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PROBLEMS OF BLACK RECRUITMENT: OBJECTIVE TASKS AND SUBJECTIVE PROBLEMS

By Tony Thomas

The problems of recruitment of blacks and other Third World people to the party and youth have often been mistakenly viewed. These mistaken views have had effects on our work, not only in the black struggle, but also in other arenas.

Many comrades feel that objective conditions alone are to blame for our inadequate recruitment of Third World people. They say: "Since we are a largely white organization and since white workers are not in motion, therefore, it is objectively precluded that we can recruit significant numbers of blacks in this period." The usual corollary to this "theory" is that after the "white workers" radicalize, blacks will flock to our party and all problems will be solved.

Flowing from these "theorizations," the party and youth are absolved from doing very much in recruiting blacks and criteria and needs for leadership within the black movement are lowered or dropped entirely. To the "objective" roadblocks in building our black cadre, illusionary substitutes are soon found. These often tend toward conceptions totally alien from those which we apply to other fields, lapsing into un-Leninist and spontaneist concepts.

To discuss the recruitment of blacks to the SWP and the YSA, we must discuss two things: 1) the objective needs of our party in carrying out its principal task, making the American revolution; 2) the objective and subjective possibilities for such recruitment in this period as it relates to these tasks.

The needs for building a large black cadre within our movement are quite clear. To lead the working class to victory our party will need firm roots in all sections of the working class, especially Third World people. The concept of working-class struggles as something reserved for "white workers" or of viewing labor struggles as divorced from the development of the black struggle is an incorrect one.

Indeed, the vanguard role that blacks will play in the American revolution makes such recruitment and cadre building especially important. Objectively blacks will be the detonator of the American revolution. It is around the demands of the black liberation struggle, especially as they coincide with the actions of black workers, that mass anti-capitalist activity by the entire class will be ignited. Thus in large part the development of the American revolution will be a function of the development of the black struggle for self-determination.

Because we recognize the objective role of the black liberation struggle, we understand that the question of a leadership for this struggle is especially important. As Leninists, we recognize that only with an adequate leadership can the struggle play its vanguard role. We define the criteria for a revolutionary leadership in both programmatic and organizational terms: the existence of a strong leadership welded around a Marxist program, acting as part of a Leninist combat party which is part of an international, not merely internationalist, revolutionary movement. Obviously the SWP is the only party that can play such a role. This is especially true in contrast to our conscious opponents, the Stalinists and the Social Democrats, though we feel that any independently developed leadership or formation must eventually come to the side of one of these leaderships or ourselves.

The rise and degeneration of the Black Panther Party (BPP) shows the inadequacies of spontaneously developed leadership in this period. The Panthers reached their current stage of degeneration because they were unable to make a correct estimate of the period we are in and of the tasks of black revolutionaries. They thought that this is a prerevolutionary period and that the basic task for the present is organizing the technical preparation for prolonged armed struggle. Flowing from this "perception" the Panthers explicitly rejected the course of building a mass black political party for the building of an elitist para-military "vanguard" organization.

Their internal organizational concepts were taken from Mao's Stalinist conceptions of bureaucratic centralism.

The cumulative effect of these deficiencies in a period of deepening struggle, in the plants, in the schools, in the universities, in the community as a whole, laid the basis for stagnation, isolation, and ultimately for degeneration of the BPP.

In a period of deepening struggle, the programmatic and organizational weakness of formations becomes clearer to the politicized vanguard. Political groups must present analyses and guidelines for action that meet the needs of the struggles they will be tested in. Any group's intervention in struggles must show the concrete need for its organizational form in relation to action. The increasing confrontations, discussions, and differentiations within the ever-expanding van-

guard shortens the time for organizations to develop gradually and to correct their mistakes.

It is exactly the expansion of political consciousness and struggle that means that either organizations must understand the struggle and thus intervene appropriately, or they will be by-passed by the expanded vanguard, or crushed by the reformists and the class enemy. Being democratically organized and non-sectarian are necessities if groups are to be flexible enough to meet the needs of such a period.

It is hardly surprising that faced with all these challenges the BPP has not only failed to advance over their past errors but have degenerated in important ways. The Panthers' crude view of the development of the black struggle conflicted with the development of the explosions on the campuses the elsewhere, thus they have been unable to give a meaningful analysis or make successful interventions. They have failed to intervene in these struggles either to build their own organization or to provide leadership for these actions.

As a result of their political backwardness and their lack of internal procedures to change leadership and perspectives, an increasing sectarianism has led the BPP to oppose the black student struggles as a whole. By cutting themselves off from the vanguard of the black struggle, the black students, the Panthers have suffered irretrievable losses and blows to the hopes of advancing their own organization.

The political capstone of the degeneration of the Black Panther Party has been their increasing acceptance of Maoism-Stalinism. It is wrong to say that this is of no strong importance. Stalinism provides political justification for the situation the BPP finds itself in.

In the first place, the BPP's use of Maoist rhetoric provides a substitute for developing a consistent ideology to deal with the black struggle for self-determination or the general problems of the world revolution.

Secondly, Maoism-Stalinism provides an ideological justification for the purges and other aspects of the Panthers' bureaucratic centralism. The Panthers have stated numerous times that they take Stalin's purge trials as a model.

Thirdly, Maoism-Stalinism provides justification for the combined ultraleftism and reformism of the BPP. (In the Year of the Gun, the Decade of the Pig, under Fascism, the only vanguard party that has picked up the gun responds with breakfast for children and a popular front.)

We have always maintained that any tendency in the radical or labor movement must find itself drawn to ourselves, the social democracy, or to Stalinism. This is not only because one must take sides on all important questions, but because each tendency has its base in real material forces. Maoism is not just an ideological conception, but a counter-revolutionary political force based on a gigantic state power. The power of such reformist trends are further enhanced because they provide a means to adapt to bourgeois ideology, either through ultra-leftism or reformism or a combination of the two.

The lessons of the demise of the Panthers validate our basic Leninist positions. An organization can develop only so far, before it must choose between the main worldwide tendencies in the workers movement. Leadership cannot develop spontaneously. In the absence of Marxist cadre, political development is necessarily limited and distorted. There is no way around the need for building the SWP and the YSA, the revolutionary party and youth organization.

In this period in which our black cadre is small, the development of the black struggle, especially on an organizational level, is both uneven and irregular. Movements develop that are able to make breakthroughs on one or more points -- SNCC on black power and later the need for socialism (that is popularizing Malcolm's thought), initially the BPP on the need for party-type organizations and Marxist analysis, DRUM on the independent organization of black workers, and now black students on transitional demands. However, while these groups and layers increase the development of the struggle, they are unable to spontaneously link together all lessons or carry the struggle very far. The struggle moves irregularly, halting for periods of time, going forward only briefly. Organizations don't last long, reflecting the inconsistent development of the struggle.

Moreover, with their empiricist view of the struggle, black militants view the various sectors of the black struggle as developing independently of one another. The BPP thinks that only "the community" and not students should be organized. DRUM feels that the need for community and student organization is secondary, and rejects the need for a party. They feel revolutionary black caucuses of workers will be the central form for the whole black struggle. Even where militants are conscious of the need to connect and extend the struggle in several sectors, in practical application and organization they are restricted to one field.

Opposition to the need for a multi-national revolutionary party as the form of vanguard organization is a contributing factor to the organizational weakness of the black struggle. This is especially debilitating to the degree that black militants consciously reject the revolutionary party -- the SWP -- on an organizational and programmatic level.

Organizations more often than not develop in a dual fashion, attempting to be simultaneously both mass organizations and revolutionary cadre organizations. In this period, that doesn't work. Thus, DRUM tries to be both a trade union caucus and an organization for revolutionary cadre. Black workers who are not yet on a "revolutionary" level, but who want to struggle around caucus-type demands, are alienated and isolated from DRUM. In the BPP, the need for building action along the lines of their transitional ten point program is obfuscated by their increasingly Stalinist "vanguard" nature.

Imagine what the character and depth of the antiwar struggle would be if our total cadre was the size of our current number of black cadres. This imaginary exercise helps bring the current state of the black movement for self-determination into better focus. We see only a dim reflection of the potential for struggle in the black struggle, since the main problem is not in objective conditions or in mass combativity, but in the crisis in the leadership of the politicalized vanguard.

An example of this problem which is strangely overlooked in our attitudes toward the antiwar movement is the effect that this crisis has had on the antiwar struggle. The fact that no national black organization or series of organizations has seriously addressed itself to the need to build the antiwar struggle in the black community is a major political factor that should not and cannot be ignored.

We correctly discuss the importance of the lack of a labor party to the development of the antiwar radicalization, though in this period our call for a labor party is chiefly propagandistic and not directly related to current mass consciousness. In this light how much of an error is it, that we have rarely pointed out internally or in our publications and external work the relationship between the lack of a mass independent black political party and the character of the antiwar movement, since we see our call for a mass black party as a transitional demand closely related to mass consciousness. The lack of participation of blacks and other Third World people in the antiwar movement is the most important weakness of the current antiwar movement, and is a determining factor in the

overall political situation in this country.

This weakness in the antiwar field is a minor example of the damaging effects of the current lack of leadership, effects which extend to all other areas of the black struggle.

The need for building a black cadre in the SWP exists not only on a programmatic level (i.e. understanding of various political and organizational questions) but on an organizational level. The struggle against U.S. capitalism is not one in which the black struggle is separated from the struggles of Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Indians, Orientals, or whites. Indeed, the struggles of black, white and other workers will take place in the same plants and same unions. Already we see the student struggles in which the dynamic of black students' and white students' struggles is a combined and intermixed one.

This situation makes necessary a party to project the centralism of the revolutionary workers, against the armed might of the imperialists, a centralism united around one party with one revolutionary Trotskyist program.

To have a correct political orientation toward any struggle, a revolutionary party must also take into account its orientation toward other struggles, and its tactics for building itself in all arenas. It is the uneven development of the various sectors of the working class that makes the existence of a revolutionary class party necessary, for it is the vanguard party's task to close the gaps in consciousness by pushing the various struggles toward a revolutionary program. Proposals for the formation of separate, white, black, or Latin, Marxist Leninist parties do not take this factor into account.

Thus, the objective tasks of our party are clear: to build a large black cadre within the party that must strive for the leadership of the black struggle. We must see this as a necessity for the successful development of the American revolution and of the black struggle for self-determination as it exists at present.

It is important to understand the relation between objective and subjective factors in our recruitment. There are definitely limitations on our recruitment at present imposed by the general objective conditions, both among blacks and whites. The lack of any radical activity on a mass scale by the working class and of a socialist tendency with political hegemony in the radical movement, prevent socialist radicalization on a mass scale among both whites and blacks.

It is also true that a certain amount of recruitment among blacks to our organization is limited by its current predominantly white character, and especially because of the current absence of a large scale radicalization among white workers.

However, these factors do not come anywhere near explaining the state of our recruitment of blacks or the level of the opportunities before us. Indeed, any proper understanding of even these "objective" factors leads to opposite conclusions from that of the "objective conditions preclude recruitment" theory.

While objective limits to our recruitment in this field do exist, we have in no way reached them. To say that limitations exist in the titanic struggle of Third World people does not mean that they are on the paltry scale of our level of black recruitment. Objective limitations and our organizational strength may mean that between now and the close of the year we will not be able to recruit and hold 1,000 blacks and Latins to the youth and party. But certainly, this limitation does not prevent us from recruiting one hundred in this period. We have only begun to scratch the surface of our Third World recruitment possibilities.

Even these objective limitations cause no permanent problem, not taking into account a change in the objective conditions. We are dialecticians not formalists. We don't see permanent immutable categories which exist for all time, or any time, without change. We understand that motion is not just from quality to quality, but that quantitative changes in time bring about changes in quality.

We understand that because we have at this time a weak Third World cadre, our recruitment is to this degree hindered. That does not mean we will always be weak in this category, until outside factors (white workers) change. We believe that quantitative increases will change the quality of our cadre if correct policies are used. We know that if it is to make the revolution, our party cannot be forever as it is today.

Our understanding of the unfolding of the North American revolution tells us that the panacea of a mass working-class radicalization will not solve our problem. Since the black people, including a large workers component, have a vanguard role, it is their struggle that will be key in setting off the large radicalizations and mobilizations of the working class that are coming. They are doing so not just in relation to workers' struggles but in relation to current student struggles. The white working-class radicalization will come at the heels and under the tow of the black radicalization.

The tendency that is able to win strength out of the vanguard struggle, will be able to set the tone of white working-class struggles. Moreover, because of the vanguard role that blacks play, even after such a radicalization blacks will be playing a central role. We do not feel that nationalism will crumble after such a radicalization, rather history teaches that it will increase. It is a total error for a vanguard Leninist party to base its hopes for attracting members of the vanguard of the class on its ability to attract the current rear-guard of the class in a distant unforeseen situation. Such a strategy would be a mockery of Leninism.

What is our problem of recruitment? What must we do?

The main problem lies not in the objective situation, but in our subjective situation, in our failure to organize correctly to take advantage of opportunities. Branches, the party as a whole, and the youth organization are only beginning to deal with orienting to the task of building our black cadre. To the degree this has been done, we have begun to register modest successes. In the past year, we have recruited many Third World militants. This has been especially true in areas where we have previously had few active black comrades such as New York where we have a Third World fraction of nearly twenty, or in the East Bay where we have a leading influence among sectors of the Chicano movement.

The problem is largely one of our consciousness. First it is necessary to understand our task of constructing a multi-national Leninist vanguard. We have to understand that we are not a white organization, but a multi-national one that has to recruit on that basis.

Our actual functioning in carrying out these tasks embodies turning the party branches and youth locals toward this work organizationally, although this will only succeed if the political questions are understood. Because of the weakness of our cadre within the struggle, our propaganda instruments, which are principally party institutions, must be put to maximum usage. Forums, sales, educational series, public meetings, all must be applied toward recruitment in this area. This must be thought out and consciously organized. This is not mainly the responsibility of Third World comrades or comrades assigned to black work committees, but of the executive committee branch leaderships.

Secondly, our youth intervention in campus and high school struggles can lead to important breakthroughs. Radicalization of the vanguard of the black strug-

gle is taking place primarily within the campus struggles. We must make use of our intervention to recruit Third World militants. We want to involve them in all campus activities and struggles. We do not aim to prove only that we are the best Marxist supporters of the nationalist struggle for self-determination; we aim to recruit blacks to our movement.

Significant contacts for our movement can be made from Third World participation in antiwar struggles. Our work at Fort Jackson has shown this. In Detroit by organizing a Third World student strike against the war on April 4, our comrades were able to get in contact with a wide layer of high school students. We have recruited several from this layer, and expect to recruit more. In Detroit, Chicago, New York, and other areas comrades are planning to maximize this work in the fall. In line with our general antiwar tasks and our recruitment needs, all areas should push this work. In areas where we do not have Third World members, we will want to involve blacks to a maximum in the Student Mobilization Committee and other formations.

It is important to realize that possibilities for recruitment increase as the struggle enters its current stage. The same process of testing that has weakened the Panthers, means that more than ever black militants, especially stu-

dents, are looking more seriously for a program that will explain the black struggle and other questions as well.

A whole milieu has developed that is opposed to the ultra-left rhetoric of the BPP, but who are looking for revolutionary solutions. We have recruited mainly from this milieu in New York. Nationally we must orient to it.

A large milieu both within and without the BPP is beginning to look for the lessons of the degeneration of the Panthers. When I was in Detroit, where the Panthers have been dissolved after three weekly leadership purges by Chicago and national office Panther leaders, several of the ex-Panther officers (from different purges!) agreed that it was the lack of democracy and the absence of a transitional approach that spelled the doom of the BPP. We can and will recruit from this layer.

The key to all progress is organizationally and politically understanding the tasks before us: the need to build a multi-national Leninist party and the need to consciously increase our work in the field of the black liberation struggle for self-determination. These are among the most crucial tasks for the SWP at its convention and among the most important challenges for the party leadership that will be elected there.

INFORMATION AND PROPOSALS ON THE MEXICAN-AMERICAN STRUGGLE

By Norman Hodgett

Although there is a vast amount of available information on the Mexican-American movement, our movement has not yet assembled and analyzed it from a Marxist point of view. The need for such work is being significantly accelerated by the growing involvement of the party and youth in Latin American work, leading to recruitment and a need for still further involvement.

With branches of the SWP and YSA functioning in the Southwest (Arizona, Central and Southern California, New Mexico, Colorado, Texas and Utah), the Mexican-American struggle takes on a new perspective. Mexican-Americans must be seen not as simply the second largest minority and an oppressed nation, but in a few cities the majority of the population and in many cities the largest minority with the potential of engaging in a mass struggle against the system.

While almost every pattern of segregation applied to the Afro-American has been suffered by Mexican-Americans, it is risky to roughly generalize from one minority to another. A different history has produced the unique characteristics of the Chicano. Parallels can be found with the black struggle and in some cases even more significantly with the French Canadians in Quebec.

Because of the period of national and international struggle, the Mexican mass movement has leaped over stages which other mass movements have taken many years to reach. Especially on the question of developing a class program, some sections of the Chicano movement have advanced rapidly.

The foregoing is becoming commonly known in radical circles, but the question of the history and roots of this movement are not so commonly known. The mass struggles of the Mexican-American against Anglo capitalist and colonial oppression dates back in history over 150 years, and when one considers that the Mexican population is considerably American Indian, the history of hard-fought mass struggles dates back for centuries.

The contemporary multiple economic and social problems faced by the Mexican people have produced many different organizational forms and programs; but the struggle, although complex, is unifying. It is useful to analyze the movement from several different approaches: first, the existing organizations of struggle, their programs and composition; second, the breakdown of the movement into youth, student, worker, trade union, urban and rural categories. This will be the general pattern of this discussion following a

very brief outline of Mexican-American history. I have attempted not to repeat the facts already presented by Richard Garza in Bulletin Vol. 27, No. 3.

Background: Historic and Sociological Factors

Mexican-Americans are related to American Indians both racially and culturally. Analysis reveals the importance of both the Spanish and Indian peoples in creating the present-day Mexican-American. The Spanish, bringing with them the most advanced forms of European knowledge of their day to the Americas, eventually settled and based themselves on the Pueblo Indian, laying the foundation for the building of the American Southwest.

Isolated from the North Americas until the beginning of the nineteenth century, Chicanos were little prepared to ward off the colonializing and capitalist forces that were soon to engulf them. The contemporary Mexican became a citizen of the United States through force, colonial conquest, and purchase of his territory -- but primarily through force.

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 ended the Mexican-American War. Its provisions stipulated "...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 quarantees equally ample as if the same belonged to citizens of the United States." By 1853 the U.S. had acquired one million square miles of Mexican territory -- one-half of all Mexico.

Following the conquest of this new territory, North American business interests proceeded to plunder the economic wealth of the Mexican people, reducing them to the status of lowest paid and forced labor. Through brutality, poll-tax laws, the judicial process, and the educational system the conquest was almost complete in fifty years.

It is not surprising that a high proportion of Spanish-named individuals in the Southwest consider themselves Mexican and do not think of themselves first as Americans. Throughout this period, the Chicanos did fight for their citizenship rights, but their basic identity was that of a suppressed nation. A recent example of this outlook was manifested when members of the Crusade For Justice, led by Corky Gonzales took down the Colorado flag over the state capitol in Denver and replaced it with the Mexican flag.

Another factor contributing to nationalist feelings of the Chicanos is the fact that a large percentage of them are living within the barrios and are only second- and third-generation American citizens. Further, large numbers of Mexican immigrants have been recruited or moved into the Southwest as low paid labor for the benefit of business. Wherever Mexican immigrants move in the Southwest (by immigrants I mean present-day citizens of Mexico), they find colonies of Spanish-speaking, Mexican-American residents with Mexican-operated rooming houses, restaurants, barber shops and stores.

Economically and technologically Mexican labor and science has built the Southwest. Developed concepts of mining, farming, ranching, animal husbandry, and irrigation were brought from Spain by some of the most scientifically advanced elements of the time, on a distinctly higher educational level than the Northern European invaders. When the Anglo set foot in the Southwest, whether cowboy or miner, he received not an insignificant part of his know-how from the Spanish. After achieving dominance, the North American isolated the Mexican-American communities in order to exploit their labor.

Mexican workers made up the labor force in the major economic areas of copper, coal mining, agriculture, sheep and cattle ranching, the sugar industry, meat-packing, and building construction. Each industry maneuvered and vied for its monopoly of the exploitation of Mexican labor. For instance, the agricultural business interest in Texas hired goons to engage in violence to prevent the Colorado sugar industry from employing Texas-based Mexican workers.

The Mexican workers' struggle to ward off this exploitation has been long, courageous, and often well organized. Of all the working-class groups in America, it is the greatest slander to say that the Chicano has been slow to move. The trade unions of the Southwest were built by Mexican workers. In many cases deported Mexican workers along with those returning voluntarily from the United States built the trade union movement in Mexico.

"As early as 1903, over a thousand Mexican and Japanese sugar-beet workers went on strike in Ventura, California.... In October, 1915, three unions of Mexican miners, numbering about five thousand men, went on strike at the Clifton, Morenci and Metcalf mines. This strike was largely called over the issue of the 'Mexican rate' and against the tyrannical conduct of foremen who sold jobs to Mexicans and forced them to buy tickets in raffles as a condition for holding their jobs. The company sealed up the mouth of the mine

with cement and told the strikers 'to go back to Mexico.' Hundreds of miners were arrested and the National Guard was finally sent in to break the nineteen-week-old strike. On June 27, 1917, the Arizona copper miners, Mexican and non-Mexican, went on strike. After being out for a month, a vigilante mob rounded up 1,186 of the strikers and shipped them, in box-cars, to Columbus, New Mexico. The Columbus officials would not permit them to get off the train, so they were taken out and dumped in the desert. In 1928 a strike of field workers was broken by wholesale arrests and deportation. However, two years later, five thousand Mexican field workers struck in the Imperial Valley and won some of their demands.

"In June 1933, seven thousand Mexicans walked out of the berry, onion and celery fields of Los Angeles, California. With scarcely an exception, every strike in which Mexicans participated in the borderlands in the thirties was broken by the use of violence and was followed by deportations. In most of these strikes, Mexican workers stood alone; that is, they were not supported by organized labor. Their organizations, for the most part, were not affiliated with the CIO or the AFL." (McWilliams, Carey. North From Mexico.)

Revolutionary workers and socialist organizations have appeared many times in Mexican-American history. The presence of Leon Trotsky in Mexico was of no small importance to radical thought in the Chicano communities. Mexican-American communities have also been the birthplace of workers struggles in Mexico itself. As previously mentioned, trade unionism in Mexico was largely motivated by participants in the Mexican Southwest labor struggles. In 1910 a small liberation army was organized by Ricardo Flores Magon from a base in Los Angeles. Its purpose was to bring about a socialist revolution in Mexico. After successfully capturing Mexicali and Tijuana, they were forced to retreat because of amateur organization and were arrested by U.S. government agents. Ricardo Magon died in Leavenworth Prison. Mexicans throughout the Southwest mourned his passing.

Cultural Nationalism

Cultural nationalism has become an important part of the Mexican-American movement. Capitalism segregates the Chicano, confining him to ghettos. Despite the oppressive physical environment of many of the barrios, a fundamental difference in values has led many individuals living in them to value this isolation from the majority American way of life.

Recognition of the uniqueness of the Mexican culture is important for maximum effectiveness in revolutionary work

in these nationalist organizations. Just as an effort has been made to "Afro-Americanize Marxism," it is also necessary to "Mexican-Americanize" and "Puerto Ricanize" Marxism.

An exceedingly important aspect of the culture of Mexican-Americans is the high degree of sophistication and an absence of the intellectual backwardness that pervades America. Literature and the arts in general are highly prized in barrios that are not overwhelmed with depression. Corky Gonzales himself is widely known in the movement as a poet and playwright. The smallest of Spanish settlements or plazas during the frontier days would honor and respect their poet.

A rejection of pragmatism as a philosophy of life is very common. Concepts of social justice and the dignity of man are very prominent in the thinking of Mexican working people. Much has been retained from the Indian culture. Concepts of collectivism probably have many of their roots in the primitive communism of the Pueblo Indian. Most important, nationalism in the Mexican community is not only a defensive measure but a positive affirmation of their national culture which existed long before the Northern European arrived on this continent.

International influences have been considerable in the barrios. The impact of immigrants from Mexico is obvious. Immigrants from all Latin American countries have settled in the barrios. Mexican-Americans associated with Corky Gonzales in the 1960's played an important role in the Fair Play for Cuba work in Colorado. The recent USIA Justice Committee film on the Mexican student strike is presently being shown widely throughout the American Southwest. The SWP and YSA branches in the Southwest already have had some influence in the struggle.

The willingness of Chicanos to work with the black struggle has also been obvious, especially work with the Black Panther organizations. This has not taken place without some friction, but the tendency has been toward cooperation in a common struggle.

A firm historic foundation against white capitalist oppression of the black man has existed since the days of slavery. As early as 1839 a fairly large number of Negro slaves had escaped from their Texas owners by crossing the Rio Grande, and a sizable colony of ex-slaves had sprung up in Matamoros. During the Civil War, the Texans suspected that native Mexicans were implicated in the flight of fugitive slaves. The accusation finds circumstantial confirmation in the known opposition of Mexicans to slavery (Mexico had sought to invert a provision in the treaty barring slavery forever from the territory

ceded to the United States).

Organizations of Struggle

The nationalism of this oppressed nation has provided the cohesion for the movement and its organizations. However, the overall social outlook and programs of the Mexican-American organizations have been dominated by a working-class approach. Large numbers of middle-class elements are generally absent along with any philosophical pacifist tendencies (Cesar Chavez being the noticeable exception; even here most National Farm Workers Union members are not pacifist oriented). In contrast to the black movement, neither the church nor the clergy has emerged in any leading role.

Four tendencies and organizational forms dominate the struggle. All of these organizations have been formed in the last seven years. Through militant actions they have captured the support of much of their communities and in many cases have extracted victories that have left the capitalist forces concerned and painfully wounded.

The Crusade for Justice is a broad community organization. It is headquartered in Denver, Colorado. The Crusade maintains a sizable apparatus: staff, building, meeting facilities, newspaper and routine functions. The organization was formed nearly four years ago. It has an active membership of several hundred with an additional two to three thousand book members. A majority of Denver's 70,000 Chicanos identify with the program of the Crusade. Some Chicano militants united with the leadership of the Crusade only after close scrutiny due to the leadership's past Democratic Party ties.

Led and organized by Rudolpho "Corky" Gonzales, along with Emilio and Juanita Dominguez functioning in key roles, the Crusade has involved itself in militant struggles against the war in Vietnam, and struggled for community control of schools, national organization of the Chicano youth, labor organization, and cultural activities of the Mexican-American people. The Crusade has fielded a series of national trailblazing activities to help organize Mexican-Americans throughout the United States.

Efforts by the Denver branch of the SWP, Mexican-American independents who supported our program, and other local organizations helped to bring about the present break of the Crusade with the Democratic Party. The Gonzales-led movement plays a dominant role in Southwestern antiwar activities. The ability of the Crusade to mobilize a unit of several hundred disciplined anti-Vietnam war fighters has been on many occasions an important deterrent against threatened right-

wing violence.

The recent National Chicano Youth Conference was hosted by the Crusade for Justice. (A report on the size, composition and politics was carried in The Militant.) The delegation of our comrades was well received and must literature was sold.

The staff attorneys for the Crusade for Justice are Eugene Deikman and Harry Nier.

The Alianza Federal de Pueblos Libres is based on a program of reclaiming land seized illegally from the Mexican-American population in the Southwest. The goals of the organization are also separatist in nature. Illegal seizure of land of the Mexican-American farmers has never ceased since the forced annexation of this territory.

Reis Lopez Tijerina, the president and founder of Alianza, besides being the most well-known man in the state of New Mexico, is one of the most respected leaders among Mexican-Americans. NBC labeled Tijerina "the most hated man in Mexico." Among many Anglos this is probably true. The Alianza office in Albuquerque, a converted concrete garage, has been bombed six times. The bombings destroyed twelve cars and six trucks.

The key to understanding the land movement, its program, and especially its formulations is to understand the history of New Mexico and southern Colorado's Spanish and Indian populations. In this region the Mexican population has retained many more of the early historic forms of their culture, language, and values than have Mexican-Americans in the highly urbanized sections of the Southwest. No sizable section of America has developed in more total isolation from the rest of the United States than has this region, separated by desert, Apache Indian attacks and cultural values. This struggle has produced political forms which are difficult for Anglo militants to understand.

Through Tijerina's leadership the Alianza has led many seizures to reclaim stolen land, and has made citizens arrests of U.S. government agents and armed self-defense efforts against police attacks. The Alianza has demanded increased welfare and Medicaid benefits, fought for pay raises among Albuquerque sanitation workers, organized classes, exposed a "horsemeat scandal" in the public schools, protested police brutality, and "begun a no-holes-barred struggle for restoration of the Spanish language, history and culture."

Tens of millions of acres have been stolen from Mexican-Americans. They were

taken at gunpoint by gold miners and rancheros; by enterprising lawyers, waving Anglo documents and incomprehensible tax claims published in cities five hundred miles away; by Governor Pile, who sold most of the New Mexican archives as waste paper for \$30. And it was taken for national forests, and named after hated Indian-butchers like Kit Carson.

Tijerina's organization is very small. Many of his methods remind one of John Brown's. The newspaper of the movement, El Grito del Norte, is edited by Elizabeth Sutherland Martinez. It carries stories on revolutionary Cuba and other international struggles. Rumors indicate the presence of many internal differences and antagonisms within the small apparatus. Tijerina in recent years has been involved in attempts at independent political action.

While 80 percent of the Chicano population lives in the cities, there is a strong identification with the farm workers. The movement that has achieved much recent success in organizing farm workers is the National Farm Workers Association. With great effort and dedication, Cesar Chavez, the leader of the National Farm Workers Association, and a small group of associates have succeeded in dramatizing the problems of the Mexican-American both in the cities as well as on the farm. Masses of Mexican-Americans and young people from other communities rallied around the struggles of the farm workers. This was the single biggest issue that began the Mexican-American civil rights movement.

Following these steps in labor and community organization, Chavez's weakness for future leadership began to appear when he endorsed the Democratic Party campaign of both Brown and Kennedy. However despite Chavez' pacifist tendencies and his gravitation toward opportunist politics, there should be no lack of awareness of the role his leadership has played in pulling together a mass union struggle of farm workers under almost impossible conditions. Enduring company goons, firings, and every conceivable form of company pressure, the farm workers have won several victories. Besides organization of the workers, key points in the farm workers' strategy have been the use of the boycott involving sizable community forces outside of the workers involved. The most recent struggle has involved the organizing of grape pickers. The strike has attracted public sympathy and has resulted in enormous losses of sales to the companies, which in turn prompted the Pentagon to order vast amounts of table grapes for the troops in Vietnam.

Because of the victories of the National Farm Workers Association and its

wide public support, the AFL-CIO was forced to accept affiliation of the National Farm Workers Association and granted them a \$14,500-a-month subsidy.

The most revolutionary forces are found among Chicano youth. Students and youth organizations have sprung up from California to Detroit, Michigan. The programs of the youth are deeply affected by the black nationalist feelings of the Afro-American youth. Some groupings go under the name of the Brown Berets, others as Mexican-American student organizations.

Recently Young Socialist Alliance comrades at a university in Phoenix collaborated with a Mexican-American student organization around a labor struggle of laundry workers. There are probably many such involvements throughout the Southwest with Mexican-American organizations which should be compiled as information on this struggle. I hope we will be receiving information from other comrades who have been active in this struggle.

Trade Unions

Mexican labor built the Southwest. This statement is equally true when it is applied to technological know-how. Highly advanced concepts in mining, farming, ranching, animal husbandry were brought from Spain and developed by the Mexicans. Chicanos have remained in the forefront of militant trade unionism in the Southwest.

Key areas of labor struggles are mining, agriculture, the building trades, meat-packing, and canning. The human suffering endured by Mexican labor in desert mining and agricultural work which demand long hours of back-breaking labor often in choking dust amidst insects and under a flaming sun would be hard to imagine by those who have not spent time among them.

The former Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers Union with a very large Mexican-American membership withstood the attacks of the witchhunt. The radical film Salt of the Earth portrays one such example of the militancy of these workers. Comrades who have petitioned during the presidential election campaigns among the Mexican-American copper workers in Utah can verify the receptiveness of Mexican-American workers to socialist ideas.

The agricultural workers union was the first mass labor movement in many years to openly call upon the left and community forces for assistance. Besides economic benefits, another important side of the large-scale trade union involvement of the Mexican population is the class character which it gives to the nationalist organizations. There are no

other mass organizations in America in which party members of non-Mexican-American origin can work so openly and find so much receptiveness to their class and international program as they can in Chicano organizations.

Student and Youth Movement

The statistics about the size, number, and composition of the Chicano youth organizations have yet to be assembled. That they will play an ever increasing role is attested to by the struggle at San Francisco State and the National Chicano Youth Conference held in Denver, Colorado.

The Chicano youth rebellion has few signs of being in part a rebellion against older elements in their communities. Its direction is against the Anglo power structure. Much less of a generation gap has been apparent for years on the picket lines. Older people are more inclined to consider it their duty to support the struggles of the youth. The involvement of entire families is common in the Alianza, Crusade for Justice and National Farm Workers Union.

It is only recently that youth organizations have begun to appear, indicating the vanguard role that young people generally play in struggles. But among many Mexican-Americans this tends to be true because of health and energy levels rather than because the older generation supports the system.

Puerto Rican-Chicano Unity

There should be no resistance to promoting a common unity in struggle of Latin nations in North America. A common fight against the same Anglo capitalism that has responded in the same colonial way is basic. The Puerto Rican and Mexican peoples have the same language and some cultural similarities. In Chicago, the two communities live in the same barrios and despite some past conflicts have formed common organizations of struggle. A sizable delegation of Puerto Ricans (50 to 60 youth from New York and Chicago), attended the National Chicano Youth Conference. In New York a Dominican organization whose members live in a Puerto Rican section have as their central activity the support of the Mexican-American farm workers grape boycott. The international revolutionary activity of Che Guevara characterized a certain Latin internationalism.

As mass struggles emerge, Third-World concepts can be important in coordinating the Puerto Rican, Mexican-American and black struggle. However, this concept must be applied carefully, basically as a coordinating concept. It should not replace the concept of Puerto Rican work, Mexican-American work, and Afro-American

work and the fractional formations that arise from this.

The Role of the SWP and the YSA

A great deal of time, energy, and involvement has been spent over the last year by our Southwestern branches of both party and youth in the Mexican-American struggle. No one pattern of work appears to have evolved. The most obvious weakness in our work has been the lack of information and no delegated national Third World or Latin activities committee in the center to compile information and provide coordination and direction.

It goes almost without saying, that the best way to intervene in a mass struggle is nationally. However, it is natural and correct that the first awareness of a need to intervene should come from the branches.

The SWP perspective of building a multi-national revolutionary party is most immediately realizable in Latin communities throughout the United States. The reasons for this have already been partially given. An added asset is that Mexican-Americans and Puerto Rican comrades are able to do work and recruitment in black communities more easily than white Anglo comrades.

Nationalism just isn't enough, and most Mexican-American organizations are tied programmatically to the working-class struggle. Organizations in the community tend to take the form of mass organizations of either class, community, or both. In general, Mexican-American Marxists tend to see themselves in alliance with existing revolutionary parties. Black Panther-type equivalents do exist, but they are not the rule. An important determining factor as to whether or not Mexican revolutionaries are propelled in the direction of a nationalist party could partially depend on the tactics of the SWP. That is, are we willing and able to do the necessary work, develop the literature, to make Latin militants aware of our desire to form a multi-national revolutionary party and at the same time to help build the Mexican-American and Puerto Rican struggle for national liberation? The New York local has taken a big step in this direction with the establishment of an active Third World fraction. This effort should be expanded to other branches where recruitment is possible, and further immediate steps should be taken to coordinate these activities. It would be a serious mistake to overly generalize from our experiences in the black struggle to the broad mass organizations in the Mexican communities for the following reasons:

1. These organizations are not parties with exclusion clauses. Mexican-Am-

erican organizations in general welcome at least limited Anglo radical participation.

2. Our party already has had key personnel associated with all of these movements -- both Mexican-American and Anglo comrades. For instance, Froben Lozada, who is a comrade, and Della Rossa, a comrade, have participated. I have also served on the boards and committees of Mexican-American organizations for a ten-year period.

3. Recruitment of Latins to a predominantly Anglo revolutionary socialist party and youth organization has not proved to be difficult, offering our most immediate opportunity to begin transforming our party into a multi-national revolutionary organization.

4. We must resist any signs of concern that involvement in the Latin struggle will undercut our work in the black struggle. Nothing can be more false than this. Chicano and Puerto Rican recruitment would accelerate our recruitment of black members.

Proposals

1. Assigning time for a panel discussion on the Mexican-American and Puerto Rican struggles during one of the evenings of the coming party convention with recommendations from the participants to be made to the incoming National Committee.

2. The establishment of a national Latin or Third-World committee or work fraction.

3. A development of at least one good pamphlet each on the Mexican-American and Puerto Rican struggles.

4. A greater effort in the Southwest and New York City to recruit Mexican-Americans and Puerto Ricans to the SWP and the YSA.

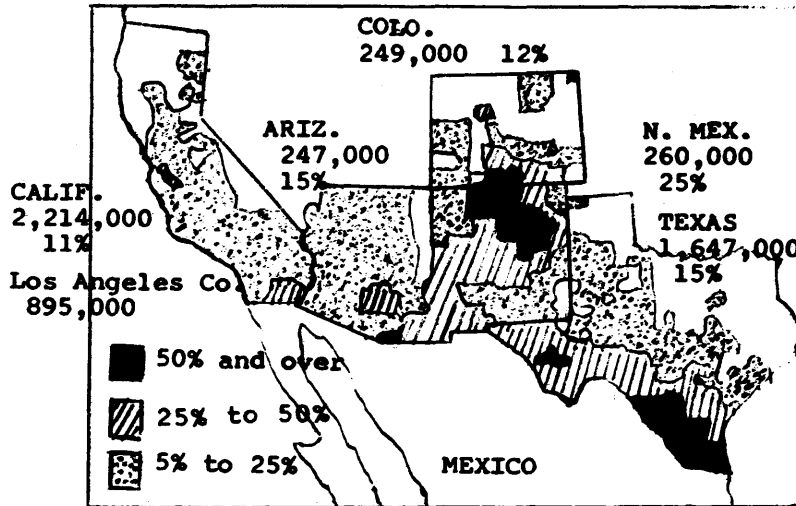
5. Coming to grips with the question of independent political action based on Latin American struggles. Is the party nationally on record in favor of independent Mexican or Puerto Rican political action? Or is this a position that has evolved out of our local campaign committees? I don't know. If we support independent political action, what are the specific criteria for our support? Many times Mexican-American groupings move quite rapidly. A number of contacts of a branch suddenly take the party up on its position of independent political action and help put together a community grouping, coming to the party for support. This is exactly what happened in Denver,

Colorado, some three years ago. While the Colorado New Hispano Party was a pretty shaky political party, it still posed the same problem.

at the moment to convince revolutionary nationalists that to be a consistent nationalist, you have to be interested in building a Marxist-Leninist party.

The Latin struggle in the U.S. is the one place where it is most realizable

July 12, 1969
New York



4,617,000 Americans with Spanish surnames in 5 Southwestern states. Several million more individuals of Mexican culture reside in the United States. Many live in northern and midwestern America. Others are not included in the figure because they do not have Spanish surnames.