toward pressuring the union bureaucracy and winning union posts.

Petty-bourgeois radicals extend this attitude toward the ranks into their approach toward party building, as well. They view the leadership core of their parties as a group of professional intellectuals, whose task is to “link up” with the “natural leaders” of the working class. They cannot conceive of a party in which both the membership and the leadership are more and more *composed* of working people.

#### 4. The SWP’s accomplishments

**W**HILE OTHER TENDENCIES on the U.S. left have been disoriented by the pressures from the pace and evolution of the U.S. class struggle in the last decade, the SWP has made important strides toward building a proletarian party.

The party today has more class-struggle experience. We have gone through skirmishes on the shop floor, strike situations, and other struggles on the job. We have learned more about how to function in our unions and the labor movement in order to do effective communist work. We are in regular contact with broader layers of the working class. We are part of its daily life and conflicts.

The party, as part of our class, went through the deep recession of 1981–82 that resulted in large-scale layoffs, some of them permanent. Most of our national industrial fractions were drastically reduced in size. During the current upturn we are rebuilding fractions in several priority industrial unions. We have learned how to make some of the adjustments and deal with some of the problems and pressures that are involved in building a workers party through the ups and downs of capitalist business cycles.

### *Applying the party's organizational norms*

The SWP is increasingly becoming the kind of party that is able to apply in practice the proletarian norms adopted at our founding convention. Leadership of the retreat that began shortly after World War II included consciously loosening the application of these norms. This decision was a necessary part of leading the party through a period of enforced isolation from our class in such a way as to sustain our proletarian orientation and avoid an unnecessary loss of cadres.

That course, and the leadership that carried it out, made it possible for the party to turn toward and win a new generation of revolutionists of action when the first signs of the revival of the class struggle began to appear.

By the early 1960s, the party was experiencing modest recruitment, political expansion, the growth of the

Young Socialist Alliance, and the beginnings of greater openings for participation in the mass movement. Our net membership bottomed out in late 1967.

In 1965 the party adopted the resolution, “The Organizational Principles of the Socialist Workers Party.” This resolution was part of the preparation for deeper involvement in the class struggle. It registered the success of leading the party through a number of splits by various sectarians who recoiled sharply from the party’s identification with the Cuban revolution and its Marxist leadership; from our embracing the rise of Black nationalism; from our refusal to revise our position on Stalinism, including its Maoist and other variants; from our successful leadership of the course toward reunification of the Fourth International; and from our continuation and reaffirmation of the party’s proletarian orientation and the Bolshevik organizational norms that had been adopted at the founding convention in 1938.

The adoption of the 1965 resolution reflected the determination of the party to bring to an end the deliberate loosening of the application of our proletarian norms once an improved objective situation made it possible to do so. It reaffirmed these norms and rejected all proposals by those in the party who sought to head toward permanent factionalism as a mode of functioning in the SWP.

After a period in which progress toward a proletarian party could be made only by following detours around the obstacles imposed by the objective situation, we are now once again able to construct a party based in the industrial working class. Since the 1978 decision on the turn to the industrial unions, the party has grown into these organizational principles and become more comfortable applying them.

There are many manifestations of this progress. The growth of the number of comrades who contribute more than \$50 a week to help finance the party's activities is one sign of our continuing development as a party of active workers who finance a professional local and national structure.

The decision to adopt participation in the goal of weekly plant-gate sales by branch teams as a norm of party membership is another example. It aims to advance our course toward building branches made up in their majority of industrial workers, with a weekly rhythm of political activity organized to help increase our influence among industrial workers and within the unions.

The development of the national industrial union fractions has increased our capacity to generalize and learn from our collective experiences, politically homogenizing the party through organized discussion, exchange of views, and debates, in order to decide democratically what we will carry out as a centralized party.

### ***Political centralization***

The SWP's political centralization as a nationwide party has increased as well. This is not easy in a country as large as the United States. Political conditions between the late 1940s and the 1970s made it even more difficult. Throughout most of this period, there was a tendency for the norms, modes of functioning, and even political orientation of a branch in one part of the country to vary widely from those in other regions.

The new openings for the party since the mid-1960s allowed us to begin reversing this trend, but substantial progress toward political centralization was not possible before the turn to the industrial unions and the adoption of the perspective of the national industrial fractions.

This has brought the structure, norms, and experiences of the party membership across the country into closer coordination. It has laid the basis for us to begin functioning as a more truly nationwide campaign party. It has made the party more democratic by ensuring that party decisions are carried out everywhere, without obstruction on grounds of local exceptionalism.

A significant contribution to the party's capacity to achieve this has been our success in collaborating with the YSA in the organization of our movement's industrial union fractions. The SWP and YSA share the same fundamental political orientation and function in the same arenas. The YSA's work as part of the industrial fractions aids us in bringing young workers around our movement and winning them to the revolutionary party.

At the same time, the YSA as a youth organization does not have to duplicate the broad range of institutions and propaganda vehicles that the party has. The YSA has the flexibility to concentrate its energies and resources on one or two political campaigns, helping to maximize the nationwide impact of our movement. That is what the YSA is currently doing by throwing itself into efforts to advance the fight against the war in Central America and the Caribbean.

**S**INCE THE INITIATION of the turn to the industrial unions, the party has gone through fusions—with forces in Seaside, California, and with the Revolutionary Marxist Committee—as well as several splits.

As a result of the fusions we have integrated into the party and into the leadership a broader layer of communists who were attracted to the SWP in the initial stages of building our fractions in industrial unions. We have



changed for the better in the process. We have emerged stronger.

At the same time, the deepening of the party's proletarianization and our advance along the road converging with the Cuban, Nicaraguan, and Grenadian proletarian leaderships set a minority of the party on a different political trajectory. These members adopted the view that what is decisive is hanging on to the doctrines of a sect, rather than responding politically to the evolution of the class struggle on a world scale. They resisted and then rejected the deepening understanding of our continuity with Marx, Engels, and the Bolsheviks under Lenin's leadership. They recoiled from the political advances of the party, from the changing reality of a party more and more centered around industrial union fractions, and from our orientation toward the revolutions in Central America and the Caribbean. This led them on a split course.

They held in common a rejection of continuing the orientation of building the kind of party and the kind of world movement we started out to build half a century ago. Some simply quit the party. Others functioned as a secret faction, organizing disloyally inside and outside the party in an attempt to subvert our organizational norms and block the party from carrying out the course it had democratically decided on. The party brought this split operation to an end in January 1984.

The net result of the splits and fusions of the last period is that the party is more proletarian and more politically homogeneous. It is more the kind of party that the Fourth International set out to build at its founding. It is better able to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 1980s and 1990s, as we deepen our convergence with proletarian leaderships in Central America and the

Caribbean, and prepare for stepped-up battles between the capitalists and the workers and farmers, both in the United States and around the world.

## **5. Organizational adjustments and political priorities**

**D**EEPENING THE TURN to the industrial unions and responding to the new opportunities on a world scale opened up by the advances in Central America and the Caribbean has also been the axis around which we have carried out an organizational retreat made necessary by the smaller size of the party. We have gone through a period in which numerical losses through splits and through attrition have significantly outpaced growth through recruitment and fusions. The party today is 40 percent smaller than it was at the end of 1978.

These membership losses did not come about because of the party's turn to the industrial unions; they came about because of the pressures generated by the bosses' offensive at home and abroad. The party today is stronger, both politically and organizationally, than it would have been had we failed to carry out an organized, collective effort to build fractions in the industrial unions. We rejected pulling back from this course in order to be able to continue counting as members those who refused to accept the party's decision to ask every able member to get industrial jobs and help build industrial union fractions. Keeping such bloated membership figures is a sign of a party whose revolutionary fiber has been corroded and whose Leninist norms have been deeply corrupted.

In order to continue advancing the turn to the industrial unions, given the decline in the size of the party, we have made a series of cutbacks in the size of the party apparatus. The most important of these have been the steps

to reduce the size of the *Militant* from 28 or 32 pages weekly to its current 16 or 20 pages. Similar reductions were made in the number of books and pamphlets published. Other national departments were cut in size, as well.

The scaling back was organized in such a way as to allow the party to continue to move forward politically and organizationally on several fronts that were central to the orientation we had decided on. The party leadership school, the first session of which was held in 1980, has continued. *Perspectiva Mundial*, which began appearing in 1977, has been continued without reduction in size or frequency. And our Managua bureau, which was opened in 1979, has continued to play a vital political role for the party and our world movement by providing weekly news coverage and analysis for the press. Moreover, we have helped launch *New International* as another tool for education on the theory, politics, and continuity of the Marxist workers movement, and for advancing knowledge throughout the English-speaking world about the political thinking of other proletarian revolutionists in the Americas.

The launching of a series of books documenting the rich political record of the Comintern in Lenin's time is another major step toward strengthening our political education. By mining the political resources contained in these books, especially through organized classes, we will strengthen our understanding of the political continuity that links us to the program of Bolshevism, which, following the October 1917 revolution in Russia, provided a firm political foundation for the Comintern.

The printshop has been essential to this reorganization. It has allowed us to move forward along these lines, including expansion in the directions outlined here, despite the decline in the size of the party. Maintaining

and continuing to strengthen the printshop involves a major allocation of cadres and central leadership attention. Without the political understanding, initiatives, and skills of the cadres in the printshop, and the income the shop generates, such undertakings as the publication of *New International*, the maintenance of the Managua bureau, the continuation of *Intercontinental Press*, and the important Pathfinder Press publishing projects would be financially impossible.

Following the split operation that the party brought to an end in January 1984, further reorganization of the party was needed to bring our structure and political functioning in line with our reduced size as we maximize our ability to build functioning national fractions in the industrial unions.

One measure has been to continue to reduce the size of the full-time apparatus of the party to one that is more in line with our political needs and present size. A national apparatus that is out of harmony with the current size and opportunities for short-term growth is not only a drain on party resources, but it can throw us off politically by overprojecting tasks for the branches. There is then a tendency to substitute activity by full-time staff for political work organized by the branches and industrial union fractions to meet these projections.

A second step has been to dissolve several branches that were too weak to be sustained without substantial reinforcement from outside, which the party nationally was not able to provide. The members in these branches have joined in reinforcing other branches, helping the party to take advantage of opportunities to strengthen our national industrial union fractions.

A third step has been the dismantling of most of the party's state, district, and local structures, which can

no longer be maintained given the size of the branches involved. This organizational adjustment has been carried through in such a way as to maintain the strongest possible districtwide industrial union fractions and continue to build our nine national industrial union fractions. Steps have been taken by the Political Committee to organize adequate leadership guidance of the districtwide fractions, as well as to increase systematic national leadership attention to the party's activity with organizations of working farmers.

### *Weekly rhythm of branch activity*

A fourth measure has been leadership attention to more sharply focusing the party's political priorities, and carrying out party work structured around a sustainable weekly rhythm of activity of the branches and fractions. With a regular and measured pace of work, a party that is politically alert will be capable of moving swiftly when special openings arise in the class struggle. When such opportunities occur, a campaign party focuses the energies of the membership and the political power of our branch institutions, multiplying the impact of our ideas and leadership abilities.

Our branches need to move toward establishing a weekly rhythm of activity that is in line with the size of the branch, the work schedules of the members in the industrial union fractions, and the overall resources of the branch. An unrealistic tempo of activity or number of campaigns sets back progress toward the proletarian norm of an active membership carrying out regular political work under the direction of the party.

Branch executive committees need to lead the membership in discussion and determination of political priorities, and their collective implementation. The branch

needs time for political discussion, as well as time to bring workers around party activities, recruit them, and integrate and educate them as worker-Bolsheviks.

The party's national leadership bodies can assist the branches in organizing their work in this manner by adopting central political priorities and campaigns. What we need is greater *political* centralism, not *lists* of national tasks that every branch feels it must try to carry out regardless of its particular situation. We need branches strong enough to sustain the party institutions without which no basic unit can function over time.

Branch executive committees should organize to make political discussion and educational work a regular aspect of branch activity. The Lenin classes are a model in many branches and remain the linchpin of the party's education. When major line articles on new questions or events appear in the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*, it should be normal to organize a discussion in the branch. The executive committees should not leave it up to individual members to read and absorb reports adopted by the National Committee or conventions of the party and published in the internal bulletin, but should schedule reports and discussions as part of the branch meeting. Classes should be organized around articles in *New International*.

This will also help the party make more effective use of our national resources. The leadership time and financial resources that go into producing our newspaper, magazines, and books are not well spent unless we organize ourselves to put these tools to work to increase our collective effectiveness as revolutionary politicians and our education as leaders of the working-class movement. International trips to the scene of miners' struggles in Britain, or to Nicaragua or Indochina, for example, are a wise use of resources if they bear fruit in material for

the party press, public speaking tours, and utilizing expanded opportunities to bring more people around our movement.

### ***Organizing the party's active supporters***

Organization of the active supporters of the party can provide the branches with an important auxiliary force to advance our work and increase our effectiveness as a nationwide party. We have many supporters who want to engage in organized activity to advance our political campaigns and work in the mass movement, but who choose not to carry out weekly political activity as part of a centralized workers party, and not to take responsibility for participating in our democratic discussion to determine party policy and activities.

Since the National Committee's 1982 decision to begin organizing work with active supporters as a task of every branch we have not been able to pay sufficient attention to this as a truly national project. Some branches have devoted substantial leadership attention to this work. Their initial experiences provide lessons from which the party as a whole can learn. Organizing this work in a systematic way as a national orientation, however, is a challenge still to be met.

The aim of all these organizational adjustments and political tasks is to better equip the party to deepen our turn to industry and to concentrate more of our efforts on recruiting workers to the SWP and educating our cadres.

## **6. Revolutionary perspectives**

**T**HE FUNDAMENTAL POLITICAL ASSESSMENT in the opening paragraphs of this resolution—that the industrial working class and its unions have been pushed

to the center of U.S. politics—determines our course of maintaining and deepening the turn to the industrial unions.

The rulers' frontal assault on the industrial unions is preparing a new stage of working-class struggle. Every social and political question—imperialist war, Black liberation, women's rights, attacks on democratic freedoms—is reflected more quickly and directly inside the industrial working class and the unions.

Within the new political framework, the working-class reaction to Washington's course toward a broader war in Central America will produce further changes in the political life of the country.

Opposition in the industrial working class and its unions to the Central America war will qualitatively increase as the U.S. imperialists send ground troops into combat. The weight of the working class in a mass antiwar movement will stamp it with a more and more proletarian character. The struggle against the war, against the attempt to reimpose conscription of U.S. youth to fight it, and against the restrictions on democratic rights that will inevitably accompany it will become intertwined with class battles around economic demands and action around other social and political questions.

Individual workers and union forces today will be part of antiwar actions from the beginning to a qualitatively greater degree than happened with the rise of the movement against the war in Vietnam twenty years ago. That war coincided with a period of continued concessions by the bosses to the unions. The war that has begun today coincides with a period of assaults on the unions. The coming war will lead to big struggles inside the labor movement as well, as workers organize against the policies of those in the officialdom who try to keep the unions in



line behind the bipartisan war policy.

The U.S. rulers will fight to preserve their economic and social system of domination and exploitation in this hemisphere regardless of the opposition in the working class. The political price they will have to pay, however, will help lead not only to their military defeat at the hands of the workers and peasants of Central America and the Caribbean, but also to a political crisis that can shake this country to its foundations.

Opposition to the war offensive abroad and the parallel offensive against the working people at home is already beginning to create new openings for building the party by recruiting working people who are attracted to revolutions and revolutionary perspectives. These openings will increase as resistance to the rulers' offensive continues on both fronts.

**B**UT MUCH MORE PROFOUND CHANGES in the framework of the class struggle are on the horizon. They can be foreseen even though we cannot predict the pace of events, and the twists and turns the class struggle will follow in reaching that stage.

Militant struggles of social protest and mobilizations of the working class and the oppressed nationalities will more and more be answered in the streets by violent attacks from racist and other ultraright outfits, urged on and protected by the bosses and their government. Fascist movements will arise. There will be a breakdown in bourgeois democracy, as wings of the ruling class and its state apparatus begin to seek dictatorial solutions to the crisis of its political rule and social system.

It is under these conditions that the gap between today's conditions and experiences of the workers and

farmers, and the conditions and experiences of revolutionary struggle will be bridged.

Out of the tumultuous clashes that will mark this stage of the class struggle will come a prerevolutionary situation, in which the working-class vanguard will begin to draw revolutionary conclusions. Broad class-struggle wings will develop inside the labor movement. There will be a qualitative transformation in the conditions for building a revolutionary workers party in this country.

Only by having fractions in the strategic centers of the industrial working class can the SWP be part of the class battles that are unfolding today, and those that will unfold tomorrow. It is there that forces to build a class-struggle left wing of the labor movement will emerge. It is there that proletarian fighters will be found who will build and lead the mass revolutionary party that will be necessary to lead the vanguard through a series of prerevolutionary battles on the road to the revolutionary conquest of power and the establishment of a workers and farmers government. And it is there that we can begin right now to recruit to the Socialist Workers Party the most conscious workers and farmers who are prepared to join us in fighting to advance this revolutionary perspective today.

## NOTES

1. This resolution itself is available in Spanish in the February 4, 1985, issue of *Perspectiva Mundial*.

2. Fidel Castro, *The Second Declaration of Havana* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1979), p. 19.

3. The entire interview was printed in the Cuban magazine *Bohemia*, and was translated and published in the April

30, 1984, *Intercontinental Press*.

4. *1979 World Congress of the Fourth International*, Special Supplement to *Intercontinental Press*, January 1980, p. 95.

5. "Theses on the Communist Parties and Parliamentarism" in *The Second Congress of the Communist International*, vol. 2 (London: New Park, 1977). A different translation of this document is contained in *Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International* (London: Ink Links, 1980), under the title "The Communist Party and Parliament."

6. James P. Cannon, *The History of American Trotskyism* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972), p. 1.

7. "The Trade Union Movement and the Socialist Workers Party" in *The Founding of the Socialist Workers Party*, (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1982), p. 123.

8. "The Political Situation and the Tasks of the Party" in *The Founding of the Socialist Workers Party*, p. 109.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

10. "The Trade Union Movement and the Socialist Workers Party" in *The Founding of the Socialist Workers Party*, p. 123.

11. Leon Trotsky, "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International" in *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977), pp. 137–38.

12. "The Statutes of the Communist International" in *The Second Congress of the Communist International*, vol. 2, p. 145.

13. Trotsky, "Closer to the Proletarians of the 'Colored' Races" in *Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1978), pp. 84–85.

14. Trotsky, "The Negro Question in America" in *Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination*, p. 30.

15. Castro, December 20, 1980, speech in *Main Report: Second Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba* (New York: Center for Cuban Studies, 1981), p. 46.

16. Trotsky, "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International" in *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, p.151.

17. The resolution adopted by the third Comintern congress, “Methods and Forms of Work Among Communist Women: Theses,” is contained in *Theses, Resolutions and Manifestos of the First Four Congresses of the Third International*, pp. 121–29.

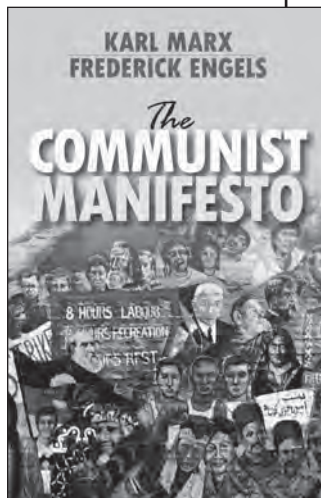
18. “The Organizational Character of the Socialist Workers Party” (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), p. 21.

# Basic works of Marxism

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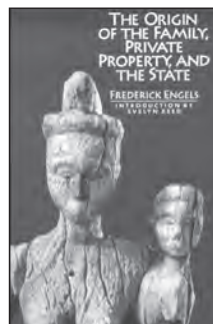


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# THE CRISIS FACING WORKING FARMERS

*by Doug Jenness*

**F**ARMERS IN THE UNITED STATES are suffering the worst economic and social crisis they have faced since the Great Depression more than half a century ago. In the past few years their real income has plummeted and their debts have skyrocketed as they are squeezed between high production costs and the low prices they receive for their products. One thousand farmers a week are being ruined and forced off their farms and ranches. Farm machinery and livestock are being repossessed as farmers are unable to make their payments.

The capitalist politicians in Washington, both Democrats and Republicans, are further tightening the screws on farmers. Bipartisan legislation and Department of Agriculture policy have made it more difficult for working farmers to qualify as “good credit risks” and obtain low-interest government loans. At the same time, government price supports of some major commodities have been lowered, and the current administration is threatening to slash them more.

Black farmers, concentrated primarily in the southern states, have been hit the hardest. They are losing their

farms at a much faster rate than the average. During the 1970s the decline in the Black farm population was 58 percent compared to a 19 percent decline among other farm residents. The median income of Black farm families in 1978 was 40 percent that of other farm families, and the proportion of Black farm families in poverty was much higher. Black farmers have been especially victimized by the federal Farm Home Administration's (FmHA) hard line against loans to "bad credit risks."

The reverberations of this crisis are being felt throughout the entire rural population. Many small retailers, farm equipment dealers, tradesmen, and mechanics are facing bad times or going broke. State and local divisions of the U.S. government are cutting back on funding for schools, health facilities, and other public services. At the same time, the federal government is slashing assistance for conservation programs, housing loans, health facilities, and other social programs.

The Democratic and Republican parties—representing a handful of ruling capitalist families—implement policies that accelerate the ruination of working farmers. In spite of election-time demagoguery extolling the virtues of "family farms," their policies are designed to aid only what they label "well-managed" and "credit-worthy" farms. They act as if it is in the "natural order of things" that farmers having difficulties should fall by the wayside. The hardships of farm families, squeezed until they are forced out of farming, are of no concern to these ruling-class politicians.

Working farmers are victims of conditions over which they have no control. But these are not primarily natural conditions—bad weather, insect infestations, and so on. They are social conditions, the results of the workings of capitalism—exorbitant interest rates; monopoly control

over marketing; and monopoly-rigged pricing of farm machinery, fertilizer, seeds, and fuel.

Working farmers have never faced easy conditions. Their situation took a major new turn for the worse in the mid-1970s. Farmers who borrowed heavily to purchase land as prices were rising in the 1960s and 1970s have seen the market price of their land—and thus their equity and collateral—plummet over the past five years. With production costs closing in on farm incomes throughout the past decade, farmers have fallen deeper and deeper into debt to finance more modern equipment needed to produce ever more commodities.

**I**N RESPONSE, a wave of farmer protests began in 1977. The American Agriculture Movement (AAM), a new organization of working farmers founded that year, initiated these protests with coordinated rallies and “tractorcades” at state capitals, grain elevators, and warehouses around the country.

In 1979 the AAM again took to the streets, this time in Washington, D.C. It organized a nationwide tractorcade and encampment of tens of thousands of farmers at the Capitol Mall to demand improved federal farm price supports. The administration of the capitalist peanut millionaire, James Carter, dismissed the farmers as motivated by “just old-fashioned greed.”

The sharp downturn in the business cycle that began in 1981 precipitated an explosive revival of militant tactics farmers had used in the 1920s and 1930s. Farmers organized “penny auctions” to block farm foreclosures. Hundreds of sympathetic farmers gather when officials try to auction off a foreclosed farm. Using “friendly persuasion,” they seek to prevent anyone but the farmer who is being

foreclosed from bidding more than a few pennies.

Activists in the AAM have played an important part in many of these actions, but these protests have also thrown up other new farmer organizations to fight against the bankers and the government—organizations such as the Family Farmers' Movement in Ohio, the Kentucky Farm Survival Association, Citizens Organization Acting Together (COACT), the Iowa Farm Unity Coalition, and others.

One result of these protests has been the birth of a new coalition of farmers' organizations, the North American Farm Alliance (NAFA). Founded at an April 1983 conference in Des Moines, Iowa, NAFA brought together AAM activists and representatives from the many new militant farmer organizations. Joining them were Canadian farmers associated with the Canadian Farmers Survival Association.

NAFA today publishes a newspaper, the *North American Farmer*. It has organized tours to strengthen collaboration with working farmers in France and the Netherlands, as well as to Nicaragua, where a workers and farmers government is carrying out policies to benefit exploited producers in city and countryside.

From the outset NAFA made clear that an important part of its strategy was reaching out to other exploited and oppressed parts of the population—especially the labor movement, Blacks, and women.

Recent attempts by working farmers to build bridges to industrial workers and other trade unionists reach back a number of years. During the hard-fought nationwide coal miners strike in 1977–78, Midwest farmers convoyed food to the miners in a conscious attempt to begin forging an alliance with a powerful sector of the working class. In the last several years farmers have demonstrated

support for striking independent truckers and locomotive engineers.

Trade unionists on a local level have begun to help working farmers hang onto their farms, as well. They have mobilized for “penny auctions” and other protests. Workers and working farmers, white and Black, have also turned out to support Black farmers facing foreclosure, striking a blow at the racial prejudice that the rulers have used to try to keep working people divided and weak.

**F**ROM ITS ORIGINS, the modern working-class movement and its communist vanguard have championed the struggles of family farmers against landlords, the banks, food monopolies, grain merchants, real estate sharks, and other exploiters. Marxists have strived to develop a program that could forge a worker-farmer alliance capable of overturning capitalist rule and replacing it with a workers and farmers government.

In the 1930s farmers and their families made up one-fourth of the U.S. population; today they account for about 3 percent. At first glance, this sharp decline in the number of family farmers in the United States might make it appear that an alliance with these producers is no longer the strategically decisive question for the U.S. working class that it was four or five decades ago. This notion has been reinforced by the myth that all of those independent commodity producers on the land who have not already been wiped out and replaced by industrial, factory-type farms certainly will be in the not-too-distant future.

A careful look at the facts, however, underlines the continuing strategic importance for the working class of an alliance with working farmers. Independent family farmers continue to account for the greatest portion of

labor expended in agricultural production. In addition, the social and economic weight of these producers in the U.S. economy and the dominant role of U.S. agriculture in the world reinforce this political conclusion.

## I. IMPORTANT ROLE OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS

**I**NCLUDING AGRICULTURAL wage workers, the total number of persons over fourteen years old working on the land in 1983 was 3.4 million. The real figure is somewhat higher if all of the unpaid family labor and the hired workers not reported by employers are taken into account.

The rural population as a whole is larger than the number directly employed in agricultural production. Those who live in rural areas still make up a substantial part of the U.S. population. In addition to farmers and farm workers, this category includes many nonfarm workers, who either used to be farmers themselves or have close relatives who are farmers. Many work in industries located in rural areas—mining, textile, garment, furniture, forest products, and so on. Others commute to plants located close to metropolitan areas. Many workers living in rural areas have some direct connection with production on the land. They may have small plots where they grow vegetables or raise chickens.

There are all sorts of workers in rural areas whose livelihoods are related to agriculture, including crop dusters, mechanics, truck drivers, and irrigation maintenance workers. There are veterinarians, shopkeepers, farm equipment dealers, and other small businessmen who are dependent on agriculture and are adversely affected by bad times for farmers.

In many rural areas education, medical care, housing, and public transportation remain substandard. It is hard for many workers, especially if they can't find regular employment, to buy or rent decent housing. Many live in trailers.

Unlike the manufacturing industry, where the work force is dominated by wage workers employed by capitalists, *independent farmers and their families today account for the greatest number of hours of labor in agricultural production.* While two-thirds of those working on the land at some time during the year are wage or salaried workers, many of them work only a few days or weeks. At any given time, slightly more than two-thirds of those engaged in agriculture come from farming families. This is particularly true in the Midwest, the principal grain- and livestock-producing region.

The actual amount of labor put out each year by farm families is hidden by the statistics, since much of the labor time of farm women and children is not recorded. For example, most farm women without off-the-farm jobs identify their occupations as housewives. Yet a study sponsored by the Department of Agriculture and conducted by the National Opinion Research Center in 1980–81 confirmed what any experienced farm person knows. It showed that 37 percent of these “housewives” did some plowing, cultivating, or planting; from one-third to one-half were involved in other field work or harvesting, purchasing, marketing, and supervision; about two-thirds contributed to animal care on livestock operations; and 78 percent had some responsibility for bookkeeping.

Despite the steady decline of the number of both independent operators and wage workers on the land, total agricultural production today is more than twice the levels of 1930. The total acreage used for crops and the

aggregate number of breeding animals in 1930 differ by less than 5 percent from the amounts used in 1981. Yet, crop production is 2.6 times the 1930 level, livestock production 2.1 times the 1930 level, and total farm output about 2.6 times the 1930 level.

This increase in output is the result of dramatic increases in the productivity of farm labor. In 1930 one farm worker or farmer produced enough farm products for ten people; in 1982 one producer produced enough for seventy-eight. Under capitalism, the improved technology and scientific methods behind this increase in labor productivity represent far from an unmixed blessing for small farmers. These changes have greatly increased their expenditures, since they now have to farm greater acreage in order to survive. The average size of farms grew from slightly more than 200 acres in 1950 to 433 acres in 1982. Moreover, they have to raise more money to purchase machinery, fuel, chemical fertilizers, and pesticides.<sup>1</sup>

Farmers used to make many things—from household items to buildings—out of materials produced on the farm. Manure from livestock was used to fertilize fields. Many produced their own fodder for their livestock, their own seeds, and their own food. This production is now overwhelmingly done by wage workers outside of agriculture as part of capitalist industrial enterprises.

Into the 1940s a large number of farmers still used horses, for which they grew food on the farm, instead of tractors or other gasoline-fueled machinery. In 1940, for example, there were 1.6 million tractors and 1 million trucks compared to 4.3 million tractors and 3 million trucks on far fewer farms in 1979. More significantly, the average horsepower per tractor increased from 27 to 56 in



the same period. It was not until 1952 that the number of tractors surpassed the number of work horses and mules.

Today farmers buy feed, hybrid seeds, fertilizer, tractors, automotive parts, diesel fuel, storage bins, and automated equipment. Most of the food they and their families eat is bought in supermarkets. Agriculture has become more specialized, and more farms produce just one or two products.

For every producer on the land there are five more workers who are involved with the agricultural sector, either through manufacturing farm equipment, processing, transportation, or retailing. More than 20 million workers are involved either in direct agricultural production or in some closely related industry.

### **Breadbasket for the world**

Farming in the United States today plays a dominant role in world agricultural trade. The United States, or, more accurately, the United States and Canada, have become the breadbasket for the world. More than one hundred countries rely primarily on North American grain to feed their people and livestock.

The United States is the world's leading exporter of agricultural goods. In 1981 crops from two out of every five acres harvested were exported. More than half of the rice, wheat, soybeans, cotton, sunflower seeds, and cattle hides produced are exported, as well as more than one-fourth of the tobacco and feedgrain output.

In the 1930s the situation was quite different. Every continent of the world except Europe exported grain; North America, Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Australia were all net grain exporters. In the 1930s Latin America's grain exports were nearly double those of the United States. Today the only continents that are net ex-

porters of grain are North America and Australia. (In Latin America only Argentina remains a net exporter.)

U.S. exporters' biggest customers are in Japan, Western Europe, and the Soviet Union. But exports to many semicolonial countries have also greatly increased, and the people of many countries that were previously self-sufficient in food have become dependent on U.S. food imports. This is what happened to Iran in the 1960s as a result of the shah's "agrarian reform," which was so highly touted in the U.S. big business press. South Korea is another example of a semicolonial country where capitalist "progress" has meant going from growing its own food to dependency on U.S. exports, including for its main staple, rice.

**T**HROUGH THE DIRECT AND INDIRECT use of massive tax revenues, Washington enables U.S. grain merchants to sell grain more cheaply than it could be produced in these countries at their current level of economic development. The U.S. grain monopolies set up storage bins and organize transportation of the grain to these countries. These U.S. imperialist policies drive hundreds of thousands of farmers and peasants off the land in these countries, devastating local agriculture and impoverishing millions.

In many semicolonial countries that at one time grew most of their own food and grain, the richest farmers have gone over to producing "luxury" export crops such as strawberries, nuts, and cut flowers for the U.S. and European markets. Some produce cotton and beef for export. Such agricultural products cannot be afforded by the vast majority of people in the semicolonial countries.

In some countries, North American grain merchants

have introduced the production of corn, soybeans, and other crops in place of those that have long been part of the diet of the people in those countries. Farmers who produce these crops become dependent on the U.S. monopolies for hybrid seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides. Moreover, this drive for the rapid extraction of big profits ignores sound long-term farming practices, resulting in soil exhaustion. This has led to the loss of millions of acres of agricultural land, some of it even becoming desert.

In addition to the misery that has been created by the ruination of millions of farmers in the semicolonial world, the policies of the U.S. and other imperialist commercial and banking capitalists have made these countries more vulnerable to famine. The famines that devastated the Sahel region of Africa in the early 1970s and again in 1984, for example, were not “natural disasters” due to severe drought, as claimed by the big business press, but social disasters due to conditions created by imperialist profiteers. People are being starved to death by the law of value, not the law of god. They feed the maws of the ruling families of finance capital—a modern form of mass human sacrifice.

Before the arrival of European colonialism, farmers in this region, located on the southern edge of the Sahara desert, left land fallow for long periods, did not overgraze it, and grew a wide variety of crops. Mali, one of the worst-hit countries in the 1970s, was once even considered the breadbasket of Africa.

Under imperialist domination, however, land in the Sahelian countries was turned over to growing cotton, peanuts, vegetables, and producing beef for export. During the drought years 1970–74 many agricultural exports reached record levels. The total value of agricultural exports from the Sahelian countries was \$1.5 billion—

three times that of all cereals imported into the region. It was not uncommon for the same ships that brought “relief” food to leave with hundreds of millions of dollars worth of agricultural goods bound for Europe and North America.

Even with the big cut in grain production and the promotion of exports, every Sahelian country, with the possible exception of Mauritania, actually produced enough grain to feed its total population during the worst year of the drought. But debt-ridden farmers were unable to pay the high prices charged by merchants who had bought the grain at low prices and resold it at high prices in other countries.

**D**ROUGHTS, FLOODS, AND HURRICANES are natural events that human society cannot totally prevent. But no matter how devastating they can be, they are no longer the cause of famines. Famines today, to be named accurately, are *profit* famines. They are caused by the relentless drive of the imperialist ruling families to squeeze more profits out of working people in the oppressed nations.

The product of capitalist society, not nature, famines can be eliminated by social action. The capacity exists today on a world scale to produce not only enough food for every human being, but enough to compensate for big shortages caused by natural disasters.

One of the major functions of the U.S. Department of Agriculture is to organize the expansion of U.S. food exports. It provides direct aid to grain merchants and other exporters by giving them tax write-offs and helping them to find profitable markets.

The spectacular increases in agricultural production following World War II led to a situation where greater

quantities of many commodities were produced in the United States than could be sold on the home market without a big decrease in prices. So the big merchants sought more lucrative markets in other countries. This effort got a big boost in 1954, when Public Law 480—later dubbed “Food for Peace”—was adopted. Provisions in this measure permitted governments to buy U.S. food imports with their own currencies instead of with dollars. In the past thirty years, billions of dollars worth of U.S. grain has been sold in this way.

Other provisions of PL 480 were later utilized to help *create* new markets. For example, the local currencies received by the U.S. government for its sale of food were loaned at very low interest rates to U.S. corporations setting up businesses to exploit labor or speculate in stocks or real estate in those countries. In many countries, U.S. grain monopolies established poultry and livestock farms that would increase the market for their feed grains.

Multibillionaire grain merchants such as Cargill, Ralston-Purina, and the Peavey Corporation received big loans from the U.S. government to set up profitable poultry operations, to breed chicks, to produce chicken feed, and to retail chickens in South Korea.

But there was a hitch to receiving this “Food for Peace” aid. In order to get a certain amount of the less expensive food, governments also had to agree to purchase U.S. agricultural commodities in the future at regular market prices.

Washington also uses the great productivity of U.S. agricultural producers as a political weapon against the peoples of countries whose governments resist imperialist domination. It withholds or withdraws food aid altogether to punish or destabilize regimes.

For example, today the U.S. government is doling out

aid to Ethiopia, devastated by a famine, with an eyedropper. The U.S. rulers strongly oppose the Ethiopian government, which came to power in 1974 as a result of a revolution against a U.S.-backed monarch and landed oligarchy. U.S. officials have launched a smear campaign charging that the Ethiopian government is putting hurdles in the way of distributing food relief. When Ethiopian officials responded by pointing to the responsibility of U.S. and European imperialists for creating the conditions that led to the famine, the head of the U.S. Agency for International Development cynically told the press that this was “a classic example of biting the hand that feeds you.”

Several years ago, when Kampuchea was suffering from famine caused by the devastation of Washington’s war against Indochina, the U.S. government didn’t offer a single bushel of wheat from its vast surpluses. The food weapon has been used to put the squeeze on the government of Mozambique to pull back from its support to opponents of the apartheid regime in neighboring South Africa. Washington still maintains an economic embargo against Cuba and Vietnam, and it attempts to get all of its allies to join this boycott. U.S. wheat sales were cut off to Nicaragua in 1981.

## II. CLASS STRUCTURE OF U.S. AGRICULTURE

**F**ARM OPERATORS are often lumped together in a single category as if they were a homogenous economic and social class sharing common interests. This does not accurately describe the true class relations in the U.S. countryside. Farmers are not a single class, and farmers *as a whole* do not share common interests. They are a set of classes that include both exploited and exploiters, with

sharply conflicting class interests.

There is much overlapping among the different social layers in the countryside and extensive interconnections among them. Consequently, there are no “pure” categories into which each and every rural family can be neatly fitted. Moreover, government statistics are based not on class criteria but on the size of income, sales, and the amount of acreage farmed or owned. Adequate figures are not available, for example, to determine a clear breakdown according to the quantity of wage labor exploited by farmers. Bearing these limitations in mind, a general picture of the class structure of the U.S. countryside can nonetheless be drawn.

- *Large capitalist farmers:* At one end of the spectrum are a very small number of large capitalist farms and ranches owned and operated by some of the country’s largest corporations, such as Tenneco, Del Monte, and Castle and Cooke. Salaried managers are hired to run these farms, and wage workers are the exclusive source of labor. They are most concentrated in fruit, vegetable, poultry, and beef production. These farms represent the involvement of big monopoly capital in direct agricultural production.

- *Small capitalist farmers:* Most small capitalist farmers live on the land and see themselves as “family farmers.” They include farmers who exclusively use wage labor; those who use both wage labor and family labor on a permanent basis; and those who use primarily family labor, but depend on wage labor, at least during certain times of the year. Some in this latter category are themselves employed as wage laborers, at least during part of the year. There is a wide spread of incomes among these farmers, ranging from millionaires to farmers who are deeply in debt.

Many of these farmers also seek profits in other forms of capitalist enterprise in the countryside. Some are real estate dealers, insurance brokers, local retailers, or owners of grain elevators or small processing plants. Some may receive a substantial part of their income from renting out land or machinery.

In some sectors of agriculture, capitalist farmers are weighty enough to exercise considerable political and economic influence over marketing policies. This is particularly true in the production of fruits and vegetables where the growers' associations exercise substantial leverage.

As exploiters of wage labor this layer of farmers are hostile to the efforts of farm workers to fight for their rights and a decent living. They want cheap labor and resist efforts by this especially oppressed and exploited section of the working class to win higher wages, better working conditions, and unemployment and health benefits.

- *Exploited working farmers:* These independent producers employ little or no wage labor. More than half of them depend on off-the-farm jobs as wage workers to make ends meet. Some work in factories or mines; others as rail workers, truckers, or part-time for other farmers. Many farm women also work jobs off the farm to supplement family incomes.

This layer of the farm population, too, spans a range of producers facing different situations. Many own their farms, although the land is usually mortgaged heavily to the banks. These working farmers often also rent some land in addition to their own. Others possess no land at all, producing as tenant farmers or sharecroppers.

More prosperous independent farmers, while employing no wage labor, may identify more with exploiting



farmers and aspire to become small capitalists themselves, either in agriculture or in some other sector. Many other working farmers, on the other hand, are in the process of being forced out of farming altogether and becoming permanent wage workers.

Working farmers who do not exploit labor, accumulate capital, realize a profit, or live off rents are not capitalists, even small capitalists. Instead, both family farmers who depend on off-the-farm income and those who solely rely on what their farms can produce are *exploited* by the capitalist class.

- *Agricultural wage workers:* Farm workers are the most oppressed and exploited sector of the farm population and one of the worst-off sections of the working class as a whole. Most suffer abysmal conditions since the AFL-CIO bureaucracy has done virtually nothing to organize the vast majority of these workers into unions to defend themselves. Wages are low—often averaging below \$20 a day. They are not covered by minimum wage laws, and piece work is very common. Health and safety conditions are often horrendous. There are virtually no unemployment, health, or disability benefits. Most farm and ranch workers are not able to get regular work year-round. They work as casual laborers or on a seasonal basis. Since harvesting in many parts of the country occurs in the summer, a disproportionate number of workers are children or teen-age youths who are paid even less than the standard low wage.

The worst conditions are suffered by migrant workers who move from one part of the country to another following the harvests. The housing provided by the capitalist farmers for migrants is often rat-infested with no water or heat. Medical facilities, as well as educational and recreational opportunities for children, are generally

poor or unavailable. Migrant workers are often ripped off at employer-run stores in the work camps. Pesticides poison field workers, causing chronic ill health for thousands and killing many. According to the National Safety Council, farm labor is the second most hazardous occupation after mining.

Although a majority of farm workers are white, the numbers who are Black, Chicano, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Filipino, and Haitian are disproportionate to their size in the overall population. Many of these workers are undocumented immigrants, who are especially vulnerable to blackmail by overseers who use the threat of deportation to get them to accept worse conditions and to cheat them out of their meager earnings. Sometimes this intimidation is used to impress workers into virtual slavery. A 1981 report estimated that 10,000 farm workers each year are held against their will, unable to leave their employers' farm or ranch except under threat of injury or death.

Many growers still force farm workers to use the back-breaking short hoe. Nor do most farm workers benefit from the mechanization of planting and harvesting that does occur, increasing productivity and eliminating some of the arduous character of farm work. They simply lose their jobs with few prospects of getting another one.

Closely connected to those who work on the land are the men and women who work in the canneries, freezing plants, and poultry processing plants. As many of these operations are not year-round, the employers hire migrant workers—sometimes the same farm workers who have been involved in the harvest—for low pay. Like farm workers, they work under miserable conditions.

Thousands of poorly paid Blacks make up a big part

of the work force in the poultry processing plants, which are increasingly being located in the South.

### **Exploitation of independent farmers**

While agricultural workers are among the most heavily exploited layers of the working class, the *form* of their exploitation is fundamentally the same as that of other wage workers. The wage they are paid for their hours of labor amounts to only a fraction of the value they produce during that time. The remainder of their labor time actually goes unpaid. The value produced during that unpaid labor time ends up as profits in the coffers of the capitalists, who compete among themselves for the biggest shares. It is the employers who hold ownership rights to the commodities produced in the factories and the fields, not the workers whose labor creates those products. This is how wage workers are exploited.

How does the exploitation of working farmers differ from this? Exploited farmers create a product with their labor and that of other family members. Unlike wage workers, they own this product, and they either consume it or sell it on the market. Like wage workers, however, working farmers do not end up with the equivalent value of the labor time they have put into producing these commodities. This surplus labor, for which they too go unpaid, is expropriated—stolen from them—by the owners of the banks, land, and trusts.

Karl Marx, writing about the small French farmers in 1850, explained that, “It can be seen that their exploitation differs only in *form* from the exploitation of the industrial proletariat. The exploiter is the same: *capital*. The individual capitalists exploit the individual peasants through *mortgages* and *usury*; the capitalist class exploits the peasant class through the *state taxes*.”<sup>2</sup>

In the United States today the parasitic ruling families profit handsomely from the interest payments on bank mortgages and loans paid by farmers. As Frederick Engels put it, working farmers are “debt slaves.” They are always in debt. In order to buy land, a new piece of machinery, or to get money for operating expenses, they must borrow against their land or their next crop. An American Bankers Association survey conducted in 1983 found that for the first time in U.S. history the total amount of interest payments on farm loans surpassed the total net farm income.

The big farm-implement manufacturers, seed and feed companies, suppliers of pesticides and herbicides, and the oil trusts take a share of the profits extracted from working farmers through monopoly-rigged prices. Exercising monopoly control over markets, these suppliers of products that farmers need for production set prices above what they would be in a more competitive market. This sometimes becomes so flagrant that the federal government even has to admit that it goes on.

In 1972, for example, the Federal Trade Commission found that in the animal feed industry, dominated by Ralston Purina and Cargill, prices were being rigged by collusion among the monopolists. Such companies according to the FTC were helping themselves to an extra \$200 million in annual overcharges at the farmers’ expense. They found a similar development in the farm machinery industry, where John Deere and International Harvester (recently purchased by Tenneco) control 60 percent of the farm machinery market.

Squeezing the farmer at the other end of the vise are the big processing and merchandising trusts that set the prices they pay farmers as low as possible. For example, two giant grain monopolies—Cargill and Continental—

handle half of all U.S. grain exports. They operate grain “pipelines” all the way from farmer to foreign consumer. They own seed and feed subsidiaries, shipping companies, grain elevators, communications systems, worldwide commercial espionage networks, and processing plants.

Food processing and distribution are becoming increasingly concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. In every major food category in the United States, four or fewer companies monopolize more than 55 percent of the market. The top fifty food processing companies—corporations such as Beatrice Foods and General Foods—realized about 75 percent of all the profits in the industry. This concentration facilitates price-fixing and other secret dealings that victimize both the farmer and the consumer.

**T**HE RULING CAPITALIST FAMILIES that dominate commercial capital have increasingly brought working farmers under their boot in the marketplace. By using their monopoly leverage in processing, transportation, and retailing they are able to squeeze superprofits out of farmers. This exploitation by commercial capital is the counterpart to the debt slavery of the banks.

One method food processors are increasingly using to subjugate farmers is to get them to sign contracts rather than directly sell their own products on the market. Under such agreements farmers have to buy feed, seeds, and fertilizer from the processors. If they are in poultry raising, they have to buy their chicks from the corporate processors.

Through these individual contracts, the processor exercises control over the production of many farms. These separate farms then function as the equivalent of a single enterprise under the direction of a gigantic capitalist contractor. When contracting becomes the prevalent market-

ing arrangement for a given commodity, traditional markets, on which the smaller producers depend, disappear.

This type of contract farming is most dominant in vegetables for processing (95 percent), fresh and market vegetables (51 percent), citrus fruits (85 percent), potatoes (70 percent), flour mills (98 percent), broilers (97 percent), seed crops (80 percent), and cane and beet sugar (100 percent).

According to U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates in 1981, about 25 percent of U.S. agriculture was controlled by processors, either through contracting or direct ownership of production.

Other capitalist exploiters also have ways to take their cut of the wealth produced by working farmers. Farmers who rent all or part of the land they till must turn over a substantial portion of their revenues to capitalist landowners. The railroads use monopoly pricing policies to bilk working farmers. Moreover, the owners of the railroads today are cutting out many spur lines to grain elevators in smaller towns, forcing farmers to pay higher trucking costs to transport their products to more distant railroad depots.

In addition to these specific ways that working farmers are exploited by the capitalist class, they—like all working people—are victimized as cannon fodder for imperialist wars and suffer the effects of inflation, unemployment, racism, sex discrimination, environmental pollution, the hazards of nuclear power, and all the other social evils spawned by the profit system.

### **Why does independent commodity production still exist?**

Why hasn't all agriculture gone over to the industrial form of organization? Why don't the big monopolies just take

over all the wheat, corn, and soybean farms and the dairy herds, establish massive “factories in the fields,” and hire wage labor to work them?

One reason is that under the present setup the capitalists can get the working farm family to take most of the risks—the burden of crop failures, unstable market conditions, high interest rates, and taxes. Furthermore, members of the farm family who labor on the farm are not paid by the hour. Because the farm is theirs, they put out a tremendous amount of work—fourteen to sixteen hours a day, six or seven days a week if necessary during the harvest.

As Karl Marx had already explained some 135 years ago, independent commodity production on the land more and more becomes “the pretext that allows the capitalist to draw profits, interest and rent from the soil, while leaving it to the tiller of the soil himself to see how he can extract his wages,”<sup>3</sup> that is, the income needed to support his family.

As property owners and as owners of the product they produce, working farmers feel responsible for maintenance and improvement of the farm—its buildings, machinery, livestock, and land—and for organizing production. Aside from the economic benefits thus accruing to big capital, this arrangement is skillfully used by the capitalists to advance their *political* ends, as well. They try to get working farmers to see themselves as fellow businessmen, as a social group pitted against wage workers, and as a conservative and “responsible” property-holding layer in society.

Big capital is aware that when it directly takes over farming operations, it risks disruptions in production from dissatisfied workers who attempt to organize collectively and engage in strike action. In agriculture

a few days' disruption can mean the loss of an entire crop.

When working farmers are squeezed until they are forced off their farms, it is only in the exceptional case that the land becomes part of a capitalist "factory in the field." Occasionally such land is withdrawn from agriculture for use in housing, shopping centers, or other commercial development. Most often, however, it is either rented or sold out to neighboring farmers, or to another farm family that takes over, shoulders the risks, and tries to make a go of it. The banks and commercial capitalists continue raking in profits.

In addition, the monopolists often prefer to sink their funds into sectors of production with a more rapid turnover of capital than that dictated by the growing seasons associated with most agricultural commodities.

Thus the profit advantages to big capital of maintaining independent commodity production frequently outweigh those that would accrue from economies of scale on large capitalist-run farms. Moreover, in some areas of agricultural production there is no reason to assume that production on a larger scale would in and of itself be more efficient, or even as efficient, as it is on the average under existing smaller scale conditions.

### III. FORGING THE WORKER-FARMER ALLIANCE

**T**HE EXPLOITED PRODUCERS—both wage slaves and debt slaves—have a common exploiter, a common enemy, in the capitalist class. Their exploitation and all the misery and insecurity resulting from it can be eliminated only by a revolution that overturns capitalist rule, expropriates America's "sixty" ruling families, and establishes a



workers and farmers government that will chart a course toward socialism.

This perspective requires an alliance between workers and farmers that can mobilize all the producers in a massive revolutionary movement with the social goals, political clarity, self-confidence, and determination capable of overthrowing capitalist rule. The working class can achieve this alliance by showing, both in word and deed, that it recognizes exploited farmers as fellow working people, genuinely defends their interests, and offers a better future than that held out by the capitalists who exploit them. This is possible only if the working class has a vanguard party with the political understanding, experience in struggle, and leadership capacities needed to lead the oppressed and exploited in uncompromising struggle.

The farmers' organizations that have emerged in recent years, such as the AAM and NAFA, confront many of the same fundamental questions of program, strategy, and tactics that are posed for the unions, Black rights organizations, and women's rights groups. Conferences sponsored by these farm organizations have been arenas for wide-ranging discussions and debates over how best to advance the goals of working farmers. While many farmer activists conclude from their experiences over the past decade that more emphasis must be placed on direct action and forging alliances with labor and the oppressed nationalities, others have pulled back from this perspective and centered their efforts on electoral activity in the Democratic and Republican parties and lobbying in state capitals and Washington, D.C. Differences over this question have already led to an organizational division within the AAM.

Within the range of farmers' organizations, however,

the influence of capitalist electoralism and other class-collaborationist methods remains widespread. In this respect, farmers' groups are not fundamentally different from other organizations of the oppressed and exploited in the United States today.

At the same time, the fact that family farmers are independent commodity producers in an economic system dominated by monopoly capital can give rise to certain kinds of utopian schemes, nostrums, and gimmicks less likely to sink roots inside wage workers' organizations. This is true for a variety of reasons.

Family farmers are property holders who own their means of production and the commodities they produce, and thus are susceptible to the illusion that they are actually small businessmen rather than exploited producers. The mechanism by which working farmers are exploited is not direct domination by a boss who pays them a wage, who has the power to hire, fire, and discipline them, and who appropriates the product of their labor. Instead, the main agents of the farmers' exploitation are representatives of banking and commercial capital. This can lead to the illusion that the fundamental division within society is not between exploited and exploiting classes, but instead between the "producers," including sectors of the capitalists, and the "bloodsuckers"—speculators, usurers, and price gougers. This, in turn, can give rise to the conclusion that the problems facing family farmers can be solved by tinkering around with interest rates, banking laws, monetary policies, and other schemes to patch up capitalism.

In recent years radical right-wing organizations in the United States have sought to win a hearing for such false notions among layers of militant farmers. To cite one example, the semifascist National Democratic Policy Com-

mittee has sent representatives to various conferences of farmer activists, and its best-known leader, Lyndon LaRouche, has spoken on platforms with AAM representatives.

The capitalist media has taken advantage of these activities by ultrarightists to smear the farmers' movement as violent and obscurantist. Various petty-bourgeois currents in the U.S. left have also jumped on this bandwagon as a justification for refusing to champion farmers' struggles.

Leaders of NAFA and AAM have spoken out strongly against anti-Black and anti-Semitic materials that have been circulated in the farmers movement, and they have repudiated outfits that try to appeal to farmers by using fascist demagoguery.

**A**S THE CAPITALIST CRISIS DEEPENS and class polarization widens in the United States, revolutionary-minded workers and farmers will have to contend more and more with neofascists of all stripes. Farmers can be convinced to turn their backs on these demagogues if the unions and organizations of the oppressed organize and mobilize support for their struggles, and if class-conscious workers take farmers seriously as fellow working people by answering right-wing notions and explaining a revolutionary alternative.

A revolutionary workers party in the United States must present a program that guarantees farm families a fair income for their labor, an end to economic uncertainty and ruin, and relief from their staggering debt burden—a program that frees them from the stranglehold of banks, grain cartels, and price-rigging monopolies. In developing such a working-class agrarian program, two issues

in particular stand out: 1) farm income, and 2) land use and costs.

### **Farm income**

Working farmers are plagued by commodity prices that are too low to enable them to meet their costs of production and make enough to live on. Farmers try to balance off bad years with good years, but when costs run higher than income year after year they are unable to survive.

To counter this cost-price squeeze, farmers historically have approached it from two directions. One has been to press capitalist “middlemen” for higher prices for farm products. The other has been to fight for one or another way to lower their costs.

Throughout the twentieth century the ruling capitalist families in the United States have increasingly concentrated and monopolized food and fiber processing and distribution. As this process developed, the commercial capitalists were able to become *price makers*, and keep working farmers in the role of *price takers*. Faced with this situation, farmers attempted to get a better deal from the big “middlemen” by organizing marketing cooperatives. The idea behind this effort was that by uniting, independent producers would be in a stronger position to wrest a higher price from capitalist processors and distributors.

Marketing coops were designed to counteract competition among farmers in their dealings with the big commercial cutthroats. The farmers signed contracts to deliver their products to a cooperative in their area. The coop, not the individual farmers, then organized the sale to a processor. Often the farmer would be paid only part of the purchase price at delivery and the remainder after the product was sold. By bringing to the market a greater volume than any individual farmer could, it was hoped

that the coop would get a better price.

The marketing cooperative movement reached its peak in this country in the 1920s, when farmers' organizations forced the federal government to adopt the 1922 Capper-Volstead Act exempting cooperatives from anti-trust legislation.

For a few years during that decade farmers' commodity marketing associations existed for tobacco, cotton, wheat, peanuts, and other crops as well as dairy products. But they were generally unsuccessful in winning better prices for working farmers. They lacked capital to carry on large-scale marketing operations and were unable to stand up to the growing penetration of monopoly capital into the food marketing arena. Moreover, many farmers didn't like being locked into contracts that restricted their deliveries exclusively to the coop and that did not pay them the full price at delivery. Many of the marketing cooperatives disappeared.

Those that survived, such as the dairy cooperatives, have largely been transformed from instruments of leverage by the producers into capitalist enterprises—either big food processors such as Minnesota-based Land-o-Lakes, or virtual subsidiaries of such processors. In either case dairy farmers today sign contracts with “their” cooperative to deliver a specified quantity of milk much like other contract farmers. In the dairy industry farmers are often assessed stiff “membership” fees by the cooperative for the “right” to sign a contract.

Another form of collective action working farmers have taken to boost the prices they receive has been to “strike” against the processors by holding onto what they produce instead of selling it on the market. Through these holding actions farmers hoped to win collective bargaining contracts with the marketing and processing outfits,

much like workers who withhold their labor power from their employers by striking.

This method was tried in the early 1930s by the Farm Holiday Movement and again in the late 1950s and the 1960s by the National Farmers Organization. Both organizations utilized mass picketing to try to prevent scabs from taking products to the market. In spite of militant battles, however, farmers were never able to win lasting agreements.

These efforts failed in large part because the labor movement in the United States never brought its power to bear on behalf of the interests of the exploited farmers. With the weight of the working class behind them, farmers would have been in a better position to force more favorable terms with the processors. Forging a worker-farmer alliance capable of advancing such policies requires a class-struggle leadership of the kind that has been very much the exception rather than the rule in the American labor movement up to now.<sup>4</sup>

When farmers were hit by bad times in the 1920s and 1930s, another approach to combating the effects of low commodity prices was raised. This was to demand that the federal government provide price supports.

The term “price supports” is actually misleading, since it could create the false impression that workers and working farmers should call on the government to somehow jack up the prices that working people have to pay for groceries and clothing. That, of course, is not the point.

In fact, government “price supports” to farmers have little or no effect on rising shelf prices, since these are mostly set by the giant food industry profiteers. The price that these profiteers *charge* consumers has nothing to do with the price that they *pay* farmers for raw agricultural products. The monopolists charge consumers what the

market will bear, no matter how little or how much they pay the farmer. Moreover, the primary cause of rising grocery and clothing prices, like other prices, is monetary inflation—a product of the growing parasitic character of capitalism in the last decades of the twentieth century.

**F**ARM PRICE SUPPORTS are largely programs whereby the government makes a certain payment to help farmers cover costs if the price *they receive* for their products falls below a set “target price.” Other programs make low-interest loans available to farmers to place their crops in storage until prices rise, or guarantee that the government will purchase some portion of farmers’ output at a set price.

All proposed price support measures were defeated until President Franklin Roosevelt’s first administration, when the Agricultural Adjustment Act was adopted. Since then, some form of government price support program has been in operation for a number of basic agricultural commodities. These programs, initiated and implemented by the capitalist government and political parties, have all had fundamental flaws from the standpoint of working farmers.

First, they are not aimed at helping the farmers who are most in need of relief. These programs have, in fact, disproportionately aided capitalist farmers—and that has been their purpose. The amount of support granted is proportional to the amount of sales, so that farmers with the largest sales benefit the most. For example, in dairy production about 50 percent of government subsidy benefits go to the 15 percent of dairy farmers who are best off, while less than 6 percent goes to the bottom 45 percent of producers.

The Reagan administration's 1983 payment-in-kind scheme (PIK) particularly highlighted the worst features of capitalist price support programs. It offered government grain to farmers who took cropland out of production, eliminating even the nominal limit of \$50,000 per farmer on government price support aid. The owners of big capitalist farms who idled thousands of acres of land were awarded gigantic payments of commodities (some worth more than \$1 million) that they then sold at a handsome profit. The program also gave tax breaks on PIK payments that especially benefited the recipients of the biggest grants. Giant grain monopolies and railroads corralled lucrative contracts under the program, so that the ruling families who own them could fatten themselves at the tax trough as well.

A second negative feature of capitalist price support programs is that they are often connected to curtailing production. This is based on the false notion that far too many agricultural products are being grown, and that the way to provide a living income to farmers is to reduce production in order to push up prices.

**S**UCH CURTAILMENT SCHEMES, too, especially benefit the largest capitalist farmers with the most land and the most hired labor. It is easier for them to cut back, save some of their production costs, still keep a lot of land in production, and get big subsidies to boot. This is especially true for big farms that are subsidiaries of capitalist conglomerates and thus have greater flexibility in cutting back in one section of their enterprises while expanding in another.

On the other hand, the small independent farm family—providing its own labor, operating on tight margins,



weighed down with debts, and holding a limited amount of land—wants to get the full use of its machinery and land in order to get the biggest crop possible. For dairy farmers cutting back production means eliminating part of their herd, which then takes a big cash outlay and some time to replace when they want to boost production again.

When working farmers do agree to idle land, they usually try to intensify production on the land that is planted by using more fertilizer and better feeds and by planting fence to fence. Some years, in spite of acreage “set-asides,” the total production of some grains has not been substantially reduced and farm commodity prices have not been greatly affected.

Curtailed programs are not in the interests of working farmers in this country or working people throughout the world. The entire concept that there is a surplus of food requiring a production cutback—while millions in the world are going hungry—only makes sense from the twisted logic of profits, not from human needs.

Working farmers are well aware that the present price support programs are not working in their favor. The most common demand raised by farmers to change this is to call for support prices at 100 percent of parity. Parity is simply a calculation that has been used to describe the relationship between prices farmers receive for their commodities and the costs they incur for production and living expenses. The index used to determine this relationship is based on the years 1910 to 1914, when there was a relationship between costs and prices supposedly favorable to farmers. Through government action to restore this full parity situation, farmers seek to restore purchasing power equivalent to that during this base period and thus be able to meet their costs of production

plus have enough to live on.

For instance, if the costs of production are 150 percent higher today than they were in 1910 to 1914, 100 percent of parity means that the farmer's gross income today should also be 150 percent higher than it was then.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture regularly issues parity figures supposedly using this formula. The government figure is actually rigged to the detriment of farmers from the outset, however, since not all costs of production are factored in. For example, the costs of renting or purchasing land—which make up a much larger percentage of farm expenditures today—are not included. (This is similar to how the government rigs inflation figures to understate the actual rise in consumer prices and hold down cost-of-living increases, or unemployment statistics to distort true levels of joblessness.)

Even when the government has used parity to determine base prices, it has always set them below 100 percent. For example, today the price at which the government will subsidize dairy products (the only commodities for which price supports are still calculated according to parity) is only 80 percent of parity. This means that the price supports that dairy farmers receive will make their relative purchasing power at least 20 percent less—and actually much less still—than it would have been in 1910 to 1914. Yet the Reagan administration has attempted to lower the parity support price on milk.

The “target prices” that are used today to determine government price supports of wheat, corn, soybeans, and many other commodities are also well below what the price would be if 100 percent of parity were used to calculate the base price.

Farmers' organizations that raise the call for 100 percent of parity are demanding a guarantee that they be

able to meet growing costs, repair and replace equipment, and make a living income for their families. The labor movement should actively fight for these and other immediate demands to provide relief to working farmers from declining commodity prices, plummeting living standards, and the threat of dispossession and ruin.

The capitalists counter these proposals by charging that working farmers are freeloaders, living off what amounts to government welfare payments. They assert that workers foot the bill for such payments with their taxes.

Working farmers, far from being freeloaders, work long hours. Moreover, much of farmers' labor time, like that of wage workers, goes unpaid. This unpaid labor time is what fills the coffers of the ruling families. It is precisely these capitalist expropriators of the wealth that farmers and workers produce who should be taxed to pay for price supports, as well as for a multitude of other badly needed social programs for working people.

**T**HE WORKING CLASS must place its support to farmers' fight for immediate demands such as 100 percent of parity prices within the strategic framework of forging an alliance with working farmers to overthrow the capitalist government and expropriate the exploiters. This requires explaining the trap of supporting any of the bipartisan schemes based on the notion that capitalism can be patched up or reformed to serve the interests of working people. Even price supports at 100 percent of parity, as part of a policy for farmers *as a whole*, would end up giving a profit bonanza to a relatively small number of capitalist farmers at the expense of working farmers. The problem is that all capitalist price support policies

are rigged against exploited farmers.

Many farmers—especially better-off farmers—also demand that the U.S. government impose protectionist measures on farm imports as a way to lift prices for U.S.-grown commodities. This would make agricultural products grown in other countries more expensive in the United States. Tomatoes from Mexico, lamb from New Zealand, and sugar from the Caribbean are among the commodities in this category. This demand goes together with a drive to get the U.S. government to pressure other countries to remove restrictions against cheaper American farm products.

Such protectionist measures for agricultural commodities pit farmers in this country against farmers in other countries; they also pit farmers against workers in this country who want cheaper food prices. Moreover, while such measures can result in a profit bonanza for capitalist farmers and the owners of the big food processing monopolies, they offer no solution to the price-cost squeeze facing the big majority of working farmers. These measures merely strengthen the economic position of the capitalists who are driving exploited farmers off their land.

Neither the current system of government price supports geared to the rich, nor protectionist measures against farmers abroad, benefit either working farmers or other working people in the United States.

For an alternative approach, socialists in the United States can point to the example of how the revolutionary Cuban government guarantees family farmers an income high enough to meet their costs of production and to make a decent living. If Cuban farmers produce more than expected, the surplus is not destroyed or permitted to spoil in warehouses, but instead makes possible the lowering of prices to consumers. The government is

able to do this because Cuba's workers and farmers ended U.S. big-business domination and eliminated capitalism in that country more than two decades ago. The workers and farmers government there acts in the interests of the producers.

### **Who is responsible for high prices?**

The capitalist rulers use the demand by working farmers for price supports to drive a wedge between wage workers and working farmers. They not only claim that this increases the tax burden on workers, but they also propagate the myth that it is the "excessive" demands of farmers that make supermarket prices so high.

To counter this lie, working farmers, workers, and consumers must fix the spotlight on the giant food marketing and processing trusts—exposing their secret dealings, exorbitant price gouging, and total disregard for human needs. Price committees elected by independent farmers should be formed that can, jointly with workers organizations and consumer groups, demand the right to see all the financial and other records of these big corporations, whose profit columns could actually show who benefits from rising grocery prices.

The grain merchants, for example, are among the most secretive in the world and maintain huge security systems to protect this concealment of their operations. They should be forced to release the records that reveal the truth about their profits, their stockpiles, their tax loopholes, their monopoly-pricing policies, and their government connections.

### **Reducing costs**

The fight to force the big food processing and marketing monopolies to open their books is connected to the de-

mand that the government nationalize them and operate them openly and in the public interest. This proposal has been raised by militant farmers at various times over the past one hundred years.

The demand for nationalization of the big food processing and marketing monopolies has arisen primarily as part of the farmers' fight to reduce production costs—a complement to their struggle to combat the effects of declining prices for their products. In the latter part of the nineteenth century and early part of this century, farmers in the Midwest particularly singled out the price gouging of railroads and the growing big business control over grain elevators. Farm organizations called for nationalizing the railroads and grain elevators. By making them publicly owned, they figured that transportation and storage costs could be reduced. Farmers also demanded nationalization of the banks, as a way to obtain low-interest loans and lift the cloud of mortgage foreclosure from their lives.

**A**NOTHER ATTEMPT to reduce costs was made by forming consumer cooperatives. These coops bought supplies wholesale, usually not from other coops, and resold them to farmers. The goal was to provide farmers with high quality products at reasonable prices. The usual practice was to sell goods to members of the cooperative at the going retail price and award each farmer a dividend from the combined savings, if there were any, at the end of the year.

Many such cooperatives were set up, and most farmers today still belong to one or more consumer cooperative. While these coops have brought some benefits to farmers, the savings have been small, certainly too small

to offset the growing gap between sagging incomes and high costs. As long as the cooperatives have to purchase the big bulk of their fuel, feed, seeds, fertilizer, and other supplies from the big monopoly-owned companies, there is not a great deal that coops can do to substantially reduce the prices that farmers have to pay.

In the mid-1930s a major role was played by cooperatives in bringing electricity to the countryside. Until then, 90 percent of the people in rural areas did not have electricity. The big utility companies refused to bring power lines to the countryside because it was not deemed profitable. Farmer and labor protests led to the creation of the Rural Electrification Administration, which provided federal assistance to local electrical cooperatives. Most rural areas today still get their power from these associations. Even though farmers and other rural residents are members of these coops, however, most have been transformed into capitalist businesses that are looking for profits rather than savings for their “members.”<sup>5</sup>

Big business attempts to drive another wedge between wage workers and farmers by asserting that labor costs drive up the price of the goods farmers need. To counter this, committees of farmers, in collaboration with committees of workers and the unions, should take the initiative to pry open all the records and accounts of the banks, railroads, and farm-related manufacturers. Through their independent action, the toilers can police these capitalist enterprises that are guilty of monopoly price-fixing, hoarding, graft, and tax evasion.

By taking this action, workers can prove to their fellow producers on the land that the real reason for high prices of manufactured goods is not high wages but the exorbitant profits of the capitalists and the overhead of capital-

ist anarchy. It can lay the basis for a struggle to press the government to nationalize these big monopolies.

### **The rents and mortgages system**

One of the biggest costs to farmers goes to cover use of the land. As a result of the system of rents and mortgages that prevails in U.S. agriculture, the overwhelming majority of independent commodity producers must pay rent or make mortgage payments to use the land they work. Elimination of these payments would mean an immediate and substantial reduction in their production costs.<sup>6</sup>

Today about 13 percent of all independent rural producers are tenant farmers who rent all of the land they farm. The figure is slightly higher for farms with sales of \$2,500 or more. Tenant farming is the strongest in grain belt states such as Iowa, Illinois, and Nebraska where more than 20 percent are tenant farmers. The only state with a higher percentage is Hawaii, whose working farmers suffer from the legacy of colonial oppression as well as capitalist exploitation.

Most other farmers rent at least some portion of the land they farm; most independent farmers who own their land are either still making payments on it or have mortgaged it against loans. Either way they are paying interest on loans.

Because working farmers are tenants or have mortgaged their land, whenever they face a crisis due to market or natural factors beyond their control, parasitic landlords and banks can deprive them of the use of their land. This is happening to tens of thousands of farmers today who are unable to keep up with the rent and mortgage payments.

Farmers are painfully learning that holding an ownership deed to the land where they raise their crops and



livestock is no guarantee whatsoever of the use of that land. Under intense financial pressure farmers are often forced to sell at the first offer, which is frequently much lower than they could have received had they had more time. Other farmers are expropriated outright by the parasites who collect the interest on their mortgages.

Whether or not farm families hold on to their land, livestock, and machinery has nothing to do with how much they produce or how well they maintain their land. In fact, working farmers frequently end up in worse condition when they and other farmers bring in a large crop, since their prices and income plummet. There are few more powerful indictments of the capitalist system than what Marx called “the disastrous effect of good seasons for this mode of production.”<sup>7</sup>

“Private” ownership of farm and ranch land, despite the capitalist-propagated mythology, does not go hand in hand with financial independence, self-reliance, and security. It is, to the contrary, the noose by which working farmers can be hanged.

As indicated at the beginning of this article, farmers have been organizing direct actions to prevent foreclosures, reaching out and winning active support from unionists. These actions have succeeded in a few cases in forcing banks and loan companies to renegotiate their loans with farmers about to be foreclosed. For broader relief farmers are demanding that the government grant a moratorium on all farm foreclosures.

This struggle against foreclosures will lead more and more farmers to see the need for getting rid of the entire rents and mortgages system from which landlord and banking parasites profit at their expense. It is not hard for farmers to recognize that there is something rotten about the system of rents and mortgages, and that

something ought to be done about it. The questions are: what and how?

### **Nationalization of the land**

The necessary foundation for the lasting abolition of the current exploitative rents and mortgages system is the nationalization of the land. Any program addressed to the problems of working farmers that ignores or tries to get around this fact will lead to an impasse.

What is meant by nationalization of the land? How will it help working farmers keep their farms?

To answer these questions it is useful to approach nationalization of the land not as an agitational slogan to be emblazoned on banners and in brochures, but instead as a series of measures to solve specific problems that are created for working people by the character of land as a commodity. Implementation of these measures—as one product of a political fight around a series of immediate, democratic, and transitional demands aimed at overthrowing capitalist rule—could eliminate these ills caused by private land ownership and place the soil at the service of working farmers instead of the landlords, bankers, and other exploiters.

With this framework in mind, we can point to some of the concrete ways that working people are harmed by the character of land as a commodity in the United States today, and some proposals that workers and working farmers should advocate.

### ***Public lands threatened***

Forty percent of the land in this country is owned by state or federal governments. The Reagan administration has proposed selling millions of acres of federal lands to private owners. This would not be a land grant to work-

ing people, such as the Homestead Act adopted in 1862 during the Civil War. Rather, the White House plan is a proposal to turn over public lands to real estate sharks and profit-hungry developers.

- Capitalist ranchers, timber companies, and mining corporations have virtually unrestrained use of public lands. Ranchers are permitted to purchase at a nominal price grazing rights on vast tracts of federal lands. Ranchers pay no taxes on the land and overgraze it without regard to conservation measures.

- Timber companies are permitted to harvest trees on public lands with no regard to long-range conservation plans. Their sole concern is immediate profits.

- Hard-rock mining—iron, copper, gold, etc.—can be carried out on public lands with no royalty or leasing payments.

- Oil monopolies are granted leases for minimal royalty payments to tap the natural resources on publicly owned lands.

Thus, millions of acres of land in this country, while nominally owned by the government, are for all practical purposes the private preserve of the big profit seekers. The unions and organizations of exploited farmers should call for an end to this pillage of public lands.

### ***Big capitalist landowners***

The biggest private landowners are America's small handful of ruling families. For example, 18 percent of privately owned land in the United States is owned or leased by thirty-seven energy and timber corporations. That is an area the equivalent of Texas, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and a couple of Rhode Islands. Less than one-half of 1 percent of the landowners own 40 percent of the private land. In addition to the oil, mining, and

timber families, these landholders include the owners of the largest railroads, banks, and insurance companies.

These vast tracts should be taken over by the government and turned into public property.

### ***Large capitalist farms***

The large capitalist farm owners, most of whom are also big landowners, should be expropriated. Many of these enterprises can be run as state farms, just as factories that are nationalized can be operated as state enterprises.

However, some of these farms—especially those where many of the farm laborers were previously small farmers who have been forced off their lands either in this country, Mexico, or Central America and the Caribbean—may be divided by the producers and farmed on that basis. In other areas, lands from capitalist enterprises may be divided among smaller farmers who have insufficient land to make a decent living.

### ***Protecting working farmers***

The government should guarantee all working farmers the use of the land they rent or hold title to for as long as they continue farming. Farmers currently renting lands, as well as those awarded any grants of land, should be given deeds reaffirming this guarantee.

To end the burdens heaped on exploited farmers as a result of parasitic rents and mortgages, the land they till should not be subject to leasing agreements, sharecropping arrangements, and mortgages. Instead of being forced to mortgage land in order to cover production costs, working farmers should be provided cheap credit by the government on the basis of need.

In order to end the evils of real estate speculation and to prevent the concentration of land ownership in

the hands of new layers of exploiters, the only land sales permitted should be transfers to the state. All other buying and selling of land should be abolished. Land should no longer be a commodity.

The effect of these measures would abolish the tribute that exploited farmers must now pay to have access to the land they work. It would end the threat of expropriation that currently hangs over them.

The guarantees to working farmers in such a program are not those normally associated with capitalist private property. In its revolutionary, progressive stage up through the early years of the nineteenth century, capitalism supplanted feudal and communal property forms on the land with its own forms of ownership. Capitalism for the first time in the history of humanity turned land into a commodity that could be bought, sold, rented, mortgaged, and divided. Many serfs, previously bound to the land by a web of feudal relations, became freeholders.

It did not take long under the new capitalist system, however, for these “rights” of most independent commodity producers to become transformed into the very mechanism used by their exploiters to keep them in debt bondage or throw them off the land altogether. By ending the commodity character of land, working farmers can be guaranteed the most important right in relation to land—the right to *use* it.<sup>8</sup> This is also the only way to guarantee farmers that they will not lose their livestock, buildings, and machinery.

After being driven out of farming, some former farmers in the United States are able to hang onto plots of land that they rent to neighboring farmers. Some may be supplementing other income; others are disabled or are retirees who live off the rent. Often such owners are waiting for the “right price” to sell their land. Consequently, they will

lease it only on a short-term basis, creating an insecure situation for the working families who rent the land.

When an agricultural policy in the interests of working farmers is won, some of these owners may go back to farming. Those unable to work and requiring income to live should be compensated through adequate state-financed social security.

### *Lowering housing costs*

Workers, too, have a direct stake in nationalization of the land. Private ownership of land and apartment buildings generates land speculation and all the evils that accompany it. Tenants are continually being driven out of their apartments and forced into worse or more expensive dwellings as apartments are converted to condominiums, neighborhoods are “gentrified,” and buildings are abandoned or burned down. For tenants, land nationalization would immediately mean a rent reduction, since a portion of their rent now includes payment of absolute ground rent—that is, that portion of rent that landowners extract simply because there is private ownership of land in this country.

For working-class homeowners, the vast majority of whom are making payments on their homes, this can mean a reduction in these payments. A portion of their payments now goes to pay for the land on which their homes sit. (Moreover, nationalization of the banks would lead to lower interest rates, reducing these payments still more.)

### *American Indian land rights*

The adoption of the land program described above would also immediately benefit American Indians, who currently hold 51 million acres of tribal lands. It would put an end to the growing encroachment of private real estate and business interests on their lands. It would make possible

the settlement of Indian treaty demands on a just and fair basis. Indians, much of whose lands are held communally, understand quite clearly the difference between use and ownership of land. They have received four centuries of brutal “education” on this difference.

### **Organize the farm workers!**

A working-class program to forge a worker-farmer alliance must place at its center the demands of the nearly 3 million agricultural workers in this country. Although the struggles by the United Farm Workers union (UFW) during the 1960s and 1970s forced a number of big California growers to sign contracts, the overwhelming majority of farm laborers in this country remain unorganized. Moreover, many California growers today are either resisting renewal of UFW contracts in hopes of breaking the union, or demanding big concessions that would weaken union control over hiring and worsen the wages and conditions of farm workers. The Teamsters union bureaucracy is lending the employers a helping hand. It is engaged in a raiding operation against the UFW, having refused to renew its seven-year agreement with the farm workers’ union to refrain from signing “sweetheart” contracts with growers. A new round of battles are thus being fought out between the UFW and the growers in California today.

The National Labor Relations Act, adopted by the U.S. Congress in the 1930s as a concession to the big labor struggles of that decade, allows workers to bargain collectively with employers; this federal legislation does not apply to farm workers, however. Only in California have hard-fought battles by the UFW resulted in state legislation recognizing collective bargaining rights for farm workers, and bipartisan efforts are constantly under way there to weaken this law.

Inspired by the struggles and gains won by the UFW, farm workers outside California have organized to fight for union protection over the last fifteen years. In the Midwest, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) has organized workers in the tomato fields and other farms and orchards. Other organizing drives are under way in Arizona, Texas, Florida, and elsewhere. The top labor officialdom in the United States, however, has given at best token support to these efforts.

A solid worker-farmer alliance in this country can be forged only by a class-struggle leadership of the labor movement committed to doing everything it can to help agricultural workers organize unions to defend their interests against their capitalist employers. Farm workers should get union wages; full unemployment benefits, workers' compensation, and social security; decent living conditions; and protection against pesticides and other on-the-job hazards.

Undocumented workers should be granted all the rights of citizenship in order to end the discriminatory and especially brutal treatment to which they are subjected. The labor movement should demand that all laws barring involuntary servitude and child labor be enforced. It should press for a shorter workweek with no reduction in pay to spread the available work for farm workers laid off due to new machinery technology.

#### IV. FOR A WORKERS AND FARMERS GOVERNMENT

**T**HE REVOLUTIONARY PROGRAM for agriculture outlined in this article provides the framework in which the working-class vanguard can raise and effectively fight for a broad range of demands to protect farm workers



and exploited farmers from the many effects they suffer from the workings of the capitalist system. As more and more working farmers become convinced through their own experiences in struggle that capitalism cannot be reformed, they will burst beyond immediate demands such as price supports at 100 percent of parity toward joint action with the labor movement to demand a permanent debt moratorium, an end to the entire rents and mortgages system, and nationalization of the banks and of the food processing and marketing monopolies.

An uncompromising struggle for these immediate and transitional demands, moreover, will lead increasing numbers of working people to one and the same conclusion—that the workers and farmers need to forge a fighting alliance to overturn capitalist political rule, establish their own government, and expropriate the ruling families and all their holdings.

A workers and farmers government would provide a powerful instrument for working people to carry out the program outlined in this article. With such a government, the producing majority—workers and farmers—would determine how much and what cropland to set aside for urban expansion and highways; which lands to allocate for recreation and wilderness areas, and those where minerals and timber can be extracted; and how to uphold the fishing and hunting rights of American Indians and settle in a just way centuries of broken treaties.

By nationalizing the land, a workers and farmers government would abolish the rents and mortgages system and lift the ever-present shadow of ruin from the lives of working farmers. It would assist them in guaranteeing a decent life for their families and in helping to feed and clothe the entire population.

A workers and farmers government in the United States

would promote voluntary collaboration among working people of town and country to advance agricultural production, reduce the toil involved in farm labor, and protect and enrich the soil and the rest of the natural environment. Such measures to raise agricultural production will be implemented on state farms, on cooperatives, and on independent family farms. Working farmers will be allowed to continue their individual methods of production for as long as they want. Participation in cooperative and other collective forms of production will be totally voluntary.

In fact, as the Socialist Workers Party's 1984 convention resolution points out, "The working class has a direct stake in the resistance of exploited farmers against" ruin under the capitalist rents and mortgages system. "The larger the number of working farmers who succeed in this struggle, the stronger will be the worker-farmer alliance, which is essential to the advance toward a socialist revolution in this country. The more solid this alliance, the easier it will be to feed and clothe the population in a socialist United States. And the firmer will be the foundation on which to increase farm output to meet the needs of working people worldwide."

**T**HE EXPERIENCE OF THE CUBAN REVOLUTION since its triumph in 1959 is the best example that history has yet offered of how a workers and farmers government can guarantee small farmers the use of the land they till. Cuba's first agrarian reform law, adopted in 1959, expropriated the large plantation owners and ended the domination of U.S. capitalists who owned more than 25 percent of the land. Much of the land expropriated in the first agrarian reform, especially the sugarcane and rice plantations and

cattle ranches, became state property and subsequently was incorporated into the state farm system. The goal of the agrarian reform was not only to eliminate the imperialist holdings, however. The goal was to abolish the system of mortgages and rent payments and guarantee the use of the land to those who worked it.

Sharecropping was outlawed and tenant farmers, sharecroppers, subleasees, and squatters working the land who had less than 165 acres were granted land up to that amount. They were given clear title to the land they worked. Private farmland could be passed on through inheritance, but not sold to other individual landowners or subdivided. It could be mortgaged only to the state, which made financing available to poor peasants at especially favorable rates.

In 1963 a second agrarian reform law confiscated the remaining private land holdings in excess of 165 acres, eliminating the capitalist sector of Cuban agriculture.

The result of both reform laws was to wipe out the entire rents and mortgages system as well as land speculation. Land in Cuba is no longer a source of profits for a few and its custody is now in the hands of those who use it.

Overall, the achievements of the Cuban revolution in agriculture and improving conditions for the producers in the countryside have been outstanding. The production of food for consumption on the island has been greatly expanded. Great attention to research and development of plant and animal breeding has improved the productive capacity of Cuba's livestock and crops.

Sugarcane harvesting is one of the most—if not the most—mechanized in the world. The elimination of thousands of backbreaking jobs, however, was accomplished without adding to the unemployment rolls. Special at-

tention has been placed on conservation, and tens of thousands of acres despoiled by imperialism have been reforested. Hospitals, schools, and modern housing have been constructed throughout the countryside. Electricity and television broadcasts have been extended into the most remote areas of the island.

Especially since 1977, the state has devoted growing resources to developing farm cooperatives. The Cuban government implements agrarian policies encouraging farmers to join them, but membership in these coops is completely voluntary. With the expropriation of the capitalist exploiters, and as part of the overall system of socialist planning, the growing cooperative sector in Cuba has brought further gains in productivity and improved living conditions for the rural producers.

A workers and farmers government in the United States would chart a totally different foreign policy from that of the present capitalist government. It would halt wars against the oppressed and exploited around the world. Instead, it would put America's vast power and productive capacities to use in supporting the struggle by working people in other countries to combat poverty, hunger, disease, and the underdevelopment caused by centuries of colonial and imperialist exploitation and domination. It would emulate the example of revolutionary Cuba and send internationalist volunteers to every corner of the globe—skilled workers and farmers, technicians, teachers, doctors and nurses.

The capitalists have drawn U.S. workers and farmers into international politics in ways that never existed before. One feature of this is that the tremendous productive strength of U.S. farmers and farm workers has become an important factor in world politics and in the lives of the oppressed in many countries. They have cre-

ated a power that is used by the exploiters to deepen the subjugation of the oppressed throughout the world, to hold the question of life or death over the heads of people who do not do its bidding.

But that same power can be used to help feed the hundreds of millions of people around the world, especially in the colonial and semicolonial countries, who are hungry or underfed. Instead of periodically cutting back production or storing mountains of surpluses, U.S. farm producers can turn their gigantic capacities to helping the oppressed of the world.

**T**HE GREATEST CONTRADICTION of the capitalist system is that the basis exists to comfortably feed and clothe the entire world population, yet massive hunger and poverty exist and famines still stalk parts of the globe. The perspective of participating in the struggle to establish a government that will resolve this contradiction in favor of the overwhelming majority of humanity is one that will inspire workers and working farmers in this country.

In order to establish workers and farmers rule, a mass revolutionary workers party must be built that can mobilize the toilers in a struggle to overturn capitalist political rule.

A party that can accomplish this task needs to explain that the class interests of working people and the capitalist rulers are irreconcilably opposed. It must expose the lies and treachery of the capitalists and their political representatives, organize working people to combat their policies, and chart a course independent of capitalist politics.

In the United States today working people do not yet have a mass independent political party. The Socialist

Workers Party urges that the existing mass defensive organizations of the workers—the trade unions—break from the capitalist Democratic and Republican parties and establish a labor party based on the unions.

At the same time, the SWP points to the fact that Blacks, the overwhelming majority of whom are workers, are the most politically conscious and combative section of the U.S. working class. Moreover, Blacks have more than two decades of rich experience with efforts to organize a Black political party independent from the Democrats and Republicans. The formation of such a party would not only mark a qualitative step forward in the fight for Black rights and the rights of all the oppressed, it would also advance the formation of a labor party based on the unions. The small nucleus currently organized in the National Black Independent Political Party helps play a role in advancing this perspective of independent working-class political action.

An independent working-class party would help organize and lead the struggles of all the oppressed and exploited—in the factories and fields, in the streets, in urban neighborhoods and farming communities. It would participate in elections, running worker and farmer candidates and using the opportunity to win new supporters to its program. Such a party would recruit workers and working farmers to its ranks and provide a political vehicle to champion the demands of the unions, farmers' associations, and organizations of Blacks, Chicanos, women, and others among the oppressed. On every front of the class struggle it would help advance the combativity, independent organization, and political class consciousness needed to lay the basis for a revolutionary struggle to establish a workers and farmers government in the United States.

## NOTES

1. Karl Marx commented on the ruinous effects for small farmers of this trend toward greater costs of production in the section of the third volume of *Capital* on, "Share-cropping and small-scale peasant ownership." Marx wrote: "Improvements in agriculture also contribute to [the ruin of small farmers], by leading to a fall in the prices of agricultural products, while also requiring greater expenditures and more abundant objective conditions of production," such as more land, machinery, and chemicals. (Karl Marx, *Capital* [New York: Vintage Press, 1981], vol. 3, p. 943)

2. Karl Marx, "The Class Struggles in France," in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1979), vol. 10, p. 122.

3. Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1979), vol. 11, p. 190.

4. One of the more advanced achievements of collaboration between workers and farmers in this country occurred in Minneapolis during the Teamsters strikes in 1934. In his four-volume history of the Teamsters struggle, published by Pathfinder Press, Farrell Dobbs describes the material assistance workers and farmers provided each other and the gains they won in the struggle against the capitalists.

5. The failure and limitations of marketing and consumer cooperatives pointed to in this article deal only with the situation under capitalist rule where the major means of production remain in the hands of the exploiters. Under such conditions, coops are perpetually undermined and penetrated in numerous ways by capitalist interests.

When the capitalist state has been overturned and the exploiters have been expropriated, however, cooperatives, including full-scale production cooperatives, can play an indispensable role for workers and farmers. See, for example, the materials elsewhere in this issue on the experience with farm

coops in Cuba since 1977. This question is also dealt with in the report by Jack Barnes adopted by the August 1984 Socialist Workers Party convention, which also appears in this issue.

6. In the section on “Share-cropping and small-scale peasant ownership” in volume 3 of *Capital*, Marx writes: “Thus, the expenditure of money capital on the purchase of land is not an investment of agricultural capital. It proportionately reduces the capital which the small peasants have at their disposal in their actual sphere of production. It proportionately reduces the scale of their means of production and hence narrows the economic basis of reproduction. It subjects the small peasant to usury, since in this sphere there is always less credit proper. It is a constraint on agriculture. . . .” (Marx, *Capital*, vol. 3, pp. 946–47)

7. Marx, *Capital*, vol. 3, p. 944.

8. Marx writes in volume 3 of *Capital*: “From the standpoint of a higher socioeconomic formation, the private property of particular individuals in the earth will appear just as absurd as the private property of one man in other men. Even an entire society, a nation, or all simultaneously existing societies taken together, are not the owners of the earth. They are simply its possessors, its beneficiaries, and have to bequeath it in an improved state to succeeding generations. . . .” (Marx, *Capital*, vol. 3, p. 911)

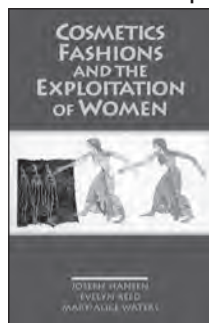


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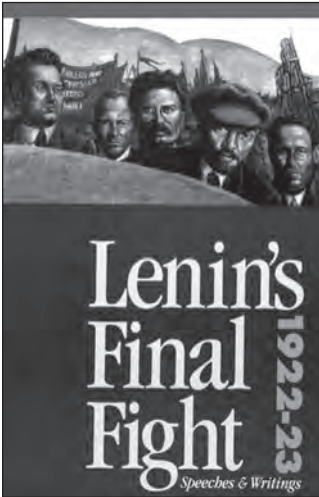
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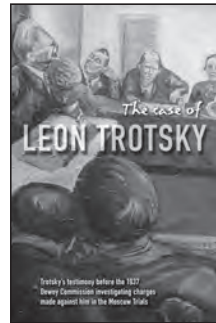
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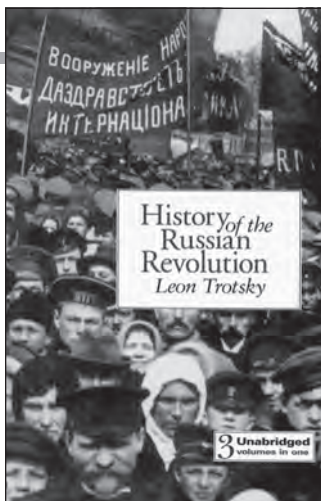
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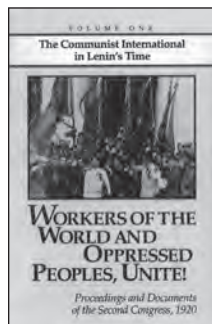
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# THE FIGHT FOR A WORKERS AND FARMERS GOVERNMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

*by Jack Barnes*

## I. AMENDMENT TO THE SWP CONSTITUTION

**T**HIS CONVENTION of the Socialist Workers Party will decide what action to take on a very important proposed amendment to the party's constitution. The recommendation is that the convention amend Article II of the constitution. This proposal has been discussed in all party branches over the past three months as part of the preconvention discussion.

Currently Article II reads: "The purpose of the party shall be to educate and organize the working class for the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a workers government to achieve socialism."

The proposed amendment would change this statement of purpose to read: "The purpose of the party shall be to educate and organize the working class in order to establish a workers and farmers government, which will abolish capitalism in the United States and join in the worldwide struggle for socialism."

The best way to begin is by summarizing five of the

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*The following is based on a report adopted by the Socialist Workers Party's Thirty-second National Convention in August 1984.*

main considerations about political strategy for revolutionary workers in the United States that have gone into this proposal. The rest of the report will then develop several of these at greater length.

### **1. A revolutionary perspective**

The only way that the workers and farmers government advocated by the proposed constitutional amendment can be established is through the third American revolution. The working people of city and countryside will have to establish a new state power—a revolutionary dictatorship of the exploited classes. They will do this by resolving the dual power that will arise in the initial stages of the revolutionary upsurge in favor of the workers and farmers, eliminating the army, police, and other parts of the repressive apparatus of the imperialist ruling class.

A workers and farmers government in the United States can be established only with the leadership of an experienced and tested revolutionary workers party, one that implements a revolutionary class-struggle strategy and combats class-collaborationism in all its forms in the course of participating in social and political battles. Such a government cannot come about through a reform of capitalism or a shift of regime or administration, but only through a revolutionary change in which classes govern. Working people cannot elect such a government into office. They cannot nationalize their way to that goal. They cannot simply demonstrate or strike their way there, or achieve such ends through negotiations. There is no set of transitional demands that, if fought for and won, add up to this goal.

These tactics, methods of struggle, and demands can and will play an essential role in mobilizing the oppressed and exploited along the road to a revolution. But the capi-

talist ruling class will not give up its power and privileges without a battle. It will have to be removed from power by revolutionary means.

## 2. An alliance of exploited producers

The amendment also clearly states the class forces that a revolutionary government in this country will be based on—an alliance of the workers and the working farmers. It will be a two-class government. This class alliance is decisive, because we are convinced that the working class in the United States—like everywhere else—cannot make a revolution without the farmers, let alone against them.

A revolutionary government in the United States will be based on an alliance with *exploited* farmers, not with those who make their living by *exploiting* wage earners and other farmers. Farmers in this country, as elsewhere in the world, do not as a whole comprise a single social class. Instead, as Marx and Lenin explained, the farming population is made up of a series of social layers that span several classes. There are sharp class divisions among farmers.

At one end of the spectrum the farming population shades into the working class, with a growing number holding down factory jobs in order to make ends meet. In addition the farm population includes many agricultural workers who do not rent or own any land.

On the other end, the farm population shades into the capitalist class, with a small number of farmers who exploit wage labor, often own big landholdings, and sometimes rent land and equipment to other farmers.

In between are farm families who, by and large, work their own land and exploit little or no farm labor.

The class interests of capitalist farmers conflict not only

with those of agricultural workers, but also with those of the big majority of farmers.

The material basis for a governmental alliance of workers and working farmers is their shared exploitation by banking, industrial, and commercial capital. The ways in which workers and farmers are exploited differ.<sup>1</sup> Both, however, have a direct class interest in an alliance—before, during, and after the revolution—against those propertied classes whose very social existence depends on profiting off the unpaid labor of the workers and the independent commodity producers. The capitalist Democratic and Republican parties administer the state apparatus in the United States today on behalf of these exploiters—the owners of the factories, the mines, the mills, the banks, the land, the trading and commercial giants.

Our class must understand, and act on, the historical necessity to forge an alliance with our fellow exploited producers in the fight for a new kind of government and a new kind of society. Any perspective that the U.S. working class can or should take power without or against the exploited farmers flies in the face of social reality. It is a betrayal of the proletariat's historic goal.

### **3. An anticapitalist government**

This worker-farmer alliance must be *anticapitalist*. That determines the class character of the tasks of a workers and farmers government. Its purpose, as the amendment states, is to aid the organization and mobilization of working people “to abolish capitalism in the United States.” As part of such a revolutionary struggle, the workers and exploited farmers will expropriate the ruling capitalist families who own the banks and the industrial and com-



mercial monopolies in this country.

Only on the basis of state property in the major means of production, together with a state monopoly of foreign trade, will it be possible to plan production on a cooperative and collective basis. Only in that way can the U.S. economy be run *by* working people *for* working people, instead of being dominated by the exploiters' quest for profits from the labor of working people. A revolutionary government of the producing classes will establish a workers state and open the door to the reorganization of U.S. society in a way fit for human beings.

Only by understanding and acting on this anticapitalist dynamic of the worker-farmer alliance can we knit together the tasks of revolutionists before, during, and after the successful conquest of power.

#### **4. An internationalist perspective**

Without an internationalist perspective, it will not be possible to build the kind of multinational revolutionary party, leadership, and class alliances that can accomplish the tasks outlined in the above three points. The kind of mobilizations, commitment, sacrifice, and determination that can lead to a victorious struggle against capitalist rule in this country will lead to heightened mass consciousness that our revolution is inseparably intertwined with the struggles and conquests of workers and exploited agricultural producers around the world.

A revolutionary movement in the United States will be forged through the fight against the wars launched by imperialism to crush workers and farmers struggling for national liberation and socialism. It will be forged through battles against racism and national oppression inside the U.S. borders, and through the struggle to build a class-struggle left wing in the unions and a

vanguard workers party with truly multinational memberships and leaderships.

A revolutionary movement in the United States will expose and combat the protectionist “Buy America” perspective promoted by many capitalists and by the current procapitalist misleaders of the U.S. labor movement. It will uncompromisingly oppose the racist notion that immigrant workers are responsible for unemployment in this country, that they are “stealing our jobs.”

In contrast to those capitalist politicians, labor bureaucrats, and racist outfits who cry out against the “Brown tide,” revolutionary-minded workers and farmers in the United States embrace all our brothers and sisters who cross over the border from Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, and elsewhere. We do not view them as “aliens” who compete with “American” workers. For revolutionists, these immigrants are fellow working people. They bring more troops for the army that is going to establish a workers and farmers government and overturn capitalism in this country.

**T**HERE IS A POSTER from the early years of the Russian revolution with a drawing of Lenin standing on top of the globe with a big broom sweeping away the trash—the landlords and capitalists, the tyrants and bishops. That’s what the workers and farmers will do in this country and everywhere else that the job remains to be done. They will sweep away the exploiters and their servants and begin to reconstruct the world on new foundations.

The world’s capitalist exploiters hold state power country by country. For that reason, revolutions to overturn capitalist state power and establish workers and farmers governments can take place only country

by country. Revolutions cannot be exported. How and when a revolution triumphs in any given country depends on the evolution of the social structure, political conditions, relationship of class forces, and leadership development in each of them, as well as the overall international context.

Likewise, the expropriation of the capitalist class and creation of new workers states occurs, and can only occur, country by country.

*Socialism*, however, will not be conquered or built in any single country—even one as industrially developed and rich in natural and human resources as the United States. Socialism in the United States cannot be built against or ahead of the peoples of the world, the majority of whom today are toiling peasants. What revolutionary socialism offers U.S. workers and farmers is not the prospect of accomplishing for the Yankees what capitalism promised but could not deliver. It is not a better way to maintain the material privileges of living in the United States and to defend these benefits against the rest of the world.

That is the kind of thinking that became predominant in the Second International, which, as Lenin explained, “only recognized the white race.” It is the narrow, conservative outlook of a section of the labor bureaucracy and the privileged workers’ aristocracy on which it is based. That cannot be the thinking of a revolutionary party in the United States at the end of the twentieth century, however.

As the proposed amendment explains, U.S. working people will establish a workers and farmers government that will use its power to “join in the worldwide struggle for socialism.” This perspective opens the road for U.S. workers and farmers to establish a government in this

country that is no longer the enemy of humanity, as the Sandinista anthem accurately describes it, but instead an active participant in building a socialist world.

### **5. Working-class leadership**

The SWP's job, the proposed constitutional amendment says, is "to educate and organize" the U.S. *working class* to advance this revolutionary strategy. The working class must lead all the oppressed and exploited in this fight for revolutionary change. This is due to its massive size and social weight; its strategic place in industrial production; the cohesiveness imposed on it by its concentration in big factories, mines, and mills; and the potential power of its unions.

The working class will place its predominant stamp on the composition and political perspectives of the revolutionary party, attracting large numbers of farmers and other exploited producers into its ranks. Our starting point is as *part* of the working class, a politically conscious vanguard of our class. Our program is a working-class program, and it is first and foremost to the working class that we address our ideas.

Understanding the strategic role that the working class must play helps us build a revolutionary workers party that can organize and lead our oppressed and exploited allies.

A revolutionary leadership of the caliber necessary to inspire, organize, and unite the U.S. working class—divided by nationality, sex, age, wage levels, job security, and so on—can and must also forge an alliance with exploited farmers. It is a myth that there is some yawning chasm in the United States between the knowledge, capacities, and discipline of working people in the cities and those in the countryside who work the land. There is

no such qualitative difference between a working person who farms and one who works in a factory thirty miles away. The substantial differences in literacy and education, access to information, mobility, and conditions of life between town and country that existed in the past—and that still exist, if on a lesser scale, in much of the world today—just do not apply to the United States in the late twentieth century.

We should also wage war on the myth that farmers are somehow peculiarly individualistic, and that their very conditions of life and work run counter to cooperative labor and social action. Only someone who knows little or nothing about farming in the United States could believe this. Since the last century farmers have formed cooperatives to collectively market their goods and purchase equipment at cheaper prices. Machinery is pooled by farmers, and harvesting is sometimes done cooperatively. Farmers have formed social and political organizations to exchange information and fight for their common demands.

The truth is that there is less direct economic competition among farmers than among workers. Working farmers know that if they knock another farmer out of business, that does not raise the price they get for their grain or other products. All working farmers face the same giant, impersonal market, over which they individually have no control whatsoever. They do not compete with each other for their livelihoods.

The situation of workers is quite different. The fundamental condition facing the entire working class is competition among individual wage workers for the available jobs. Disunity within the working class, as Marx put it in 1866, “is created and perpetuated by their *unavoidable competition amongst themselves*.”<sup>2</sup>

Of course, another fundamental condition of the working class—workers' concentration in factories, often in very large numbers—tends to push in the opposite direction. By going through common experiences with those they compete with, workers figure out over time the need to join collectively into trade unions to defend themselves. That creates the material foundation for workers' understanding that an injury to one is an injury to all, and lays a solid groundwork for the strategy and tactics of the revolutionary working-class movement.

In this respect, exploited farmers face a more difficult situation than workers. Although farmers participate in forms of social and productive cooperation, their numbers and concentration are much smaller than that of workers in basic industry.

More important, since the form of the exploitation of farmers is more indirect, its *source* is also more hidden. Wage workers are directly pitted against a capitalist boss by the very nature of how they make their living. And it is their boss, not the workers themselves, who owns what they produce. Farmers do not have a direct "boss." Unlike workers, farmers themselves own the products of their labor, which their families either consume or must sell on the market. Thus, it can appear to them that they are not exploited producers, but instead are small businessmen who come up short in a lopsided competitive struggle against much more powerful business interests. (For these reasons, farmers are also even more susceptible than many workers to certain types of utopian nostrums and radical right-wing crank ideas.)

Another myth concerning farmers is that they are less skilled than workers, since they don't perform modern factory work. To the contrary, the average farmer today is *more* skilled than the average worker. Farming itself is a

skilled trade, requiring a substantial range of agricultural, scientific, and management proficiency. This includes the need for farmers to possess substantially more mechanical skills than most workers need or have today.

While the modernization of agriculture has forced farmers to become more skilled, the historical evolution of industrial capitalism has been one of the degradation of the skills of most workers. The capitalists have taken away land and most tools from U.S. working people, transforming us into proletarians who stay alive by selling the only thing we possess—our power to labor. Why would the employers leave most of us with our skills? That's not the way capitalism works.

We have to help any workers who hold these or other prejudices against farming people to get rid of such misconceptions. (These prejudices, by the way, are much more widely held by petty-bourgeois radicals than by workers.) Prejudices of this sort don't originate in our class, but are promoted by the ruling class. These divisions are continually played on by the employers, and only the employers benefit from such bias.

**WE** NEED TO RELEARN the attitude toward other exploited producers that the Minneapolis comrades and revolutionary unionists of Teamster Local 574 demonstrated during the 1930s. Farrell Dobbs described this in *Teamster Rebellion*, the first of his four books on the big labor battles in Minneapolis and across the Midwest.

Farrell explained that the Teamsters placed a high priority on forging an alliance with working farmers during the 1934 Teamsters strike in the Twin Cities. The most politically conscious union leaders recognized how important it was to make clear to small farmers that the

target of the striking Teamsters was not fellow producers, but the big trucking and marketing outfits that profit off the labor of working people in both town and country. While the Teamsters were determined to shut down the capitalist-controlled market center in Minneapolis, they worked with the farmers to find alternative ways to market their products. This was an important element in increasing the isolation of the bosses from the toilers in that strike battle.

In another volume of the series, *Teamster Politics*, Farrell presented an example of the attitude toward fellow working people that revolutionary workers should seek to emulate and promote in the labor movement today. Farrell was not writing specifically about farmers this time, but about another group of exploited producers—the small, independent owner-operator truck drivers. The revolutionists in the Midwest Teamsters union, Farrell said, were convinced that those independent operators “owning one truck, who did their own driving, should be approached by the union as fellow workers.”<sup>3</sup>

**F**ARRELL CONSCIOUSLY picked the term “fellow workers” here, not “fellow working people” or allies or something else. That was not because Farrell did not know the scientific definition of “workers” as those who own no productive property by means of which to make their living. Farrell knew that independent owner-operators are not workers in this sense. He was not an advocate of playing fast and loose with theoretical precision.

But knowing this, Farrell nonetheless insisted that owner-operators should be *approached* by the Teamsters union as fellow workers. And he was right.

Farmers as such are not workers either—although



many farmers *also* are workers, since they hold down factory jobs in order to make ends meet. But the labor movement and revolutionary workers today should follow the Minneapolis example and approach exploited farmers as fellow workers. The biggest problem facing the U.S. labor movement is not a theoretical confusion about the difference between workers and other exploited producers, but a political confusion about the class alliances necessary to take on the capitalist class, its political parties, and its government.

The truth is that the divisions *within* the working class in the United States in 1984 are deeper than the divisions between town and country. We should never underestimate the historical legacy of prejudices and bigotry that the capitalists have built up through their multiple modes of oppression and superexploitation.

Any class-conscious worker who is honest about the depth of racism, women's oppression, and other divisions fostered within our class by the capitalists knows that this is true. The challenge of forging a united fighting force against the exploiters must be solved both *within* the working class and through an *alliance* of the workers with other exploited producers.

If we do not act based on this understanding, then we will never advance the fight to transform the U.S. labor movement. We will never tap the potential power of the multinational working class in the United States. Instead, we will bog down in a narrow, apolitical, craft-union outlook that cannot point a way forward for our class. We will begin to approach politics more like the labor aristocracy, which is the social base of the union bureaucracy, than like the young rebel workers who are going to wrest the bureaucracy's dead hand from the wheel.

The Communist International in Lenin's time empha-

sized this relationship between the fight to unify the working class around a revolutionary course and the fight to forge an alliance with the exploited rural producers. The “Theses on the Agrarian Question” adopted in 1920 by the second Comintern congress, which were drafted by Lenin, opened by explaining that, “the industrial workers will be unable to carry out their universal historic mission, and liberate humanity from the bondage of capital and war, if they shut themselves within their separate crafts, their narrow trade interests. . . .” The working class, the theses said, “becomes a truly revolutionary class, truly socialist in its actions, only by acting as the vanguard of all those who work and are being exploited, only as their leader in the struggle for the overthrow of the oppressors. . . .”<sup>4</sup>

In the United States today the fight against racist and sexist discrimination, for affirmative action, for the rights of immigrants, for bilingualism in the schools and all civic affairs, against capital punishment—these are of a piece with the fight to cement a class alliance of workers and exploited rural producers. This is the revolutionary perspective of the working class, the only realistic one for this country.

## II. GUIDE FOR PARTY BUILDING TODAY

**W**HAT IS MOST IMPORTANT about the workers and farmers government slogan is not that it provides a “correct” label to apply to a regime. This is not to belittle scientific use of language in the communist workers movement. In the interests of clarity, we have to be careful in how we employ political terms.

But that is not the heart of the matter. The importance of the proposed amendment, and of our resolution on

the workers and farmers government in the United States, is that they are a guide to action. They provide us with a perspective that is a *political tool*, not a label.

The workers and farmers government slogan is a truthful presentation to U.S. working people of the road along which we are marching, what class alliances we need, and who our class enemies are. It helps us explain to workers and farmers in this country why they need to develop what Sandinista leader Tomás Borge has called “a nose for power.” That must be our strategic guide for participation in struggles around everything that working people fight for—from battles for immediate and democratic demands, to those raising transitional demands, to the revolutionary struggle for state power itself.

Thus, the workers and farmers government slogan links the tasks that must be carried out today by the small propaganda party that we are building, with those of the mass party that can be built only under transformed conditions tomorrow to lead a revolution in this country and to begin rebuilding the state structure and economy along socialist lines.

This was explained in the resolution on the workers and peasants government adopted by the Executive Committee of the Communist International in June 1923. It stated:

The Communist Parties must not regard themselves as the parties of the extreme proletarian opposition *within* bourgeois society, as was the case during the period of the development of the Second International. The Communist Parties must develop in themselves the psychology of parties which sooner or later will lead the toiling masses into the fight against bourgeois society, to

overthrow the bourgeoisie and to replace it as the rulers of the State. The narrow craft psychology must be replaced by the psychology of parties of a class which possess the will to power. . . .<sup>5</sup>

Joseph Hansen, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party and Fourth International, made a similar point in 1978. The day-to-day tasks of socialist education, propaganda, and the organizational work of party building, Joe said, which have stood “in some instances for years, if not decades, at the top of the revolutionary agenda, can certainly appear to be more real than the question of what form of government might appear as the consequence of a revolutionary victory.”

Nonetheless, Joe wrote, “problems related to the struggle for power cannot be placed in deep-freeze to be brought out ‘when the time comes.’” They “must be kept constantly in mind. As the goal, that culminating phase dominates our decisions in selecting the means required for its realization.”<sup>6</sup>

**T**HE WORKERS AND FARMERS GOVERNMENT slogan provides a strategic orientation with which to judge every tactic, every demand, everything we do along the way toward that goal. It orients the way in which we present our call for independent working-class political action. We do not explain our programmatic position for an independent labor party and Black party, for example, by advocating the construction of another vote-catching machine to join in the scramble for public office within the existing capitalist governmental setup. That is the way that class-collaborationist and centrist forces present this question—if and when they feel pressure enough to even address it.

Instead, revolutionists call for a break from such an electoralist approach. For us, the purpose of an independent labor or Black political party is to provide the exploited and oppressed with an instrument to fight for a workers and farmers government. It is part of a revolutionary orientation to challenge the political rule of the capitalist exploiters.

We always begin with the *class character* of any social or political organization, figure, or phenomenon. In the United States the bourgeoisie and their schools, churches, and media do everything in their power to obscure these class questions. The labor officialdom and the big majority of political tendencies in the U.S. workers movement contribute to this obfuscation. This makes it doubly important for us to be as clear as possible.

We should not accept the characterization by the daily press of New York Governor Mario Cuomo as a Catholic politician, for example. Cuomo is a *bourgeois* politician. The fact that he also professes to be Roman Catholic does not affect the class character of his political role and positions.

We should not join in the talk about Jesse Jackson as a Black politician. Jackson is a bourgeois politician. He is also an Afro-American. By acting as a leader of the liberal wing of the capitalist Democratic Party, however, he is acting against the interests of the exploited and oppressed Afro-American nationality.

Nor should we call Geraldine Ferraro a female politician. Ferraro is a bourgeois politician. The fact that she happens to be female does nothing to alter her role as a figure in one of the two capitalist parties that carry out antiwoman, anti-working-class policies in this country.

What these and other Democratic and Republican politicians do is not determined fundamentally by their

religion, nationality, or sex, but by their commitment to the preservation of capitalism and their allegiance to one of the two political parties of U.S. imperialism.

This is one of the hardest things for most U.S. working people to understand, since politics in the United States is presented as having nothing to do with classes and class conflict. We are barraged by every conceivable alternative to a class approach to politics. But this is the foundation of any *principled* politics, of any *effective* political action, of the only *realistic* politics—realistic, that is, for working people. By keeping our eyes on where our class and its allies are heading—toward the fight for a workers and farmers government—we can better avoid the pitfalls of class-collaborationism that surround every aspect of political activity in this country.

Without a clearheaded class approach to politics, a revolutionary workers party will never be built in the United States. We will never build the kind of party that can withstand the enormous pressures from the ruling class, and that can attract fighters from the oppressed and exploited layers of the working class. We will never succeed in transforming the class composition of our membership and leadership.

**T**O FULLY UNDERSTAND the revolutionary implications of the workers and farmers government perspective, we need to recognize the qualitative difference between the conditions in which social struggles and preliminary class battles unfold in the United States today—under conditions of relatively broad bourgeois-democratic rights—and the future revolutionary conditions under which U.S. workers and farmers will have an opportunity to wrest state power from the exploiters.

As the draft political resolution before this convention explains:

Every modern social revolution has resulted from rebellion against some combination of war, social crisis, economic breakdown, and political tyranny. Masses of working people will not start a battle of revolutionary proportions so long as there appears to be another, less demanding road to basic solutions. So long as such an alternative appears realistic, electoral illusions will retain their hold on the working class. This will change qualitatively only as gigantic political and economic crises undercut the capacity of the U.S. capitalist class to maintain its rule with its current methods of bourgeois democracy.<sup>7</sup>

There will not be a socialist revolution in the United States under a bourgeois democracy. What we explained to the court during the 1981 trial in the SWP's lawsuit against government spying and harassment was forthright and absolutely correct. We do not conspire to overthrow American democracy—even of the imperialist variety. No serious revolutionary workers party would ever say or think it could do so.

We are convinced, however, that the capitalist rulers will not only attack our living conditions and unions, will not only launch new wars to defend their class interests around the world, but will also fight to take back the democratic rights that have been wrested from them by U.S. workers and farmers over more than two centuries. Without a crackdown on democratic rights the rulers will not be able to deepen their drive toward greater austerity and war. As the political resolution explains:

Militant struggles of social protest and mobilizations of the working class and the oppressed nationalities will more and more be answered in the streets by violent attacks from racist and other ultraright outfits, urged on and protected by the bosses and their government. Fascist movements will arise. There will be a breakdown in bourgeois democracy, as wings of the ruling class and its state apparatus begin to seek dictatorial solutions to the crisis of its political rule and social system.

It is under these conditions that the gap between today's conditions and experiences of the workers and farmers and the conditions and experiences of revolutionary struggle will be bridged.

Out of the tumultuous clashes that will mark this stage of the class struggle will come a prerevolutionary situation, in which the working-class vanguard will begin to draw revolutionary conclusions. Broad class-struggle wings will develop inside the labor movement. There will be a qualitative transformation in the conditions for building a revolutionary workers party in this country.

In the early years of this century, Lenin drew attention to this fundamental reality of class politics that would sooner or later confront all proletarian revolutionists operating for long periods under conditions of broad bourgeois-democratic rights. Writing about the tasks facing the German workers movement, he stressed: "The socialist proletariat will not forget for a moment that it is confronted, inevitably confronted, with a revolutionary mass struggle that must sweep away all the legalities of



the doomed bourgeois society.

“But, at the same time,” Lenin emphasized, “a party [the German Social Democratic Party] which has magnificently utilised a half-century of bourgeois legality *against* the bourgeoisie has not the slightest reason to renounce those conveniences in the struggle, that advantage in battle afforded by the fact that *the enemy is caught in the toils* of his own legality, that the enemy is compelled to ‘shoot first’, is compelled to shatter his own legality.”<sup>8</sup>

**WE** HAVE NO WAY OF KNOWING what kind of situation will lead to a revolutionary struggle for power in the United States or how it will come about. We cannot extrapolate from a big union battle such as that in the Arizona copper fields, or from a rebellion that breaks out in a Black neighborhood against killer cops, or from any other battle by working people under today’s conditions. Mounting defensive struggles and combativity of that kind are a precondition for our class and its allies to develop the experience, organization, and class consciousness necessary to fight and win the decisive battles for power that lie ahead. But these preliminary struggles cannot give us a preview of the conditions under which a successful socialist revolution will occur.

At the same time, we must reject the temptation to say, “Well, since these revolutionary battles are down the road and will be qualitatively different from anything we’ve ever experienced, they don’t have much to do with our strategy and tactics today.” No, we have to participate in the struggles that are going on right now with an eye to the strategic goal we are fighting for.

That is why our governmental perspective is central to everything we do. As Trotsky explained in the Transi-

tional Program, “The sections of the Fourth International should critically orient themselves at each new stage, and advance such slogans as will aid the striving of the workers for independent politics, deepen the class character of these politics, destroy reformist and pacifist illusions, strengthen the connection of the vanguard with the masses, and prepare the revolutionary conquest of power.”<sup>9</sup>

The history of the workers movement proves that organizations that erect a wall between their day-to-day activity and the line of march toward power inevitably sink into class collaboration and eventually betray the workers and their allies. That has been the record first of international Social Democracy, then of international Stalinism.

Few workers’ leaders have done a better job of summing up the task facing revolutionists than Sandinista Commander Tomás Borge in the May 1983 speech that we translated and ran in the Spring-Summer 1984 issue of *New Internationalist*.

During the struggle under the Somoza dictatorship, Borge said, the FSLN sought “to organize the barrios to struggle for better living conditions, raising immediate demands such as drinkable water, electricity, medical services, and so on, but without falling into making these demands ends in themselves. We differed from other groups that made immediate demands their final aims. For us, they were instead a means for seeking out the best individuals among the people and instilling in them the notion that they must organize for the taking of power.

“This is very important,” Borge said. “From the beginning, we had always had a nose for power, and we went on developing that instinct and transmitting it to our cadres even when we recruited them through struggles around immediate demands.”

Working people in the United States will go through many experiences and exhaust many reformist alternatives and organizations before drawing revolutionary conclusions and joining a revolutionary workers party in substantial numbers. There is no shortcut to breaking the stranglehold of bourgeois electoralism, the support to Democratic and Republican politicians, or the hope that a change of faces within the existing union officialdom can bring some fundamental change. These are all various forms of the same powerful illusion—that capitalism can be reformed. They are all consistent with class-collaborationism.

**N**O CLEVER TACTICS OR SLOGANS can shatter these illusions. That can only be done *in practice*, as class polarization intensifies, combat increases, and political radicalization deepens. We fight alongside other working people, go through experiences with them, seek to provide leadership, and explain a class-struggle road forward. In that way, we help the most politically advanced workers and farmers to begin untangling these questions. By keeping the workers and farmers government at the forefront of our strategic orientation, we make it easier for growing layers of working people to find the road to power as the class struggle unfolds.

The conditions under which it will be possible for our class and its exploited allies to take power in the United States will be more similar to those that led to revolutionary uprisings in Cuba, Nicaragua, and Grenada than those that exist in this country today. In this sense, these revolutions offer not only instructive models of what can be accomplished when workers and farmers conquer power, but also the closest approximation we yet have of

the kind of revolutionary upheavals that will precede a victory.

Only vestiges of imperial prejudice could blind us to this fundamental truth about revolutionary change in the United States and worldwide. The kind of social catastrophe and political tyranny that faced Russian working people at the end of the first imperialist slaughter, that faced Cuban working people under Batista, that faced the workers and peasants of Nicaragua under Somoza, that faced the oppressed and exploited of Grenada under the Gairy dictatorship—these conditions, more than anything we can point to in U.S. history in this century, are what U.S. working people must be prepared for.

Before the fight for state power will be posed in the United States, this country will have already been transformed from top to bottom by a series of battles, defeats, advances, retreats, and what Lenin called revolutionary rehearsals.

We must tell the truth about this to workers and farmers. Our job as revolutionists is to explain that this is how capitalism works. That realization is at the bottom of the entire communist strategy. Only when that is faced up to can we point out the line of march along which our class is advancing, internationally and here in the United States.

### III. ANTICAPITALIST ALLIANCE OF EXPLOITED PRODUCERS

**A**S EMPHASIZED at the beginning of this report, our governmental perspective is based on the alliance between the working class and working farmers. This class alliance of exploited producers against the capital-

ist exploiters is at the heart of our entire strategy. In this section of the report, I want to focus on a section of the draft political resolution that explains an important aspect of the worker-farmer alliance more clearly than our party has done in the past.

This section of the resolution opens with an explanation of how the U.S. capitalist class is forcing exploited farmers to shoulder the burden of capitalist stagnation and competition. It explains:

Income from farming remains too low to enable family farms to meet the rising costs of land, equipment, seeds, fuel, fertilizer, and loans. The squeeze on these debt slaves is being tightened by the banks; the land speculators and real estate sharks; and the seed, fertilizer, food processing, farm equipment, and energy monopolies. Washington's policies are designed to benefit the capitalist farmers and big food processors and merchants. They do little or nothing to free exploited working farmers from the scourge of foreclosures, land dispossession, and repossession of tools, livestock, and machinery.

Having laid out the crisis confronting family farmers, the resolution continues:

The working class has a direct stake in the resistance of exploited farmers against this ruinous proletarianization. The larger the number of working farmers who succeed in this struggle, the stronger will be the worker-farmer alliance, which is essential to the advance toward a socialist revolution in this country. The more solid this

alliance, the easier it will be to feed and clothe the population in a socialist United States. And the firmer will be the foundation on which to increase farm output to meet the needs of working people worldwide.

At first glance, it might seem strange for a workers party to oppose the proletarianization of farmers. After all, the creation of our class is largely the result of the proletarianization of small farmers—or of freed slaves who aspired to become small farmers—over the past few hundred years. Won't an acceleration of that process today strengthen the ranks of the working class for the coming battles with the capitalists? We say no.

What future does capitalism offer working farmers? Basically it holds out two roads.

One is to try to become a capitalist farmer. To get bigger and bigger, to amass some capital, to start hiring wage labor, and to become rich. That is the American dream, the great promise. But the problem is that it doesn't happen to many farmers.

(This dream is actually held out to workers too—the prospect of somehow scrimping and saving enough out of their wages to start a small business of their own someday, “to be my own boss.” A smaller percentage of workers are prone to believe in this dream, however, since their conditions of life and work don't lead them to think of themselves as small businessmen. They neither possess any productive property nor have anything to sell on the market except their capacity to work.)

The alternative future that capitalism holds out to working farmers is proletarianization. This is not a dream. It is a nightmare that is happening to growing numbers of farmers. Dispossession of the land they work. Dispos-

session of their tools, machinery, and livestock. Being ruined and thrown down into the reserve army of labor, into the ranks of the jobless and the homeless.

It is not the demoralization and ruin of the producers that can furnish added power to the workers' fight for a better world. Involuntary proletarianization does not make exploited farmers as a class more progressive, more anticapitalist. Working farmers will not be won to the struggle for socialism by having their land and tools wrested from them, their confidence sapped, getting bloodied and battered. That is not the way forward for working farmers—or for the working class. Of course, deepening social crisis will force many who are today working farmers to travel such a path. But that will be the product of objective conditions created by capitalism—whose effects on working people we seek to combat—not an outcome that we advocate. Defeats do not advance the revolutionary struggle to establish a workers and farmers government, nor will the ruin of working farmers facilitate agricultural production and the transition to socialism following a successful revolution.

**T**HIS IS NOT A NEW POSITION. Engels explained this in 1894 in an article addressed to socialist parties in France and Germany. “The greater the number of peasants whom we can save from being actually hurled down into the proletariat,” Engels wrote, “the more quickly and easily the social transformation will be accomplished.”<sup>10</sup>

The idea that the ruin of working farmers in any way strengthens the revolutionary labor movement has nothing to do with Marxism and the working class. It is a prejudice, with its origins not in our class but in the bourgeoisie and well-off middle classes.

The draft political resolution connects our approach to the worker-farmer alliance with the lessons that the workers movement has learned since the Russian revolution about the tasks of workers and farmers governments in the countryside.

“The goal of communists,” the SWP resolution explains, “is not the transformation of exploited independent commodity producers into proletarians, either before or after the revolutionary conquest of power and expropriation of the bourgeoisie. Our goal is the voluntary collaboration of all producers in discovering and developing the most labor-efficient and environmentally sound methods of cooperative and collective agricultural production, as part of constructing a socialized economy.”

It is important to read this paragraph carefully. It is not simply a restatement of our uncompromising opposition to any forced collectivization of the peasantry, such as that carried out by Stalin at the beginning of the 1930s. The resolution is making another point: that communists do not aim to transform all rural producers into wage workers on state farms—even by voluntary methods of example, incentive, and persuasion. Our program is not to transform all agricultural production in the United States into gigantic “factories in the fields.” That is not what a workers and farmers government will do in this country.

**O**NCE WORKING PEOPLE have taken power and expropriated the bourgeoisie, the current alternative facing family farmers—either the will-o’-the-wisp of becoming a capitalist, or the probability of being ruined—will be eliminated. The establishment of a workers and farmers government will lay the foundation for the expropria-



tion of capital and the consolidation of a workers state. As part of the planned organization of the economy, the producers will begin the process of cooperatively organizing on a voluntary basis to advance agricultural production along the most efficient lines. Working farmers will be guaranteed use of their land and will be provided the wherewithal to work it—low-interest loans, machinery, chemicals, and scientific assistance.

The expropriation of the capitalists and establishment of state property in the major means of production is a precondition for progress toward the communist goal of *socialized production* under conditions where both wage labor and the state will eventually wither away. That goal can be accomplished only through the collaborative effort of workers and working farmers. While the fact that workers and farmers have a common class enemy is a sufficient basis for joint action to bring down the political rule of the capitalist exploiters, something more is necessary to make possible their collaboration in establishing a new state power to accomplish these common class tasks.

In the bourgeois-democratic revolutions of the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, for example, the capitalists, the peasantry, and urban wage workers all had a common enemy—a rapacious feudal landlord class backed up by the monarchy. A layer of the bourgeoisie took the leadership of the plebeian masses in tumultuous revolutionary battles that brought down the states of the feudal ruling classes. But this did not mean that the bourgeoisie, the peasants, and urban plebeians could then collectively put together a state with common historical tasks. The class character of these new states was determined by the capitalist property relations that they were organized to defend and perpetuate. The revolutionary dictatorships that were established served the

interests of the new exploiting ruling class. These states were instruments to preserve the exploitation and oppression of the peasants and urban producers, who had just the day before played the decisive role in bringing down the old order.

Today, in contrast, the working class and exploited farmers have not only a common class enemy, but a common future, as well. It is in the historic interests of both workers and working farmers to organize to expropriate their common exploiters, to reorganize production, and to head toward a society of associated producers. If this were not the case, then, while it would still be possible to form a worker-farmer bloc to fight the existing order, there would also be big class conflicts ahead, as there were between the capitalist exploiters and the exploited plebeians following the triumph of the bourgeois revolutions.

*With the expropriation of the capitalist class*, however, the material foundation that by necessity leads to class conflict between wage workers and independent commodity producers, which threatens the worker-farmer alliance, is eliminated. It is important to be clear about this. Because if a workers and farmers government came into being in the United States and did not expropriate the capitalist class, then there *would be* growing conflicts among various layers of the producers in this country. There would be no way to prevent market forces from beginning to tear apart the worker-farmer alliance.

This is because the existence of the bourgeoisie and its dominance in banking, production, and trade constantly foster capital accumulation by independent commodity producers. Under such conditions, as Lenin explained in 1920, capitalism is bred and rebred “continuously, daily, hourly, spontaneously, and on a mass scale.”<sup>11</sup>

While only a relative handful of working farmers actually succeed in becoming even small capitalists, the operation of the capitalist market nevertheless creates the conditions for the exploiting class to exert influence and leadership over layers of independent commodity producers. Even the vain hope of someday, somehow “making it big” can be an obstacle to some working farmers seeing that their actual class interests lie in an anticapitalist alliance with the working class. The task before the working class is to act in such a way as to win the political leadership of exploited farmers away from the exploiters.

**T**HE EXPROPRIATION of the capitalist class goes a long way toward eliminating this potential source of class conflict between workers and farmers, especially when combined with measures to limit and eventually eliminate the exploitation of wage laborers in agricultural production. Expropriation of the exploiting class opens up the possibility of voluntary collaboration by workers and working farmers in the development of agriculture along noncapitalist lines, and, as the world revolution advances, the construction of socialism.

In the initial period under a workers and farmers government in this country, many small producers will undoubtedly choose to continue working their land primarily as family farms. That is the lesson of every social revolution in the twentieth century. A revolutionary government will assist these farmers in every way it can to increase production and to improve their living conditions.

Giant, capitalist-owned farms, on the other hand, will be expropriated by a workers and farmers government. Most of these may become state farms, increasingly draw-

ing the agricultural workers into the administration of these enterprises. In some cases, however, the land from these giant farms will be divided up to be worked on an individual basis. This may be done in cases where many of the farm laborers were previously small farmers—here or in Mexico or other Latin American countries—who desire to resume farming; or where the land is distributed to working farmers whose existing acreage is too small to make a decent living.

Agricultural production under a workers and farmers government, however, will not simply be composed of a declining family-farm sector and a growing state-farm sector. Agriculture will take other cooperative forms along the road toward socialized production, as well.

**O**NCE WORKING FARMERS have a government that represents their interests, they will use that political power to find ways to increase cooperation in pooling machinery and supplies, sharing scientific techniques, cultivating and harvesting the fields, and marketing the final products. Farm cooperatives of all kinds and levels will be established. Particular forms of cooperative and collective labor will grow out of the concrete conditions in a given region, producing such and such a crop. Cooperation with workers in the towns and cities will expand on many fronts of economic production and distribution.

As the solution to ruinous proletarianization under capitalism, the alternative that communists offer working farmers is not proletarianization with the promise of social benefits! Instead, we say to farmers and to all working people that we need a government that will help us reorganize production collectively and cooperatively both in city and countryside. The forms this will take

during the transition to socialized production will be many and varied.

Has this revolutionary approach to the worker-peasant alliance and socialist construction ever been put into practice?

The fundamentals of this policy were pioneered by the Bolsheviks under Lenin's leadership during the early years of the Soviet republic in Russia. These Bolshevik policies did not have a chance to be implemented for any sustained period of time, however. Throughout most of the first four years of the revolution, the world's first workers and farmers government had to contend with a debilitating civil war and imperialist intervention. Following the victory over the counterrevolution, the New Economic Policy was launched at Lenin's initiative to strengthen the tattered worker-peasant alliance. Lenin emphasized that this was not simply a reversal of emergency policies that had been necessary during the civil war and the battle against imperialist intervention, but also a correction of errors that the Russian Communists had made in expecting that they could move more rapidly than was actually possible toward socialist forms of distribution of farm commodities produced by the peasants.

The implementation of the NEP and the experience with its effects were only in their early stages when Lenin died in January 1924. The subsequent course charted by Bukharin and Stalin brought the worker-peasant alliance to an impasse by the end of the 1920s. These policies reflected the growing power and influence of a privileged bureaucratic caste in the Soviet Union that was increasingly blocking both the working class and the exploited peasants from expanding their participation in administering the government and economy. By the beginning of the 1930s Stalin had already embarked on the brutal

and politically and economically disastrous forced collectivization of the peasantry.

Since that time, the policies toward the rural toilers implemented by Stalinist leaderships around the world have been rich primarily in lessons of what *not* to do. To one degree or another, Stalin's forced collectivization policy was used as the model by the bureaucratic misleaders in most Eastern European workers states following World War II. In China the Maoists at the end of the 1950s launched the peasantry on a forced march into "rural people's communes," as part of an overall ultra-left economic, social, and political course that lasted for nearly two decades.

The Stalinist pattern of involuntary collectivization of the peasantry was followed in North Korea and North Vietnam, as well. Only since 1981 has the Vietnamese Communist Party pulled back from its initial course, following the 1975 victory, of rapid collectivization of agriculture in the south largely relying on administrative measures toward the peasants. The results of the Vietnamese leadership's new agricultural policies have strengthened the worker-peasant alliance and the workers state in both the north and south.

**T**HE BEST SUSTAINED EXAMPLE of how to put a revolutionary approach into practice in leading the worker-farmer alliance and advancing socialist construction is the experience of the Cuban revolutionists over the past twenty-five years. The proletarian leadership in Cuba rejected administrative and coercive methods toward the peasantry from the outset. (In the early years of the revolution, a faction around Cuban Stalinist Aníbal Escalante unsuccessfully tried to impose a policy of forced

collectivization on the peasantry. I will come back later to how the revolutionary majority in the Cuban leadership politically defeated this attempt.)

The radical land reform and other policies of the leadership team around Fidel Castro strengthened the worker-peasant alliance as a solid foundation of the Cuban workers state. But the agrarian policies of the Cuban revolution were not without mistakes and corrections. The Cuban Communist Party leadership came to the conclusion in the mid-1970s that it had been giving too much priority to the development of the state-farm sector, and underestimating the potential and importance of promoting the development of cooperatives through which individual farmers could pool their land, machines, and labor. Castro described the evolution of the Cuban leadership's thinking on this question in a speech to the Sixth Congress of the National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP) in May 1982.<sup>12</sup>

During the first couple of years of the revolution, Castro said, the revolutionists did not “have a clear idea of what we were going to do—that is, what forms of production we were going to adopt. Our main purpose was to fulfill our promise of putting an end to the latifundium [large capitalist plantation] system and to the exploitation of our agricultural workers and small farmers.”

These goals were tackled by implementing the first and second agrarian reform laws of 1959 and 1963. The large exploiting landowners were expropriated, and peasants were given title to and guaranteed the use of the land they had previously worked as tenants or sharecroppers. Since so much of Cuban agriculture before the revolution was made up of giant capitalist plantations exploiting wage labor, Castro estimated that by the mid-1960s “over 70 percent—nearly 80 percent—of the

land (including that made available under the agrarian reform laws or acquired in other ways and rented land) had already been included in state enterprises in one way or another.”

During this initial period of the revolution, Castro told the ANAP delegates, “there was an imbalance in the development of our countryside, because the main attention was placed on state enterprises. This doesn’t mean the farmers were ignored, but there was a time—and I’m responsible for this—when the prevailing idea was that the only way to transform our agricultural system was through the state enterprises and that one day we’d have all our agriculture socialized on the basis of state enterprises.”

The Cuban leaders were committed to voluntary means, Castro stressed. While provision had been made for aiding the establishment of cooperatives by small farmers, however, few resources and little attention were initially devoted to encouraging the development of cooperative labor in this way. The Cuban leadership today believes that this was an error.

Castro pointed to two interrelated misconceptions in his own past thinking. “I had a predilection for state enterprises, but, and at the same time, I had a nearly sacred respect for the farmers’ traditional individualism. I used to think the farmers weren’t going to be very interested in joining cooperatives. I was underestimating the level of our farmers’ awareness—I overestimated their individualism—and at the same time I respected them too much to even think about going against their wishes or their feelings. . . .

“I wasn’t an ardent believer in cooperatives.

“Whenever I speak of higher forms of production, I’ve always thought and still think that state enterprises are



the highest. . . . I've always liked that form best, but it wasn't the most realistic one."

The campaign to form agricultural cooperatives got under way in Cuba during the mid-1970s. "It was slow going at first," Castro said. "It seemed it would take a lot of work for the idea of cooperatives to catch on, but we said there should be no pressure or haste, that we should let the farmers gradually convince themselves of the advantages offered by the cooperatives. That was how this movement began."

**O**VER THE NEXT TEN YEARS the cooperative movement *did* catch on, however, and today the cooperatives have become an expanding component of Cuban agricultural production. "I am sure the day will come," Castro told the ANAP delegates, "when, what with the state enterprises and the cooperatives, our agriculture will be highly developed—not just for Latin America, where we're already far ahead of other countries, but also one of the most highly developed agricultures in the world, and one of the most thorough agrarian revolutions ever effected, without resorting to violence, without using coercion, and with the strictest respect for our workers' and farmers' feelings and wishes."

These gains for the worker-farmer alliance and for agricultural production in Cuba cannot be separated from the overall progress and development of the Cuban workers state. They would not have been possible without the expropriation of imperialist capital and Cuba's own capitalist class and the establishment of state property and a planned economy. This will certainly be true for the United States, as well.

Expropriation of the capitalist class is a precondi-

tion for a durable alliance of the workers and farmers. Of course, this fundamental task of the socialist revolution is posed quite differently for the United States, the world's wealthiest and mightiest imperialist power, than for oppressed nations such as Cuba or Nicaragua, where the most immediate revolutionary tasks of a workers and farmers government are the struggle against imperialist domination, landlordism, and the onerous forms of oppression inherited from the neocolonial tyrants whose state power has been overthrown. In general, we can say that the more economically backward the country and historically retarded its class structure, the more protracted will be the transition under a workers and farmers government from the domination of capitalist property to the domination of state property.

Nonetheless, both in Cuba and in even more economically backward Nicaragua democratic and socialist tasks began to become intertwined from the outset. That is, rapid expropriations of the holdings of the Somoza family and its closest supporters in the ruling oligarchy, together with other radical economic measures, were decisive in consolidating the revolutionary dictatorship of the exploited classes. The Nicaraguan workers and peasants government expropriated the Somozaist bourgeoisie and landlords, the banking and insurance system, key national resources, capitalists who have sought to sabotage the economy, and large landowners who refuse to plant. The beginning of an extensive agrarian reform has been essential to the consolidation of the revolutionary alliance of the exploited producers. This reform has so far included granting titles to farm small plots of land to more than 60,000 agricultural workers and peasant families and implementing cheap credit and other policies to assist them.

These measures are part of the overall course set by the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) to advance the organization, mobilization, and revolutionary class consciousness of the workers and exploited peasants in Nicaragua. The leadership capacities demonstrated by the FSLN in pursuing this revolutionary course have enabled the workers and peasants government to strengthen its defenses against imperialist-organized *contra* mercenaries; combat efforts by Washington to impose diplomatic isolation on Nicaragua; obtain economic aid and trade from capitalist governments in Europe and Latin America, in addition to that it has received from Cuba, the Soviet Union, and other workers states; and continue production while developing the experience, skills, and confidence that the workers and peasants need to begin managing a nationalized and planned economy.

Some 60 percent of industrial production remains in private hands in Nicaragua today; 12 percent of cultivated land is in large capitalist farms of more than 865 acres; and an additional 30 percent is in medium-sized private holdings smaller than this.

**A**S THE CLASS STRUGGLE DEEPENS in Nicaragua and the neighboring region, the expropriation of the economic strongholds of the exploiters will become indispensable if the workers and peasants government is to survive, progress, and institute the kind of economic planning without which no major sustainable improvement in the conditions of Nicaraguan working people will be possible.

Contrary to the impatient insistence of various infantile leftists both in Nicaragua and elsewhere around the world, however, the correct pace of this transforma-

tion of property relations cannot be determined by any a priori schema. There is no timetable against which to measure how well the Sandinistas are leading the workers and peasants government forward. The character and tempo of the transition will depend on a combination of factors—the course of the U.S.-backed mercenary war and its linkages with counterrevolutionary forces inside the country; the progress of the organization and mobilization of the workers and peasants; initiatives by working people to advance their class interests and resist economic and political sabotage by the remaining exploiters; the economic needs of defense, reconstruction, and social welfare.

This transition from capitalist to socialist property relations will be the product of an ongoing and intensifying class struggle in Nicaragua. The big capitalists and landowners have lost state power, but they cannot and will not be expropriated without further battles. That cannot be accomplished without the mobilization and involvement of the working class and exploited rural producers. This is a key *political and social task* facing the Nicaraguan revolution, not a technical or administrative one.

Given the revolutionary capacities, integrity, and commitment to the interests of the workers and peasants demonstrated by the FSLN, we can be confident that it will strive to lead the exploited producers in carrying out this fundamental social transformation. This is what the Sandinista leaders are talking about when they say that Nicaragua is moving toward a society without exploiters and exploited, and that it is only the workers and peasants that will go all the way. The Nicaraguan working class must lead its allies through this transition. It has been the Sandinista Workers Confederation (CST) that has taken the lead in the education and propaganda for

socialism in Nicaragua since the victory in 1979.

Historically there is no way to “con” a layer of the bourgeoisie, to fake them out. Nor is there any way to absorb them into the revolution. Some individuals from bourgeois backgrounds will desert their class as they are won to the camp of the workers and farmers. As a social class, however, the capitalists cannot and will not make peace with a workers and farmers government—in Nicaragua or anywhere else. The exploiters will either be expropriated, or, over time, they will regroup their forces and overthrow the workers and farmers government.

**I**N THE IMPERIALIST UNITED STATES, the thrust and weight of the revolutionary mass struggles that will be necessary to establish a workers and farmers government will involve expropriation of the big capitalist financial, industrial, agricultural, and commercial enterprises *right from the outset*. Given the extent of monopoly power, of the concentration and centralization of capital in the United States, it is inconceivable that the U.S. workers and farmers could establish a government and hold onto it without expropriating the gigantic property-holdings that form the foundation of the mighty repressive state power of America’s “sixty families.” Any government that did not do this would not be a workers and farmers government.

Even in the United States, however, not *all* privately owned industrial and commercial undertakings will be immediately expropriated. A workers and farmers government will adopt a different approach to small business people and retailers. Unless their owners are engaged in counterrevolutionary activity, Leon Trotsky explained in 1934, small enterprises such as these in the United States “could be kept solvent until they were gradually

and without compulsion sucked into the socialized business system.”<sup>13</sup>

Expropriation of America’s “sixty families” is also a separate question from how a workers and farmers government would approach well-to-do middle-class professionals, such as doctors and dentists. We can be sure that these upper-middle-class layers will be infested with counterrevolutionaries. But to the degree that doctors and dentists are not themselves capitalists—to the degree, that is, that they do not directly live off selling the products of exploited wage labor, but instead live off inflated incomes derived from their professions’ monopoly position in capitalist society—to that degree they can be more easily divided politically. Some will be convinced to put their skills to work for the benefit of the producing majority.

Most important of all, the proletariat’s goal is not the expropriation of craftsmen, individual proprietors, small masters, and so on. For years following a revolutionary victory, a workers and farmers government will make use of entrepreneurial initiative among working people to carry out a range of otherwise inadequately fulfilled economic tasks and functions as part of a system of nationalized industry and planning.

We are talking in this case about *working people*, not about small business people, nor even about middle-class technicians, administrative personnel, and professionals—some of whose skills will be valuable to the workers and farmers government. We are talking about working people who figure out a better way than some planning board to repair or rebuild a piece of machinery, to reorganize some aspect of a production line, or to meet a consumer demand for something. It is not antisocialist to say that individual or cooperative enterprises of skilled

working people will be needed for quite some time after the establishment of planning to fill in all sorts of gaps in the nationalized system of production. Ask the Cubans. Read what Lenin, Trotsky, and other Bolshevik leaders had to say during the first years of the Russian revolution.

The workers and farmers government in the United States will need a New Economic Policy of a special kind. It will need to combine a developing central planning network with ways of using the market for periods of time and organizing production in order to draw to the maximum on the capacities and initiative of working people.

**T**ROTSKY EXPLAINED THIS in a speech given to the Eleventh Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in 1922. He pointed to some of the utopian errors that the leadership of the young Soviet republic had made at the outset.

“How did we start?” Trotsky said. “There was a market—we liquidated it. Competition? We abolished it. Commercial calculation? Out with it! The Supreme Council for the National Economy [the central planning board] allocated everything.

“This failed.”

Trotsky then went on to emphasize his opinion, also held by Lenin and the big majority of the Bolshevik leadership, that the problems with such a headlong approach were not due solely to Russia’s economic backwardness. If in industrially advanced Germany, Trotsky added, “the workers were to seize power now, we would not advise them to . . . put everything under a Supreme Economic Council.”<sup>14</sup>

We are so encased in capitalist society today that it is difficult for us even to begin to envision these problems

of the transition to socialized production in the United States. While it is pointless to engage in flights of speculation, however, we also should not inadvertently cede such qualities as initiative and organizational capacities in economic matters only to the capitalists. The producers, too, have the ability to organize themselves to encourage such initiatives—not to exploit the wage labor of others, but as part of cooperatively reorganizing the economy to meet human needs.

Working farmers in the United States will make an irreplaceable contribution to this collective reconstruction of society. They will take the lead in the social reorganization of the production of food and fiber.

Some middle-class radicals and currents in the labor movement doubt that farmers can be won to an anticapitalist perspective. Don't working farmers, they object, have a preoccupation with private property, and won't that be an obstacle to a revolutionary government in taking anti-capitalist measures to advance the interests of the working class? Won't that make it difficult for workers to hold governmental power together with the farmers? Won't the workers have to exercise a revolutionary dictatorship not only against the capitalists, but even to some extent against working farmers—using methods of persuasion and incentives wherever possible—in order to chart an anticapitalist course?

**WE** SAY NO. This is not a necessary source of class conflict between workers and working farmers. It is not a barrier to a workers and farmers government, a two-class government, in the United States.

We would be making a big mistake if we were to conclude from the necessity over time of expropriating *all*



*capitalist property* that it is also necessary to expropriate all *individual private property*. Capitalist private property and individual private property are not necessarily the same thing.

A farmer, for example, may own a tractor that members of the family use to work their land. That land and machinery are the farmer's private property, but not necessarily capitalist property. If the farmer hires some workers to do the job, however, then that land and that tractor become capitalist property.

Most working farmers in this country are not capitalists, not even small capitalists. It is true, of course, that farmers are concerned about preserving what property they do have. Is the bank going to foreclose and take away the land that they farm? Is it going to put their machinery up for sale? That is the farmers' private property—or at least they hope someday to pay off the mortgage so that it can become their property.

Land held by capitalist farmers, real estate sharks, and the owners of banks, insurance companies, and big corporations will be expropriated by a workers and farmers government. Socialists also advocate nationalization of all land by a workers and farmers government, but this is the opposite of calling for the expropriation of the farms and private property of working farmers.

For exploited farmers nationalization of the land offers the only protection against the threat of *expropriation by the capitalists*. The aim of this measure is to guarantee to working farmers the use of the land they rent or hold title to for as long as they choose to till it. This will put an end to the mortgages, leasing agreements, sharecropping, and other methods by which the capitalists deprive farmers of a decent living and often dispossess them entirely. Moreover, a workers and farmers govern-

ment will not expropriate farmers' machinery, buildings, livestock, and crops. It will guarantee their right to put these means of production to work, and to own their output, for as long as they choose to continue farming on a private basis.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, far from being an obstacle to a governmental alliance between workers and farmers, the concern by working farmers to prevent the dispossession of all their private property by the exploiters can be a powerful impetus to join with the working class in the revolutionary struggle to expropriate the capitalists. Through the advance of cooperative and collective forms of work, the skilled labor of working farmers will grow over without compulsion into part of the system of socialized production.<sup>16</sup>

It is not just working farmers who are hostile to schemes dreamed up by petty-bourgeois radicals in the cities to "abolish" all private property. The working-class movement, too, is hostile to the anarchist notion that the goal of the socialist revolution is "the abolition of private property." That idea has nothing to do with socialism. It does not originate in the working class or among other exploited producers. It is an idea propagated by petty-bourgeois revolutionists, reactionary utopians, who think of working people as *objects* of social change, not as its *makers*.

Capitalist property in any given country will be expropriated at whatever pace is dictated by its particular class relations and concrete national and international conditions. All property in the means of production will wither away—as will the state, the family, and religion—as society advances toward communism on a world scale. As the state withers away, so too will state property; neither one will be "abolished." That is anarchism, not communism.

Marx explained this in his 1871 defense of the Paris

Commune, known as *The Civil War in France*. Answering the slanders of the capitalists, Marx wrote, “The Commune, they exclaim, intends to abolish property, the basis of all civilisation! Yes, gentlemen, the Commune intended to abolish that class-property which makes the labour of the many the wealth of the few. It aimed at the expropriation of the expropriators,” that is, of the capitalist exploiters who had expropriated the land and tools of the toilers and turned them into propertyless wage workers, into proletarians.

The Commune, Marx concluded, “*wanted to make individual property a truth* by transforming the means of production, land and capital, now chiefly the means of enslaving and exploiting labour, into mere instruments of free and associated labour.”<sup>17</sup>

Engels stressed the same point in 1875 in *Anti-Dühring*, his polemic against professorial-minded German socialists. The expropriation of the capitalists, Engels wrote, will result in “the re-establishment of individual property, but *on the basis* of the social ownership of the land and of the means of production produced by labour itself.” Social ownership, Engels wrote, “extends to the land and the other means of production, and individual ownership to the products, that is, the articles of consumption.”<sup>18</sup>

**T**HIS IS NOT an abstract theoretical question. We can point to an example of a regime within the past decade that *did* try to expropriate all private property, including what Engels called “the means of consumption.” That happened in Kampuchea under Pol Pot. That murderous regime ordered the expropriation of even pans, dishes, and other personal items. This was not carried out by the workers and the peasants of that country. It was car-

ried out *against* them, by petty-bourgeois revolutionists from the cities who tried to put into practice their own anti-internationalist, utopian, and reactionary notions of establishing socialism in Kampuchea on the backs of the producers. We now know the horrors that resulted from this.

Some radicals have tried to explain Pol Pot's crimes by alleging that his Khmer Rouge organization was based among the poor peasants, instead of the working class. The facts belie this claim. Pol Pot headed up an urban, petty-bourgeois Stalinist clique. Its policies did not reflect the class interests or aspirations of the poor peasants, who suffered as much brutality as the urban dwellers who were forcibly evacuated from the cities. Most peasants, too, were driven from their homes and villages, dispossessed of their belongings, and made to work in forced labor camps. They, too, faced death from starvation, disease without medical care, and outright execution.

Fidel Castro's description in November 1983 of the Coard faction in Grenada as "Pol Pot-ists" was scientifically correct, not an emotional exaggeration. The secret faction built by Coard in the party apparatus of the New Jewel Movement, in the army officer corps, and in the state administration was based among petty-bourgeois revolutionists, and their cothinkers and supporters in other countries, who acted on the conviction that Grenada's producing classes didn't understand enough, were too backward, to be the makers and the leaders of the revolution. The Coard clique saw themselves as revolutionists *over* the exploited classes, not revolutionists *of* the exploited classes. They did not represent the class interests of either the workers or working farmers in Grenada.

The goal of communists is *not* the negation of all private property. It is not "barrack-room communism," as

Marx described the reactionary program of anarchist Mikhail Bakunin. Our goals are the conquest of power by the workers and farmers; the education, organization, and mobilization of working people to expropriate their exploiters; the advance of the international socialist revolution; the transition to a society of associated producers; and the withering away of the family, private property, and the state with the advance toward world communism.

**T**HE ENEMY OF THE WORKING CLASS is the bourgeoisie, not other exploited producers. The goal of the communist workers movement is to establish a revolutionary dictatorship—a workers and farmers government—*together with* the exploited farmers and against a *common enemy*. Either that is blood and bone of our program and strategy, or—no matter how unintentionally—we are charting a course that approaches the farmers as an object, not as an ally in making revolutionary social change. A revolutionary workers party cannot be built with that kind of perspective, because *never in modern history has any political current pretending to be revolutionary treated the farmers as an object without also treating workers in the same way*.

Stalin's brutal policy of forced collectivization of the peasantry did not in any way advance the interests of the urban working class in the Soviet Union. No, it was part and parcel of the policy of a parasitic petty-bourgeois social caste whose interests came into conflict with both workers and working peasants. The Stalinist bureaucracy treated the producers of both city and countryside as objects of policy; it did not act as—and was not—the political vanguard of either of these producing classes.

This petty-bourgeois caste was also an opponent of

“private property.” As Trotsky explained in *The Revolution Betrayed*, “Collectivization appeared to the peasant primarily in the form of an expropriation of all his belongings. They collectivized not only horses, cows, sheep, pigs, but even new-born chickens.”<sup>19</sup>

**T**HE CUBAN REVOLUTION offers important lessons in this regard, as well. As mentioned earlier, during the first years following the victory in Cuba, a Stalinist faction led by Aníbal Escalante sought to impose collectivization on some working farmers. This became an especially serious problem for the revolution in the Matanzas region, where Escalante’s faction had substantial strength in the apparatus of the newly formed party, the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations (ORI).

The Escalante group seized on the growth of CIA-supported counterrevolutionary activity among layers of rich farmers in late 1961 and early 1962 to circumvent the policies toward working farmers that the revolutionary leadership had been following since the 1959 triumph. When the revolutionary government decreed the expropriation of the land of farmers proven to be actively involved in counterrevolutionary actions, Escalante’s backers took the opportunity to put their Stalinist conceptions into practice in the countryside. They began to strike out against working farmers who had any questions whatsoever about the new government and its policies, including against many who supported the revolution.

According to Cuban CP leader Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, these bureaucratic actions were contrary to the guidelines laid out by the revolutionary government, which “made it very clear that all those measures [against counterrevolutionary activity] had to be taken with the

participation and consideration of the small and middle farmers, in ANAP meetings, and without harming that section, the great majority of the farmers.”

The Escalante grouping paid no attention to these guidelines. “Revolutionary law was not respected,” Rodríguez wrote in a 1963 article on Cuba’s agrarian reform. “Poor and rich were hit indiscriminately, without taking into consideration all the circumstances in each case. Instead of discussing with the farmers themselves about the measures to be taken, in many cases meetings were held mainly with the agricultural workers, who, carried only by their class feelings, tended at all times toward expropriation.”<sup>20</sup>

These bureaucratic policies by Escalante’s clique damaged the worker-farmer alliance, as Castro explained in an April 1962 speech to the ORI leadership in Matanzas.<sup>21</sup> These actions, he said, were responsible for a growing questioning of the new government, even among “classes that have benefited so much from the revolution.” Castro continued:

What reason could there be for the slightest discontent if not our own errors, our mistakes, our mistreatment, our contempt for the people, our insolence with the people? Because one must really be insolent with the people to get up in a village and say, “Everyone here is a counterrevolutionary, bring in the gallows.”

What are those manifestations if not manifestations of the petty-bourgeois spirit? That is the real petty-bourgeois spirit, because the petty bourgeois, when the people are disgusted as a consequence of his errors, does not take the blame himself, he blames the people. And then he

believes that he is the only revolutionary and the people are counterrevolutionary. . . . He ends up accusing the masses of being counterrevolutionary when they are not turning against the revolution but rather against his arbitrary acts.

Castro continued:

And when a worker became discontented with [these policies], he was correctly discontented, because he doesn't agree with disorganization, and disorganization is not socialism. He doesn't agree with arbitrariness, and arbitrariness is not socialism. He doesn't agree with disorder and anarchy, and disorder and anarchy are not socialism. No one has the right to try to smuggle in disorganization, disorder, anarchy, and despotism, and pass it off as socialism, because then the masses react against that.

If the entire leadership were to follow the methods of the Escalante group, Castro explained, it would begin to act as if the source of problems facing the revolution were to be found in weaknesses among the masses, rather than "in our anarchy, in our tendency toward authoritarianism, despotism, in our lack of political tact, in our unwise policy. Instead of wanting to build the revolution and win the people to the revolution, we would every day be turning people against the revolution, kicking the people around and creating for ourselves ten thousand enemies."

Castro also responded to the claim by Escalante's supporters that their policies were aimed at combating the CIA campaign to enlist peasants in counterrevolutionary



activity, and that this imperialist subversion was the only real problem facing the revolution.

“How are we going to blame the enemy?” Castro asked. “The enemy takes advantage of our weaknesses; but no enemy radio, no enemy campaign will prosper where it does not have a base to prosper, where there are not many people aggrieved, discontented, disgusted—no longer with the injustice that has been done to them, but with the injustice they’ve seen done to someone else, and that they think tomorrow could be done to them.”

**S**HORTLY AFTER Castro’s Matanzas speech, the revolutionary majority in the ORI leadership reversed the Escalante group’s arbitrary collectivization policies, as part of a successful political battle against the faction’s overall bureaucratic and privilege-seeking course. Expropriated land was returned to a number of farmers, as Castro had advocated to the Matanzas leadership.

The most difficult problem of a socialist revolution, Castro said, “is in carrying the revolution to agriculture without affecting production and without affecting the worker-peasant alliance. If we must return farms wrongly taken over, we will return them. We’re not going to be afraid that it may appear to be a step backward. On the contrary, if returning farms which were unjustifiably taken over brings tranquility to thousands of people who have to march together with the revolution, then it’s better to return them, because that will permit us to advance with greater power and security.

“We have to adopt a different policy toward the [small] propertied interests that remain than toward the big latifundists,” Castro said. “Because while the big latifundists were an insignificant minority, the middle proprietors are

now many thousands; while the latifundists were parasites separated from the land, the middle proprietor is commonly linked to the land and works it, takes care of it.”

What a contrast to the policies of Stalin, Mao, Escalante, Pol Pot, and Coard!

#### IV. RADICAL RECONSTRUCTION

**T**HE INTERNATIONAL working-class movement should know something about the devastating effects that come with forced dispossession from the land. That is how the proletariat was born—through the wholesale ruin of rural toilers over several centuries. The rising capitalist class had to take away the lands and commons from masses of small farmers and rural producers and deprive them of their tools. It had to deprive them of any means of supporting themselves except selling their labor power to a capitalist.

In the United States, the formation of a hereditary, propertyless proletariat took a different form from that in Europe and many other parts of the world. Throughout most of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the working class in this country was created in large part through immigration—often of peasant families driven off their land in Europe. Many immigrants also became small farmers. As a result, the growth of the U.S. working class throughout the nineteenth century went hand in hand with a net expansion of the farming population. This was true despite the fact that many small farmers were already being expelled from the land in the eastern United States, with some heading westward to homestead and others into the cities in search of work.

It has only been since the turn of the century, espe-

cially since the 1930s, that the growth of the U.S. working class through the ruin of small farmers has resulted in a net decline in the number of independent commodity producers on the land.

The creation of the Black proletariat following the revolutionary abolition of slavery was also integrally linked to the land question. In this case, however, proletarianization did not primarily involve the dispossession of Black farmers (although that has been the fate of millions of farming families that are Black over the past 100 years).

Instead, freed slaves in their great majority were denied land ownership. In the initial two years following the Civil War, most ex-slaves were impressed into contract labor gangs on plantations under the notorious Black Codes adopted by most state governments of the vanquished Confederate slaveocracy. Blacks organized in the South to resist this effort by the planters to restore virtual slave labor conditions. They won the support of some sectors of the northern labor movement, as well as that of a layer of industrial capitalists and their representatives in Congress who were alarmed at efforts by the former slave owners to reassert their political influence.

As a result of this postwar struggle, Radical Reconstruction regimes were set up throughout the South by 1867, with the mandate of the U.S. Congress and backed up by the armed power of the Union Army. These new governments repealed the Black Codes and adopted legislation barring some of the most onerous provisions of the labor contracts that had been imposed on Black agricultural laborers.

The proletarianized ex-slaves, however, wanted more than better contracts and labor-law reform. They waged a struggle for land—for a radical agrarian reform that would break up the old plantations of the former slave

owners and divide the land among the freed slaves and other small rural producers. They fought for the tools, livestock, cheap credit, and other things they would need to make a go of it as free farmers. “Forty acres and a mule” became their slogan.

Exploited farmers and other toilers who were white in the South also fought for land, for tools, for better conditions. Many initially joined in struggle with freed Black slaves, some even with the goal of reconstructing the former Confederacy as “states of labor.” Small farmers and propertyless rural working people made up the big majority of the population in all these states. In five states Blacks were a majority.

In South Carolina, in particular, the exploited producers, led by Blacks, took big strides for a number of years following 1867 toward establishing a revolutionary dictatorship that advanced the class interests of the freed slaves, small farmers, and other working people. The Radical Reconstruction regime there had a majority Black legislature, and its social base among the freed slaves and other working people was organized through an extensive armed militia and Union League chapters in many communities.

**T**HE U.S. RULING CLASS, its schools, and bourgeois historians try to hide or distort this revolutionary experience of the producing classes in this country. But it is a story that needs to be told by a revolutionary proletarian party in the United States, as an example of what many of our predecessors fought for a century ago—a forerunner of the kind of workers and farmers government we are fighting for today. This story will find a ready audience among fighters in the factories and on the farms.

The most advanced of these Radical Reconstruction regimes, such as those in South Carolina and Mississippi, adopted progressive social legislation: civil rights laws barring racial discrimination; progressive tax laws that taxed the rich; universal suffrage for males regardless of race; the first free public schools in these states, in some cases including free college education; expanded rights for women; and public-relief systems.

None of the Reconstruction governments, however, had the will or the power to enforce an expropriation of the big plantation owners that could have made possible a radical land reform, since the appointed Union Army commanders in each state held effective veto power over legislation and its enforcement. While some of these officers were more radical than others, none were willing to countenance a broadside attack on the property of the southern landowners.

Even in South Carolina, where legislation to meet the land hunger of the freed slaves went the furthest, it never went beyond a homestead law allotting relatively meager funds *to purchase* land for distribution, together with property tax laws that did result in some big landholdings being forfeited to the state government by defaulting planters.

By and large, however, most of the freed slaves did not get any land, and were instead forced into sharecropping, tenant farming, or wage labor in the fields and towns. Often they worked under conditions of virtual debt peonage for large plantation owners. Of the white farmers and few Black farmers who did have their own small plots, many fell deeper and deeper into debt bondage. They often lost their land and ended up in the same situation as the majority of freed slaves.

The aspirations of the liberated and proletarianized

Blacks, and their allies among southern white working people, were blocked by the growing power of the U.S. capitalist class. The final defeat of Radical Reconstruction required a bloody counterrevolution. The deal between the Democratic and Republican parties to withdraw Union troops from the South in 1877 accelerated a reign of terror by the Ku Klux Klan, the Knights of the White Camelia, and other racist gangs beholden to the interests of the exploiters.

Farrell Dobbs explained this culminating chapter of the defeat of Radical Reconstruction in the first volume of *Revolutionary Continuity: Marxist Leadership in the U.S.* Farrell wrote:

By 1877, radical reconstruction had gone down to bloody defeat and not only Afro-Americans but the entire working class had suffered the worst setback in its history. The defeat was engineered by the dominant sectors of the industrial ruling class, who were incapable of carrying through a radical land reform in the old Confederacy and rightly feared the rise of a united working class in which Black and white artisans and industrial workers would come together as a powerful oppositional force, allied with free working farmers.

The rural poor and working class were forcibly divided along color lines. The value of labor power was driven down and class solidarity crippled. Jim Crow, the system of extensive segregation, was legalized. Racism was spread at an accelerated pace throughout the entire United States.<sup>22</sup>

This defeat was suffered not only because the freed slaves, who aspired to get land and to become working

farmers, were betrayed by the bourgeoisie and both capitalist political parties. It also occurred because the U.S. working class and its organizations were as yet still too weak and politically inexperienced to provide leadership to the kind of social revolution that could have made possible a massive expropriation and redistribution of land to the freed slaves.

**T**HE DEFEAT of Radical Reconstruction set back the possibilities for a fighting alliance of workers and farmers, Black and white, in this country. Attempts at united action by the oppressed and exploited also ran up against the rise of U.S. imperialism during the final decades of the nineteenth century. The robber barons of finance capital encouraged racist notions as part of their ideological justification for imposing U.S. domination on the black-, brown-, and yellow-skinned peoples of Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Philippines, and Hawaii.

An important effect of these blows was felt in the 1880s and 1890s, as economic and political conditions created a groundswell of protest among farmers across the southern and middle-western United States. This emerging farmers movement, known as the populist movement, took some significant initial steps to involve Black farmers and organizations such as the Colored Farmers' Alliance. These efforts were ultimately aborted, however, by the forward march of Jim Crow at home and Uncle Sam abroad. Most populist leaders were not able to stand up to these ruling-class pressures, and by the mid-1890s many had joined in the capitalist-orchestrated chorus of racism and jingoism.

The U.S. working-class movement at that time was as yet incapable of developing a political leadership that

could present an anticapitalist and anti-imperialist program and strategy to the ranks of labor, to exploited farmers, and to landless Black proletarians. The social and political conditions for such a development were not yet ripe.<sup>23</sup>

In 1877 Marx had expressed the expectation that the powerful nationwide strikes sparked by railroad workers in the United States that year might augur a new political situation in which the U.S. working class could provide leadership to the exploited farmers and freed slaves. “This first eruption against the oligarchy of associated capital which has arisen since the Civil War will of course be put down,” Marx wrote to Engels, “but it could quite well form the starting point for the establishment of a serious labour party in the United States.”

Marx continued, “The policy of the new President [of withdrawing Union troops backing the Reconstruction governments] will turn the Negroes into allies of the workers, and the large expropriations of land (especially fertile land) in favour of railway, mining, etc., companies will convert the peasants of the West, who are already very disenchanted, into allies of the workers.”<sup>24</sup>

This was not to be. The economic and political reserves of the rising U.S. industrial bourgeoisie were far from exhausted; over the next half century the United States would become the world’s mightiest imperialist power. Moreover, the defeat of Radical Reconstruction—what Farrell Dobbs calls the “worst setback” of our class in the history of this country—was a much more devastating blow to Blacks and other U.S. working people than Marx anticipated. The U.S. working class remains deeply divided by the national oppression of Blacks that was reinstitutionalized on new foundations in the bloody aftermath of 1877. U.S. labor’s first giant step toward the



formation of major industrial unions did not come for another six decades, and the formation of a labor party, anticipated by Marx 108 years ago, remains an unfulfilled task of our class to this day.

Nonetheless, Marx could not have been more correct about the alliance of social forces that would be central to a successful revolution in the United States. Nor could he have been more correct about who had increasingly become the common class enemy of U.S. workers and farmers, Black and white, with the betrayal of Radical Reconstruction.

**T**ODAY, THE OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS *do* exist to build the class alliances that the working class was unable to forge and lead in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The U.S. working class *does* have the power to throw in its weight and give leadership to the battles of farmers and the oppressed Afro-American nationality. Black workers will be in the vanguard of the transformation of the labor movement that will make possible the conquest of state power in the United States by an alliance of the exploited producers. A multinational revolutionary working-class party, attracting both workers and exploited farmers to its ranks, can be built to lead this revolutionary struggle for socialism.

There can be no question in these closing decades of the twentieth century about what the capitalist class has to offer exploited working people in this country and worldwide. It offers war, destruction, economic misery, social inequality, the erosion and eventual crushing of democratic freedoms. That is how capitalism works. It cannot be reformed.

The Socialist Workers Party offers an alternative future to the exploited producers. We offer them a party

whose purpose is to educate and organize the working class to establish a workers and farmers government that will abolish capitalism in the United States and join in the worldwide struggle for socialism.

## NOTES

1. For a discussion of the ways in which workers and working farmers are exploited by capital, see the article "The Crisis Facing Working Farmers" by Doug Jenness elsewhere in this issue.

2. Karl Marx, "Instructions for the Delegates of the Provisional General Council" in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), vol. 2, p. 82.

3. Farrell Dobbs, *Teamster Politics* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975) p. 242.

4. *The Second Congress of the Communist International* (London: New Park, 1977), vol. 2, p. 286.

5. "Resolution on Workers and Peasants Government," appendix to Jack Barnes, *For a Workers and Farmers Government in the United States* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1982), p. 49.

6. Joseph Hansen, "Introductory Note" in Robert Chester, *Workers and Farmers Governments Since the Second World War* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1978), p. 3.

7. The quotations from the Socialist Workers Party 1984 draft political resolution are drawn from "The Revolutionary Perspective and Leninist Continuity in the United States," printed elsewhere in this issue.

8. V.I. Lenin, "Two Worlds" in Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), vol. 16, p. 311.

9. Leon Trotsky, "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International" in the *Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977), p. 135.

10. Frederick Engels, "The Peasant Question in France and Germany" in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), vol. 3, pp. 472–73.

11. V.I. Lenin, "'Left-wing' Communism—an Infantile Disorder" in Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), vol. 31, p. 24.

12. Excerpts from this speech appear elsewhere in this issue under the title "Farm Cooperatives in Cuba."

13. Leon Trotsky, "If America Should Go Communist" in *Writings of Leon Trotsky (1934–35)* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1974), p. 75.

14. Alec Nove, "New Light on Trotskii's Economic Views," *Slavic Review* (Spring 1981), vol. 40, no. 1, p. 85.

15. For more on the socialist position on nationalization of the land, see the article "The Crisis Facing Working Farmers" by Doug Jenness elsewhere in this issue.

16. In 1870, Marx explained how the development of capitalism was creating the conditions that were undermining conflicts between the toilers of town and country. Writing about the importance of the Paris Commune for the exploited farmers in France, Marx said:

"There exists of course in France as in most continental countries a deep antagonism between the townish and rural producers, between the industrial proletariat and the peasantry. The aspiration of the proletariat, the material basis of its movement is labour organised on a grand scale, although now despotically organised, and the means of production centralised, although now centralised in the hands of the monopolist, not only as a means of production, but as a means of the exploitation and enslavement of the producer. What the proletariat has to do is to transform the present capitalist character of that organised labour and those centralised means of labour, to transform them from the means of class rule and class exploitation into forms of free associated labour and social means of production. On the other hand, the labour of the peasant is insulated and the means of pro-

duction are parcelled, dispersed. On these economical differences rests super-constructed a whole world of different social and political views. But this peasantry proprietorship has long since outgrown its normal phase, that is, the phase in which it was a reality, a mode of production and a form of property which responded to the economical wants of society and placed the rural producers themselves in normal conditions of life. It has entered its period of decay. On the one side, a large *prolétariat foncier* (rural proletariat) has grown out of it, whose interests are identical with those of the townish wages-labourers. The mode of production itself has become superannuated by the modern progress of agronomy. Lastly—the peasant proprietorship itself has become nominal, leaving to the peasant the delusion of proprietorship, and expropriating him from the fruits of his own labour. The competition of the great farm producers, the blood-tax, the state-tax, the usury of the townish mortgagee and the multitudinous pilfering of the judiciary system thrown around him, have degraded him to the position of a Hindoo ryot, while expropriation—even expropriation from his nominal proprietorship—and his degradation into a rural proletarian is an everyday fact. What separates the peasant from the proletarian is, therefore, no longer his real interest, but his delusive prejudice. The Commune, as we have shown, is the only power that can give him immediate great boons even in its present economical conditions; it is the only form of government that can secure to him the transformation of his present economical conditions, rescue him from expropriation by the landlord, on the one hand, save him from grinding, trudging and misery on the pretext of proprietorship, on the other, that can convert his nominal proprietorship of the land into real proprietorship of the fruits of his labour, that can combine for him the profits of modern agronomy, dictated by social wants and every day now encroaching upon him as a hostile agency, without annihilating his position as a really independent producer. Being immediately benefited by

the Communal Republic, he would soon confide in it.” (Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *On the Paris Commune* [Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971], pp. 159–61).

17. Karl Marx, “The Civil War in France” in Marx and Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), vol. 2, p. 233. Emphasis added.

18. Frederick Engels, *Anti-Dühring* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954), p. 181.

19. Leon Trotsky, *The Revolution Betrayed* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1980), p. 39.

20. Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, *Four Years of Agrarian Reform* (Havana: Republic of Cuba, Ministry of Foreign Relations, 1963), p. 18.

21. The extracts from Castro’s speech are translated from the May 1962 issue of *Cuba Socialista*.

22. Farrell Dobbs, *Revolutionary Continuity: Marxist Leadership in the U.S., The Early Years 1848–1917* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1980), p. 52.

23. Socialist Workers Party leader Farrell Dobbs discussed the objective factors underlying these political limitations of the U.S. labor movement at the close of the nineteenth century in his book, *Revolutionary Continuity: Marxist Leadership in the U.S., The Early Years, 1848–1917*. See in particular the chapters “Indigenous Origins” and “Gains and Setbacks,” as well as the related materials by Marx and Engels in the appendix to Dobbs’s book.

24. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Marx and Engels on the United States* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1979), p. 272.

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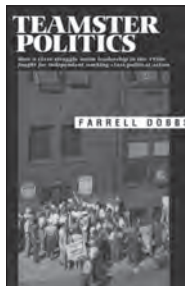
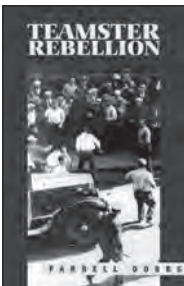
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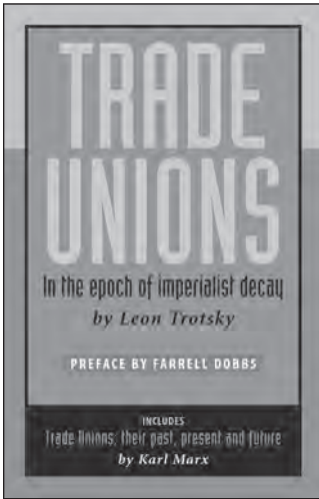
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LAND REFORM AND  
FARM COOPERATIVES IN CUBA  
Introduction to three Cuban documents

by Mary-Alice Waters

*“The party’s policy toward the peasantry is based on the principles of the worker-peasant alliance.*

*“The worker-peasant alliance is the union in struggle of the working class and the working peasant; that is, with the small and medium peasants who work the land with their own labor and that of their families.*

*“It is the union in struggle between two laboring classes, two classes that were exploited, that suffered the domination of the bourgeois-landlord regime. . . .*

*“The worker-peasant alliance is not a temporary, tactical pact but rather a strategic and enduring union between these two classes, a union whose final objective, as Fidel said, is to ‘carry the revolutionary process forward until every single one of us belongs to a society without classes, a society of producers, a society of workers with equal rights.’”*

—from **“The Agrarian Question and Relations with the Peasantry,”** theses adopted by the First Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba, 1975

**T**HE REVOLUTIONARY ALLIANCE between the workers and peasants of Cuba, the alliance in struggle to break the yoke of imperialist domination and end their exploitation by the big landowners and capitalists, has been and remains the backbone of the Cuban revolu-

tion. The roots of struggle by the toilers of Cuba's countryside and cities go back to 1868, to the beginning of the war for independence against Spain. Its history can be traced through the victorious liberation war of 1895–98, and the defeat of the Spanish colonizers—followed by the military intervention by Yankee imperialism and subjugation once again.

Throughout the twentieth century the struggle continued against the various brutal and corrupt dictators who ruled by the grace of Washington. With the revolutionary destruction of the Batista tyranny on January 1, 1959, the struggle by workers and peasants entered a new stage.

“Without this alliance with the peasantry, the working class would not have united sufficient forces to expel imperialism and its puppet, overthrow the capitalist system, and free itself from exploitation,” states the theses adopted by the First Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba.

“Without this alliance with the working class, the peasantry would not have been able to break the yoke of the latifundists and the bourgeoisie.”

Without this firm alliance, consolidated through the agrarian reform and other far-reaching social measures of the Cuban revolution, the working people of Cuba would not have been able to withstand the quarter century of U.S. imperialist aggression, sabotage, and blockade.

**W**HILE THE ROOTS of this alliance in struggle go back to the last century, the three Cuban documents that are published in this issue of *New Internationalist* address one of the most decisive questions of proletarian strategy in the epoch of imperialism: the place of the worker-peasant alliance in the political strategy of the working class, which strives to lead the exploited producers to take

power, establish a workers and farmers government, and carry through the socialist transformation of the economic foundations of society.

Speaking in La Plata on May 17, 1974, on the fifteenth anniversary of the signing of Cuba's first Agrarian Reform Law, Fidel Castro placed this question in the historical context of that country's long struggle against colonial and imperialist domination.

When the battle against Spanish domination began in the nineteenth century, he pointed out, its program and objectives were determined by the economic and social conditions of a different epoch. Slave labor was dominant on the huge Spanish-owned plantations that dotted the sparsely settled land. There were few cities, or even large towns, and little manufacturing. At that time, Fidel stated, "the struggle was aimed at the eradication of slavery from our society. It was necessary to fight against colonialism, against feudalism." The small landholders, the small peasant farmers of eastern Cuba were the backbone of that liberation struggle.

During the twentieth century, however, the objectives of the struggle were different. We had to ask ourselves, Castro said, "just what kind of society were we going to build with our Revolution? A society of small farmers? Certainly not. Such a society could not exist because who would take care of production, of transportation? Who would produce the things which are so indispensable in modern life? What would we do with the cities, with the peoples themselves? The revolution could not be a revolution solely of peasants nor could the society be a society of small farmers."

As Fidel explained, "We're living in a society which has evolved tremendously, which has its own laws and its own objectives." The growth and development of the working

class in Cuba brought “something essential, decisive, indispensable and irreplaceable” to the union of the two classes, he stressed. It changed the goals, interests, and allies of the working peasants as well.

“In these times and in this century,” Castro went on, “the Revolution had to be a Revolution inspired [by] the ideology of the working class, a Revolution for the construction of socialism.”

The two classes had common interests in this struggle because “both the workers and the peasants were exploited by the same people, by the same capitalists, by the same landowners, because the landowner who wanted to evict the peasants from La Plata, Palma Mocha and Magdalena was the same landowner who owned vast canefields down there in Niquero and had thousands of agricultural workers starving and leading a life of poverty to make him richer.”

Our goal, said Fidel, was “to put an end to exploiters of every kind—loan sharks, big bankers and big businessmen.”

But “what kind of a social system could we possibly establish? The only system that could be established was a socialist system, for the simple reason that we were not going to make all those property owners disappear just to replace them with other property owners and exploiters of the people! There was only one way and that was the way of socialism!”

Pointing to the continuity of the revolutionary strategy of the Cuban leadership with that of Lenin and the Bolshevik Party in Russia, Castro concluded:

That is what Lenin had in mind when he spoke of the need for the worker-peasant alliance in the old Czarist regime. An alliance between

the workers and the landowners or an alliance between the workers and the bankers and the great capitalists were both out of the question. An alliance between exploiters and exploited was out of the question. It was necessary to establish an alliance between the exploited—and the two exploited classes were precisely the working class and the peasantry. And the working class and the peasantry became united to make the revolution, to establish a new way of life and a new society, to put an end to the exploitation of man by man, to build socialism, to build communism.<sup>1</sup>

The agrarian reform law took effect on May 17, 1959. With its implementation, the *Fidelista* leadership carried out its historic commitment that the revolution would guarantee land to those who worked it.

**I**N HIS FAMOUS “History Will Absolve Me” speech, delivered to the court that convicted and sentenced him for the 1953 attack on the Moncada army barracks, which aimed to overthrow the Batista dictatorship, Fidel outlined the five revolutionary laws that would have been proclaimed from the Moncada barracks had the plan succeeded. “The second revolutionary law,” he said, “would give nonmortgageable and nontransferable ownership of the land to all tenant and subtenant farmers, lessees, sharecroppers and squatters who hold parcels of five *caballerías* [165 acres] of land or less.”<sup>2</sup>

When the Rebel Army began its operations in the Sierra Maestra mountains at the end of 1956, the guerrillas’ conduct toward and respect for the peasantry rap-

idly won them active support. The Rebel Army paid for everything received from the peasants. The penalty for rape committed by guerrillas was death. When the Rebel Army was strong enough to set up a hospital to care for its wounded, medical care was provided for all who came in. More than thirty Rebel Army schools were set up throughout the mountains during the two years of military struggle.

**A**S THE GUERRILLAS SPREAD OUT over more and more territory they demonstrated to the peasantry that the Moncada program was not just promises. Those who had stolen land from the peasants were tried and punished. Agrarian reform measures were put into effect. One of the early instances was recounted by Fidel:

“When we arrived at the Sierra Maestra, we executed a ranch foreman who had accused tenant farmers and peasants of being pro-rebel, and who had increased the holdings of his landlord from 10 acres to 400 acres by taking the land of those he denounced. So we tried him and executed him and won the affection of the peasants.”<sup>3</sup>

The 1959 Agrarian Reform Law, which is referred to frequently throughout the three items that follow, was the measure that more than any other single act “defined the Cuban Revolution,” in Castro’s words.<sup>4</sup> Its rapid implementation consolidated the class alliance on which the revolution was based—the alliance of the workers, including the agricultural workers, and working peasants. It brought the revolution into head-on confrontation with U.S. imperialism and its Cuban allies.

The goal of the law was to expropriate the large plantations, eliminate the system of rents and mortgages

crushing the peasantry, and guarantee use of the land to those who worked it.

The reform was administered by a newly created National Institute of Agrarian Reform. Staffed by cadres of the Rebel Army and the July 26 Movement (the organization founded by the *Fidelista* leadership team, which was the political vanguard of the revolution), INRA was granted sweeping powers over virtually every aspect of the economy.

The amount of land an individual family could own was limited to approximately 1,000 acres in most cases, and 3,300 acres for some types of agriculture such as cattle raising, or where the land was especially productive. This maximum size of landholdings was, in fact, the limit written into the 1940 constitution of Cuba, which forbade the holding of latifundia, i.e., individual properties of over a thousand acres.

The Agrarian Reform Law prohibited ownership of Cuban land by foreigners. (Before 1959 more than 50 percent of the most productive land in Cuba was owned by foreigners.)

Ownership of cane land by sugar mill owners was forbidden.

Large estates that had previously been worked as a single unit were kept intact and were soon turned into state enterprises.

Prior to the revolution, 85 percent of Cuba's small farmers rented rather than owned their land and lived under constant threat of eviction. Two hundred thousand peasant families did not have a single acre of land to till for their own use. The 1959 agrarian reform guaranteed each peasant family a "vital minimum" of 67 acres. Every tenant, sharecropper, or squatter cultivating up to 165 acres was given clear title to that land.

Privately owned land could be mortgaged only to the state, which made financing available to poor peasants at favorable rates. Land could not be divided and could be inherited by only one person.

The law stated that agrarian reform land grants “may not be transferred other than through inheritance, sale to the state, or exchange authorized by the authorities charged with its enforcement, nor be the subject of lease agreements, sharecropping agreements, usufruct, or mortgage.”<sup>5</sup>

In short, with the 1959 reform, the system of rents and mortgages ceased to exist. Land was no longer a commodity and land speculation became a thing of the past. The legal maximum holding, nonetheless, was large by European standards; even in the United States a thousand acres is a sizeable farm. The terms of compensation were more generous than those of the land reform imposed on Japan by the U.S. army of occupation government under Gen. Douglas MacArthur following World War II.

But the Cuban and Yankee owners of vast landholdings in Cuba were stunned by the new law. They were outraged by the compensation offered: twenty-year government bonds at 4.5 percent, payable in Cuban pesos and not convertible into U.S. dollars. Property values were determined by accepting the evaluations previously set by owners themselves for purposes of taxation, which grossly underestimated the value of their holdings. Owners were given a choice: either pay up the back taxes they had evaded for years by undervaluing their property, or accept compensation based on tax assessment records.

The 1959 land reform was a bourgeois-democratic and anti-imperialist measure, not a socialist one. The revolution had not yet entered its socialist phase.

A massive popular insurrection, led by the July 26



Movement and its Rebel Army had overthrown the imperialist-backed Batista dictatorship and destroyed the army and police of the capitalist state. The masses of working people began to organize and fight to create a government that would carry out policies in their interests. But the Cuban bourgeoisie—despite the blows directed against those tied to Batista—was still sizeable and determined to prevent the revolution from threatening its property and power. Fidel had taken over as prime minister on February, 16, 1959. But representatives of significant bourgeois forces still held important government positions, hoping to thus protect their interests and limit social and economic measures that constituted inroads on the prerogatives of their class.

The Agrarian Reform Law was pushed through by the *Fidelista* leadership and implemented by INRA despite the bourgeois opposition. It constituted a watershed in the revolution. Most of the bourgeois forces soon abandoned their government posts and went into open opposition. By late 1959 the government was no longer a coalition. A workers and peasants government led by the cadres of the July 26 Movement was directing the agrarian reform and organizing the exploited classes to advance and defend a social program in their interests.

**T**HE AGRARIAN REFORM defined the Cuban revolution and put its stamp on the government precisely because—despite its bourgeois-democratic nature—only the alliance of workers and working peasants could carry it through and defend it. That class alliance, and the capacities of the vanguard leadership in Cuba, determined the dynamic of the revolution and defined its character.

“What was the force that was ready to fight to the death

alongside the peasants in the defense of that law?" Fidel asked in his May 1974 speech referred to earlier. "The Cuban proletariat, the working class!" This alliance is not a fragile and passing affair, he noted. "This is a permanent union, written throughout the course of our revolutionary history and sealed with the sacrifices and blood of our peasants and workers."

The Programmatic Platform of the Communist Party of Cuba, adopted at the first congress of the party in 1975, described the course of the revolution that unfolded as the workers and peasants fought to defend the agrarian reform.

The revolutionary victory of January 1, 1959, it notes, displaced the bourgeois-latifundist bloc from political power. "For the first time in our history this power passed into the hands of an alliance of the popular masses, in which the dominant role has been played by the interests of the working class and of the working peasants, represented by the victorious Rebel Army and its revolutionary leadership.

"A deep social revolution began."

The development of the Cuban revolution, the platform states, confirmed that "there is no unsurmountable barrier between the democratic-popular and anti-imperialist stage and the socialist stage. In the era of imperialism, both are part of a single process, in which the national-liberation and democratic measures—which at times have already a socialist tinge—pave the way for genuinely socialist ones. The decisive and defining element of this process is who leads it, which class wields political power.

"January 1959 marked the beginning of the democratic-popular, agrarian and anti-imperialist stage of our Revolution. . . . The enforcement of the Agrarian Reform Law

in May 1959 was the most important and radical measure of this stage.”

This measure, the platform notes, “which started the revolutionary transformation of production relations—the economic basis of society—though in itself did not go beyond the national-liberation framework of the first stage, generated a process that, when implemented, led to the replacement of private ownership over a fundamental means of production such as land, by State ownership.”

**T**HE IMPLEMENTATION of the agrarian reform dealt imperialist interests a powerful blow. “The process of expropriating and transferring land ownership to the peasants was carried out rapidly, in a situation of an increasing upsurge of the revolutionary consciousness of the masses.”

In response to Washington’s suspension of the sugar trade with Cuba in July 1960, its organization and financing of counterrevolutionary bands, and other acts of aggression, the revolution “took immediate action: it armed the people, created the workers and the peasants militia and organized the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution. Following its steady course, it responded vigorously to every act of imperialist aggression.”

During the second half of 1960, the platform notes, “nationalizations of an anti-imperialist and socialist nature took place” and “the Cuban Revolution entered its stage of socialist construction.”

“On August 6, the main US companies were nationalized and on September 17, so were all US banks. On October 13, Cuban banks and the remaining foreign banks, and 382 large enterprises of national capital were also nationalized. On October 24, as a response to the total em-

bargo on Cuban products imposed by the US five days before, the remaining US enterprises were nationalized.”<sup>6</sup>

In short, a land reform that did not go beyond the limits of capitalist property relations could not be implemented in Cuba, without the workers and working peasants overthrowing Batista; driving the recalcitrant bourgeois representatives out of the government coalition; and establishing their own popular revolutionary dictatorship, a workers and peasants government.

To defend their initial democratic reforms against the combined opposition of imperialist interests and Cuban capitalists, the revolutionary government was obliged to take increasingly anticapitalist social and economic measures. Ultimately, the expropriation of all foreign and Cuban capital—an act that could be carried out only by the mobilization and active participation of the working class itself, with the support of the working peasants—was necessary before the exploited toilers could consolidate their political power on a stable and lasting economic foundation. The massive expropriations in the summer and fall of 1960 established a workers state, the dictatorship of the proletariat.

**T**HE SECOND AGRARIAN REFORM in Cuba, implemented in October 1963, was of a different character from the first one. It was a socialist measure. It followed by several years the nationalization of imperialist- and Cuban-owned industrial enterprises, and was designed to bring property relations in the countryside into harmony with the social ownership of other productive property.

From the time of the first agrarian reform on, the 10,000 or so farmers holding between 165 and 1,000 acres had been treated as a separate group. They were not, for

example, permitted to join the National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP).

The 1963 agrarian reform expropriated the land in excess of 165 acres owned by these capitalist farmers, who still controlled 20 percent of the agricultural land. By nationalizing these sizeable holdings, which could be cultivated only by hiring wage labor, the second agrarian reform eliminated the capitalist sector of Cuban agriculture.

The continued existence of a substantial layer of capitalist farmers in the countryside had led to a number of growing problems. Many either refused to cultivate their land, or turned to speculation with badly needed products such as milk, channeling them to the well-heeled. Further steps needed to be taken to organize the small peasants, through ANAP, to help formulate an economic plan for agriculture. But the hostility of the capitalist farmers, and the prevailing uncertainty over possible future expropriations, affected the outlook of many small peasants as well.

Incentives for small farms were clearly needed to help boost production, but it was difficult to provide them without favoring the capitalist farmers, thereby increasing social inequality in the countryside, and ultimately harming small family farmers.

While the second agrarian reform cut far more radically into capitalist agricultural relations than the first, it was accomplished with far less conflict and disruption. By the end of 1963 the counterrevolutionary bands operating inside Cuba had been decisively defeated, although not yet completely eliminated. The imperialist invasion plans had been pushed back following the 1961 Bay of Pigs fiasco and the strengthening of Cuba's defenses that led to the so-called Missile Crisis in October 1962. The capitalist farmers had few allies left.

The 1963 reform was accompanied by a commitment by the revolutionary government that there would be no further expropriations—a commitment that has been adhered to. Every individual farm family could rest assured that their land was inalienable, that they could remain on it and produce as long as they wished, and that they would receive as much aid as the resources of the revolution permitted. The decision to join a cooperative or integrate into a state farm would be strictly voluntary, as it had been from the first days of the revolution.

The agrarian reform and the agricultural policies of the Cuban revolution have been exemplary, but they have not been without error, as the Cuban leaders are themselves the first to underscore. Some of the mistakes that have been made, and the measures adopted to correct them, are discussed in the two speeches by Fidel that follow.

In the early years of the revolution especially, policies were sometimes based more on hopes and dreams than on what could actually be done under existing conditions. An attempt to rapidly transform the entire economy, diversifying production and ending Cuba's dependence on sugar before an adequate economic base existed, was one such error. An attempt to harvest a historically unprecedented but unrealistic 10 million tons of sugarcane in 1970 was another.

Following the failure of the 10-million-ton effort, and a national discussion of the reasons why it happened, significant changes were instituted to organize the participation of the mass organizations—such as the trade unions, the women's organizations, and the association of small farmers—in deciding economic as well as social priorities.

The first speech printed here was given by Fidel Castro

at the main celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Agrarian Reform Law on May 17, 1984. It provides a striking picture of the changes that the Cuban revolution has brought to the countryside. An appreciation of these historic achievements places the questions and challenges being confronted today in perspective.

The second speech was made by Castro at the closing session of the Sixth Congress of the National Association of Small Farmers on May 17, 1982. In the portion of the speech printed here, Fidel takes up some aspects of the history of the agrarian reform. He concentrates on explaining the imbalance that marked the first fifteen years of agrarian policy, which overemphasized state farms at the expense of giving adequate attention and resources to the development of cooperatives. This imbalance was corrected in the decisions made at the First Congress of the Cuban Communist Party in 1975, as well as the Fifth Congress of ANAP in 1977. Fidel discusses the progress made in implementing those decisions.

**T**HE SPEECHES ARE FOLLOWED by a major portion of the theses adopted by the First Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba on "The Agrarian Question and Relations with the Peasantry." The translation by *New International* makes this important 1975 document available for the first time in English.

The portion of the resolution published here states the position of the Cuban Communist Party on the historic character of the worker-peasant alliance in the Cuban revolution. It also explains the necessity to encourage the development of farm production cooperatives on a qualitatively broader scale in order to increase the productivity of Cuban agriculture and take the next steps

forward in improving the standard of living of working people in the countryside.

Two things especially mark the relations between the working class and working farmers in Cuba: mutual respect for their different needs; and confidence forged through experience that their interests are in harmony, and that they are traveling the same historic road as genuine allies in struggle.

The leaders of the revolution, starting with the example set by Fidel, have from the beginning worked to educate the Cuban people in this political spirit. To find an accurate comparison, it is necessary to go back to Lenin and the way he and the Bolshevik Party worked tirelessly for twenty years to educate the Russian working class, and then the entire international communist movement, with a similar political attitude and understanding.

Despite the best efforts of Lenin, and of Marx and Engels before him, there are few questions on which the international workers movement has made more costly mistakes throughout its history than on the worker-farmer alliance. Thus the lessons of the Cuban revolution are decisive for arming new generations of revolutionists. The speeches and resolution printed in this issue of *New Internationalist* are a contribution to that effort.

## NOTES

1. Printed in *Granma Weekly Review*, May 26, 1974.
2. Fidel Castro, *History Will Absolve Me* (New York: Center for Cuban Studies, undated), pp. 25–26.
3. Quoted in Leo Huberman and Paul M. Sweezy, *Cuba: Anatomy of a Revolution* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1961), p. 58.



4. Speech given in La Plata, May 17, 1974, in *Granma Weekly Review*, May 26, 1974.

5. *Militant*, July 20, 1984.

6. *Programmatic Platform of the Communist Party of Cuba* (Havana: Department of Revolutionary Orientation of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, 1976), pp. 46–52.

# THE CUBAN COUNTRYSIDE, THEN AND NOW

*by Fidel Castro*

**H**ERE IN THESE LANDS of Granma Province, where our independence struggles and final liberation war began, we today celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Agrarian Reform Law, the twenty-third anniversary of ANAP, and Peasant's Day. [*Applause*]

In all truth, we could say that today is not only Peasant's Day, but also Farm Worker's Day, [*Applause*] a day that was fundamental and definitive for the revolution, a day for all the people given the importance of the Agrarian Reform Law signed at the General Command in the Sierra Maestra. That was the first really profound measure of the revolution and, as we have said on other occasions, that which pitted us directly against U.S. imperialism.

What had been the situation up until then? To cite only a few examples, we might say that thirteen of the main U.S. companies owned some 1,342,000 hectares [1 hectare = 2.47 acres] of land and forty landholding

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*This speech was given May 17, 1984, to a celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Cuba's agrarian reform, held in Yara in Granma Province. It was originally published in the May 27, 1984, Granma Weekly Review.*

cattle farmers owned 25 percent of the country's pastureland. From the beginnings of the republic at the turn of the century, there had been large-scale investment by U.S. companies buying up the greater and better part of Cuban land at laughable prices. It was a period of land repartition, not land redistribution among the peasants, but repartition of colossal land areas among magnates.

As a result, many of the peasants who had played a major role in the independence struggles, who had fought first for ten years, then kept up their rebellion to continue the struggle anew in 1895, found at the end of the war that they had lost their lands.

Many of those who had collaborated with the Spaniards, who had become rich on the struggle of those years, ended up owning a good part of the country's agricultural land. Suffice it to say that in 1959, 3 percent of landowners owned 56 percent of the country's agricultural lands.

Many young people and children here today can't even imagine what such an unbalanced distribution of the country's natural resources meant to our peasants and workers.

We remember the evictions, the crimes committed, the dead season, the hundreds of thousands of workers without a job, miserable family incomes at a time when 70 percent of rural families, peasants and workers included, had a monthly income of forty pesos or less.

We remember the real hunger, poverty, humiliation, insalubrity, and illiteracy of our peasants and workers, victims of not only the most blatant exploitation of labor, but also every kind of abuse and injustice, victims to hoarders, speculators, and middlemen.

We were all too familiar with that situation and will never forget how, when we arrived in the Sierra Maestra, thousands of peasants had sought refuge there, fleeing

the dead season, unemployment, and hunger to settle on and clear a small plot of land, growing root crops and coffee, to then only reap benefit from what they had for only two or three years, if the land had known latifundist owners; or, when they were working state-owned land and had managed at great efforts to raise some crops and coffee, then representatives of the big companies and rich landowners would show up wanting to take over their by then cultivated lands.

This is why there were so many peasant squatters who lived in constant fear of alleged landowners, judges, legal representatives, and the Rural Guard showing up to evict them.

**A**T THE BEGINNING of our liberation war, the presence of the rebel forces was used as a pretext to bomb and evict peasants from their lands. In those days, the enemy underestimated our small force, believing it to be liquidated, yet it took advantage of that revolutionary juncture to carry out mass peasant evictions under the pretext of war.

The health situation was truly appalling. There wasn't a single doctor, hospital, or dispensary anywhere in the mountain areas.

The infant mortality rate was extremely high. There are no reliable data, but it is thought to have been over sixty for every 1,000 live births. Looking at the overall peasant situation, especially in the mountains, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that over 100 of every 1,000 live births died each year. We remember the gastroenteritis and typhoid epidemics and other calamities taking thousands of peasant children's lives each year.

If a peasant raised some animal, let's say a pig, it wasn't

for his own consumption. It was for an emergency, in case someone in the family fell sick. Then he'd go to the market and sell it for five, or maybe ten pesos to pay the doctor who, in most cases, was very far away and was quite ineffectual, and to pay for medicine which was very expensive.

All of us remember the tragedy and anguish of the peasantry, the scourge the health situation was for our country, but much more so for rural areas, for peasants and agricultural workers in particular.

The situation in education was similar. Whereas in the country as a whole the illiteracy rate was around 30 percent, in the countryside it was between 40 and 50, and over 50 in the mountain areas.

There were practically no schools in the mountains, very few in lower-lying rural areas, and very rarely could children stay in school beyond second or third grade. Before the triumph of the revolution, only 38 percent of rural children had a chance to attend school. For the remaining 62 percent there were no teachers, no schools, no books or any alternative but to remain ignorant for the rest of their lives.

Very often there was no market for peasant produce. Profits went to middlemen; credits were practically nonexistent. Only a few middle and rich peasants could obtain bank credits, at very high interest rates and always liable to confiscation, mortgage, and loss of property.

Social security was practically nonexistent in rural areas. When a sugarcane worker retired and after a lot of hard work received a pension, it was around seven pesos a month.

This was the general picture, to which may be added the lack of communications and transportation, the lack of roads, of everything. That was the real situation in our

rural areas before the triumph of the revolution.

The enactment of the Agrarian Reform Law by the revolution on May 17, 1959, freed peasants and agricultural workers from exploitation: a total of 100,000 tenant farmers, sharecroppers, and squatter farmers became owners of their lands by virtue of that law. Also by virtue of that law, the large foreign and national latifundia were doomed to disappear.

The implementation of that law marked the beginning of the liberation of peasants and farm workers, the beginning of the end of the dead season, and of the various devices with which to rob farm workers of their wages. Many were the farm workers who were never paid in cash because when payday came around they already long owed as much as they were paid and, even at harvest time, there were many who never laid their hands on money.

In those days it was common for cane cutters to line up waiting for work. There was no transportation, no decent quarters for the cane cutters, no workers' dining rooms, no security or guarantees of any kind for workers in the fields.

**A**LL THAT HAS CHANGED and we are all witness, those of us who can remember the situation at the time of the revolution. [*Applause*] Today the picture is totally different: the speculators, hoarders, and middlemen disappeared. A market was guaranteed for all the peasants' produce. It became unnecessary to hold on to the little pig, the hens, or goat for when a family health need arose. Worries about education disappeared. The robbing disappeared, along with income for people who didn't work, sharecropping, and eviction.

The peasant became the absolute owner of the land worked. And, moreover, in twenty-five years of the revolution, he never paid a cent in taxes; taxes began to be collected almost twenty-five years after the Agrarian Reform Law.

Tens of thousands of kilometers of roads and highways were built. Fifty-two rural hospitals and almost 200 dispensaries and first-aid stations were created, apart from the peasants having access to municipal, provincial, and national hospitals. A huge battle was launched in the field of health and many diseases disappeared.

For example, gastroenteritis, which still caused the death of more than 4,000 children in 1960, was reduced to 400—one-tenth. Poliomyelitis disappeared, along with typhus, malaria, human rabies, and various other diseases. [*Applause*] Infant mortality progressively decreased until the rate dropped to below seventeen in 1983. Life expectancy was lengthened to seventy-three years. The security which a peasant family now has with regard to the children, the most beloved ones, was experienced for the first time in our countryside. The family not only received medical services, but also dental services, and the progress continues. In the future we will achieve even more successes.

Already in the coming year, here in Granma Province, a group of peasant communities will have a resident physician, and we expect to have a doctor for each peasant community in the not-too-distant future, apart from the polyclinics and municipal, provincial, and national hospitals. [*Applause*] For that purpose, we are graduating thousands of doctors every year and more than 5,000 students are enrolling in the medical schools—schools which now exist in the country's fourteen provinces so that each province can turn out its doctors and special-

ists and they will not have to come from the western part of the island, from Havana.

With a view to these projects, the work of family doctors began to be tried out last year and will, we are sure, raise considerably further the health levels of our urban and rural population, to the extent that we may well be able to say that no other country in the world will have the public health network that our people will have in the cities and in the countryside. [*Applause*]

**I**T WAS NOT ONLY the handing over of the land to the peasants who worked it, it was not only the freeing of agricultural workers, but rather a number of fundamental aspects that altogether permit us to say that the liberation of our peasants and agricultural workers began on May 17. [*Applause*]

I spoke of health, but we could speak about education. Today 100 percent of rural children, children of peasants or agricultural workers, have their education guaranteed and they've had it guaranteed for many years now. I remember the early years, when we didn't have sufficient teachers, or we didn't have teachers to send to the mountains, when we had to turn to students, to voluntary teachers. Those were difficult times when we confronted the problems virtually without the necessary human resources!

The literacy campaign began a short time thereafter, by virtue of which illiteracy was practically eradicated in only one year—a truly record time unequaled by any other country. Then came the follow-up courses and today we can say not only that an illiterate peasant no longer exists but also that through ANAP's consistent and tenacious efforts, in cooperation with the educational system, the



battle for the sixth grade has been achieved [*Applause*] and the battle for the ninth grade is being conducted together with the rest of the country's workers. [*Applause*]

Who would have ventured to say that the mass of our peasants would today have a much greater cultural and educational understanding than a large part of capitalist overseers and foremen had! [*Applause*] And would be even more knowledgeable than many of the landowners. And would have not only higher learning, higher education, but also greater culture—not only general culture, but also extensive political culture. [*Applause*]

Before, there were the times of the political sergeants and their election campaigns, buying votes and up to other crooked things. That can only happen in the midst of an exploited and ignorant population.

Who can imagine someone in this country today speaking to a peasant, telling him to vote for someone or another, or wanting him to sell him his vote? Or speaking with a peasant so that he hands over his vote in exchange for a hospital appointment, or a recommendation for a government job—and not only a government job, but also work in a private enterprise. Who today can imagine this character, this individual in our cities and in our countryside?

Who today is capable of deceiving any one of our peasants? Who among you could be so miserably deceived [*Shouts of "nobody!"*] and then told that this is freedom, that this is democracy? No sir, that was exploitation, hunger, injustice, deception, abuse, oppression! [*Applause*]

Moreover, not only are the educational needs of all children and young people met, not only is study through the sixth grade guaranteed through scholarship programs, but also hundreds of thousands of peasants and peasant youth have been educated and trained over the years.

Before, there wasn't a single junior high school in Cu-

ba's countryside, much less a single senior high. And today our country has 567 junior and senior high schools in the countryside, the vast majority of them with excellent facilities, where more than 20,000 teachers work. And if many young people from the cities are studying there, the young of peasant background have first priority in enrolling in the junior and senior highs in the countryside and every possibility also to study in the urban technological institutes and trade schools.

Thousands and thousands, better said tens of thousands, of young people from our countryside are now engineers, architects, doctors, teachers, officers of our armed forces, and party and state cadres, thanks to these programs. And with great satisfaction we can now guarantee all the children and young people of our countryside equal, if not greater, possibilities to study than any child or young person of the city.

**B**UT THERE'S SOMETHING MORE. If we said before that our peasants today know more than many overseers and foremen knew, even more than many landowners, what will the situation be in years to come? We might say that any Cuban child or young person now has more educational opportunities, better educational institutions, and better teachers than those the children of the overseers, foremen, and landowners had. [*Applause*]

That really is justice! That really is equality! That really is freedom! That really is dignity! Because we know well what capitalist society imparted to young boys and girls: bad habits, corruption, gambling, drugs, and prostitution. That is what capitalism imparts to scores upon scores of millions of people in the world: vices, calamities, and tragedies with which our people today are not familiar.

Today all our agricultural workers are covered by social security and recently a law was enacted providing social security for members of agricultural production cooperatives. But even prior to that law, many thousands of farmers who for one reason or another could not continue working and earning a living have had a form of social security help. Today, the minimum received by a retired agricultural worker is ten or twelve times that received by the few pensioned agricultural workers in the past, in addition to the free services, such as health, that the revolution provides.

Of the nearly 800,000 who receive social security benefits, about 200,000 live in the countryside and were once agricultural workers or peasants. If the average income of the great majority of farm families was previously no greater than forty pesos a month, now the income of any farm worker is four or five times greater than that of an entire family then, in addition to the fact that there are many more people working in every family.

Nobody wants to even remember the evils or tragedy of the dead season anymore. Now there are more than enough job possibilities, in some provinces more than in others, because there is work to be done in agriculture, industry, and construction, and when there is no large-scale construction in some provinces, there is in others, in Santiago, Moa, Cienfuegos, Havana, or any other part of the country. Ever since unemployment was wiped out, the problem is very different: finding the personnel needed for the many things that have to be done.

There are already more than half a million farm workers. In other sectors, such as education and health, there are some 600,000 workers; hundreds of thousands in construction. We have had no problem with introducing machines, without leaving anybody jobless. With the so-

cial conditions under capitalism, who would have introduced a cane harvester, loader, or rice harvester? A lot of very hard work had to be done, hard manual labor, to prepare the terrain for the sugar and rice harvesters, in construction, on the docks, and everywhere else.

The revolution, with its measures of social justice and clear-sighted, revolutionary, socialist policy, not only eradicated the dead season, unemployment, insalubrity, and illiteracy. Not only did it provide the mass of the people with health care and education which was previously available only to the privileged elite.

**T**HE REVOLUTION HAS ALSO freed the worker, especially in the countryside, from the most inhuman and difficult labor, by using machines to prepare the terrain, chemicals to combat weeds, loading machines, cane and rice harvesters, along with vehicular transport, bulk shipment of sugar, and mechanization of the docks.

Before, people in the countryside would have to work twelve, thirteen, or fourteen hours for wretched starvation wages. For the first time in the history of the Cuban countryside, the eight-hour day became a reality and when people work nine, ten, eleven, or twelve hours they do so voluntarily, spontaneously, enthusiastically, because they know they are helping the national economy and helping themselves; [*Applause*] because they know they receive fair retribution. This shows how the work of the revolution is not for a privileged elite, but for the benefit of all. [*Applause*]

About 10 billion pesos have been invested in the countryside in the last twenty-five years since the enactment of the Agrarian Reform Law. The number of tractors has increased eightfold, the use of fertilizer tenfold, pesti-

cides fourfold. Herbicides are being used on a large scale, reservoir capacity has multiplied 125 times as compared to before the revolution, and there has been a fourfold increase in the irrigated land area which now comes to about a million hectares.

Some 3,000 agricultural and industrial installations have been built and, together with cane-conditioning centers, schools in the countryside, and development of the electricity industry, whole rural areas and an enormously increased number of families have been provided with electricity.

Now we are working with minihydroelectric plants, and experiments have been undertaken here in Granma Province to provide power in this way, several hours a day, to dozens of rural communities in the mountains. In coming months, we plan to extend this experience, which has yielded excellent results, to all the mountains in the eastern region.

According to the data, eighty-two times more credit is now available than before the revolution, with thirty-five times the number of beneficiaries, who receive it under very different conditions. They now no longer have to mortgage or forfeit anything, are given low interest rates, and have special considerations from state financial agencies, every time there has been a disaster affecting the rural sector.

All this has meant more humane working conditions for people in the countryside. Virtually nobody milks cows by hand anymore; nearly all cows in the country are milked by machine—this is something I hadn't mentioned previously—not only are there more humane working conditions but also big increases in production and productivity. In 1970, some 350,000 cane cutters were needed but in the 1984 harvest it was only 80,000,

which means less than 25 percent of the figure fourteen years ago. This hasn't left anybody jobless, because there are many other important spheres where people are needed.

Nearly all output has increased, and in some cases quite notably. For example, egg production is twelve times greater than in 1960; poultry production, three times greater; pork, five and a half times more than in 1960; citrus fruit, four and a half times. This goes to illustrate both the diversification and notable gains in agricultural production and productivity, as in the number of cane cutters in the sugar harvest fourteen years ago and now, as also in development of construction, the docks, and industry.

**O**N THIS TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY, therefore, we can have a clear and objective picture of what the measures initiated on May 17, 1959, meant for the Cuban countryside. [*Applause*] Now, the peasant movement, the National Association of Small Farmers, and farmers as a whole have new tasks.

We are involved in the drive for higher forms of production on peasant land. The cooperative movement advances and is something which is relatively new in the revolution and has registered a big upsurge in the last three years. Now, some 56 percent of peasant land has been brought into cooperatives, almost a million hectares, of which just over 80,000 were ceded by the state. If we include the state farms and agricultural production cooperatives, we find that about 90 percent of the land is now worked under higher forms of production. [*Applause*]

In the early years, the biggest investments were made in state agricultural enterprises, which have progressed considerably. Now the stress is on the peasant cooperative

movement. There are 1,457 cooperatives with an average land area—some more, some less—of over 600 hectares. While it is a new field and we are just setting out, the progress which has been made is considerable. The great majority of the cooperatives have been successful, made profits, and significantly cut down on production costs; we can say they are really doing well in economic terms.

The causes as to why a small group still hasn't made profits are under study, to see the relationship prices and other factors may have on higher production costs, and we have discovered difficulties and problems which can be solved.

The greater part of cane lands are in cooperatives. There are forty-two cane cooperatives with a yield of eighty-five tons per hectare and, since the start of the cane cooperative movement, there has been a fifteen-ton-per-hectare increase and a total crop of 4,600,000 tons of cane, yielding 500,000 tons of sugar.

We know there are problems because the comrades from the National Association of Small Farmers and the party have been telling us about them, difficulties of different kinds that we are trying to solve. I can assure you we will find a solution to all those problems and difficulties. [*Applause*]

The big successes scored in all fields encourage us to continue. We believe we should now take this date to undertake a commitment with the farmers to continue advancing toward higher forms of production, to continue promoting the cooperative movement, to see what we will be saying about the fulfillment of such a historic task on the thirtieth anniversary of the agrarian reform.

¡Patria o Muerte!

¡Venceremos! [*Ovation*]

# FARM COOPERATIVES IN CUBA

by *Fidel Castro*

**I**T IS GOOD TO MAKE A REVIEW of the past every so often. On this occasion, we should do so in order to review the long way we have come in the last twenty-three years and to recall the Agrarian Reform Law, the situation that existed in those days, what our thoughts were at the time, and what things we were concerned about. We didn't even have a clear idea of what we were going to do—that is, what forms of production we were going to adopt. Our main purpose was to fulfill our promise of putting an end to the latifundium system and to the exploitation of our agricultural workers and small farmers. The main issue—the topic that was most widely discussed—however, was how much land we were going to leave in the hands of the latifundists, what kind of agrarian reform we were going to have, and how radical it was going to be, because everybody was fully aware of the challenge implicit in that agrarian reform, of the

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*This excerpt is from Castro's closing speech to the Sixth Congress of ANAP on May 17, 1982. It was originally published in the May 30, 1982, Granma Weekly Review.*



battle it would initiate.

I remember that at the time we had a group of what we might call technicians—to be more exact, they were a group of amateurs in agrarian affairs—who, if I remember correctly, included Carlos Rafael Rodríguez; Antonio Núñez Jiménez, who had written a book on Cuba's geography; and Che. [*Applause*] The burning issue was what limitations we should place on land ownership. A number of U.S. enterprises owned as much as 268,600 hectares each. One day we came to an agreement and decided, "OK, the limit will be 403 hectares and, in exceptional cases, when the land is being worked extremely well, 1,343."

In any other country, 403 hectares would have sounded like an exaggeration, but here, in a country infested with latifundia that covered thousands of hectares, a 403-hectare limit was really very low. That was the key issue: how stringent we were going to make that agrarian reform. It meant the disappearance of latifundia in Cuba—including the ones owned by the imperialists. That was what we decided.

That group of technicians, assisted by other comrades, kept working on that Agrarian Reform Law. The really important thing wasn't the details of the law but rather its rigorousness. Such topics as development areas and the distribution of land were discussed. Of course, we'd also decided to put an end to land rents and sharecropping; to give squatters title to their land; and to turn the land over to all those who worked it as tenant farmers, sharecroppers, small and middle peasant cane growers, etc. That was one of the bases of that law: to free the farmers from exploitation and give them ownership of the land.

We weren't too sure about what we were going to do about the latifundia, however. Up until then, up to the

very end, almost the only thing that, according to the technicians, was clearly stated in the law was land distribution. That term was always welcomed.

I'd been mulling over these land problems for a long time. I remember that, at the time of the attack on the Moncada garrison [1953], we used to talk about higher forms of production—very carefully, picking our way, but purposefully. We talked about land distribution, and freeing the farmers from land rent, etc., but we also talked about cooperatives.

Taking a last look at the law—the draft law—on the plane, reading it over and over, I couldn't find the term "cooperatives" anywhere, so I added a paragraph—something that was perfectly legal, since the law hadn't been enacted yet [*Laughter*—and included cooperatives in the law. It's a good thing I did. Otherwise, the creation of cooperatives would have seemed a violation of the law. That was the way one of the higher forms of production was included in the text. I say "one of the forms" because the other was the state enterprises. They weren't included. They were instituted, but not against the law. Actually, they were instituted in a revolutionary, de facto fashion within the law, because the first Agrarian Reform Law didn't mention state farms. They were the result of how our views on agricultural problems evolved. Needless to say, the proclamation of the law produced great enthusiasm among the farmers.

I used to give a lot of thought to these questions. Agrarian reforms in the form of land distributions were important in revolutionary ideas because they were usually something that the farmers demanded and there are specific political circumstances in which land distribution is the only alternative, simply because it is the most political measure, the one that gets the greatest revolutionary

support—an excellent measure, but one that can destroy agricultural production.

The revolution had tremendous support among the farmers and workers, and, for strictly political reasons, we shouldn't create hundreds of thousands of small farms. Besides, that type of distribution had another problem: there wasn't enough land to go around, and, whenever land distribution was mentioned, a lot of people in the cities, even, expected to be given a plot of land. Land distribution at the rate of one *caballería* [13.43 hectares—33 acres] per capita would benefit from 100,000 to 200,000 families, but hundreds of thousands of families would get nothing. To avoid this, we would have to divide the land into even smaller sections, which would only make the situation worse.

There was really no political need to use such a method of land distribution. What we were doing by giving ownership of the land to the 100,000 families who worked it was simply distributing the land once owned by the latifundists.

**I**N OUR COUNTRY, agriculture had some capitalist aspects; enormous cattle ranches and sugarcane, rice, and other plantations. We also had an agricultural proletariat headed by sugarcane workers that had engaged in outstanding actions in the labor struggles. It pained me to think that land distribution would mean a step back for the labor movement, the revolutionary movement. This was apart from the fact that I was convinced that land distribution would make it impossible to maintain sugarcane production and agricultural production in general at the levels required by the country, and our country couldn't take chances with agricultural production, because it was

very dependent on its agricultural exports.

I had visions of a vast canefield divided up among ten owners and each one of them growing some bananas, cassava, rice, and dry beans, with a little bit of land left over for sugarcane. What a future for the sugar industry!

That was when we began to analyze the advantages of not distributing the land and to play with the idea of cooperatives. Later we realized—at least I used to think that way when I saw an enormous cattle ranch with thousands of head of cattle and from ten to twelve workers—that we could turn that ranch into a cooperative and make those ten or twelve workers rich overnight. We saw other types of rice plantations with similar circumstances and we decided to create the first state enterprises on those large cattle ranches and other large agricultural enterprises. Even so, we went on developing cooperatives in the sugarcane areas, since that was clearly preferable to dividing up the land and distributing it, and the first sugarcane cooperatives were created.

Those cooperatives lacked a natural base, though. They had no historical base, because they were created with the farmers who owned the land. We were creating artificial cooperatives, turning the agricultural workers into members of cooperatives. Perhaps inspired by Martí's "A slave to the age and doctrines," I favored turning the cooperatives that were run by workers rather than farmers into state enterprises.

It goes without saying that our actions will have to be judged in the future. We can't judge them impartially and say they were correct, they were the perfect thing to do. The fact remains, however, that that was how the state enterprises were born. An analysis of that action after so many years leads us to the conclusion that it was really an act of great daring, because at that time we

didn't have any cadres, managers, engineers, or veterinarians—nothing! And something similar occurred with regard to industry.

**T**HE FACT IS, I always rejected the idea of a social retrogression as regards agricultural ownership, the idea of a socialist revolution in which the workers don't become the owners of the factories and where no cooperatives of industrial workers are created, and I strongly favored turning those lands that belonged to the latifundists and imperialist enterprises into socialist enterprises with the same status as the factories and industry as a whole.

Exactly the same thing happened in the sugar mills as in the agricultural enterprises. Who should we choose as manager? A revolutionary worker. Who should manage a farm? A revolutionary. What were the requisites? That he be revolutionary. Maybe he didn't have more than a second- or third-grade education, and if anybody decides to do some historical research, he'll find out that some of the farm managers were illiterate.

In those days, there wasn't anything resembling an engineer or a veterinarian—nothing—in either the factories or the countryside, yet our country managed to develop its industrial and agricultural production under those conditions. It's really incredible!

The state didn't take over the cane areas in the first year of the revolution. If I'm not mistaken, this was done in the second or third year—we didn't want to upset sugar production, since the country was so dependent on its sugar exports.

We didn't have any trouble with the first sugar harvests, because there was still a large surplus of manpower. Our difficulties began when unemployment began to disap-

pear, when the reserve of hundreds of thousands of unemployed workers we'd had in Cuba began to disappear as a result of the revolutionary measures that were taken. People with absolutely no experience were managing factories and farms, and over 100,000 industrial workers had to be mobilized to bring in the sugar harvests, especially in provinces with small populations, such as Camagüey, Ciego de Avila, Las Tunas, etc. The beginning of the sugar harvest was always accompanied by the agony of the mobilizations.

We said that that land measure was an act of tremendous daring, but a revolution necessarily implies daring, and anyone who isn't daring will never be a revolutionary. [*Applause*] Without daring, we would never have had our October 10, 1868, war of independence; José Martí and Máximo Gómez would never have landed at Playitas, just the two of them, without any troops; Antonio Maceo would never have landed at Baracoa; the revolution for independence would never have taken place; and, of course, a socialist revolution would never have been initiated in our country, only ninety miles from the United States. [*Applause*]

**T**HAT IS HOW our agrarian revolution was begun. Then came the second Agrarian Reform Law, because what had seemed very little in the first law looked like too much later on. Besides, according to the first law, the latifundists were left with 403 hectares, and they usually included the workshops and the main installations. The first law affected a few hundred owners—perhaps 1,000 in all—but the second one affected thousands of them by setting the limit at 67 hectares.

Special attention was given to state enterprises, and

they continued to develop. Vast investments were made in roads, reservoirs, and other projects. The independent farmers weren't ignored. The farmers were given credit, guaranteed markets at stable prices, and every other kind of assistance possible. Living conditions in the countryside were improved, and education and health care were extended to the rural areas. In a nutshell, a veritable revolution was wrought in the farmers' living conditions and in the rural areas as a whole.

Our agricultural workers—the farmers' closest brothers in the proletariat—have done some tremendous work during the past twenty-three years, in spite of hard, difficult conditions. Their lives were radically changed. Whereas in the past they had worked as many as thirteen or fourteen hours a day on some occasions and had spent long, interminable months without any work, now they began to work an eight-hour day, as established by law, and earned higher wages and were covered by social security. Moreover, they and their children were given an education and medical assistance, and all of them had guaranteed jobs. The living conditions in our rural areas were very poor, though—there were practically no houses to speak of—and our country didn't have enough resources to meet the needs of the workers in the state enterprises, who have kept the main branches of our economy going—including sugarcane, for they produced nearly all the sugarcane that was sent to the mills.

During all these years they have produced nearly all the rice, chicken, eggs, pork, beef, and other important items distributed to the people. That is why, in the closing session of this congress, on this day of happiness for our farmers, we gratefully recall the hundreds of thousands of agricultural workers who, along with our farmers, made this great agrarian revolution in our country

possible. [*Prolonged applause*]

They worked under the worst, most difficult conditions, living in dormitories and rundown houses. And, in spite of the revolution's efforts, building hundreds of communities for agricultural workers and their families—some of the enterprises have made great progress in this regard—our agricultural workers' living conditions are still bad and will continue to be so for many years to come.

Now we can visit places we are proud of. This happened only recently, when we went to the Los Naranjos Cattle Raising Project, a modern community whose workers, technicians, and management personnel were presented with a banner—the enterprise's achievements are truly impressive. There are many similar enterprises throughout the country that are gradually becoming models of achievement.

The difference between the past and the present—when there are dozens of engineers, veterinarians, irrigation technicians, economists, and experienced managers in each of those sugarcane, cattle-raising enterprises—is incredible, and the difference between those times and these is just as impressive in terms of farm machinery—harvesters, etc. I remember that rice was harvested by hand in the first years of the revolution. This hasn't been done in our country for many years now, and I doubt if anybody even remembers what the sickles for cutting the rice looked like. As for sugarcane, impressive levels of mechanization have been achieved in harvesting and transporting it and irrigating and preparing the land. We rejoice over all these things along with you farmers, because you and the tens of thousands of industrial workers who were mobilized to bring in the sugar harvest have made an accelerated improvement of our farmers' living and working conditions possible.



Undoubtedly, however, there was an imbalance in the development of our countryside, because the main attention was placed on the state enterprises. This doesn't mean the farmers were ignored, but there was a time—and I'm responsible for this—when the prevailing idea was that the only way to transform our agricultural system was through the state enterprises and that one day we'd have all our agriculture socialized on the basis of state enterprises. This concept was a little idealistic, though undoubtedly revolutionary in essence. [*Applause*] I remember that I spoke of this in my closing speech at one of your congresses—I'm not too sure whether it was the third or the fourth, around 1971.

**N**O REVOLUTIONARY THINKING is developed in a straight line, like a ray of light; what must be absolutely unwavering, like a ray of light, is man's revolutionary spirit and honesty. [*Applause*] Ideas aren't always presented precisely and clearly, however. I recall my ideas during that period. I was thinking about how we could develop the revolution in the countryside, as we've done in Pica-dura Valley, the Valley of Peru, the East Havana Genetic Group, Triunvirato, and the Escambray Mountains. If it had been possible, if we'd had enough resources to do the same thing in other parts of the country, it would doubtless have meant a great advance, just as it was for the farmers living under very bad conditions in those areas. New communities were built complete with schools, first-aid stations, and other facilities. Living conditions that would make city dwellers envious were created in many places in rural Cuba, but it required enormous resources, huge investments. Many years had to go by before higher forms of production could be used on the farmers' land.

I remember that I gave all this a lot of thought—sometimes as I flew over valleys filled with huts or tiny plots of land, or when I went through the tobacco region in Pinar del Río Province and saw all the huts where the farmers' great-grandparents, grandparents, children, grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren lived. I used to wonder about the history of so many plots, and I kept thinking how expensive it would have been for us—how long it would have taken and really how impossible—to build a town like Triunvirato or Picadura in each of those valleys in that way, the only way that existed before.

**T**HAT WAS HOW I came to believe that we had to follow the path of cooperativization in many areas in our country. Even though over 70 percent—nearly 80 percent—of the land (including that made available under the agrarian reform laws or acquired in other ways and rented land) had already been included in state enterprises in one way or another, we had reached a point where the economy and the population required that agricultural production on the remaining 20 to 25 percent of the land be developed technically. Small-scale private ownership had given all or nearly all it could. Sugarcane was being harvested by machine in many places, crop-dusting techniques were being used to spread herbicides and pesticides, and irrigation systems were being developed; all this was practically impossible with so many tiny plots. Individual agricultural production was practically at a standstill. There was no possibility of introducing advanced techniques under those conditions.

All those elements convinced us that true cooperatives—not the ones we'd wanted to set up in the early years, with the agricultural workers—that true, logical,

historic cooperatives are formed when the small farmers pool their land.

This was how, following the first party congress, the party leadership discussed all these problems and came up with two forms of agricultural development, the two higher forms of agricultural production: state enterprises and cooperatives. These ideas, these resolutions of the First Congress, laid the groundwork for the Fifth Congress of ANAP. A principle was set forth—it always had been set forth—but actually, two things were set forth. Following the second Agrarian Reform Law, it was announced that this was the last land reform—that is, everybody could relax—and this promise was kept. It was also promised that no farmers would be compelled to join a state farm or a cooperative, and this, too, was and will be strictly kept, as [ANAP leader] Pepe [Ramírez] pointed out here at the end of his speech. This principle has been scrupulously respected.

Needless to say, in view of the living conditions in some of the towns I've mentioned, many farmers—nearly all of them—saw how advantageous it would be for them and their families to join a state farm, with the security it offered. Even when we decided to stick to the cooperatives, it wasn't easy. We had to convince many comrades and many cadres that that policy was reasonable. Many farmers preferred state farms over cooperatives because of all the advantages they offered in terms of improved living conditions.

The country didn't have enough resources to do that. It didn't have the resources to build hundreds of thousands of homes in the countryside within a few years, when we had to go on advancing in agriculture, to meet our country's and economy's demands. Thus, the cooperative movement had a modest start.

I've often said and argued that we should have begun this cooperative movement sooner. I've said it before, and I say it now, and I take my share of moral responsibility for the delay of years in getting the cooperative movement started. [*Applause*] I think that the first, most sacred duty of every revolutionary is to admit his mistakes. [*Applause*] I always try to think back on events and analyze every one of the acts with which I've been involved. Usually, I'm quite critical of myself—more critical than I admit—and I've always been noted for self-criticism in the revolution. [*Applause*]

**T**HERE WERE TWO IDEAS. I had a predilection for state enterprises, but, at the same time, I had a nearly sacred respect for the farmers' traditional individualism. I used to think the farmers weren't going to be very interested in joining cooperatives. I was underestimating the level of our farmers' awareness—I overestimated their individualism—and, at the same time, I respected them too much to even think about going against their wishes or their feelings. While I underestimated their level of awareness, I profoundly respected them—and I've always done so.

I wasn't an ardent believer in cooperatives.

Whenever I speak of higher forms of production, I've always thought and still think that state enterprises are the highest. I've always liked the idea of having agriculture develop like industry and of having agricultural workers be like industrial workers. An individual worker doesn't own the industry or production, except as part of the people, for the people are the owners of industry and production.

I've always liked that form the best, but it wasn't the most realistic one. The most realistic form—since the

most realistic thing is always the most revolutionary one—for the farmers' land, that 20 to 25 percent of the land that the farmers retained, was to use both methods: state enterprises and cooperatives.

We were quite clear on all these ideas following the first party congress and the fifth ANAP congress, and we set out to work in this direction.

We made little headway in 1977. As I recall, according to Pepe's report, there were forty-four cooperatives, with 6,052 hectares of land. It was slow going at first. It seemed it would take a lot of work for the idea of the cooperatives to catch on, but we said there should be no pressure or haste, that we should let the farmers gradually convince themselves of the advantages offered by the cooperatives. That was how this movement began.

I used to think—and I still do—that this movement will last eight or ten years more, until a higher form of production is introduced on most of the land now individually owned. Ever since I came to this conclusion, I've been—as is always the case when I'm convinced of something—an enthusiastic, determined champion of developing cooperatives on the farmers' land, [*Applause*] especially in the areas where there are a lot of small plots. There are already 1,140 cooperatives in the country, covering 530,485 hectares, or 35 percent of the farmers' land.

I think our countryside will have a great future and I am sure the day will come when, what with the state enterprises and the cooperatives, our agriculture will be highly developed—not just for Latin America, where we're already far ahead of the other countries, but also one of the most highly developed agricultures in the world [*Applause*] and one of the most thorough agrarian revolutions ever effected, [*Applause*] without resorting to violence, without using coercion, and with the strictest respect for

our workers' and farmers' feelings and wishes.

We'll see this clearly once we've managed to build a community in every state agricultural enterprise and every farmers' cooperative, once electric power, running water, and all the other advantages of modern living are available all over our countryside.

The big landowners of the past already find it difficult to recognize their old holdings, because the country is filled with dairies, new fences, dams, roads, and buildings. I wonder how, say, ten, fifteen, or twenty years from now, when our countryside is further developed, any of them can find his way in broad daylight to where his holdings used to be, even armed with a map and a magnifying glass. [*Applause*] An air view of the countryside will show it dotted with model farms and communities. That's where we're heading. We've already come this far, and there's much less than half the way to go. [*Applause*]

**N**OT WITHOUT reason, it has been said that this sixth ANAP congress is history making. Here we have seen that the idea of cooperatives has triumphed. In just five years, the idea of cooperatives triumphed. That is evident here in this congress. It was really impressive to hear the cooperatives' presidents reporting their successes. [*Applause*] It's incredible. There's no comparing the productivity, the production, and the income of that land when technology is applied. As was reported for two sugarcane cooperatives, production doubled—from thirty-five tons per hectare to seventy and from forty-three tons per hectare to eighty-six—when they were formed, and so have the yields of tobacco, potatoes, root and other vegetables, coffee, and all other crops. Cooperatives mean greater enthusiasm, strength, development capacity, and

land utilization and better use of all the resources in our countryside. It's really impressive and stimulating to see the results achieved by cooperatives. Together with the advances that the state farms are making in citrus fruit, rice, milk, poultry, egg, and sugarcane production, they indicate a tremendous advance for our agriculture and lay the basis for the healthful emulation we want to develop between the cooperatives and state farms.

# THE AGRARIAN QUESTION AND RELATIONS WITH THE PEASANTRY

*Adopted by the Communist Party of Cuba*

## CHAPTER 4 TRANSFORMATION OF THE PEASANT FORM OF PRODUCTION

### **Necessity to move toward higher forms of production Increase in population, decrease in cultivable land**

In the La Plata speech referred to previously, our commander in chief laid out the following watchword to the Cuban peasantry:<sup>1</sup>

“We have to come up with a way of implementing the principle of optimal use of the land and getting the most yield out of it to satisfy the needs of the people. . . .

“Now we are beginning to develop citrus production,

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*The following is from the theses, “On the Agrarian Question and Relations with the Peasantry,” adopted by the First Congress of the Communist Party of Cuba in December 1975. The first three chapters of the theses deal with the origin and development of landed property in Cuba; the structure of land ownership and conditions of life in the countryside prior to 1959; the revolutionary transformation of the property relations and social conditions in the countryside after 1959; and the technical-scientific revolution in agriculture made possible by the changed relations of production. It has been translated for this issue of New International by Michael Baumann, from Tesis y resoluciones: Primer Congreso del Partido Comunista de Cuba (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1978).*

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at the same time continuing with the production of sugar, rice, milk, meat, tobacco and vegetables for the consumption of the people and for the economy of the country. This requires our peasants to ask themselves which method they will follow in the future to continue the uninterrupted progress of our economic and agricultural development and meet the growing needs of the people.”

At the time of the revolution’s triumph, the population was a little over 6.5 million inhabitants; that is, sixty inhabitants per square kilometer. Today the population is more than 9 million, with a density of eighty-four inhabitants per square kilometer. By 1980 we will have more than 10 million inhabitants.

The population will continue to grow, but the land of course will not. In the years since 1959, thousands of *caballerías* of unused land, covered with brush and scrub growth, have been bulldozed and brought under cultivation. However, the possibilities of continuing to recover cultivable land are already coming to a close.

In reality, the amount of land for agriculture will decrease in the years ahead because of housing construction for the expansion of urban centers, the emergence of new rural communities, and the construction of education centers, hospitals, factories, roads, highways, rail lines, dams, electricity transmission lines, warehouses, workshops, airstrips, etc.

### **Land: our chief natural resource**

The demographic density of our country is increasing, but our natural resources are limited.

The present reality of our economy compels us to obtain from the land not only food for the population but also the basic export products necessary for acquiring the factories, equipment, and raw materials that are es-

sential for both economic development and production of articles for the consumption of the population.

In addition to the population increase, we aspire to an increasing improvement in meeting its basic needs. But since more food and more export products have to be extracted from an area of cultivable land that is decreasing and not increasing, we have to attain optimum use and yield from each *caballería* of land.

The share of national agricultural production that comes from land in the hands of the peasant sector—about 30 percent of the country's agricultural land—could be increased several times over through applying the gains of science and technology. A significant increase in production is also possible on land cultivated by state projects and state farms.

Technological progress is possible, as we noted before, only to the extent that production is concentrated and specialized.

### **The minifundia is a backward form of production**

The peasant's small plot of land is characterized by subdivision into small areas for market production; for the planting of food crops, vegetables, and grains for self-consumption; for a grove of fruit trees; for pastureland for livestock and work animals; and for space for a corral.

This mosaic of production did not arise by chance. It stems from the peasant's need to at least guarantee food for his family in face of a possible lack of a market or of stable prices for his products; and in face of the insecurity, isolation, and lack of protection in which he formerly lived.

The minifundia [small peasant plot] system of exploiting the soil means underutilizing one of the country's vital resources: a means of production so decisive as land.

For example: In the tobacco regions about one-fourth of the land area is planted with tobacco; the rest is used for products of self-consumption or remains idle. In the best land for sugarcane, in areas near the big sugar mills, less than half of the land is used to grow cane. In addition to this poor use of land involved in minifundia production, this system also makes impossible in some cases and more difficult and expensive in others, the application of advanced technology—such as electrification, irrigation, mechanization, artificial insemination, the use of crop-dusters, etc.

On the other hand, the peasant's isolated labor on his parcel of land, divided among the most diverse tasks, impedes the productivity increase that can be attained through collective labor in brigades—a system that facilitates social division and specialization of labor.

By impeding or making more difficult the application of these gains, the individual peasant's land parcel is condemned to inadequate land usage and offers limited possibilities for increasing present yields and productivity.

To organize production on a greater scale, it is necessary for the peasantry to overcome its traditional way of using the land. In short, this means leaving behind the methods of cultivation typical of the minifundia and passing over to a form of production in which technology and adequate, intensive exploitation of the soil will increase several times over both the yield per area of land cultivated and the productivity of labor.

### **Two roads we can follow**

The possible roads toward higher forms of production were outlined by Fidel in 1974, in La Plata, when he stated:

“What methods are we going to use to get there? We

propose these methods: joining state projects and forming cooperatives.”

Which of the two roads should we take?

An adequate response will depend on a concrete examination of each of the country's regions, of the program for developing the national economy, and of the desires of the peasantry itself.

There are regions where peasant land parcels are isolated in the middle of state projects. There are other regions with a certain concentration of peasant land parcels.

There are regions where development of agricultural production requires enormous investments in installations, dam and irrigation projects, etc.—projects that only the socialist state can carry out. There are other regions where development of the dominant crop does not require investments of such a scope.

There are regions where it is necessary to develop non-traditional forms of agricultural production and where, consequently, the peasants of the area have no experience of this type. There are others in which existing crops should simply be extended and intensified, using the traditional specialization of the peasantry.

There are regions where the needs of the national economy demand a rapid and large-scale development of production, and consequently an immediate assignment of extensive resources. There are others where the availability of resources will be more limited, and where development will tend to be less rapid.

Given this diversity of situations, there are regions where the peasantry may undertake, as a higher form of production, the road of integrating their parcels of land into the state plan. In others, the path to follow will be to unite their lands to form a production cooperative.

Given the socialist character of our economy, both of

the two roads will lead to socialist forms of production.

In agricultural production, the state farm is the highest form of socialist property, because it represents the property of the entire people.

The cooperative is also a form of collective property—an indisputable step forward in terms of property, compared to the individual peasant's small plot of land.

Both in the state farm and in the cooperative production is linked to a plan. To a greater or lesser degree, both forms permit attaining a scale of production that makes possible the introduction of technological progress and the efficient use of material and human resources.

The question posed for our peasantry in the years ahead is whether to pass over to higher, socialist forms of production or whether to continue cultivating the small plot of land in the traditional manner, with limited yields, low productivity, and barely taking advantage of the land. The result of the latter is that there is no compensation for the peasant's individual effort as an isolated producer, in the midst of a socialist society that is developing through the united effort of large collectives of workers who are increasingly assimilating the conquests of civilization.

Passing over to higher forms of production is not only an economic necessity for attaining maximum use of the land. It is also a social necessity for attaining progress for the peasant family, for helping it advance toward socialist forms of living together.

### **Incorporating the peasant and his land into the state projects**

Incorporating the peasants' land into state projects is one of the forms of gradual transition from private property to property of all the people, through the peasantry's own free choice.

Land that is incorporated into a state project becomes part of the social patrimony. Accordingly, the proprietor of the parcel will receive compensation corresponding to the land and the other means of production that go with it.

Peasants who incorporate their land into a project have the possibility of becoming part of this collective of workers whose efforts create riches for the entire society. When this happens the peasant takes a great step forward. He leaves behind the concept of private ownership over the means of production; he stops being an isolated laborer; he passes over to the ranks of the most revolutionary and advanced social class—the working class.

For the peasant woman, it creates better conditions for her incorporation into productive activity.

The collective of workers on a state project also strengthens its ranks with the entry of each peasant. For the peasant brings to the collective his knowledge as an agricultural producer, his sense of responsibility, and his habits of self-sacrificing labor forged over long years of hard work.

It is man with his labor who makes the land produce. If incorporating the peasant plot of land into a state project is important, even more fundamental is incorporating the peasant and his family into the project's collective of workers.

Through their effort these collectives of workers on state farms and state projects have provided the bulk of agricultural production during these harsh years in which the imperialist blockade has sought to bring us to our knees through hunger.

Agricultural workers, pariahs under capitalism, have understood the necessity of organizing production under the new conditions created by the revolution; of learning to administer the new state farms that arose out of the old latifundia; of acquiring the leadership qualities nec-

essary to direct the work of brigades, *lotes* [plots of land], districts, and workshops; of conscientiously assuming a new work discipline, in accordance with their new role of representing the interests of the entire people.

They had to rapidly assimilate new technology, operate tractors and irrigation systems, master the formulas for fertilizers and pesticides, and learn how to handle new breeds of cattle.

They had to confront a shortage in the labor needed to bring in the harvests. To help out, there was a turnout of big contingents of workers from the cities, soldiers from the armed forces and the Ministry of the Interior, students, women, peasants; the entire people mobilized to save the harvests, to save the sugar crop, to save the revolution.

In the midst of these difficulties, accumulating experience through their own mistakes, the collectives of agricultural workers on the state projects and state farms progressively consolidated and strengthened their trade union organization and overcame the initial decline in productivity. Today they have the potential to attain a higher level of economic efficiency, a sustained increase in the volume of production and in the yield per unit of land, and a better use of the extensive resources invested by the socialist state.

By joining a state project and linking arms and energy with the working class, the peasant acquires the same rights and undertakes the same duties as the rest of the collective of workers.

### **The agricultural cooperative as a form of collective production**

The cooperative is one of the two socialist forms of agricultural production representing the interests of the

collectivity of producers. It arises on the basis of the decision by the peasants who make it up to *unite their land and other basic means of production*, leaving behind individual production on a minifundia.

The individual contribution of each member of the cooperative, in land and in basic means of production, will be calculated and repaid in a series of installments. Part of the annual income of the cooperative will be set aside for this purpose.

In addition to this payment each member of the cooperative, male or female, will receive periodic payments in the form of advances, as well as annual dividends. The dividend will be based on the amount and quality of labor each individual contributes, as well as on the annual earnings attained by the cooperative.

**T**HE COOPERATIVE is based on democratic principles of management. Its highest body is the general assembly of cooperative members, which is to elect a president and an executive board. The assembly has the task of deciding the most important questions bearing on the cooperative's economic and social life, plans of production, and forms of distribution of monetary income. It is also responsible for accepting or rejecting any request for admission by a prospective new cooperative member, within the guidelines established under its operating procedures.

Peasant women who join the cooperative enjoy rights, duties, and benefits equal to those of men.

Workers employed on the land of peasants who join cooperatives can themselves join the cooperative if they wish to; the general assembly of cooperative members will accept them. Or, if they prefer, they can go to work



on a state farm or project.

The worker who joins a cooperative has the same rights and duties as the rest of the cooperative members.

The cooperative will work out its production plans on the basis of the indexes fixed by the state for cooperative production. All marketable production will be purchased by the state, and the cooperative's relations with state enterprises will be regulated by contracts.

The prices paid for products—whether to cooperatives, state farms, or individual peasants—will vary according to regions of the country, type of crop, and time of year. The state will take into account that not all soils are of the same quality and therefore cannot produce identical agricultural yields. The state will also take into account that for some products the interests of society dictate price differentials in favor of a crop whose development is desired.

The cooperative's work force will be made up, fundamentally, of the peasants who have joined and their families.

In those cases in which the cooperative requires day laborers at given times during the peak of the harvest season, such laborers will be paid in accordance with the prevailing norms and wage rates.

Utilization of day laborers creates surplus value, which will be recovered through a tax and used for the benefit of society.

Social security for cooperative members will be an integral part of the state social security system. Cooperative members will contribute a certain portion of their income to the state fund established for this purpose, just as do those who work on state farms and other state enterprises.

Women cooperative members enjoy the right to benefits under the Maternity Law.

The cooperative, like the state farm, must contribute a part of its earnings to the national budget. This will be the contribution of rural workers, workers on state farms, and members of cooperatives who—together with the entire working class—contribute to the economic and social development of the country. These contributions strengthen the budget, that is, the financial resources that make possible the state's investment in industry, roads, dairy plants, housing, dams, etc.; that make possible the investment and expenditures spent each year for schools, educational materials, hospitals, medicine, teachers' wages, medical and other social services; and that make possible the expenditures the country is forced to make to maintain a powerful armed forces—the country's guarantee of defense against imperialist aggression.

To aid in their development, cooperatives will receive the attention of the state, which, in planning the national economy, will take into account the financial and material resources needed for this purpose.

State financial support for the cooperatives will be extended through short- and long-term loans. Both cooperatives and state farms will pay the rate of interest established by the National Bank for the loans they receive.

## CHAPTER 5 THE PARTY'S POLICY TOWARD THE PEASANTRY

### **The worker-peasant alliance**

The Party's policy toward the peasantry is based on the principles of the worker-peasant alliance.

The worker-peasant alliance is the union in struggle of the working class and the working peasantry; that is,

with the small and medium peasants who work the land with their own labor and that of their families.

It is the union in struggle between two laboring classes, two classes that were exploited, that suffered the domination of the bourgeois-landlord regime.

This alliance had already begun to take shape at the end of the previous century, in the struggle for independence from Spanish colonialism; it developed during the period of the republic through the struggles of workers and peasants for their common demands; it developed further in the struggle against imperialist oppression, against the ruling classes and their various governments, and against the Batista tyranny.

Without this alliance with the peasantry, the working class would not have united sufficient forces to expel imperialism and its puppet, overthrow the capitalist system, and free itself from exploitation.

Without this alliance with the working class, the peasantry would not have been able to break the yoke of the latifundists and the bourgeoisie.

This alliance has been strengthened and consolidated since the victory of the revolution on January 1, 1959.

In the big class battles against the expropriated exploiters, in the confrontation with imperialism's military aggressions and its criminal blockade, in defense of the country and the revolution, in the tasks of building socialism, the working class has counted on the firm support of the revolutionary peasantry.

In turn the working class, its Communist Party, and especially its first secretary, Comrade Fidel, have stood firmly behind the worker-peasant alliance and have worked constantly to improve the living conditions of small farmers; to improve their cultural level; to provide better education for their children; and to achieve their

full incorporation, with equal rights, into the new society being built.

Each time an error has been committed in applying the correct line of the party toward the working peasantry, there has been an effort to rectify matters as soon as the transgression has been recognized.

“The working class,” as Lenin pointed out, “gives the alliance its universal historical role as the material bearer of the new mode of production and its ideology—Marxism.”

The working peasantry, as it comes to understand that its well-being and a better future depend upon the alliance with the working class and as it comes to attain full revolutionary consciousness, identifies more and more with this ideology, to the point of adopting it without reservation. And it takes as its own the objective of the proletariat: To build a new society without exploiters or exploited; a society of workers, the collective owners of the means of production—a society that makes possible for all their children a life that is full and happy.

### **Respect for the free choice of the peasantry**

*The socialist revolution; its leading force, the working class; and its political vanguard, the Communist Party, proclaim as an inviolable principle of this alliance respect for the free choice of the working peasant regarding the forms of production.*

This means that decisions adopted by the revolutionary government must always take into account the specific interests of the working peasantry.

This means that the socialist state recognizes the right of the working peasant to work his own parcel of land as an individual; it undertakes to provide him with material and technical aid; and it seeks to establish with him, as long as he remains a private producer, economic relations that are mutually advantageous.

This means that the working peasantry, as its understanding and consciousness advances, as it understands the importance that its decision has for both the national economy and for bringing to an end the isolation of the peasant family itself, will gradually pass over to higher forms, to socialist forms of production.

Accordingly, to attain this gradual transformation in the small holdings of working peasants, *the decisive instrument will be the actual demonstration of the advantages the overall unity of agricultural production has over the individual exploitation of minifundia—advantages not only for the economic and social development of the country but for the peasant and his family as well.*

This will be a gradual process. The slowness or rapidness of its pace will depend upon two factors that reciprocally influence each other: the development of the productive forces and the deepening of the working peasant's consciousness. As both factors are constantly advancing in our country, this process, though it may be of shorter or longer duration, will of course not be eternal.

As Fidel pointed out in his 1974 speech in La Plata:

“Does this mean perhaps that we are forever going to have independent peasants cultivating small plantations? We know our peasants are aware that this is not possible. Throughout the years, this stage must be slowly and progressively left behind. The day will come when the isolated and independent peasant will be a thing of the past, because we are not going to remain behind the times.”

Consequently, the worker-peasant alliance is not a temporary, tactical pact but rather a strategic and enduring union between these two classes, a union whose final objective, as Fidel said, is to “carry the revolutionary process forward until every single one of us belongs to a society without classes, a society of producers, a society

of workers with equal rights. . . .

“That is the mission of the proletariat and the farmers in our country.”<sup>2</sup>

### **The National Association of Small Farmers**

The peasantry has its own organization, the National Association of Small Farmers. It has 226,669 members, of whom 157,404 own land. It emerged to organize, unite, orient, and mobilize peasants to carry out the agrarian program of the revolution, and to represent the peasants’ interests and aspirations.

ANAP has played an outstanding role in mobilizing the peasantry in support of the revolution and its agrarian laws and measures, in the task of the country’s defense against imperialist attack, and in crushing the imperialist-organized counterrevolution.

The revolutionary government’s plans for the social transformation of our countryside, for improving education, public health, culture, sports, and recreation have enjoyed ANAP’s enthusiastic and invaluable collaboration.

ANAP has been a spokesperson for socialist ideas among the peasants, publicizing and explaining the gains of the revolution, unmasking the slanders and distortions of the agents of anticommunism and obscurantism, tearing apart the phony rumors spread by the counterrevolution, and encouraging the massive study of party orientation guidelines and documents and of Marxist-Leninist educational texts.

In collaboration with the other mass organizations, ANAP has promoted solidarity of the peasantry with the peoples fighting imperialism; brotherhood with the socialist countries, headed by the Soviet Union; and fraternal relations with the peasants and sister peoples of Latin America.

The organization has played an irreplaceable role in boosting production in the private sector and in the resulting increase in agricultural products delivered to the state storage centers. The same is true of its help in working out production plans among the ranks of the peasantry, and in assuring the correct use of technology and credits.

### **Collective forms of labor**

ANAP has promoted mutual aid and collaboration among the peasants as a means of increasing productivity and attaining better use of the available labor force. The aim has been to teach the peasants a collectivist attitude that counteracts individualism, lack of confidence, and isolation—characteristic remnants of the small rural proprietor's psychology and customs of life.

Together the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) and ANAP have developed a vast movement of women's mutual-aid brigades, through which more than 100,000 women have been incorporated into productive labor outside the family plot of land. This movement has tremendous social significance as an instrument of liberation for peasant women, who for centuries have been relegated to household chores.

Similar massive scope has been attained by mutual-aid brigades formed by ANAP among peasants. These brigades, like those of the FMC-ANAP, work one or another plot of land without distinction, in accordance with the labor requirements of each one.

The "millionaire movement," initiated by agricultural and urban workers, has been powerfully extended to the peasant sector, thanks to ANAP's efforts.<sup>3</sup> These brigades, because of their permanent character during the entire sugarcane harvest, their high productivity and labor discipline and, above all, because of the fact that they cut

cane on the state farms as well as on their own land, serve as an eloquent expression of the socialist attitude toward work shared by tens of thousands of peasants.

These massive forms of cooperative labor, organized and encouraged by ANAP, lead peasant men and women to assume a new collectivist attitude that prepares them to undertake higher forms of production. Other forms of cooperation also exist, such as agricultural societies and credit and service cooperatives.

### **The historic task of ANAP**

Without abandoning the multiple and important activities it is carrying out today, *a new task of historic importance faces ANAP in the future: the patient and systematic work of publicizing, clarifying, persuading, and winning over each peasant family to the proposition of marching ahead to new socialist forms of production at a certain time. At the same time ANAP must zealously see to it that this is carried out with respect for the principle of free choice.*

Under the guidance of their combative and cherished organization, the working peasantry can make the decision to march along this road by its own free choice, by the mandate of its own consciousness, out of its own interest, out of the supreme interest of the entire people.

## CHAPTER 6 ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH THE PEASANT AS AN INDIVIDUAL PRODUCER

**T**HE RELATIONS the state should maintain with peasants who incorporate their land into state agricultural projects or cooperatives were spelled out above.

The transition from individual peasant property to



these higher forms of production is, as has already been stated, a process that will last for years. During this period it is necessary to continue increasing the production of the individual peasant.

The fundamental principles that must guide the state's economic relations with peasants who remain private producers are the following:

### **Centralized planning**

Our socialist system is based on centralized planning of the national economy, in contrast to the anarchy of production characteristic of capitalism.

Centralized planning of the economy requires the levels of production to correspond, on the one hand, with the needs of domestic consumption, exports, and development; and on the other hand, to available resources in terms of raw materials, basic means of production, labor, financing, etc.

Like the country's other economic activities, agricultural production is guided by these principles of centralized planning. This is true for state agricultural units, for cooperatives, and for the small production units of private proprietors.

Workers participate actively in working out the one-year and five-year plans for the national economy. In the case of agricultural production, both workers on the state farms and projects and peasants in their rural areas analyze, discuss, and approve the corresponding plans for production and delivery of products.

### **Contracts for delivery of products, inputs, and services**

Relations between peasants and the state units that purchase their products, whether they be industrial (Ministry

of the Sugar Industry, ECIL, CUBATABACO, etc.), commercial (INRA storage centers, People's Power storage centers, etc.), or agricultural (INRA livestock, etc.), must be spelled out in *contracts* that establish the responsibility of both the producer and the state unit.

Shipments of inputs and work tools, the servicing of machinery, and anything else provided or loaned by the appropriate state unit must also be spelled out in a contract between it and the peasant. The assignment of such resources will be in accordance with the possibilities of the national economy, and with the pledges of production established in the contracts for delivery of farm products.

### **Marketing of peasant production**

General policy in the marketing of goods produced by the peasant sector must be guided by the principle that marketable products from this sector will be sold to state purchasing bodies. These bodies are in turn charged with the responsibility to assure supplies to the industrial units that process these goods, and at the same time to assure consumption in schools, hospitals, child-care centers, and other social institutions, as well as direct distribution to the population—with the aim of satisfying the needs of all citizens.

By “marketable production” is understood all production from a peasant's plot of land, apart from that intended for family self-consumption, in accordance with their habits of consumption.

However, excess production or secondary products that the state either does not need or is not in a position to collect, may be sold freely by the peasant. This should be done at official prices and with the permission of the corresponding local authorities.

### **Contribution to the national budget**

In the years ahead our country will establish a system of directing the economy, with the objective of increasing economic efficiency.

This system establishes that the nation's budget will be met, fundamentally, by contributions of various types from earnings and income of state enterprises in the productive sphere, from the cooperatives, and from private producers.

In the agricultural sector, this means that the state farms and state projects, as well as the cooperatives and the peasants who produce as individuals, must contribute, along with all productive sectors of the economy, to enlarging the state budget.

In the case of the peasant, his contribution will be in relation to the size of his income as a producer. For it would be unjust if someone who received a lower income had to contribute the same amount as someone with a higher income.

Through this contribution to the national budget the peasants will contribute, proportionally to their situation, just as do workers in the state enterprises and in cooperatives. In this way they help defray the large expenditures the state makes to improve public health, education, culture, and sports; and to build housing, means of communication, and other social projects—all of which benefit equally the families of both workers and peasants.

### **Loans for production and improvements**

Through agencies of the National Bank of Cuba, peasants will receive the loans necessary for their annual cycle of production, for the improvement of plantings and herds, and for other investments in production.

Loans for production will be granted with relation to contracts for the delivery of products.

As is the case with state farms and cooperatives, these loans will be interest bearing, with rates that vary according to the amount and length of the loan, the use for which it is destined, and the social interest in improving given products.

### **Day laborers**

The labor force used by a peasant on his property must be, fundamentally, that of himself and his family.

Taking into account the character of agricultural production—which includes a need for labor at given moments during peak parts of the harvest—mutual-aid brigades, made up of the men and women who themselves belong to ANAP, are a necessity for resolving these temporary labor requirements.

However, given the low level of mechanization that can be utilized rationally on the small peasant plot, situations will occur in which neither the labor of a family nor the aid of a peasant brigade will be sufficient to assure the harvest of products that are absolutely essential for the country.

Under present circumstances, social interest dictates that in these cases the peasant be authorized to contract day labor and assisted in doing so. On occasion it may also be necessary to mobilize volunteers and to use students, soldiers, etc.

This need on the part of the national economy to assure an increase in production by individual peasants must not lead to the peasants obtaining surplus value from the labor force that is being made possible for them to employ.

Accordingly, this surplus value must go to social funds,

through a tax on wages paid, based on prevailing rates and norms. This will make it possible to avoid a situation in which the peasant obtains an illegitimate income, based on the sweat of other workers, or on the labor provided by young people in educational institutions who combine study with labor.

### **Prices for purchase of agricultural products**

On the basis of costs for efficient production, the state will fix the prices for products of agriculture and animal husbandry. It will do so for the state farms and cooperatives, as well as for peasants who personally work their own plots of land.

In determining these prices, the factors noted above for cooperative production will be taken into account.

Differentiation in prices, taking these situations into account, foresees the case of groups of farmers who produce under less favorable conditions owing to poorer quality of their land, the characteristics of their microclimate, the level of their technical development, etc.

Another element that will intervene in the fixing of prices will be society's interest in given products in specific locations.

### **Attention to the private sector by INRA**

INRA's attention to the peasant is presently carried out, in general, in the following manner:

a. *Specialized projects.* Specialized state projects maintain productive relations with the peasants of a region who raise the same crop, providing them with inputs, services, and technical assistance, and guaranteeing to them the delivery of their products to the state storage centers. The most typical example here is sugarcane.

b. *Supervised projects.* These are organized in areas

where there is a concentration of peasants who specialize in a given crop. In these regions INRA provides the peasants with material and technical assistance through an administrative apparatus organized especially for this. The most typical example is tobacco.

*c. Peasants not linked to specialized or supervised projects.* These peasants establish relations with the National Bank for the purposes of receiving loans, and with the state purchasing agencies for the sale of their products.

These organizational forms that today address the needs of the peasant have been in place for several years now. They mark a step forward and have contributed to an increase in private production.

Nonetheless, the insufficiency of this system can be seen in the following:

- The planning of production and attention to peasants not linked to specialized or supervised projects remains insufficient in terms of technical aid, inputs, and services.
- In terms of the secondary products produced by peasants who are linked to specialized or supervised projects, there is a similar lack of planning and of sufficient provision of inputs and services.

An example of the latter is the raising of cattle, which, for the immense majority of peasants, is a marginal activity. That is why they do not have an organizational vehicle through which they can receive adequate attention from the state, with the aim of increasing and improving the herd and increasing the supply of milk and meat.

From all this it follows that the National Institute of Agrarian Reform must undertake, along with ANAP, a study of the structural forms for providing attention to production by the private sector, so as to help them correspond to the system of supervision of the economy. The

aim is to introduce the organizational changes necessary to ensure that *the entire peasantry, all its land, and all its production* become the object of maximum attention and receive all the technical aid and technical and material supplies that lie within the possibilities of the national economy.

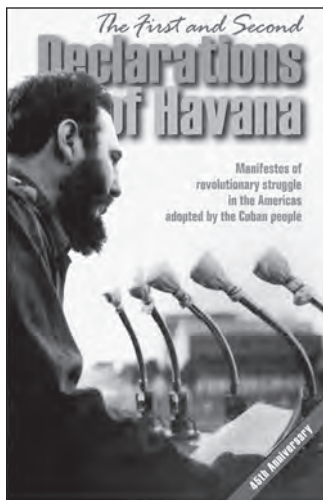
## NOTES

1. This is a reference to Castro's speech of May 17, 1974, printed in the May 26, 1974, *Granma Weekly Review*.

2. Speech to the Fourth Congress of ANAP, December 31, 1971, printed in the January 9, 1972, *Granma Weekly Review*.

3. The "millionaire movement" is an emulation campaign organized by the Central Organization of Cuban Workers for sugarcane cutters who cut one million *arrobas* (12,500 tons) of cane during a harvest.

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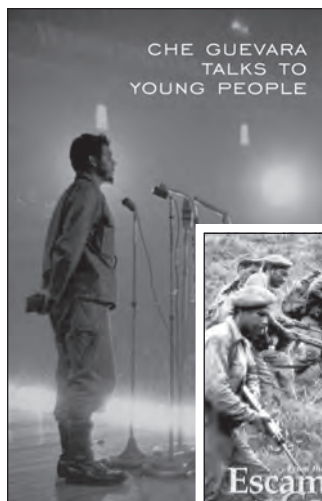
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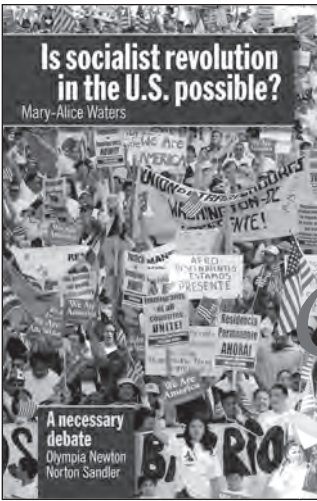
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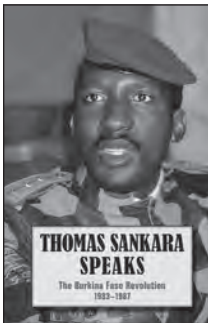
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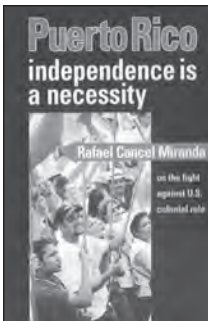
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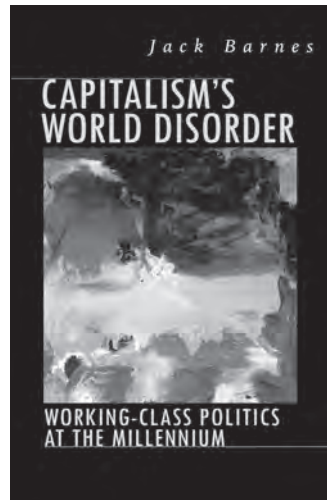
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*Jack Barnes*

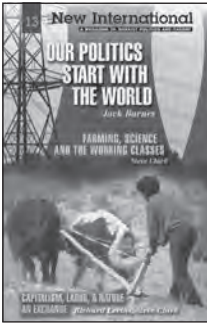
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*Jack Barnes*

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*Also includes: "Farming, Science, and the Working Classes" by Steve Clark and "Capitalism, Labor, and Nature: An Exchange" by Richard Levins, Steve Clark. \$14*

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*Jack Barnes*

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