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THE FORGING OF AN OPPRESSED NATIONALITY
by Antonio Camejo, Oakland-Berkeley Branch

The following historical sketch is intended only as a schematic overview of some of the main events which led to the forging of the Chicano people into a distinct oppressed nationality. Nor does it attempt to present a rounded analysis of major events such as the Mexican-American war. As such, it should not be viewed as a complete Marxist history of the Chicano people. That is yet to be written, and hopefully this is just one small step in that direction.

The Spanish Conquest of Mexico

The Chicano people have their origins in the racial and cultural mixture of Spaniards with the native populations of what is now Mexico and the agricultural Pueblo "Indians" of what is now the Southwestern part of the United States.

The Spanish conquest of Mexico (1519-1542) and the exploration of what is now California, Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Texas predates the arrival of the Pilgrims by almost a century. By 1630 the Spanish had founded 25 missions and a series of settlements in New Mexico. From New Mexico settlements spread into Arizona and California. While Juan Bautista de Anza was exploring San Francisco Bay, the European colonists on the Eastern seaboard were celebrating the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

By 1781 the Spanish had established in California a string of 21 missions, four Presidial towns (military garrisons), and two pueblos (San Jose and Los Angeles) and a number of settlements in Texas and Arizona. By 1848 there were approximately 75,000 Spanish-speaking settlers (predominantly mestizos, people of Indian-Spanish stock) in these northern provinces of Mexico; 7,500 in California; 1,000 in Arizona; 60,000 in New Mexico; and about 5,000 in Texas. There were approximately 250,000 native inhabitants in the same area.

While the British colonized the Eastern seaboard with large numbers of settlers, the Spanish conquerors were few in number and predominantly male. The British drove the native population they encountered off the land. Later, as Anglo-American capitalism pushed Westward, its rulers developed a conscious policy of genocide against the Native American population and forced the survivors into reservations.

Unlike the Eastern seaboard settlements, Spanish colonial society was built on the backs of the indigenous inhabitants. The Spanish discovered a people one stage beyond those that the British found along the Eastern coast. The Aztec society, based on the cultivation of corn, was in the middle stages of barbarism. The Spanish were in a period of transition from feudalism to capitalism. The inevitable and irreconcilable clash produced by the meeting of these agents of European class society, with the collectivist societies of the Aztecs and other indigenous peoples of Mexico resulted not only in a new race, the mestizo, but also in combined economic forms. Early colonial society in Mexico was as much feudal as it was bourgeois. Colonial and post-colonial society was characterized by the exploitation of pre-capitalist modes of production (serfdom, slavery, debt peonage, share-cropping) for the benefit of the rising capitalist system.

The conquest of the Aztecs and of other native peoples living in what became the Republic of Mexico resulted in their decimation. Disease, slavery, overwork in the fields and in the mines, starvation caused by the expropriation and export of agricultural produce and the brutal repression against all resistance to the conquest took their toll. It is estimated that Tenochitlán (Mexico City) had upwards of 300,000 inhabitants and that 25 million Indians populated the Central valley of Mexico. Within a 50 year period after the arrival of Cortez, this population dropped from 25 million to about 4 million. In 1646 it reached a low point of 1,250,000.

Revolts broke out throughout the colonial period. A revolt by the Pueblo Indians in 1680 drove the Spanish and mestizos out of New Mexico. It was not until 16 years later that the area was resettled. In 1848 those who dominated major sections of the provinces of Northern Mexico were neither Mexicans nor Anglo-Americans. They were the nomadic Apaches and other hunters and food gatherers who resisted not only the Spanish and the mestizo settlers but also the Anglo invasion of the area.

The frontier settlements of Northern Mexico were separated from the central seat of power in Mexico City by large belts of desert and the hostility of the native peoples who controlled the deserts separating New Mexico from California and isolating New Mexico from the settlements in Texas. With the opening of the Santa Fe trail in 1820, residents of New Mexico could trade more easily with St. Louis than with Chihuahua in Northern Mexico. These geographical factors, as well as the resistance of those Indians who refused to be conquered led to a certain isolation of Mexico's northern-most provinces from the central administration of a weak *criolle* (Mexican-born Spaniards) bourgeoisie. This encouraged the territorial ambitions of both the slavocracy and Northeastern capitalists in the United States, who viewed these territories as easy prey.

The ability of Mexico to govern its northern provinces was further weakened during the 10 year struggle for national independence in which 500,000 of its citizens lost their lives. Although formal independence from Spain was achieved in 1821, the *criolle* bourgeoisie merely replaced the Spanish administration leaving the conditions of the masses unaltered. Independence was soon followed by the Spanish invasion of Tampico in 1829, a short-lived French invasion of Veracruz in 1838, a secessionist revolt in Yucatan in 1840, and was marked by unstable governmental regimes up to 1851.

The U. S. Conquest of Northern Mexico

The introduction of the cotton gin in the late 1790's greatly increased the desire of the Southern slavocracy to open up new land to exploit. This drive for territorial expansion led to the Louisiana Purchase from the French in 1803, the purchase of Florida from Spain in 1819, and the eventual clash with Mexico over the twelve year period from 1836 to 1848.

A further factor propelled the slave system westward. The intense production of cotton as a single cash crop quickly impoverished the soil of the South, resulting in lower yields. Since the Compromise of 1820 prohibited

slavery from moving northwest, the Mexican province of Texas, larger than France and well-suited for cotton, was a logical area for expansion.

As early as 1825, President John Quincy Adams attempted to purchase the Texas province from Mexico. When Mexico refused, other means were attempted. The Southern planters who dominated the U. S. federal government encouraged the settling of Texas by Anglo-Americans with the hope that they would outnumber the small Mexican population and create enough difficulties for Mexico so that it would relinquish control to the United States. After initially issuing land grants to such settlers, Mexico became alarmed at the rapid growth of the Anglo population and the violation of the conditions stipulated in the grants.

In 1829 the Mexican president issued a decree banning slavery, essentially aimed at Anglo slave-holders in Texas, who had imported thousands of slaves (by 1836, one-third of the non-Mexican population in Texas were slaves). In 1830 a decree prohibited further colonization of Texas by Anglo-Americans and called for collection of custom duties along the Louisiana border.

The Anglo-American Texans, who were legally Mexican citizens, refused to submit to the authority of the Mexican government and maintained slavery. They set up the Independent Republic of Texas in 1836. This led to the sending of Mexican troops into Texas, resulting in the attack on the Alamo by General Santa Anna and the subsequent defeat of Santa Anna by the army of Sam Houston. By that time Anglo-American settlers outnumbered the *mexicanos* by 6 to 1. The slavocracy looked forward to immediately annexing Texas to the United States with the idea of carving six slave states out of the immense territory. But divisions within the U. S. ruling classes delayed annexation until 1845.

The main issue of the presidential campaign of 1844 was the annexation of Texas, with the Democratic Party running Polk in favor, and the Whigs running Clay in moderate opposition to annexation. The victory of the Democrats, who represented the Southern planters, guaranteed annexation.

But the plans and desires of the slavocracy went beyond Texas. President Polk was intent on provoking Mexico into a war which would end in the conquest of all of Mexico. The Democratic Party Convention meeting in New York State in 1844 resolved: "That the title of the Mexican government is a title by conquest from those who held it by conquest. If we took it and held it by the same title, they could not complain. Their title is legal; and our title would also be legal." The chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations stated in 1848 that the Mexicans could be removed to reservations in the same manner that the United States had done with the native North Americans.

The Northern capitalists opposed adding Texas as another slave state and feared the enhanced political weight of a strengthened slavocracy expanding south into Mexico. But they favored provoking a war with Mexico to gain the commercially valuable harbors of California. The commander of the United States exploring expedition to the Pacific prior to 1845 praised the commercial possibilities of the West Coast, stating that it could easily fall into the hands of "the Anglo-Norman race . . . having none to enter into rivalry with it but the indolent inhabitants of warm climates. . . ."

The ideological justification for this expansionism was "Manifest Destiny." President Polk expressed the desires of the U. S. ruling class in the following terms: "Our union is a federation of independent states whose policy is peace with each other and all the world. To enlarge its limits is to extend the dominions of peace over additional territories and increasing millions." But the expression of this expansionism was not merely limited to a particular view of the American nation. The racist ideology of the ruling class, both North and South, was perhaps best expressed by a northern capitalist, Commodore Stockton, who commanded the U. S. assault in California during the war with Mexico. "I will not attempt to impeach or defend what I believe to be the inevitable destiny of my country and of my race. . . . I am unwilling to say to my countrymen that you shall go no farther east or west or north or south. I am unwilling that the Anglo-American race shall perpetually recoil from any given boundary and that any portion of this continent not now in their possession shall forever by impenetrable to their civilization, enterprise and industry."

The war began in 1846, and during its course the United States defeated Mexico's armies and occupied Mexico City. The Democratic administration favored taking all of Mexico, but was stopped short by opposition in Congress. The government negotiator completed the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo on February 2, 1848, against the orders of Polk. The treaty was subsequently ratified by the Senate giving the United States one half of Mexico's national territory, an area larger than France and Germany combined. In addition to Texas the newly won U. S. territory encompassed what are now the states of California, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, Arizona, part of Wyoming, and the western part of Colorado.

Mexico attempted to include a provision prohibiting slavery in the ceded area but this was rejected by the United States. Mexico was paid \$15,000,000 for the entire area. The Mesilla Valley (Gadsden Purchase), was added in 1853.

The Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo

Besides formalizing the military conquest, the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo also guaranteed certain rights to the conquered Mexican inhabitants. Article VIII stated:

In the name of Almighty God:

Mexicans now established in territories previously belonging to Mexico, and which remain for the future within the limits of the United States, as defined by the present treaty, shall be free to continue where they now reside, or to remove at any time to the Mexican Republic, retaining the property which they possess in the said territories. . . . In the said territories, property of every kind, now belonging to Mexicans not established there, shall be inviolably respected. The present owners, the heirs of these, and all Mexicans who may hereafter acquire said property by contract, shall enjoy with respect to it guarantees equally ample as if the same belonged to citizens of the United States.

Article IX guaranteed to those who became citizens (automatic one year from the date of the Treaty, unless an individual specifically chose to remain a Mexican citizen)

"enjoyment of all the rights of citizens of the United States, according to the principles of the Constitution," and also "the free enjoyment of their liberty and property, and secured in the free exercise of their religion without restriction."

Every one of these guarantees has been systematically violated since that day.

New Mexico and Arizona

With the end of the Civil War the United States government concentrated its military forces on crushing the Indians, including those in the territory of Arizona and New Mexico. In order to keep the southern routes to California open for commerce and to consolidate its hold over this former Mexican territory, the U. S. Army systematically destroyed the flocks, fields, and orchards of the Navajos, forcing their surrender and removal to reservations. The Apaches and Comanches, severely reduced in numbers and area, were driven into the worst desert or rugged mountain areas and finally defeated and captured.

This had the temporary effect of permitting a brief expansion of the *mexicano* settlements, particularly in New Mexico and Arizona. But this process was cut short by the expanding Anglo cattle ranchers and farmers who encroached on the *mexicano* farmers and sheepherders. The trade which developed between Santa Fe and St. Louis had gradually opened up New Mexico and Arizona to the influence of Eastern capital. The establishment of the railroads along the old trails to Santa Fe and then on to California by 1885, eclipsed the trade of *mexicano* caravans.

Along with the railroads came the growth of capital-intensive mining operations which shifted from gold to silver and then to copper, displacing *mexicano* miners through competition where it was not done through outright fraud and violence. By 1900 mining was predominantly mechanized and controlled by Eastern capitalists using a *mexicano* labor force. Anglo capitalists extended their railroad and mining interests into northern Mexico itself. By 1910 Guggenheim had a virtual monopoly of the metallurgical industry in Mexico and U. S. interests dominated the railroads there.

The railroads of the Southwest were built mainly by *mexicano* labor. After 1880 up to 70 percent of section crews and 90 percent of the extra gangs on the principal Western lines were *mexicanos*. The present Chicano settlements of Chicago and Kansas City grew out of railroad labor camps.

California

A new rich lode of gold was discovered in California almost immediately after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848. Mexicans had been successfully mining gold between Los Angeles and Santa Cruz a decade before James W. Marshall made his famous discovery.

The "Californios," as the Mexican inhabitants of that former part of Mexico referred to themselves, lost no time in applying their mining knowledge to the rich deposits. By 1848 1,300 out of the approximately 7,500 Mexican population were engaged in gold mining. By the end of 1848 there were already some 4,000 Anglo miners. The news of the new discovery of gold brought

some 8,000 Mexicans from Sonora into California along with 5,000 South Americans, mainly Chileans and Peruvians. But the largest influx was of Anglo-Americans, who by the end of 1849 numbered 80,000.

The period from 1849 to 1860 was one of violence, fraud, and intimidation against Spanish-speaking miners, ranchers and farmers by Anglo miners who considered them to be something less than human beings, an attitude reflecting the ideology of the capitalist and slaveholder ruling classes in Washington, now in control of California. Whippings, branding, ear cropping, and lynchings were commonplace occurrences for *mexicano* miners who dared to defend their claims as guaranteed by the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo.

When California became a state in 1850, the state legislature wasted no time in passing the notorious "Foreign Miners' Tax Law of 1850" which was used as a pretext to drive *mexicanos*, Chileans and Peruvians out of their mine claims.

From 1850 to 1900, the Anglo settlers, merchants and their politicians and lawyers expropriated almost the entire propertied class of Californios. (This class was predominantly of Spanish blood and light-skinned.) Those who did not lose their lands were reduced to small holdings. Towards the end of the 1800's the *mexicano* population was in retreat, the distinction between Californios and "Cholos" (the poor working masses of predominantly Indian blood) all but wiped out, and a racist Anglo majority firmly entrenched. This point was not reached, however, without a fight. Guerrilla bands developed during the 1850's which tried to hold back the Anglo invasion. But the forces of occupation were overwhelming.

The expropriation of "Tejano" (Mexican Texan) landowners by Anglos proceeded in a similar fashion. In California, New Mexico and Texas many of the *ricos* (wealthy Mexican landowners) collaborated with the Anglo invaders but to little avail. They too were either expropriated or driven out of business by a combination of Anglo lawyers and unfavorable economic conditions. Succeeding generations of these families were driven into the working class. The tremendous wealth derived from the mines and lands stolen from Mexico and then from the Mexican owners themselves, played an important part in the financing of eastern capitalist expansion.

Agri-Business and "Merchants of Labor"

As early as the 1890's, *mexicanos* were working the cotton fields of east Texas. By 1910 cotton was spreading into middle Texas, creating a need for cheap labor. Certain conditions in Mexico created the labor supply to meet that need. The recession of 1907 generated a large amount of unemployment which encouraged the beginnings of migration from Mexico. With the start of the Mexican Revolution in 1910 this out-migration was greatly accelerated.

The First World War also created an expanding need in the United States for agricultural produce and textiles. During the first three decades of the 20th century, over one million Mexicans crossed into the United States, primarily into Texas and California. The passage of the National Origins Act of 1924, which reduced European immigration, increased demand for *mexicano* workers who moved as far north as Detroit, as far east as Pittsburgh, and into Alaskan canneries.

Prior to 1924 the Labor Contract Law of 1885 forced growers to recruit labor illegally. Labor smugglers went into Mexico to recruit workers. On bringing them across the border they would be sold to a "labor contractor" who would then sell the workers for 50 cents to \$1.00 a head, to a grower or railroad or mine employer. Carey McWilliams in "North From Mexico" described the handling of these workers:

Shipments of workers en route to employers were often kept locked up at night, in barns, warehouses, and corrals, with armed guards posted to prevent their theft. Crews of imported Mexicans were marched through the streets of San Antonio under armed guard in broad daylight and, in Gonzales County, workers who attempted to break their contracts were chained to posts and guarded by men with shotguns.

By 1929 the Southwest was producing 40 percent of the nation's supply of vegetables, fruit, and truck crops with a labor force that was from 65 percent to 85 percent *mexicano*. The sugar beet industry in Colorado alone produced more profits than all the gold and silver ever mined in that state. Agri-business was not alone in recognizing the profit that could result from a cheap source of labor. Some workers went directly from central Mexico as well as from Texas to Midwest industrial centers where they were employed in steel mills, packing plants, auto factories, and tanneries. The pressure from the sugar beet industry, the Texas Emigrant Law in 1929, and the depression brought this movement to a halt.

Contrary to the myth of their docility, *mexicano* workers began organizing as early as 1883 in Texas. Strikes occurred throughout the country before World War I and after, but they were almost invariably met with violence and deportation. Many of these deported workers then became union organizers in Mexico. Some, including IWW members, played a role in the famous Cananea miners' strike in Sonora, Mexico in 1906, a date marking the start of the Mexican labor movement. During the depression years in the 1930's, tens of thousands of *mexicanos* were forced by the U. S. government to repatriate to get them off the welfare rolls. Many were from families who had lived in the United States for generations.

World War II

The start of the Second World War brought about dramatic changes among the *mexicano* population of the United States. With the expanded war production many farm workers were drawn into the cities and into basic industry. Although this did not create a shortage of labor in agriculture, the growers feared that elimination of the large surplus labor pool would drive wages up and create conditions more favorable for unionization. Also competition with industrial wage rates would mean a lowering of profit.

The growers convinced the Roosevelt administration to negotiate a contract with Mexico for the importation of farm workers, as an emergency war measure. This Bracero Program amounted to a direct subsidy of agri-business which was already garnering huge profits. Under the plan, the U. S. government paid out \$120,000,000 to import a total of about 400,000 Mexicans between 1943 and 1947. They were restricted to agriculture, al-

though a special arrangement was made for 80,000 of them to work as section hands and maintenance workers on the railroads at low wages.

The war resulted in an increasing urbanization of La Raza and further proletarianization of their ranks. The war, however, had a further effect. Many *mexicanos* believed that service in the armed forces was a means of gaining full rights as citizens of the United States. Another important aspect of the war experience was, that while Afro-Americans were in separate, all-Black units, *mexicanos* were not segregated. This did not mean freedom from discrimination and racist practices, but it was an improvement over the repressive conditions experienced in the barrios of East Los Angeles and the fields of Texas and California.

The so-called Zoot Suit riots of 1943 were the most notorious examples of overt racism and brutality toward *mexicanos* in this period. Following on the heels of the internment in concentration camps of the Japanese-Americans in 1942, and the hysterical campaign against non-white peoples which accompanied the expropriation of the Japanese-Americans, the Los Angeles press began a campaign against youth known as "Pachucos" (identified by the Zoot Suits many young *mexicanos* then wore). The Hearst press and the *Los Angeles Times* played on all the racist attitudes of the Anglo population, including the local police theory that *mexicanos* were biologically predisposed to violence and crime. They whipped up an atmosphere which led to a week of vicious attacks by Anglo servicemen on *mexicano* youth especially, but also on Black youth in Los Angeles.

The events in Los Angeles were followed by similar attacks on Black and *mexicano* communities elsewhere, from Beaumont, Texas to Detroit, Michigan. The international embarrassment these incidents caused Washington finally forced President Roosevelt to intervene. Most serious to the ruling class was the possibility of Mexico cutting off the Bracero Program in protest. Roosevelt's refusal to act swiftly to defend the victims of these racist attacks is one more item in the long list of the crimes of the Democratic Party.

The impact of U. S. capitalist propaganda about "liberating oppressed peoples" from fascism and colonialism, however, was great. *Mexicano* GIs returning from years of the imperialist slaughter were expecting respect and full rights. They found quite a different situation, however. They were discriminated against as before, and were even excluded from groups such as the American Legion and other veterans organizations. They were still considered "greasers," "dirty Mexicans."

One postwar incident helped focus the resentment and bitterness of La Raza. The family of a Texas Chicano war hero was refused a plot in a Corpus Christi cemetery for their son. The national and international embarrassment to the ruling class caused President Truman to provide burial for the soldier in Arlington National Cemetery. But the lesson was not lost on returning veterans, who founded their own organizations, such as the GI Forum, organized in 1948 in Corpus Christi, Texas. While the Forum stated that one of its objectives was to "preserve and defend the United States of America from all enemies," it also proposed to "secure and protect for all veterans and their families, regardless of race, creed or color, the privileges invested on them by the Constitution and laws of our country." In less than a year, there were over 100

GI Forum chapters throughout the Southwest.

Another such organization was the Unity League, organized in Southern California. Composed primarily of veterans and workers, the Unity League participated in electoral activity, running candidates of their own and electing a city councilman in Chino, California in 1946. This victory encouraged others to run for office. Ed Roybal, a veteran, ran for Los Angeles city council as an independent. Although he lost, an organization grew out of his campaign called the Community Service Organization (CSO) which was at first composed solely of World War II veterans and was then expanded to include first their wives and later others from the broader community. In 1949 Roybal ran again and won with the support of the CSO. With the advent of the cold war, Roybal quickly moved to the right, into the Democratic Party, where he has remained to this day. The CSO meanwhile became involved in a series of community activities and civil rights fights.

Cesar Chavez, leader of the farm workers union, gained much of his political experience as an organizer for and one-time director of the CSO. After conducting successful voter registration and "education" drives (in 1960, the CSO registered 137,000 Chicanos to vote, 95 percent of whom voted for John F. Kennedy) the AFL-CIO began giving the CSO financial assistance to expand their work. In recent years, however, the organization has been declining in both membership and influence and has tended

to oppose the new rise of Chicano militancy.

Thousands of the returning World War II veterans took advantage of the GI Bill of Rights to get a high school and college education, to buy homes, and to set up small businesses. By 1956, 2 percent of the professionals in Los Angeles County were of Spanish surnames. Organizations reflecting the small but growing number of white-collar workers and professionals sprang up during the 1950's. The Council of Mexican American Affairs (CMAA) in Los Angeles, attempted to bring together various community organizations, gave birth to a special education committee which raised the issue of special programs to meet the needs of Chicano students. The Association of Mexican American Educators (AMAE), founded in 1965, continued this work, also helping to elect Julian Nava to the Los Angeles school board in 1967. In 1959, the Mexican American Political Association (MAPA) was organized as the first Mexican-American group in the postwar period to proclaim themselves "political." It was built around the Democratic Party successes of 1958 when several Chicanos were elected to office in California.

The Second World War, then, saw increased urbanization of La Raza, proletarianization of its ranks, and the development of a small layer of professionals. Organizations reflecting these changes appeared in the late 40's and 50's and helped set the stage for the resurgence of militancy in the decade of the 1960's.

June 1, 1971

THE STRUGGLE FOR CHICANO LIBERATION
Political Committee Draft Resolution, Adopted June 15, 1971

For many years the Chicano people were considered the "silent minority" or the "forgotten minority." They were one of the "other" oppressed nationalities. The plight of Chicanos as a doubly oppressed people, exploited as workers and oppressed as a nationality, was not in the public spotlight.

This image was to change dramatically in the mid- and late 1960's as an independent movement developed in response to the specific oppression of the Chicano people, which had a dynamic and revolutionary logic of its own. The Afro-American and student movements were joined by a movement of those who had called themselves Mexican-Americans, Hispanos, Latin Americans, Spanish-speaking. Part of the nationalist dynamic of this development was a new self-image which included the use of terms like "La Raza" and "Chicano" to describe themselves, reflecting a new pride and dignity, a new determination to struggle for equal rights, for a better life, for liberation.

This resolution will describe the roots of this nationalist awakening and trace the developments which led to the new rise of Chicano militancy and combativity in the 1960's. It will outline the current stage of the struggle, the prospects for independent political action, some initial components of a transitional program for Chicano liberation, and the tasks of the Socialist Workers Party in this important movement.

The Roots of Chicano Nationalism

The conquest by the United States of the northern half of Mexico in the mid-nineteenth century resulted not only in the incorporation of a huge land mass into the territory of the United States, but the incorporation of the Mexican population as well. These people and their descendants, set apart by race, language and culture as well as national origin, were not assimilated into the United States as full and equal citizens, whatever formal guarantees were made to the contrary. Instead, they were systematically oppressed as a people, forged by expanding American capitalism into a distinct oppressed nationality. Subsequent immigration from Mexico swelled the ranks of this oppressed people.

Except for Native Americans, Chicanos suffer the highest unemployment, the lowest per capita income, the worst education, the highest functional illiteracy rate, the highest death rate, occupy the most dilapidated and over-crowded housing and have the least political representation in local, state or national government of any other nationality in the population of the Southwest and perhaps in the nation.

The 1970 census put the "Spanish-surnamed" population at approximately nine million, with about five million Chicanos. The real figures are assumed to be much higher, with estimates by scholars of ten million Chicanos at a minimum. Over 80 percent of Chicanos live in the five Southwestern states of California, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado. The rest are spread out over the entire country from Florida to Alaska, from New Jersey to Illinois.

By 1960 La Raza was as urbanized as the white population. Eighty percent of Chicanos in the Southwest live

in cities. Most of these are workers. For example about 30,000 of the 90,000 members of the United Steelworkers of America in the Western states are Chicanos. Sixteen percent of the Chicano labor force are farmworkers, many of whom live in urban areas.

Of the total elementary and secondary student population in the Southwest, 17 percent are Chicanos and ten percent are Blacks, yet only four percent of the teachers are Chicanos and only three percent of the principals are Chicanos. There are approximately 20 white students for every white teacher in the Southwest, 39 Black students for every Black teacher, and 120 Chicano students for every Chicano teacher.

The only school jobs in which Chicanos are proportionately represented, in schools with ten percent Chicanos or more, are custodians (28 percent) and teacher aides (34 percent). While the median educational grades attended for whites is 12 years of school it is only eight years for Chicanos.

It is clear that language plays a critical role in maintaining the oppression of the Chicano people. According to the 1970 census, 50 percent of the Spanish-surnamed people stated that Spanish is their primary language. The overwhelming majority of Chicano youth enter the schools speaking Spanish. By the time they drop out or graduate they have been partly or completely stripped of their first language without attaining a proficiency in English equal to that of whites. Thus they leave school with a linguistic handicap.

The suppression of the Spanish language in the schools is one of the most insidious forms of the oppression of the Chicano people. The use of Spanish by Chicano children in the schools has been restricted or banned even in states where prohibitive legislation has been repealed. Through attempting to obliterate the Spanish language, the capitalist ruling class hoped to strip Chicanos of their cultural identity and history in the same manner that the slave masters stripped the African slaves of their languages and identities. While this objective was never fully achieved, the damage done to Chicano students and their ability to learn has been dramatic. Racist textbooks and teachers and irrelevant materials have created a 50 percent "push out" (so-called drop out) rate from the predominantly Chicano high schools of East Los Angeles. In Texas the figure for Chicanos is 70 percent. Functional illiteracy among Chicanos is seven times that for whites and twice that for Afro-Americans. In Texas 50 percent of the Chicano heads of households are functionally illiterate. The use of linguistically and culturally biased intelligence tests has led to placing Chicano students in classes for the mentally retarded at a rate 200 percent out of proportion to their numbers in the population.

Inferior education, a linguistic handicap, and racist hiring practices force Chicanos into the worst low-paying jobs. The per capita income for Chicano workers in 1959 was 40 percent that of white workers. Since then, the income gap between whites and Chicanos has widened. In Texas 52 percent of the Chicano families live in poverty, in New Mexico it is 42 percent, 35 percent in Colorado, 31 percent in Arizona, 19 percent in California.

While in 1960 14 percent of the white work force was classified as professionals, only four percent of the Chicanos were in the same category, and six percent of the

Blacks. Chicanos suffer four times the rate of crowding in housing compared to whites.

It is the combination of all these factors which give Chicanos higher incidence of tuberculosis, infant mortality, chronic diseases and illnesses associated with malnutrition, poverty and lack of medical care. For example, the life expectancy of Chicano farm workers is 38 years.

* * *

The expansion and consolidation of American capitalism was carried out through the subjugation of various peoples including the Chicanos, and their incorporation into its structure as oppressed nationalities. This national oppression within the borders of the United States has benefited and continues to benefit the ruling class in many ways and is essential to its continued rule. It has divided the working class and increased its stratification, created pools of cheap labor and detachments of the industrial reserve army, and provided workers for the most difficult, dangerous or seasonal and low-paying jobs. White racism, the ideological justification for such national oppression, is used demagogically by the rulers to divert white workers away from struggling against their capitalist class enemy and towards supporting the oppression of Chicanos and other oppressed nationalities both within the borders of the United States and beyond.

The ruling class will never grant freedom to oppressed nationalities, including the Chicanos. The national liberation of the Chicano people can be won only in the process of the socialist revolution, which will have a combined character: a social revolution by the working class to establish its own state power combined with a revolution by the oppressed nationalities for their self-determination. The predominantly proletarian composition of the Chicano people indicates that they will be in the forefront of the revolutionary struggle of the working class as a whole as well as fighting alongside other oppressed nationalities for their national self-determination.

The Rise of the Chicano Nationalist Movement

Many of the developments which led to the worldwide youth radicalization of the 1960's also affected the Chicano people and helped facilitate the emergence of a new generation of militant young Chicanos.

The colonial revolution showed that peoples long oppressed could rise up and win their freedom. The Cuban Revolution especially had an impact in the Chicano community.

The first mass reflection of the colonial revolution in the United States was the movement of the Afro-American people. The struggles of this oppressed nationality shook up the political equilibrium in the U. S., helped inspire the youth radicalization, and served as a model for subsequent insurgent movements it helped set into motion. The student movement, the antiwar movement, the Chicano movement and more recently the women's liberation movement, owe much to the initiating role of the Black movement, the lessons of its successful and unsuccessful strategies and tactics, and the experiences of Black organizations and leaderships.

The Chicano movement has benefited from the experiences of the Black and other movements, and, in turn, it has taught lessons in its own right, surged ahead in some

aspects, and now provides examples for these other movements.

Two efforts were begun in 1962 that were to influence the initial stages of the new Chicano movement and inspire subsequent developments. These were the farm workers movement and the land grant organizing efforts led by Cesar Chavez and Reies Lopez Tijerina respectively.

The Farm Workers

Cesar Chavez resigned from his position of leadership in the Community Service Organization in 1961 when conservative elements blocked his efforts to use the CSO to support the struggles of Chicano farm workers. The following year he formed the Farm Workers Association which was to become a social movement, a union of farm workers that could fight for collective bargaining with the rich growers but would also deal with medical, language and other problems faced by farm workers.

In 1965 the Association joined forces with a Filipino farm workers organization to form the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee, based in California. The expiration of the Bracero program at the end of 1964 (although it partially continued under the Green Card program) had created a new opportunity to organize farm workers with less likelihood that strikes could be broken by the massive importation of Mexican workers. A strike of grape workers began in the fall of 1965 and though it won some initial concessions, it was necessary to carry out a protracted grape boycott campaign before substantial victories were won and consolidated.

The initial organizing efforts and achievements in California had a major impact upon the *barrios* and farm labor camps around the country and led to similar developments in Arizona, Texas, Washington, Colorado and other states.

It was *La Huelga* (The Strike) together with the land grant movement in New Mexico which first forced into the public eye the existence of this "forgotten minority" and the recognition that a new civil and human rights movement was emerging. The migrant laborers, who were said by racists to be naturally endowed for such "stoop labor" by virtue of the fact that they were "built low to the ground," were challenging racist stereotypes and asserting their humanity. Chicanos shouting "*Huelga*" and "*Viva La Causa*" and demanding "*Justicia y Libertad*" added another powerful element to the struggles of the oppressed and exploited.

The farm workers movement has been led for the most part by pacifist reformists like Chavez, who supports liberal Democrats. Nevertheless this movement of farm workers has had an independent, nationalist dynamic which has helped set other sectors of La Raza into motion.

Up to this point this independent dynamic has been incomplete and blunted by the refusal of the Chavez leadership to break politically with the Democratic Party and initiate an independent Chicano party. Such a development is a necessary step for the success of the farm workers struggle. It could result in rapid electoral victories in the majority Chicano cities and towns in the rich farm country in the valleys of California and in other states. These victories in turn would give fresh impetus to unionization efforts, the fight for higher wages, better conditions, health and child care and other demands.

La Raza Unida Party developments in 1970 and 1971

have exerted considerable pressure on the farm workers movement to embark on the road of independent Chicano political action. This may be seen in Chavez's recent statement in favor of La Raza Unida "candidates." If the farm workers union should begin to stray from the Meany-approved subordination of the labor movement to the Democratic Party, the AFL-CIO bureaucracy can be expected to exert considerable pressure on the farm workers union by withdrawing financial and other support.

The Land Grant Movement

In violation of the provisions of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, which ended the U. S. war with Mexico in 1848, the property of the Mexican inhabitants of what is now the Southwest U. S. was not respected.

Reies Lopez Tijerina investigated the original land grant titles and exposed the processes by which they were stolen. The Alianza Federal de Mercedes (Federal Alliance of Land Grants) was formed in 1962 in New Mexico to publicize the claims of the "Indo-Hispanos" to the land now occupied by Anglos and by the National Forest Service.

A series of events beginning in 1966 brought the Alianza to public attention nationally. A march from Albuquerque to Santa Fe with petitions to the governor of New Mexico and the president of the United States was followed by attempts to occupy parts of National Forest lands in the fall of 1966 and summer of 1967. This was answered by military force and frame-up charges against Alianza leaders.

Included in the propaganda of the Alianza was the idea of internationalizing their struggle by appealing to the United Nations and Cuba to recognize their claims to the land and their right to establish an independent republic based on the land grants.

The Alianza participated in a "new politics" Peace and Freedom-type formation, the Peoples Constitutional Party of New Mexico, during the 1968 elections, running Tijerina for governor. They, along with the Crusade for Justice of Denver and the farm workers union, joined the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's Poor People's March on Washington in 1968.

At the present time Tijerina and other Alianza militants, after frame-up trials, are imprisoned and the Alianza has declined.

With Chicanos constituting over one-third of New Mexico's total population, and a majority in some areas, considerable potential exists for building an independent Chicano party there, although no such efforts have been undertaken thus far.

Crusade for Justice

An urban civil rights and cultural movement called the Crusade for Justice was formed in Denver, Colorado in the mid-1960's. While located solely in Denver, the Crusade's influence was to be more widely felt as its principal spokesman, Rudolfo "Corky" Gonzalez, a former official of the Democratic Party, emerged as one of the central leaders in the Chicano movement.

The Crusade for Justice organized and supported high school strikes, demonstrations against police brutality, and legal cases in behalf of Chicanos framed up by the

police. It also supported mass actions against the Vietnam war.

One of the most important roles played by the Crusade has been organizing the Chicano Youth Liberation conferences. The 1969 and 1970 conferences brought together large numbers of Chicano youth from the Southwest, the Northwest and Midwest, as well as some Puerto Rican youth from the Midwest and East Coast. Out of the first conference came *El Plan Espiritual De Aztlan* (The Spiritual Plan of Aztlan), a program for the mass mobilization of Chicanos for control of their communities. The Plan of Aztlan raised the concept that the liberation of the "Mestizo Nation" would ultimately require "a nation autonomously free, culturally, socially, economically, and politically." The formation of an independent Chicano party was projected "since the two party system is the same animal with two heads that feeds from the same trough."

The second Chicano youth conference (1970) represented a further step forward for those forces who supported a mass action perspective and the formation of an independent Chicano political party. Following the conference, the Crusade for Justice and other Chicanos launched the Colorado Raza Unida Party.

The Chicano Student Movement

The schools have been a place where Chicano youth have been politicized by many of the factors that fueled the international youth radicalization, as well as by many specific grievances. By the 1960's the number of Chicano youth in the high schools had dramatically increased.

There are approximately two million Spanish-surnamed elementary and secondary school students in the United States, 70 percent of them in the Southwest. More Chicano students are now going on to college, but not in the same proportion as the rest of the population.

The Chicano student movement developed to combat oppressive school conditions. Chicano high school and elementary students were prohibited from using Spanish in the classroom or on the school grounds, the true history of the Chicano was not taught, white principals and teachers directly and indirectly expressed their racist concepts and attitudes, and Chicano students not "pushed out" of the schools were "tracked" into "vocational" rather than "academic" courses, often into the army rather than college. Students were not allowed to freely organize political or cultural groups in the schools. Corporal punishment was meted out to those who objected to these repressive conditions. Disciplinary suspensions and expulsions were common.

To change these conditions a wave of Chicano high school "blow-outs" (strikes) occurred all over the Southwest and in other places like Chicago with the largest and most effective taking place in 1968 in Los Angeles, where 15,000 Chicano students walked out of the *barrio* schools and triggered similar actions among students in some predominantly Black and several mostly white schools. A Chicano sit-in at the Board of Education brought to public attention the demands of these students for "education, not contempt," "education, not eradication" and posed the need for Chicano control of schools in the Chicano community. The actions of the high school students engendered support from college student groups as well as parent and community organizations.

Concessions have been granted in the face of these high school struggles, one of the most important being the repeal or easing of the prohibition against the teaching of regular classes in Spanish in the schools. But the Chicano people still face the problem of how to take control of the schools in the Chicano communities. Elements of control have been won in some school districts in South Texas, where student strikes have been combined with the formation of independent Chicano parties which have elected candidates to office.

Chicano college students also began in the late 1960's to organize on the campuses for Chicano studies programs, open admissions and community control of higher education. Chicano students played a leading role in the Third World Liberation Front strikes at San Francisco State College, the University of California at Berkeley and elsewhere in 1968 and 1969. A Latin and Mexican-American studies department was won at Merritt Junior College in Oakland and some form of Chicano studies was won at many other colleges.

A conference of Chicano students and educators in 1969 at Santa Barbara issued *El Plan de Santa Barbara* which "set out to formulate a Chicano plan for higher education." Some elements of the concept of the Red University as applied to Chicano students are present in this document as summed up in the following quote: "We do not come to work for the university, but to demand that the university work for our people."

No one Chicano student organization exists as a national or even Southwest-wide group. UMAS (United Mexican American Students) is strong in Colorado, MECHA (*Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan*—Chicano Student Movement of Aztlan) in California, MAYO (Mexican American Youth Organization) in Texas. In the Midwest, Chicano students have in some cases united with Puerto Rican students in Latino groups such as the Latin American Student Organization in Chicago.

In many urban areas Chicano youth formed groups like the Brown Berets. These groups have played a role as organizers and monitors in high school strikes and in actions against police brutality. Politically the Brown Berets vary from place to place, from being non-political or antipolitical, to revolutionary nationalists, to ultraleft sectarians.

In those areas where independent Chicano political parties have been formed, student groups have often provided activists and leaders. This has been especially important in Texas, where Mayo-led student strikes helped lay the basis for the formation of La Raza Unida parties in South Texas.

La Raza and the War in Vietnam

The Vietnam war was escalated at a time of heightened nationalist consciousness among Chicanos. Some Chicano leaders and organizations were among the most consistent and outspoken opponents of the war. As the antiwar movement grew, many activists became aware that masses of Chicanos could be mobilized in militant opposition to a war that was not in their interest. For one thing Chicanos were being used as cannon fodder totally out of proportion to their numbers. For another, the Defense Department was giving a helping hand to the rich growers being struck by the farm workers by buying huge quantities of scab grapes and later lettuce to feed to the U. S. troops in Vietnam. Increasing numbers of Chicanos asked

the obvious question: "How can we be fighting for freedom and democracy 8,000 miles away, when we don't have freedom and democracy here at home?"

Chicano contingents in antiwar marches were organized in the late 1960's in places like Los Angeles, Denver, and San Francisco and helped lay the basis for the unprecedented outpouring of La Raza for the National Chicano Moratorium to End the War in Vietnam on August 29, 1970 in East Los Angeles. Thirty thousand marched while additional tens of thousands lined the streets to cheer on the marchers.

The brutal police assault on the Chicano Moratorium rally showed that the ruling class feared the prospect of mass mobilizations of Chicanos in the streets, especially when the idea of forming La Raza Unida parties was being popularized far and wide, including in Los Angeles. The Los Angeles area contains a million Chicanos. Many live in unincorporated areas of Los Angeles county, the rest live in an area gerrymandered to thwart the potential independent strength of the Chicano population as a single voting block.

The police attack brought about a sharp confrontation between an enraged community and the Los Angeles ruling class. First, the *barrio* erupted as many Chicanos gave vent to long pent-up rage at the conditions of life, the day-to-day police brutality, the profit-hungry merchants. Second, a sharp political struggle was waged to organize a mass street action to reassert the right to peaceably assemble for redress of grievances. Such an action was held on Mexican Independence Day. Ten thousand militant Chicanos marched despite the red-baiting campaign by city officials which was echoed by the reformists in the movement.

Further Chicano antiwar actions have since been held in widely scattered places and sizable Chicano contingents have been organized for the subsequent coalition-called antiwar actions, most notably the huge April 24 march in San Francisco where some four thousand Chicanos and Latinos marched, the largest contingent of an oppressed nationality in that action.

Chicanas

Raza women have begun to discuss and act against their triple oppression as members of an oppressed nationality, as workers and as females in a patriarchal bourgeois society. Most Chicanas are brought up in Catholic families, and thus have to cope with an especially reactionary morality which rationalizes the subordination of women in the family and in society, including strictures against the right of women to control their own bodies, the right to abortion and contraception.

The reactionary concepts about the role and rights of women perpetrated by capitalist society and religion are also promoted by some Chicano leaders in the name of *La Familia de La Raza* and "machismo." The result is a denial of full opportunities for participation and leadership by Chicanas in the Chicano movement.

The May 1971 *Mujeres Por La Raza* (Women For La Raza) conference in Houston attended by some 600 women was an historic gathering. It showed the potential for mobilizing this half of La Raza as nationalist fighters and as feminists and points the way for women of other oppressed nationalities.

Immigration

The Immigration Service continues the policy of harassing and illegally deporting Chicanos and resident Mexicans to Mexico. This decades-old injustice has given rise to actions and organizations to expose and oppose these practices.

Catholics

Although over half of the Catholics in the Southwest are Chicanos, the Catholic Church hierarchy has continuously insulted its Chicano membership by its racist practices and refusal to use its immense resources to support the Chicano movement. Groups have formed such as *Catolicos Por La Raza* in Los Angeles which has demonstrated at churches against the current state of affairs in Los Angeles county where they say property owned by the Catholic Church is valued in excess of one billion dollars yet Chicano children "are praying to La Virgen de Guadalupe as they go to bed hungry."

* * *

The Development of Chicano Parties

The recent development of independent Chicano political parties that have contested in city, county, and state elections in several states in the Southwest has profound implications for the Chicano people and for other oppressed nationalities, especially Afro-Americans.

For years Chicanos have voted in their majority, and in many cases overwhelmingly, for candidates of the Democratic Party. Over 95 percent of Chicanos voted for Democrats in 1956, 1958, 1960, 1962 and 1964. One of the most successful vote hustling tools for John F. Kennedy in 1960 was the Viva Kennedy committees. Around the same time the Mexican-American Political Association (MAPA) and the Political Association of Spanish-Speaking Organizations (PASO) were formed which for the most part have faithfully delivered the Chicano vote to the Democrats. One exception to this trend was the "third force" maneuver in 1966 in Texas, Arizona and New Mexico to throw the Chicano vote to one major Republican candidate with the hope that this would make the Democrats more responsive to the aspirations of Chicanos. In Texas this maneuver resulted in the election of the Republican candidate, John Tower, to the U. S. Senate. A half million Chicanos voted for Tower, and at the same time voted for the Democratic candidate for governor, John Connally, who also won. This resulted in the Johnson administration calling various moderate Chicano politicians to the White House to discuss holding a "White House Conference on Mexican Americans." An earlier White House meeting with Black leaders had turned into an attack on the president so Johnson decided to hold the meeting with Chicano politicians as far away as possible with militant Chicanos excluded. This caused such furor among Chicano leaders that the conference was indefinitely postponed and never held. But demands for action by the federal government continued to be pressed and the White House set up Cabinet Hearings

in El Paso in October of 1967. Invited were the more moderate leaders like Chavez, excluded were Tijerina and others considered more militant.

Those excluded set up their own "La Raza Unida" conference attended by some 700 activists including many who had been invited to the White House hearings. They held their own hearings and issued the *Plan de La Raza Unida*. This proclamation insisted that "the time of subjugation, exploitation, and abuse of human rights of La Raza in the United States is hereby ended forever." They drew up a list of demands directed at all levels of government, demands which were ignored by the Johnson administration and the Democratic and Republican parties.

Subsequently, at the Democratic Party convention in 1968, Chicano Democrats complained that they were being ignored and considered walking out. Following the convention, California MAPA, which had always endorsed the Democratic Party nominees, voted not to endorse anyone for president. This probably prevented a victory for Hubert Humphrey in California.

Though political associations like MAPA and PASO continue to endorse capitalist party candidates, they are pressured toward a more independent posture by the paucity of concessions emanating from these parties and by the insurgent Chicano movements including the independent Chicano parties.

The formation of La Raza Unida parties signifies the beginnings of a break with this subordination to capitalist politics. These parties point the way toward registering in the electoral arena the strength, combativity and independence of the mass struggles against the oppressive conditions of life forced on the Chicano people. They point to the need to generalize the various struggles of La Raza around the specific issues of education, the war, discrimination, and all the others into a unified, independent mass political struggle of Chicano people to take control of their own destiny. They show that meaningful victories can be achieved by combining electoral action with mass actions in the streets.

If these La Raza Unida parties remain independent of the capitalist parties, including the *national* Democratic and Republican parties, and if they develop mass struggles centered on the needs of the Chicano people, they could be the first steps towards a mass, independent Chicano political party.

Within the context of the deepening radicalization in the U. S. today, the development of a mass, independent Chicano party would shake up American politics. The strength of the Democratic Party comes from the support it receives from a combination of sizable oppressed groups—the trade unions, and the great majority of the Black and Chicano people. The coalition of these forces with the capitalist forces which control the Democratic Party is held together by the belief that this coalition can win elections and deliver reforms. The massive defection of Chicano voters would create an immediate crisis for all the elements in this coalition, not only in the Southwest, but nationally. Without the Chicano vote, the Democrats would be unable to carry whole sections of the Southwest and would be weakened in a number of Midwestern states. The Democratic Party's growing incapacity to win nationally would

break up this coalition, encouraging Black people and the labor movement to organize their own parties.

Old alignments would disintegrate and new ones form. A mass independent Chicano political party would therefore not only be the best way to promote and protect the welfare of the Chicano people, but would also create the possibility of forging alliances with other oppressed groups.

Meaningful improvements in the quality of life of the Chicano people under capitalism and their ultimate liberation require a strategy of mass independent political action in all forms, and a militant leadership that can inspire and win the confidence of the masses. The forms this political action can take are many and varied. Thus far, the different components of the movement, such as student, labor, and antiwar struggles, have developed independently, each adopting organizational forms thought to be most suited to the struggles being organized, the milieu in which the struggle takes place, and the adversary being combatted. All these developed separately in the absence of an independent Chicano party enjoying the active support and adherence of the great mass of the Chicano people. If such a mass party had existed, the form of these struggles would undoubtedly have been different.

There are three interrelated aspects to building an independent Chicano party of mass action.

1) One is the organizing and carrying out of united front-type mass actions. That is, actions around specific, well-defined issues organized in such a way that they are capable of drawing into action the masses of La Raza. This requires an issue that is of immediate importance to Chicanos, formulated in a demand or demands easily understood, led by a leadership that wants to mobilize Chicanos in militant mass actions and is capable of forging the organizational means to that end, that is, a non-exclusive, democratic decision-making structure.

The building of such mass actions will help lay the basis for the development of an independent Chicano party. Where the nucleus of such a party exists, the building of united front actions by that nucleus and other forces will help it reach out to broader masses and at the same time project the independent Chicano party as a party capable of organizing the Chicano struggle on all fronts.

Aspects of the united front-type approach existed in the organization for the National Chicano Moratorium against the war August 29, 1970. The issue was one of burning importance and immediacy. The central demand raised was basic, clear and aimed squarely at the federal government: "Bring Our *Carnales* Home Now." The popular slogan "*Raza Si, Guerra No*" captured the nationalist spirit and dynamic of the Chicano Moratorium. The leadership of the Moratorium wanted a massive action and sought and welcomed the support of all irrespective of their ideas on other issues. Many different groups and individuals were actively drawn into the organizing of the action.

Many local struggles in the high schools and colleges have likewise resulted in groups working together for mass actions which in some cases have mobilized considerable support and won their demands.

The mobilization of thousands of people in militant mass political action in the streets paves the way for independent political action in the electoral arena that reflects this militant mobilization. This in turn can further spur on the independent mass street mobilizations. These two forms of political action should be seen as complementary and reinforcing, not as mutually exclusive or con-

tradictory. In this way it will be made clear that an independent Chicano party must be a party of a new type, that is, a party of mass action.

2) The formulation of a mass action program of democratic and transitional demands will be fundamental to the development of a mass Chicano party.

3) Another important element in the construction of a mass Chicano party will be a non-exclusive, democratic structure open to all Chicanos who want to participate in the struggle. Internal democracy is important because it facilitates the fullest involvement of the masses of people, increases the likelihood that the party will faithfully reflect the aspirations of the most oppressed and exploited, and helps to ensure the selection and replenishment of leadership.

* * *

In the last two years a considerable number of leading Chicano activists have come to see the need to break with the capitalist parties and extend the independent thrust of the Chicano movement to the electoral arena through the formation of La Raza Unida parties and similar formations in Texas, Colorado, California and Arizona. So far these attempts have resulted in a widespread popularization of the concept of independent electoral politics and have put on the defensive both the ultraleft abstentionists who reject any electoral activity on principle, and the opportunist Chicano Democratic and Republican politicians and those who support them.

The most outstanding results of these efforts have been the electoral victories in various city elections in South Texas where Chicanos constitute an overwhelming majority of the population.

In other areas, such as Colorado and California, good showings have been made by initiating nuclei of La Raza Unida parties. Though modest vote totals were achieved in the initial attempts, the results were promising given the difficulties in launching any new political formation. Rather than causing a lapsing into demoralization and inactivity, these modest successes have encouraged continued efforts. This is in sharp contrast to the earlier experience of the Black movement, when leaders of the Michigan Freedom Now Party in 1964 and the Lowndes County Freedom Party in Alabama in 1966 and 1968 made promising first showings in election efforts but became discouraged because they did not more quickly achieve a mass following, in the case of the FNP, or in the case of the LCFP, achieve an election victory. Both later returned to capitalist politics.

The advocates of independent Chicano parties have also avoided the error of merely proclaiming the formation of a nationwide or Southwest-wide political party, which would at this time be an artificial shell of such a party. While stating the need for a party based on all the Chicano people and making that their goal, these leaders have chosen to begin on a more realistic basis, on the state, county and municipal level.

The Crystal City, Texas, La Raza Unida Party grew out of militant student struggles in 1969. After the students and community came into conflict with the local government and won certain concessions, they saw the need to replace the racists and *vendidos* (Chicano sell-outs) on the city council and school board with militant representatives of the Chicano community who had been tested

in struggle. This led to the formation of La Raza Unida Party, running and winning in the city elections, and making changes beneficial to the Chicano community. At the same time LRUP supporters have continued to encourage further independent struggles such as participation in anti-war actions and the struggles of the workers for a democratic union in the main industrial plant in the area.

The meaningful changes made possible by combining independent mass action in the streets with independent electoral action included the firing of racist teachers, protection of high school student rights, outlawing corporal punishment by teachers, launching Chicano studies programs and bilingual education, and taking advantage of federal government monies they were entitled to but were not utilized by the previous city government. Police policies were altered to the benefit of the Chicano community. La Raza Unida Party leaders also took immediate steps to substantially raise the wages of school and city workers and to encourage their unionization.

Steps were taken or projected to cope with the problem of involving the Chicano community in more direct, ongoing, and meaningful ways in policy decisions and implementation. One was the functioning of the *Ciudadanos Unidos* (United Citizens), originally set up as a parent support group during the school strikes in 1969, which later became a general adult leadership body. Another step was the projection of advisory councils, to be composed of democratically elected representatives from various constituencies—students, parents, teachers and other school workers—to discuss and make decisions on key educational policy questions with the understanding that their decisions would be implemented by the city and school board officials elected on La Raza Unida Party's slate. These advisory councils have yet to be organized, however.

One of the principal achievements of the election victories in Crystal City was the psychological impact they have had, the inspiration and symbolic value of oppressed people being able to wrest some influence in public policy making, some element of control over their lives and destiny.

While it is important to evaluate and publicize the Crystal City achievements, it is likewise essential to be aware of the limitations of this development. Crystal City is a small isolated city of 10,000 in a county of less than 15,000 in South Texas, 100 miles from San Antonio, the nearest large city. The economic mainstay of the county is agriculture and the small processing industries that exist are related to agriculture. Virtually all the land and agriculture-related industries in the county are owned by whites. Most of the commercial enterprises are white-owned.

Moreover, many Crystal City Chicanos spend at least half of each year away from their homes as they fan out across the country in the spring to work in the fields, returning in late fall. Though this mobility helps spread the ideas and example of La Raza Unida Party to other areas it creates certain difficulties for local organizing.

Controlling the city hall and the school board in a small city like Crystal City has strict limitations. There is only so much that can be changed through control of a city government, especially one which lacks financial resources. Beyond reach at the present time are the Anglo-owned businesses and the all-Anglo county government which wields considerably more power because of its ability to tax the land owners in the county.

There are also leadership limitations. The central, mili-

tant leadership radicalized in the Chicano student movement is a small layer spread out in different cities in South Texas. Often the candidates chosen to run under the Raza Unida Party banner or other independent slates are less political, less radical than the former student leaders. Even among the most politically developed leaders, one can see different levels of understanding on key questions involving the capitalist parties, especially whether or not to support liberal Democrats like McGovern for President in 1972 on the national level or Yarborough for U. S. Senator in Texas in 1970.

Programmatically these independent Texas formations aspire to Chicano control of South Texas, a majority Chicano area. While they see the need to fight for attainable reforms that would improve their conditions, they don't necessarily pose the question of the need for more fundamental changes in society. The logic of fighting consistently for Chicano control of South Texas through all forms of independent mass political action points toward anti-capitalist conclusions but this is not widely understood among the activists and leaders of these independent developments.

Although La Raza Unida Party in Crystal City has mass support among Chicanos, the party is not yet a mass party but rather more of an electoral instrument, organized to comply with Texas election laws. Those who register to vote as LRUP don't "join" a party with an organizational structure which can democratically involve the masses of Raza. Instead, the decision-making groups that the political-minded activists belong to are *Ciudadanos Unidos* and MAYO.

The question of remaining independent of the capitalist parties and politicians is a decisive test facing the Raza Unida parties in Texas and elsewhere in the next period, especially as the 1972 presidential campaign approaches. We must expect that Democratic Party politicians, assisted by the labor bureaucracy, reformists in the Chicano movement and the Communist Party will be putting increasing pressure on the Raza Unida parties to support liberal Democrats and the national Democratic ticket, or perhaps some form of "New Politics" petty-bourgeois formations. Resisting this pressure will be essential to the continued development of the Raza Unida parties as parties independent of the capitalist parties and based upon the Chicano people. The fact that some leaders of these parties have not unequivocally repudiated any support to the Democrats nationally, and have been attracted to Democratic presidential hopeful McGovern, highlights this danger. We will be participating in the political debates on this question, emphasizing the need for an independent mass Chicano political party.

Towards a Transitional Program For Chicano Liberation

One necessary step in the construction of a mass independent Chicano party is the elaboration of a transitional program of democratic and transitional demands that would be capable of mobilizing the masses of La Raza in struggle.

Attempts have been made to formulate such a program for Chicano liberation that would speak to the immediate day-to-day needs of the masses of La Raza, needs American capitalism shows itself less and less able to meet in full, and at the same time point to the ultimate goal of Chicano liberation and self-determination.

Chicano control of the Chicano community is a centra'

and better working conditions. Farm workers shall be covered by minimum wage and workmen's compensation legislation. End all residency requirements so that migrant laborers qualify for all national, state and local welfare and other benefits.

Growers and other bosses shall be prevented from strike-breaking practices by the establishment of union-controlled hiring halls.

For full union democracy, including the right to organize Chicano caucuses to fight against racist union officials and practices.

For a sliding scale of wages and hours so that all who want to work can do so and so that inflation doesn't eliminate wage gains. An escalator clause in all union contracts so that wages automatically rise with the cost of living. A shorter work week with no loss in pay to spread the available work so that there will be jobs for all.

Preferential hiring and training of Chicanos to make up for past and present discriminatory hiring practices.

No federal government money to construction projects where Chicanos are not hired at least in proportion to the population.

5) *Raza Women*

Chicanas have the right as women to control their lives and destinies.

End all discrimination against Chicanas. Equal pay for equal work, equal job and educational opportunities, free 24-hour child care controlled by the parents and community, repeal all laws restricting the right to abortion, free abortion on demand, no forced sterilization, the right to contraceptive devices and information.

6) *Election Laws*

Repeal all state election laws that restrict the participation of independent Chicano candidates and parties in local, state and federal elections, including prohibitive registration or signature requirements, distribution requirements, loyalty oaths, filing fees and gerrymandering of election districts to the detriment of the Chicano people.

For the full 18 year franchise: the right to vote in all elections and the right of *any* qualified voter to run for and hold any public office.

Print official election material including ballots in English and Spanish.

7) *Against Mass Media Stereotypes*

The FCC shall revoke the licenses of radio and television stations which use racist stereotypes to portray Chicanos in advertising and programming. No racist stereotypes in newspapers, textbooks, and other forms of mass communication.

8) *Foreign Policy*

End the drafting of Chicano youth to fight in imperialist wars. End the war in Southeast Asia and bring the *car-nales* home now. Bring all U. S. troops home from Southeast Asia now.

Support the constitutional rights of Chicanos in the armed forces to organize and to express political views and cultural pride.

Support the national liberation struggles of oppressed peoples. End U. S. government intervention in Latin America.

9) *Land*

Land to those who till it.

Nationalize the "factory farms" under farm workers control.

10) *Formation of a Chicano Political Party*

The indispensable instrument for organizing and carrying on effective struggle for such demands, achieving Chicano control of the Chicano community, and moving forward to Chicano liberation is a mass independent Chicano political party.

Tasks Of The SWP

In aiding the development of an independent mass Chicano movement, the Socialist Workers Party must help popularize the ideas of and help in other ways to build the Chicano parties, the Chicano antiwar movement, the high school and college struggles and other important actions, including the farm workers and boycott movements, the struggles of Raza women, the developing movement of Chicano prisoners, and the defense of victims of political frameups. In this work we advance our own program and perspective for Chicano liberation.

In the coming debates concerning the 1972 elections, we can play an important role in fighting for the maintenance of an independent perspective, arguing against any support to the capitalist parties, either direct support to the Democrats or Republicans, or through New Politics-type tickets or parties.

Such tasks are the responsibility of the entire party and must not fall solely to Chicano and Latino members. Due to our limited forces and our small La Raza membership at the present time, a premium is placed on extensive use of our propaganda vehicles. These include *The Militant* and *ISR*, Pathfinder literature, our election campaigns and our weekly forums.

The Militant above all enables us to get out our ideas regularly to thousands of people, including many activists in the Chicano movement, and to extend our political influence much beyond our numbers. Sales of individual copies and subscriptions to *The Militant* to Chicano activists must be seen as part of our regular sales efforts.

These propaganda vehicles enable us to present news and analysis of the Chicano and other movements of the oppressed and exploited and counterpose our full program for social change in polemics against the reformists and ultralefts.

To be fully effective, these propaganda tasks will require the participation of many non-Raza comrades in writing articles, for example, selling individual copies and subscriptions to *The Militant* and *ISR*, building our election campaigns and forums.

Where possible, Chicano and Latino comrades should be assigned to work to help build Chicano student, antiwar and feminist groups and in La Raza Unida Party formations. Where it is not possible to participate actively in the Chicano movement our strength in the student, antiwar and women's liberation movements can be utilized to make contact with and help the independent development

component of such a program. The demand that the Chicano community control through democratic means all institutions in the community arises from the experience of the Chicano people, who are exploited by Anglo business, brutalized by Anglo-controlled police forces, imprisoned unjustly by Anglo judges, drafted to fight by Anglo draft boards in a war that is not in their interests, miseducated and stripped of their language, history and culture by the schools, excluded from or discriminated against in the trade unions, restricted from exercising constitutionally guaranteed rights of free speech, assembly, and redress of grievances.

Many demands have been put forward in the course of struggles in the last few years which constitute a starting point for developing a transitional program for Chicano liberation. *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan* drawn up in 1969 at the Chicano Youth Liberation Conference in Denver was one contribution to the development of such a program. The 1970 platform of the Colorado Raza Unida Party and the initial programmatic documents of the Oakland-Berkeley Raza Unida Party were steps in the same direction.

The Delano Proclamation presented in 1966 by UFWOC, the *Plan de La Raza Unida*, *El Plan de Santa Barbara*, the *Plan del Barrio* (issued during the Poor People's March on Washington) were additional programmatic manifestos and documents.

The goals of the high school student struggles must form part of such a program along with the goals of the farm workers movement, the Chicano workers in general, the college student organizations, the Bring Our Carnales Home movement, the prisoners, the women.

No full program for Chicano liberation has been developed, but some of the most important demands are clear. Some derive from the Transitional Program (*The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International*) and can be directly applied to the Chicano struggle. Others were outlined in the transitional program for youth (*The International Youth Radicalization and the Tasks of the Fourth International*). Still others will be similar to demands in *A Transitional Program for Black Liberation*. Some demands were raised in the programmatic section of *Toward a Mass Feminist Movement* (Political Committee Draft Resolution adopted April 19, 1971) which apply to Raza women.

Such demands as well as demands raised first in the Chicano movement will constitute the beginnings of a transitional program that can provide a guide for the organization and mobilization of the masses of La Raza. Such a program can point in the direction of mass anti-capitalist mobilization, and lead toward the goal of Chicano liberation, and at the same time maximize the gains that can be won short of that goal. It will form a part of the general transitional program of the American socialist revolution.

The following is a contribution to the formulation of a transitional program for Chicano liberation.

1) *The Right of Self-determination*

Since the Chicano people are oppressed as a nationality, they have the right to fully and unconditionally determine their own destiny, including the right to establish a separate state if they so decide collectively.

The most immediate and compelling struggles to determine the destiny of the Chicano people are those aiming

at Chicano control of the Chicano community (or, as in a number of larger geographical areas where La Raza is a majority of the population, Chicano control of these regions, such as South Texas).

It is a democratic right of Chicanos to control all institutions in the Chicano community. These institutions should be administered by democratically elected councils representing the masses of La Raza. These local councils should join with others on the state and national level on the basis of elected delegates subject to immediate recall.

2) *Justice*

Replace police occupation of the Chicano community, with a police force composed of residents of the Chicano community and controlled by the Chicano community. Organize the community to defend itself.

La Raza has the right under the Constitution to trial by peers, and such trials should take place in Spanish if desired by the defendant. Release all Chicano prisoners who have not been tried by peers.

Prisoners and ex-prisoners should retain citizenship rights of speech, association, assembly, the right to hold and discuss ideas, the right to read and write what they choose with no censorship and the right to vote. Regular conjugal visits should be provided for.

3) *Education*

The Chicano community shall have control of the education of La Raza through democratically elected councils.

All of La Raza is entitled to free education through the university level with subsidies by the government to cover living expenses and books for those who otherwise wouldn't be able to go to school. From the earliest grades there should be instruction in the Spanish language as well as English. The true history and culture of the Chicano people must be taught to all.

In all educational institutions Chicano students must be allowed to exercise their constitutional rights without fear of disciplinary suspensions, expulsions or corporal punishment. These include the right to hold and freely express ideas; the right to propagate these ideas through organizations, newspapers, leaflets, buttons; the right to use facilities of these public institutions to serve the needs of the Chicano people. End the tracking system.

All ties between the schools and the war machine must be severed. Student records must not be turned over to Selective Service. No military recruiters in the schools, no ROTC, no research for military purposes in the schools.

At both the high school and university level the student health services should include contraceptive and abortion facilities. Students, married or not, with children shall not be expelled or suspended and shall be provided with free 24-hour-a-day child care controlled by the students.

No cops on campus.

Teachers must abide by the will of the Chicano community. Racist teachers must be fired. Preferential training and hiring of Raza teachers. Teachers have the right to form unions, to bargain collectively and to strike.

4) *Chicano Workers*

All Chicano workers, including farm workers, shall have the right to organize unions and to strike for higher wages

of the Chicano movement and at the same time encourage them to unite in broadly based mass action coalitions. We should be alert to opportunities to support struggles of Chicano workers.

Unfortunately, redbaiting has marred certain Chicano struggles. We should expose redbaiting for what it is, attempts to divide the Chicano movement and to weaken its more militant wing. When directed specifically against us, it is in reality aimed at all those, including ourselves, who are consistent fighters for the political independence of the Chicano movement.

In addition to participating in Chicano antiwar actions we must help build Raza antiwar contingents such as was organized for the April 24 antiwar marches. Chicana contingents in mass women's actions should also be built.

Part of the preparation for meaningful participation in the Chicano movement is the process of learning from that movement. In this connection it is important to read Chicano newspapers and magazines and hold educationals on the history and current stage of the oppression of the Chicano people. To equip comrades to understand and help provide leadership for the Chicano movement they must study the Marxist analysis of the national question, the theory of the permanent revolution, the history of struggles of other oppressed nationalities in this country and the history of the working class movement.

One of the tasks of the coming American revolution will be carrying through to completion the struggle of the Chicano people for self-determination which cannot be won under capitalism; the full liberation of Chicanos, both as part of the working class and as a nationality, cannot be won except through a victorious socialist revolution.

An absolutely essential prerequisite for the success of the coming American revolution is the construction of a mass revolutionary socialist party on the Leninist model. The construction of such a party is the central objective of the SWP.

The mass revolutionary socialist party we seek to build must be multinational as well as proletarian in composition, uniting revolutionary Marxists from the different nationalities in this country into a single, centralized combat party. At the present stage of building such a party, the recruitment and training of cadres is our foremost task. Thus recruitment and training of Chicano activists is a key objective. More and more Chicanos will join the SWP as they come to see the need for a socialist revolution and for a Leninist party to lead that revolution to victory, a party with a correct program on all aspects of the anticapitalist struggle, which unconditionally supports the fight of the Chicano people for self-determination, fights alongside them for their full liberation, and the full liberation of all humanity.