

# ***The Future Is Up To Us***

***A Revolutionary Talking Politics  
With the American People***



**Nelson  
Peery**

The Future  
Is Up To Us

Also by Nelson Peery:

*The Negro National Colonial Question* (1975)

*African American Liberation and Revolution in the United States* (1992)

*Black Fire* (1994)

*Black Radical* (2007)

# The Future Is Up To Us

*A Revolutionary Talking Politics  
With The American People*

*Second Edition*

**Nelson Peery**

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## **FOREWORD**

*The Future Is Up to Us* was originally published in May 2002. The first edition played an important role in clarifying some burning questions facing revolutionaries at that time. We have decided to print this second edition because a new generation of revolutionaries has stepped forward recently, fighters for a new society who can benefit from the long-term historical perspective in this volume.

*The Future Is Up to Us* consists of excerpts from wide-ranging interviews conducted with Nelson Peery between 1994 and early 2001. These interviews took place after the publication of the author's award-winning autobiography *Black Fire: The Making of an American Revolutionary* in 1994. *Black Fire* recounts the author's experience of growing up during the Great Depression and fighting in the Second World War. It received critical acclaim and prompted many readers to ask the author for his views on how the world has changed since 1945 (the point when *Black Fire* ends). These readers also wanted to understand what the qualitative nature of that change is, and how someone could become a revolutionary today.

While a few typographical errors and imprecise formulations have been corrected in this second edition, the volume remains essentially the work published in May 2002. Because the book's purpose is to describe the broad sweep of history, no attempt has been made to update the specific examples used in the first edition. Every day's news provides more vivid illustrations of the unfolding of the processes described in this book. Today, more than a decade after its original publication, *The Future Is Up to Us* is a work that stands on its own and would be pointless to alter.

We hope this volume contributes to a wide-ranging discussion among today's revolutionaries.

— *The Editors, May 2015*

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## **PREFACE**

This collection of statements was first recorded during several interviews on some pressing questions facing the new generation of revolutionaries. It is an effort to present Marxism in an easily understood way. The idea of the discussions originated with Abdul Alkalimat. Rosemary Williams, the heroine of the project, did the difficult job of transcribing the tapes. Marilyn Borgendale pitched in her considerable talents to edit and advise the book along its way. Dana Yarak applied his imaginative and graphic arts skills to turn cold type into an attractive and accessible volume. Diana Berek helped design and select the graphics. Lew Rosenbaum organized the process to its conclusion.

I take responsibility for my statements and formulations. But much of what I have learned is through the collective process. Throughout these essays, you will find me saying “we think and we know” as often as “I think and I know.” Therefore, I give credit to the collectives of which I’ve been a part. Individuals make books the way they make history, in unity with others.

I wish to thank all the people who asked the questions and patiently listened to my answers. And thanks to all the comrades who kicked my butt to finish this book. Thanks, too, to those I had to kick in order to finish.

— *Nelson Peery, May 2002*



## **INTRODUCTION**

### *A Revolutionary Talking Politics With The American People*

I had finished an interview on “Good Day, Atlanta,” a popular morning show. From there, I went to Underground Atlanta, the old railroad station that has been converted into a popular eating and shopping center. I had no more started eating my lunch when the waiter said, “Hey, I know you; I saw you on TV. I thought that stuff you were saying was right on, man.” Then I noticed a white guy standing just to the side of me very patiently waiting for me to notice him. Southerners are still polite. I stood up and invited him to please sit down. He declined, saying his family was waiting for him. Then he went on to say he had seen the interview. “I’m from Vicksburg, Mississippi and there is no way for me to be a communist.” Then he said, “I’m not going to agree with you, but at the same time, I want to tell you that this was the only sensible resolution of this problem that I’ve heard so far and we’d better resolve the problem, soon.” We all agreed on what the problem is: something must be done to guarantee people at least the means of survival.

I thought that he summarized the attitude of a large number of people, who, for ideological reasons, are not prepared to accept communism, but understand there is no other way. Either the method of distribution is changed to guarantee the necessities of life to those without employment, or we will have to coexist with growing numbers of bodies in the streets. In the winter of 1998 in Chicago, there were 40 or 50 bodies a month found along the roadsides and in the shelters. But the numbers are growing and either we deal with it or it will reach epidemic proportions.

Reaganomics introduced a level of selfishness hitherto unknown in our country. As bad as the ideological and moral situation has become, there is still a fundamental morality amongst human beings that simply cannot tolerate the wholesale destruction of human life. The American people will rise to their historic tasks.

## **WHAT'S UNIQUE ABOUT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE? WHO ARE WE, ANYWAY?**

Any American who has observed this country from the outside realizes that the United States and its peoples are unique amongst nations. This uniqueness is not just a reflection of the geographic or ethnic diversity of the country. It reflects the ideological diversity and contradictions that are rooted in American history.

The U.S. is, by far, the most ideological country on earth. The U.S. was founded by ideological groups and they left their mark in the form of a number of sects. Huge numbers of the population who do not belong to these sects harbor and cherish sectarian ideas and ideals.

This is the purest capitalist country in the world. The spiritualism and idealism expressed by the sects, more often than not, are in flat contradiction to life in the material world of capitalism. This contradiction was most vividly expressed by slavery and the slaughter of the indigenous peoples on the one hand, and revolutionary proclamations that thrilled democratically minded people everywhere, on the other. Revolutionary, democratic idealism coupled with the most brutal imperialism and exploitation is the context for the uniqueness of the people of this country.

Over the past few years, I have been able to travel up and down and across this country on book tours and speaking engagements publicizing my memoir, *Black Fire* (The New Press, 1994). As a revolutionary of more than fifty years, I've started summarizing and publishing my experiences for the newer comrades. The thousands of people I have talked to, and the hundreds I have listened to, confirm the grappling of the American people with this historic contradiction. The people sense that they are at, or approaching a defining fork in the road. Either they uphold political democracy and extend it into the economy, or they fall back into some sort of dark age of fascist reaction. They don't state it that way, but I got the sense they understood it that way.

During these book tours, there were three generalized groupings I met. In the first group were the interviewers, the hosts of talk shows, radio or television programs. In the second were people who came

to the bookstore readings or lectures and the third included people who had heard the radio or television interviews—people I met in the street and had some opinion or commentary on the interviews.

The radio and television personalities were very aware of the political and economic situation. They have access to all the news that is forwarded to the public, and perhaps more importantly, news that never gets out of the studio. They have information that we will never see. Their analysis of the situation is pretty much the same as the organization I belong to, the League of Revolutionaries for a New America. The difference is they have not and cannot draw conclusions from the mass of facts they possess. They give you these facts and figures and conclude by saying, “My God, this is terrible!”

The second group of people regularly visited bookstores, held discussions and had informed opinions. These people also were clear as to the problem but confused as to the resolution. Most of this group were college people, either students or faculty.

The third group was comprised of people I happened to meet under various circumstances. They were people who had read about the book or heard something about the book from the radio or television interviews. They came to the readings or lectures out of curiosity, and sometimes wanted to ask questions.

This third group was the most interesting because they were open-minded and wanted information. After a reading or a lecture, the first thing they would say is “but I thought communism was dead.” That was their opinion, and, of course, they can have no other opinion given the history of the last seventy years. They thought communism was dead because they think communism is a political system. It is very difficult to tell them that it is an economic system and explain that system as such.

This confusion clearly arises from the Cold War anti-communist propaganda. Why could that propaganda take root?

There was something more than social bribery brought about by the expansion of U.S. imperialism. Ideology always has a basis in material reality, and bribery was part of the basis. Apart from that and I think more important was the fact that both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. used the same means of production. The difference was

the relationship of the people to those machines. The contradictions were restricted to the level of ideology. The Soviet Union was an industrial country. Western European nations and the U. S. are also industrial countries. Transforming the socialist industrial system into a capitalist industrial system was relatively simple since the level of the means of production was the same. The fact that they had the same industrial foundation accounts for the life-and-death character of the struggle between the two social systems. It would have been much more difficult, and I think impossible, to have gone from one economic category to another. For example, the U. S. cannot be forced back to being an agricultural, labor intensive system. Had the Soviet Union fully developed electronic production, they could not have been forced back to either capitalism or the industrial system. Humanity never relinquishes what it has won. But the winnings are the economic formations, not the political formations. The left in the United States did not understand.

In answering the questions of this, the third group, I would try very hard to explain why we believe a cooperative rather than a competitive society (that is, economic communism) today is a practical inevitability. There are no shortcuts in this explanation. I would begin with an explanation of the concept of value. As a world system, this concept is only five or six hundred years old. Today, even the bourgeois economists agree that value is the expression of expended labor power that had gone into the creation of something that is useful to society. This is what made a world market possible. Useful things created by human labor in China or India could be exchanged with commodities made in England on the basis of how much necessary labor went into their creation. Before capitalism, things were different.

In a pure feudal system—and of course there was no such thing—there would be no value nor exchange. There was a social contract between the serfs and the feudal lords. Marauding bands of soldiers in post-Roman Europe took the land unto themselves by the force of arms. They reduced the peasants to serfs and forced them to stay on the land. Of course, the land was worthless without them. Out of, say, a six-day work week, perhaps three of those days went to working

on the land of the nobility. Then they would work the remaining days on the communal land. In exchange, the nobility would protect them from other marauding bands and feed them if the harvest failed. There was no or little value exchanged.

Now, let's move forward to robotics.

Today, we have a world market with exchange based on value. Suddenly, there is a flood of electronically produced consumer goods that are no longer exchangeable on the basis of how much human labor has gone into their production. How long can you exchange a car made by labor with an identical car made by robots? One car was made in one-quarter of the time of the other. Since they are identical, it would appear that they could be exchanged one for the other. The exchange means that the value of the labor-produced car has to sink to the production cost of the other. In this process the value of human labor sinks below the cost of its production. Of course, the ruling class cannot allow that to happen on a world scale. Consequently, we are seeing the beginning of the debauching of the world's currencies and the markets.

It is impossible to maintain a long-term relationship between things produced by labor and identical things produced by robotics. The immediate visible results are the advanced sector of the world turning to electronics, displacing the workers and condemning them to poverty. On the other hand, the more economically backward sector is being worked to death at starvation wages trying to compete.

People understand this process. In a different, qualitative way they have been through it before. Remember the old folk song, "John Henry"? There is a John Henry in every culture. It's not just a Black experience. John Henry was the leader of a steel-driving gang. Driving steel meant hammering down railroad spikes with a ten-pound sledgehammer. After the development of the steam engine, it was only a matter of time until the principle was adapted to the hammer. The boss had to decide: was it cheaper to drive these semi-paid Blacks harder to maintain profitability, or should they be fired and replaced with the steam drill? John Henry made an agreement with the boss. "If I beat the steam drill, can the men keep their jobs?" The boss agreed, adding, "You can't beat the steam drill."

John Henry laid ten lengths of track and the steam drill only made nine, but he laid down his hammer and he died. On a qualitatively higher level, this is happening to entire societies today. Some so-called Second and Third World societies do not have the resources to deeply, rapidly and broadly invest in the latest technology. They find themselves in exactly the position of John Henry. They are working themselves to death trying to compete with the robotics of the advanced countries.

Computerized production is making fifty cars with five workers. Fifty industrial workers are making five cars. The workers cannot reproduce their wages. Therefore, the capitalists in the advanced countries are getting wealthier and the people of the earth who cannot afford or are not involved in technology are getting poorer. The competition is impossible. The rapid rise of ethnic struggles reflects the attempts of the bourgeoisie of the weaker nations to secure a market for their industrial production. This is an attempt to protect themselves against the onslaught of technologically produced commodities that are absolutely necessary to humanity. Yet they are becoming increasingly unavailable even as they become increasingly cheaper to produce. People do not have the money to buy them.

This economic lesson has to be communicated to the people. Then they will understand the implications of a very important question, "What is to be done with the people who have been driven out of the marketplace and yet must consume?" I think that most of the people we talked to in the bookstores grasp this and understand that this is the historic end of the road for the capitalist system.

This projection is certainly different than what I thought as a young revolutionary. I believed that if we could win people over to an understanding of and support for the collective society based on the injustice of the capitalist system, we could move to socialism. Today, the need for this change is being forced upon people. There is no need to win them to the abstract idea or some formula of communism. We only have to explain the roots of the problems they are actually facing. They are going to organize to get what they need for their daily lives. We have to show them that given the automated

character of production, the goals of peace, freedom and social democracy are only attainable with a collective or communist system.

What is communism?

First, it is a system that allows every person to contribute to society. I place this first because self-worth, the foundation of happiness, is based on social contribution. Secondly, it is the rational distribution of the necessities of life according to need. Of course, needs are different today than two hundred years ago. Then, a person's needs were food, shelter and clothing. Today, our necessities include education, culture, health care, and other entertainment and comforts. I cannot precisely define needs, but each level of satisfaction is bound to produce greater longings and needs. They can be satisfied with the ever-expanding technology.

When I put the question this way, the people were extremely interested. I found out that a growing sector of the American people are becoming hostile to capitalism. Some of them express it openly as such, others talk about the system, and others talk about conditions. Distrust of the government and its institutions is an expression of their hostility. Most of us have seen the statistics. Twenty-two percent of the people trust the Congress. Only 23 percent have confidence in the trade union movement. Why are all these institutions coming under fire? I think it is because the people sense the impending crisis. They believe the government is lying to them about it and they don't think the government is going to protect them during the crisis.

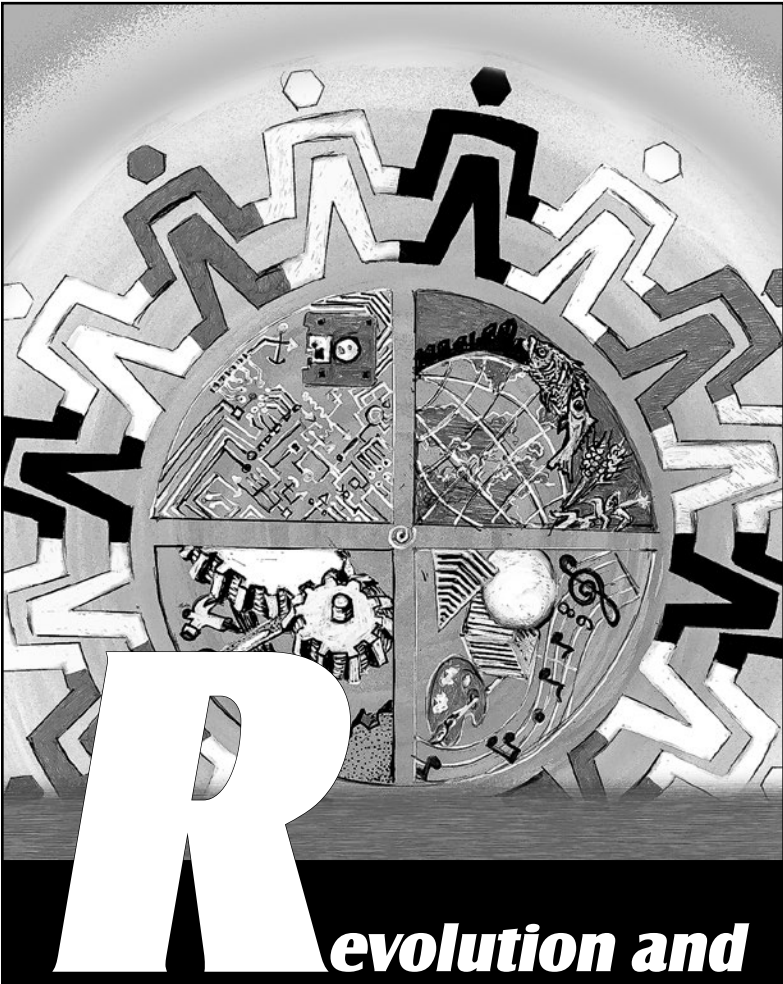
I learned a lot on the trip. Most of all, I learned we are seriously underestimating the American people. We are underestimating their readiness for a new kind of politics. I became convinced that the entire left is approaching the moment with the wrong slogans and concepts. As they say, we go for what we know. What most of us know is the political conceptions that we learned during the upheavals of the 1960s and early '70s. That is, that the answer to political problems is to organize. It is a very seductive concept. When Joe Hill stood in front of the execution wall after writing, "Don't mourn for me. Organize!" he captured the imagination of every revolutionary. Well, that concept was fine for 1915. It is not fine for the 21st century.

We have plenty of organizers out there. But they are people who only understand the defensive and their basic slogan is “Fight Back!” Every crisis brings forth a new core of organizers. Their slogan must be “Attack!” What is needed today is a core of educators who are capable of helping the people understand what they already know. More than that, we need speakers who are capable of explaining the situation and the inevitable resolution in such a way as to excite people for their historic revolutionary tasks.



# chapter 1

DIANA BEREK



## ***evolution and Class Struggle***

## **WHAT IS REVOLUTION?**

A revolution is a historical process by which a subordinate class overthrows its ruling class, establishes itself as a new ruling class and establishes a new political system. It is a process, a living thing. It has a beginning, a stage of maturing, and stages of decline and death.

The first stage is an economic revolution. Changes in the economy force changes in society, a social revolution. The change in society, the social revolution, forces a political revolution. These stages are intertwined, and exchange places as the most important factor at any given time. Each stage of the revolution has its own phases and contradictions. No revolution has ever started out as a political revolution.

People generally recognize revolution as such only when it reaches the stage of class struggle or political revolution. Serious revolutionaries, though, need to understand the process of development or what is called the line of march of the revolution in order to lead it. They need to know the roots and the direction of the revolutionary motion. If they do not know this, they will be condemned to tailing the movement.

Let's take a moment to look at the developing revolution in the United States. A revolution does not and cannot come simply from the will of people. There has to be a reason rooted in the economy. Generally, people support revolutionary activity when they perceive that "the system doesn't work anymore." This begs the question, "Why doesn't it work anymore?" Like anything else, it doesn't do what it used to do because it has changed. Why did it change? Things can only change when something has been added or subtracted. A machine stops working because a part wears out, the part is abstracted from the machine. It is no longer what it was. This also happens when something foreign to the machine is added to it. You cannot replace a gear with a ball bearing and expect it to work.

Here's a historical example we are all familiar with. Southern agriculture was very labor-intensive and profitable to the degree that laborers were paid little or nothing at all. Segregation and the oppression of the African Americans was necessary in order to carry on this near slave-like production. As Southern agriculture became mechanized,

for example through the introduction of the cotton-picking machine, the African Americans were driven off the land and into the cities. Concentrated in the cities, they had the political and social resources for a prolonged struggle. The economic revolution in agriculture was the basis of and intertwined with the social revolution known as the freedom movement.

### **WHAT IS A SOCIAL SYSTEM AND WHY ISN'T THIS ONE WORKING?**

Society is a system. A system is a combination of parts forming a complex whole. The foundation of society is made up of two basic interdependent parts of what we call the economy. One side is the way we produce and the other side is the way that production is distributed. The production process is industrial, not necessarily capitalist or socialist. An “ism” in this sense is a political term. A system of production is called capitalism because the capital (the means of production) are privately owned. An industrial economy is the combination of human labor and power-driven machinery. Its political shell can be socialist or capitalist.

When we move to the other side of the system, the way things are distributed, the “ism” becomes of decisive importance. In capitalism, everything is a system of buying and selling. The workers sell their ability to work, their labor power, and buy the commodities that are necessary to live. The capitalist buys this ability to work, the labor power, the nerve and muscle and energy that, once put in motion, becomes work, and sells the commodities that work produces. So long as everyone participates in this buying and selling, the system works. It works unfairly and unevenly, but it works. Like the machine, when something is extracted, or something foreign is added, it will no longer work.

The social problems of drugs, crime, homelessness and so forth are the result of an increase in a new kind of poverty. The increase in poverty is caused by unemployment. The unemployment is caused by something new—electronic production via labor-replacing robots entering the system. The workers buy commodities and sell their labor power

in the process of production. The robots produce, but they don't buy or sell anything. The system is being disrupted; it doesn't work anymore.

What happens in the world and people's understanding of the world are two separate things. Sometimes it takes a long time for people to grasp the meaning of very important events. Nonetheless, when their livelihood begins to change, they react. The inevitable social reaction to changes in the economy is called the spontaneous movement.

Any change in the economy brings about a spontaneous movement for reform. For example, as the industrial process called Fordism developed, a spontaneous movement for labor unions got under way. Such movements are internal, inside the system, and aim to restructure, reform or reorganize the system to reflect the new level of production.

Other movements, under other circumstances, which begin outside the system are not aimed at restructuring, but objectively aim to destroy it. Such a movement is beginning to form today. Very few people involved in that movement call themselves revolutionaries. Yet, their demands for food, housing and health care, without having to pay for any of these things, are revolutionary demands. These demands express the elementary understanding of how and why a new society has to be organized. If production is carried on without wages, then the means of life have to be distributed without money. These demands strike at the very heart of the capitalist system.

These stirrings aren't fully revolutionary yet because the people carrying them out do not realize that they are revolutionary. The main role of the conscious revolutionary is to help the fighters become conscious of what they are doing. Are there any conscious revolutionaries out there? Yes, they are out there by the thousands and hundreds of thousands. This is the beginning of the 21st century. We are not dealing with an ignorant peasant mass. The intellectual leap to consciousness on a mass scale will happen very quickly once it gets underway.

### ***WHAT IS HOLDING BACK THE PROCESS?***

People less than 60 years old have grown up under an unending barrage of anti-communist propaganda. This attack against communism has been powerful because it was linked to a steadily rising

standard of living throughout the country. When thinking and activity are linked with rewards, we all become Pavlov's dog. The great physiologist Ivan Pavlov experimented with what he called the conditioned response. In the experiment he would hit a dog and then feed it. As the dog was conditioned to this process, if it was hit and not fed, it would still go back to be hit again. We also have been hit and then fed by the capitalist system and its leaders. If we get hit and not fed, we tend to go back to get hit again in hopes of being fed.

The majority of the American people are in this process, but they are beginning to change their thinking. They know they are being hit and being hurt and are not being fed. They are still at a stage of understanding where they attempt to salvage what they still might have by blaming anyone or anything else.

This time around, however, provides conscious revolutionaries with a window of opportunity through which we can struggle for their hearts and minds. Understanding that the fundamentals have changed is of decisive importance. Anti-communist ideology united with a rising standard of living is one thing. Anti-communism linked with a declining standard of living is something else. Since the robot is more efficient than human labor the capitalist must fire the human and utilize the robot. By doing so, they strike at their indispensable base of political support. Our class enemy is losing its decisive advantage.

Some years back I used to tell the story of the famous First Battle of the Marne during World War I. The dejected French General Staff watched as the intelligence officers plotted the onslaught of the German army on the situation map. The western wing of the German army was overpowering all resistance in its drive to invest Paris. Suddenly, that army turned eastward, sweeping to the north of Paris to link up with its eastern wing. An unbelieving French officer, Marshal Foch, muttered, "My God, they are offering us their flank." An army can fight only when it faces an enemy. The object of tactics is to blindside the enemy, to attack against the side rather than the front. As you know, the French attacked that unprotected flank with everything they had. The Germans never recovered from that battle. The story is relevant because attacking the living standards of the very people the ruling class depends upon for political support is equal to offering us their

unprotected, but vital flank—the unity of the people and the capitalists. Conscious revolutionaries have to organize for this new battle.

Unfortunately, revolutionaries cannot create, educate and train revolutionaries just because we want to do so. The logic of the system and the policies of capitalist greed do that job. And they are doing a good job of it in spite of themselves. The capitalist still thinks of revolutionaries in terms of ideology. That is the old battle. The new battle—our attack against their flank—is being carried on by a new type of revolutionary who is practical, not ideological. Because they are practical, they are politically solid and the capitalists have no weapon except force to use against them. The danger, however, is that because they lack ideology, they are in constant danger of falling victim to the ideology of the very people they are fighting.

We must deeply understand that the new American revolution is already underway. The economic, the objective, side is already in revolution. No one can stop the more efficient means of production replacing the less efficient. As that happens it will become increasingly less possible to maintain the existing society.

The people are asking themselves and their leaders, “What has gone wrong with the country?” The leaders have no answers except to blame the victims. Thus, in turn, we find the victims blaming one another. Some people on welfare are blaming other people on welfare for the dismantling of the welfare system. We find some undocumented immigrants from the 1970s and 1980s blaming the undocumented of the 1990s for the decline in jobs.

The reality is that the leaders of the mass movement today find themselves in much the same situation that faced the leaders of the 1946-47 period. At that time, a new economic era was dawning. American imperialism could and did dominate a world devastated by war. The established leadership didn’t and couldn’t understand the significance of the new period. It was a political shock to see the great movement for civil and labor rights that had been built during the 1930s and during World War II collapse and be taken over by forces hostile to the former aims of the movement. Irresistible economic forces were coming into play and the leadership had to either adapt to this new era or be crushed by it. They did not change, so they were marginalized and crushed.

Today, we are entering a new epoch. A new qualitative stage of history is beginning. This is not a quantitative stage of the old process as the post-war period was. The mills of history sometimes grind slowly, but this change is fundamental. Again, the mass leaders must either adapt to the new irresistible economic forces or be crushed by them.

We are entering a period when two historic forces are colliding in the national arena. On the one hand, strike struggles are becoming more and more militant as the honest leaders use the only weapons they know how to use to defend the workers from the layoffs and pauperization of their work. They are failing. Many capitalists welcome a strike in order to introduce new machinery and hire replacement workers at half the strikers' wages. On the other hand, a new force is rising that has no choice but to meet the ruling class and all their organs of power head-on with neither side having room to make concessions. This new, disorganized, inarticulate force is the wave of the future. We revolutionaries have to find the ways and means of uniting with it. Mechanically uniting with it won't turn the trick. We cannot simply speak and agitate for this movement outside of it. We have to chemically unite with it and that means becoming an integral part of it.

How is this done? It can only be done by bringing theoretical and ideological clarity to the emerging revolutionaries. This is the only link of the chain that will not develop spontaneously. Conscious revolutionaries have to bring in that link, and when we do so, we will have become an integral part of the new American revolution.

### **WHAT IS SOCIETY?**

### **WHY ARE SOCIETIES MADE UP OF CLASSES?**

I would like to describe a class as a group of people that are economically, and consequently socially, created by specific means of production. This is broader than the classical defining of a class only according to their relationship to the means of production.

People organize themselves around the production and distribution of the necessities of life. We call such social organization a society. The type of societies they form and develop ultimately reflect the level

of the development of tools at any particular time. The rudimentary bow and spear was the foundation of the hunting and gathering society. Such elementary tools did not allow for the development of economic classes. Such classes cannot develop unless there is a surplus of food and other necessities. As the means of production improved and such surpluses were created, different groups related to tools in different ways. Some owned tools and did no work. Some owned tools and worked with them. The majority owned no tools and had to work with tools belonging to others. The first and most fundamental of divisions in society was along these lines. Consequently, modern societies are made up of economic classes of people.

As we enter the 21st century, we are on the verge of a revolution that will change a society composed of exploited and exploiting classes into a society of practical, economic communism. Classes, as such, will come to an end. In a communist society there will be divisions of socially necessary labor but none will create privilege.

### ***WHAT ARE CLASSES? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO KNOW THAT SOCIETY IS MADE UP OF CLASSES?***

A class is a very large group of people that are identified by having something in common. Various sociologists and revolutionaries, for different reasons, have created different criteria for classes. One group refers to the “leisure class.” Another refers to the “capitalist class.” The question of class is very important but I think that it’s easy to get caught up in the jargon of class without realizing why we classify people. Marx classified so that he could arrive at the conclusion he was trying to reach, how to overthrow the capitalist system. If we don’t classify and deal with classes we are faced with a mass of apparently contradictory social motions that prevent rather than assist us in attaining our goal.

I have always understood classes by the Marxist definition. However, I’m trying to get away from classical definitions for awhile. I want to simply look at what people can see. They don’t see two big social classes, capitalist and worker. They see a huge mass of people caught up in all sorts of economic and social struggles. They can only see the concrete,

contradictory struggle within society that they are part of every day. For example, what Black worker hasn't, from time to time, had to struggle with white workers more than they struggled against their employer? Who, concretely, have women had to struggle against?

We cannot grasp the concrete struggles unless we understand them in their historical and abstract settings. I'm afraid that too many militants have chosen either the historical perspective or the concrete perspective, but have not "walked on both legs." Theory explains, while doctrine is policy. I want to start from Marxism the theory, rather than Marxism as a doctrine.

When you start to see there is more to society than the industrial working class and the industrial bourgeoisie, you see all kinds of groupings. There is a financial bourgeoisie and there is an agrarian bourgeoisie and an industrial bourgeoisie and there is a industrial working class and there is an agrarian working class and there are unemployed people and there are unemployable people. I think we have to structure the question so that we can identify groups of people by the way they move in society, and what they are capable of doing to alter and change society, as well as by their relationship to the means of production. We should do it this way because it is the clash and struggles between such "mini-classes" or "sub-classes" that keeps history moving toward the struggle of basic classes over political power.

Let me give you an example of how complicated this is. There were about six million sharecroppers in the United States who were white and about five million sharecroppers who were Black. They moved in different political directions. Only occasionally did their interest as sharecroppers coincide enough to overcome the color contradictions between them. To identify a class of sharecroppers isn't a real picture of what was happening, yet they were all sharecroppers. They rented the land and they were tenant farmers. But that's not the way they moved. They moved as Black tenant farmers or as white tenant farmers. If you look at the history of sharecropping from 1870 all the way up until 1953 or 1960 even, you'll see that the major driving force was the question of color. It was much more the determining factor than the question of whether or not they were sharecroppers. Revolutionaries

did a lot of good work amongst the sharecroppers. They had to start by grappling with resolving the contradiction between Black sharecroppers and white sharecroppers as “classes” before they could even think in terms of struggle against the landlords. This practical view does not negate the historical truth that their relationship to the means of production will ultimately determine what large groups of people do.

Throughout history there has been a working class which held different names such as slave or serf or worker. Since the destruction of primitive communism, there has always been a ruling class. The name or designation of that ruling class has always been closely associated with the means of production. For example, the bow and arrow are associated with a chief. The ox and wooden plow and the sword are associated with the nobility. Manufacturing and industrial means are associated with a bourgeoisie. It is also clear that the specific designation of the working class in any particular time is even more tightly associated with the means of production. For example, a plow creates a class of plowmen, a machine creates a class of operators or mechanics. There are subgroups within the working class that are even more tightly tied to the means of production. In some parts of Europe their occupation became their family name such as Bowman, Mason or Hunter.

How do we begin categorizing classes? You can identify a large group of people by any method you want to and call it a class. So, we are going to approach this question of the classification of people somewhat obliquely to what Karl Marx did. A sharecropper is a sharecropper because somebody else owns the land. In order to farm, he had to rent that land. Since he didn't have any money he had to do it on shares. That is to say that half the product went to the owner of the land and theoretically he kept the other half for himself. Ultimately, the sharecropper didn't get his half because he had no political power. No other group in America was in this situation. Therefore, we can refer to them as a class. We have to develop this concept of class from the standpoint of history and it is quite complex. To understand sharecropping we've got to talk about who owned the land under what situation, and what condition. For example, there would not have been sharecropping if we had had Jeffersonian democracy. This route

to democracy is for every family to have a plot of their own land. But people didn't have their own land. The monopolization of Southern land created the class of sharecroppers. All this must be understood if we are to understand sharecroppers as a class.

What is the problem we are trying to solve? Our problem is to classify or categorize large groups in a way that will help us understand how they would move under what conditions. It is more than between worker and capitalist. To give practical leadership to the struggle we have to be concrete. That means seeing that the struggle spills over as contradictions between all the various groups of people that are created as a result of that specific form of ownership. Some of these contradictions are historically evolved, such as the woman question, and take a specific form under capitalism. Other struggles, such as race, (and other forms of nationalism) originated with capital and have their specific features.

Let's take the land for example. The ownership of the land by a small group of people created a society that was comprised of many groupings. Basically there was a group of people who had the land and a group of people who didn't. We're talking about, to put it in the street sense, a group of people that "have" and a group of people that "have not." At the center of those who had was a leisure class of people who directly owned most of the land. They were surrounded and supported by petty owners and non-owners. This group was comprised of soldiers, accountants, church dignitaries and state functionaries. There were also servants who took care of the leisure class, all these people who were part of the "haves."

On the other side, the "have-nots" included more than the people that simply toiled at the land. Some people had to service the people who worked. Otherwise they couldn't work. Somebody had to build brogans, some kind of shoes for them; somebody had to weave cloth for them; somebody had to cook for them. Someone took care of raising the babies and washing the clothes and so forth. They were the huge extended family whose purpose was to keep the people who worked the land out there on the land, working.

When we discuss classes, we have to look at what we are really talking about. We must not nail ourselves down to some rigid definition

of class that doesn't fit our purpose. I think the main point is that classes are not simply people working at the means of production and those who own. They are quite large concrete groups of people who are created by these means of production.

### ***WHY IS THERE A PERCEPTION THAT THE U.S. HAS NO CLASSES?***

Part of the answer lies in the post-World War II interclass mobility of the American people. We hardly consider it, but to the rest of the world it is one of the salient facts of American life. Shackled by the hang-overs of feudalism, it is very difficult for a European worker's child to enter the bourgeoisie, and almost impossible in Asia or Africa.

Since World War II, a rapidly expanding economy needed managers, scientists and technicians. The education system opened up and the children of workers flooded into the universities. Many of them, or their children, went on into the bourgeoisie or at least lived a bourgeois lifestyle. To the workers it seemed as if there were no classes since that class boundary could be crossed. A postwar bit of Jewish humor makes the point. "What is the difference between the president of the Garment Workers Union and the president of the American Psychiatric Association? Answer: One generation."

The rest of the answer lies in the indescribable poverty of the neocolonial world. To them, even the poor of America seem bourgeois. Imperialist bribery has been very good to the American people. It impoverished the world and it is coming to an end.

### ***WHAT IS CLASS STRUGGLE? HOW IS REFORM DIFFERENT FROM REVOLUTION?***

Class struggle is political. It is the life-and-death fight to overthrow a social system and create a new one. Marx saw that there were two basic classes in history that propelled history forward. One was the class that owned the means of production and the other was the class that toiled at these means of production. The struggle was over control of these means of production. Contradictions internal to the system forced a political struggle between the classes that ended in revolution.

Looking back in history, I don't believe this is entirely correct. The feudal class was not overthrown by the serfs; they were overthrown by a class outside feudal society. This point is so important that if we have to state it on every single page, we should state it. The dialectic between the toiler and the owner of the means of production is the dialectic of reform. Some call the fight for wages class struggle. It is not. History shows that a class or a group or subclass that is caught up within the social order is part of that social structure. The only thing they can do is fight over the division of the social product. They don't overthrow societies because they can't—not because they don't want to—but because they can't. This is the dialectic of revolution. If you are part of the system you are not free to overthrow it; you cannot overthrow it.

The feudal political order and the agrarian system it stood upon were overthrown by classes outside that system—the bourgeoisie and the modern working class. These classes were formed around the new means of production—industrial machinery.

Today, we are talking about a new class created by another qualitatively new means of production. In one way or another, every qualitatively new means of production creates a new class, but now we are seeing something more profound. Both the new productive forces and the new classes they created are outside the existing economic and social system. Robots are outside the system because they do not conform to the labor process. They replace the worker rather than assist him or her and create without the sale of labor power. The new American proletarian class created by robots: the so-called “throw-away worker,” the temporary, the part-time, the under-minimum-wage, the permanently unemployed and the permanently poor, are increasingly outside capitalist society and less and less participate in the relations of capital. The homeless, the destitute are at the core of this new class.

Prior to the introduction of robotics, the unemployed were known as the reserve army of the unemployed to be thrown into the battle for production with the expansion of the market. Unemployment today is permanent and the unemployed are ultimately cast outside the society. Being outside society they have the possibility and eventually the necessity of destroying it.

Let's examine revolution. A revolution is a process that has two sides. It begins with the emergence and eventual supremacy of a new means of production and ends with the consequent reorganization of society. The basic dictionary definition of revolution is overthrowing the ruling class by a lower class and establishing that lower class as the new ruling class. However, I don't think that this is entirely true all the time. There have been revolutions where a lower class participated or was even the driving force in the overthrow of the ruling class but they themselves did not become the ruling class.

One side of revolution is the economic or objective side. The economic revolution consists of replacing one qualitative means of production with another. In our history we saw the economic revolution from agriculture to industry. The industrial revolution was an economic revolution. It replaced manufacturing, that is, production by hand labor.

An economic revolution inevitably calls forth a social revolution. In our history, the motion has been from a society based in agriculture and manufacturing to a society based on industrial production. Now, this was a real revolution and it resulted in a civil war. The process of economic revolution has generally meant the political destruction of the ruling class. Somehow or other, the ruling class has never been able to let go of the old means of production and the old society and accept the new. We see this thing happening now in a very strange way in the United States. The industrial ruling class created the robot which will destroy them, but without which they cannot live now.

Through the creation of that robot, another owning class has also come into being. A class of international financiers is absolutely necessary to monitor and stabilize a world market. This is the only kind of market that a robot can operate within. A robot can't operate in a national market. It would fill that national market overnight. Thus, the robot created and was then further developed by the consolidation of an international market. This is a new kind of international market in which the international financial capitalist reigns supreme. In this country we see that the political struggle against the Kennedy gang, beginning in the 1950s, was an expression of the struggle of the

industrial bourgeoisie against this budding new international financier. The victory of this new financial bourgeoisie made the robot possible by the consolidation and expansion of a truly world market.

This sets the stage for a new level of struggle where the outcome will be revolution, not reform, because these new classes are outside of and hampered by the existing social organization.

The introduction of slavery in Rome reduced its working class to a proletariat. In much the same way, the computer and the robots they control are reducing the industrial working class to a modern proletariat. This new class of people doesn't work at the new machinery, because a robot works independent of human beings. The new American proletariat has at its core permanently unemployed and basically unemployable people. This core is growing very rapidly.

The old society is being destroyed by an objective process and nothing can stop it. The people will have to decide what kind of new society will replace the old. Only at this point do you have class struggle. The struggle is a clash over reconstruction. It's a clash between the political representatives of the various classes over how and in whose interests a new society will be built.

### ***WHY DOES REVOLUTION MEAN THE DESTRUCTION OF SOCIETY AS WE'VE KNOWN IT?***

Revolution comes about as a result of the development of the means of production. An antagonism develops between the new, emerging economic relations and the old, static political relations within the super-structure of the old society. The result is an economic collapse. As the economy collapses it drags down the society. The media have people so confused that most of them think social disintegration is the cause of the problem rather than the result.

The process of the destruction of the economy doesn't mean that there isn't any production going on. The destruction of the economy means the destruction of the existing economy, which is the thing that the society is built upon. The economy that our society is built upon is an industrial economy with certain laws. The invasion of the robot is destroying those laws.

No society has been overthrown by the social or economic formations within the system. Society has always been overthrown by something external to the economy. The struggle between those that are most intimately connected to the means of production—in the feudal period this was between the serfs and the nobility—drove a qualitative stage of history along quantitatively. But it did not end the qualitative stage of history, nor did it begin it. In other words, I think that Marx is absolutely correct that the struggle between the exploited and the exploiters has driven history through its quantitative stages of development. Yet, during every historical period, in one way or another, an external force comes into play to begin the destruction of that society. Sometimes this force is an enemy army that is remotely created by the development of new means of production and sometimes it's something that is created within the existing society.

So what we see as far as classes are concerned, is that the struggle between the owning class and the exploited class, for any historical period, has driven forward and accelerated the means of production. For example, when a worker wins a higher wage, he consumes more. Greater consumption broadens the market. Broadening the market means fiercer competition for that market. This brings about the rationalization of labor and the rationalization of the means of production. This creates the conditions to constrict the market, as fewer and fewer workers are hired. More and more means of production are constantly developed that are “laborsaving.” Engels calls it “labor-wasting” machinery. Engels noted early on that laborsaving devices create unemployment, and then permanent unemployment. He concluded quite correctly that the development of such machinery or the rationalization of industry is not laborsaving. It is laborsaving to the capitalist but to the people it is labor-wasting. The capitalists are delighted with the labor-replacing robots, but they are not willing to pass over to a society compatible with robotics.

What does robotics demand? The robots demand that their production be given away because there is no value to their production. What makes revolution absolutely inevitable is that we

have a society based upon the creation of value and production that is increasingly more valueless. What is value? Value is the exchange relationship between things. This cup is worth so many tape recorders or this pair of shoes is worth so many marbles. It is the relationship between things. Thus, if one robot is producing cups and another robot is producing tape recorders how do you equate them? If a human being makes a cup and a human being makes a tape recorder you can equate their relationship by how much labor time went into making the cup and how much labor time went into making the tape recorder. You can establish relatively how many cups are worth how many tape recorders. But if a robot makes them how do you then establish a value relationship between them? I don't think you can. Robots can make cars, but they can't buy them. Since production is increasingly carried on without human labor, without creating value, such production cannot be distributed with money.

Money expresses value. Expended labor time is the basis of exchange and it is represented by money. If the worker doesn't work anymore and the robot creates the commodities how is it possible to sell them? You cannot sell them, and if you don't sell them how are you going to distribute them? If you can't sell the cups and everybody needs cups, how are you going to distribute those cups? You've got to distribute one cup to one person, two cups to two people and ten cups to a family with eight children. You've got to distribute them according to need.

Why does the ruling class create the robots which will destroy them? Revolution is a complex thing that involves changes in the ruling class and involves the inability of the ruling class to change society. They are driving forward the process that is going to overthrow them. Let me give you an example. Industry didn't come from the industrialist, rather industry arose from the manufacturing class. The industrial capitalist didn't just walk in from space. Industry grew step by step and stage by stage within the manufacturing process. Then a certain leap took place resulting in the invention and implementation of the steam engine. Suddenly industry had a stable energy source. As a result, industry

very rapidly replaced manufacturing. A certain group of manufacturers created industry, just as a certain group of industrialists created the financial bourgeoisie.

The ruling class creates the things that are going to destroy them. They can't help but do so. If they don't move forward with production, somebody else will, so they are going to be destroyed one way or another. Therefore, the ruling class constantly strives to improve the means of production despite the fact that at a certain time the improvement of these means of production takes a qualitative leap and creates consequences they could not envision. Robots, not the working class, are their Frankenstein. The ruling classes are destroyed by their own creations.

This question of revolution, and especially the revolution we're facing, is much more than simply the overthrow of one class by another class. It's the reorganization of society. Already, we can see the classes created by the robots. There are the people who engineered and created the robot itself. There are the people who service the robot, who see to it that the robot functions properly. There are people who have been permanently thrown out of work by the robot.

We could go on and on and on about how society is straining to reorganize itself on the basis of this robot. It can't quite do so because of the form of property, in this case, the private ownership of property. The private ownership of socially necessary property prevents the development of the robot to its fullest extent and prevents the development of these classes to their fullest extent. Consequently, a spontaneous reaction by various sectors of society, from various points of view, is destroying the society created during the industrial era.

This new proletariat is not the only sector attacking this society. So, also, is the financial bourgeoisie. When we talk about the destruction of American society we're saying that it is coming about because of the spontaneous activity of practically every social grouping, every class in the sense that we use this term. They may not want to do it, but they are all attacking this society; every group is saying, "We have to change this."

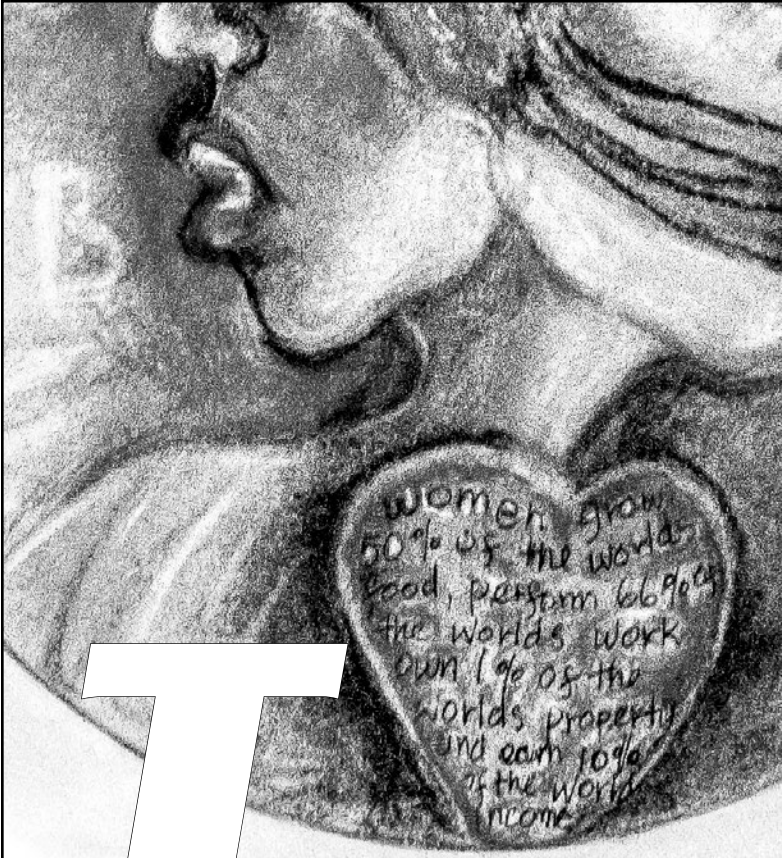
There is enormous resistance to change. Change means uprooting and overcoming huge bureaucracies, habits and entrenched financial structures. The change in welfare is a case in point. The laws have been passed, and actually certain changes have taken place. But you can bet your bottom dollar that the welfare bureaucracy is not going to allow for too many changes in welfare. They are not going to allow it because too many people in society depend upon welfare. And a minority of them are the welfare recipient.

I remember when they were going to abolish food stamps. The A&P and other big supermarket groups got together for a march on Washington with a million people to demand food stamps. “We are hungry; we must have our food stamps.” If they did away with food stamps the purchase of food would drop precipitously and half of these big shots would go broke, so the government was not able to do away with food stamps. The capitalist class isn’t united and neither is its opposition, yet.



# chapter 2

SUE YING



## **Twentieth Century Revolution**

## ***BEFORE THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY, WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF THE MOST IMPORTANT MOMENTS OF WORLD REVOLUTION?***

That's a big order. Since everything is a series of causes and effects, it is very difficult to pull out one of the events as if it stands alone. However, a few moments do come to mind. If we look at the American revolution as the first national liberation revolution, we see its overwhelming world-historic importance. Every national liberation movement since then has borrowed phrases from our Declaration of Independence. Forty-five years later the great sweep of revolution begun by Simón Bolívar broke out and still influences the struggles of South America.

Imperialism played a big role in revolutionary history. The destruction of the stultifying feudal and prefeudal societies and their ideologies was the bloody but necessary prelude to modern revolutions. In this sense we can surely say China's Boxer rebellion of 1900 was such a moment. That uprising unleashed an unbroken series of rebellions that culminated with the Chinese conquering China in 1949.

The rebellion of the weavers and tailors in Lyon in 1834 was of great importance. The workers held the city for three days before they were all slaughtered. It was the first proletarian revolution and ideologically led straight to the Paris Commune of 1871 and on to the Soviet rebellion of 1917.

I think it's important to note that these pre-20th century revolutions generated and were generated by lofty ideals that did not have the material basis for their fulfillment. These revolutions are the indispensable base for the coming revolutions that will forever end human exploitation.

## ***WHAT ARE THE MAIN LESSONS OF 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVOLUTION FOR A 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY REVOLUTION?***

The revolutions of the 20th century have the common content of being the social response to the transformation from agriculture to industry. Let's first look at the significance of the industrial revolution. For us communists, the importance of the industrial revolution

lies in its stripping away of all the idyllic relations between people and bringing to the front the naked truth of the exploitation of the working class. Industry tied the world together as never before and prepared the ground for the fundamental class struggle.

The industrial revolution began as a result of the Europeans landing in the Americas. Can you imagine the significance of transferring the form of wealth from the ownership of land to the ownership of gold? That's what really broke up feudalism and led to the development of heavy manufacturing. Shipbuilding, the iron and steel industries and the enormously profitable slave trade all developed as a means to exploit the riches of the Americas. The people who were going to be enriched the most by the conquest of the Americas were the people who were the closest to it. England, France, and the Netherlands led the breakup of feudalism and the development of the capitalist economy. From there, the industrial revolution and the breakup of feudalism proceeded slowly eastward. Remember, feudalism is a political term. We must not confuse it with a certain level of the means of production. The destruction of feudalism in Europe proceeded in leaps all the way up through World War II. As a result of World War I the Hapsburgs, the Czar and the Kaiser—pillars of feudalism—were destroyed. World War II completed the process by destroying the monarchies of Eastern Europe and the Far East.

This century has been an era of social and political revolutions as the transformation from agriculture to industry reached the economically backward areas. More exactly, the 20th century has been an era of working class revolutions or attempted working class revolutions during that transformation. The Soviet Revolution was the first wave. The second wave of revolutions occurred in eastern Europe during, or right after the war. The third wave occurred as national liberation revolutions beginning with the Indonesian and Vietnamese resistance to recolonization.

This has been a most important time because it has politically and economically evened up the world. I do not mean that all countries became socially and economically equal. I mean that all countries were drawn into the orbit of industrial production and exchange.

World revolution cannot take place until the world is prepared for it. Marx once considered that “world revolution” meant revolution in those countries that were advanced and constituted the “world market.” Today, the whole world is industrial and will go into revolution. The world is tied together in such a manner that it is impossible for one country to have a socialist system within the world of value exchange. Without a world revolution, other law systems take control of isolated revolutions and pre-empt them.

### ***WHAT ARE THE LESSONS FOR THE NEW AMERICAN REVOLUTION?***

Revolution could break out anywhere in this decade that marks the beginning of the new millennium. It's liable to spread worldwide and I think that it just might begin in the Western Hemisphere rather than in some backward country fighting its way out of feudalism. The revolution will break out at the weakest link in the industrial chain. The upsurge will be where the contradictions brought about by robotics are most intense. When it does break out it will pull the entire world into revolution. Revolutionary upsurges come in waves. In our time we have seen the upsurges of 1905 through 1917, and from 1945 through 1970 sweep the earth. It's instructive to contemplate what would have happened if the Irish and Mexican revolutions had held off a few years and occurred after the Soviet Revolution instead of before it.

One thing is for sure, we are entering a revolutionary epoch. When Mao talked about the spark that lights the prairie fire, that fire depended on the prairie being dry with no rain in sight. Now, all of these conditions are being met worldwide. I think that we are at the point where economic revolution calls social revolution into being. It's only a question of what's going to kick it forward, what's going to make it happen. We must set aside simplistic concepts. The revolution is not going to be a simple thing between the haves and the have-nots nor between the worker and the capitalist. It's going to be much more complex. There is no question that the next revolutionary wave will sweep capitalism from the face of the earth forever.

## **WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE 1917 RUSSIAN REVOLUTION?**

As Russian feudal society disintegrated, a politically independent working class under the leadership of the Bolsheviks stepped forward to struggle with the feudalists and the bourgeoisie over the future of Russia. Class struggle began. Russia had a fairly well developed, although very small working class. An industrial bourgeoisie was developing very rapidly and was very rich, especially on the basis of war. The contradiction between the feudal ruling class and the new rising classes, the contradiction between backward Russia and the more advanced European states, the contradiction between Czarist expansionist Russia and the southern layer of countries we call the Moslem areas were all leading to and arising from the destruction of the agrarian political economy. So what you had in Russia was the rebellion of a newly formed working class in the vanguard of about a hundred million semi-serfs and semi-slaves who were in absolute rebellion. All this took place within the unprecedented slaughter of eleven million Russian soldiers at the front.

There was a huge revolution going on in Russia. On the other hand you had this relatively small working class and relatively small bourgeoisie that were struggling for political hegemony. The big stakes were that society was collapsing and either the bourgeoisie or the working class was going to take over and reconstruct Russia. This was not a classical, French Revolution-type of struggle between bourgeois Russia and working class Russia. Both the bourgeoisie and the working class were struggling to find out which one of them was going to take power and build a Russia in their particular interest. No matter what kind of political Russia would be built, it was going to be an industrial Russia. It was going to be bourgeois industrial Russia or working class industrial Russia; capitalist industrial Russia or socialist industrial Russia, but it was going to be industrial Russia. The bourgeoisie and the working class were tied together in this by a million threads.

Nobody can deny that scores of political parties and bits and pieces of political parties were contending for supremacy in the councils or Soviets. The state apparatus was disintegrating and the power vacuum was filled by local Soviets. Everybody had a council. There were district Soviets, worker Soviets, there were soldiers' Soviets, sailors' Soviets, hundreds of these various Soviets or councils that became

battlegrounds for local, regional or national power. As the process of disintegration became critical, an alliance was formed between the more “progressive” sections of the nobility and the bourgeoisie against the possibility of the Bolsheviks gaining control of the Soviets and consequently shoving them both out. This was the February Revolution in which the bourgeoisie seized power, but seized power in the name of the nobility. They didn’t stop the war, they didn’t confiscate the land. Since they didn’t solve any of the revolutionary problems, the Revolution continued. It grew worse. The soldiers were simply deserting the front, throwing down their guns and walking back home. At this time, the peasants were taking over land; there were more strikes, street fighting and insurrection than there was war at the front.

Circumstances developed allowing the Bolsheviks to launch the coup that seized power. Revolutions are crowned by an insurrection or a coup. The revolution is not a coup, but the coup—the seizure of political power—is like a crown to the revolution. You cannot complete a revolution without a seizure of political power. The seizure of political power is done by an organized and basically paramilitary force that understands how and has the ability to seize power. (Later, under other circumstances, revolutionary armies played this role and instead of a coup, there was the military defeat and smashing of existing state power). The revolution is made by the masses, but the seizure of power is done by a special political organization. The Bolsheviks seized power in the name of the toiling masses. Then, they very rapidly absorbed some of the more radical groups. By the end of 1918, they had taken in all of the best of other radical elements. They all had one purpose, whether they understood it or not—to industrialize Russia.

### ***WHY WAS THE GOAL NOW TO INDUSTRIALIZE RUSSIA?***

I don’t think it had ever happened before in history, where you had two different kinds of social formations on the same kind of economic foundation. In other words you had industrial France that was bourgeois and the industrial Soviet Union that was socialist on the same land mass. As a young revolutionary I never understood this. If I can just digress for a second, I was working at a machine tool

company in Cleveland. It was one of the best machine tool companies in the world. About half their production went to the USSR. I said to myself, "Now ain't this something! Here in the United States this machine develops capitalism. When they sell this machine to the USSR, it's a socialist machine. In other words, socialism and capitalism are different political relations that have the same industrial basis. Now, somebody got to go!" I didn't understand it then as I do now, but I understood one thing—you can't have the same industrial formation, the same economic foundation as your enemy. The feudal lords had a different economic foundation than their enemy the bourgeoisie.

Looking backward, therefore, Soviet Russia was doomed from the beginning. Now, add on to this twenty wars in twenty one years and then this big one against Germany which was actually the counter-revolution. First came the destruction by these counter-revolutionary wars, then World War II left 27 million people dead. Perhaps thirty million were seriously injured. The factory system was destroyed, the mines flooded, the railroads torn up. In addition, under near-famine conditions, they had to feed Eastern Europe, especially East Germany. Only the imposition of the most rigid discipline saw them through.

The terrible damage notwithstanding, the Soviet Union was part of the world market. The real Cold War was fought out in the economy. When Soviet production went on the world market it was in a value relationship to the same commodities that were produced by the capitalist world. The capitalist world didn't suffer twenty seven million dead, they didn't suffer their industries destroyed, they didn't suffer the counterrevolution, they didn't suffer twenty wars in twenty one years. The Cold War played an immense role inasmuch as it didn't allow the USSR to recover from World War II. Soviet military technology was the best on the face of the earth, but her industrial technology had to suffer for it. It was some of the worst on the face of the earth. The USSR could not compete. The less it could compete the more it fell behind, the more it fell behind, the less it could compete. Finally it was defeated in the ideological struggle with capitalism and then in international economic competition. Finally, the Socialist Soviets were politically defeated and the Soviet Union was abolished. The anti-Soviet babble from the right and the left about the errors of this or that leader in the immediate

postwar Soviet Union cannot be taken seriously. The criticism is always placed as if the Soviet economy was on the level of the U.S. economy.

In a certain sense, I like to equate the Soviet Revolution with the Paris Commune. To not have seized power would have been an absolute betrayal of the revolutionary spirit. Lenin and his group had to seize power. I think Lenin understood that he couldn't win. He indicates in a number of his writings that if the German and French proletariat don't come to their assistance immediately they are not going to be able to survive. The only commodities they could put on the international market were oil, wheat and furs. If the labor process had remained where it was in the 1920s, Russian wheat could compete with American wheat on the world market. Given the development of agricultural technology in the U. S., it finally became cheaper for a Russian to buy Argentine wheat, which is, of course, American-owned. The wheat was grown on monstrous pampas in Argentina with more sophisticated equipment than they use in the United States. It became cheaper to buy the bread made with Argentine wheat and feed the bread to the cows than to buy Russian wheat that's grown in Russia.

During the 1920s and the 1930s, the USSR could compete with agricultural products, but it could not compete with industrial products for the mentioned reasons. Therefore, you seldom saw material produced in the Soviet Union on the world market the same way you found, say, Sheffield Cutlery. They came close to it with the Soviet-made car in about late 1958. I remember Canada had a couple of car agencies selling Soviet cars. They were great, but were limited in number and produced differently than the cars that were sold to the people of the USSR. These were produced for the world market, but were so expensive they couldn't compete.

So what we saw is that the USSR went out of business. Socialism didn't fail. The Soviet Union never had a fighting chance. Couple that with the fact that you cannot have two antagonistic social systems on the same economic foundation. Could the Paris Commune succeed surrounded by bourgeois France? Not at all. Was it necessary to seize power? Absolutely! They lasted 71 days. The USSR lasted 71 years. The Soviet Union was different from the Paris Commune in size and the level of the productive forces. It was not qualitatively different. I

mean that both were uprisings and seizures of power during the period of historic economic transformation from agriculture to industry. Both revolutions had to rely on ideology since neither had the means of production that could force society to abandon the value system.

### ***WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE 1949 CHINESE REVOLUTION?***

The Chinese Revolution has a special place in history. No matter the final outcome, that revolution moved a billion people, one-quarter of the earth's population from being economic, military and political reserves of capitalism to the front line of struggle against it. That revolution guaranteed the success of the various national liberation movements and the inability of world imperialism to reassert itself. To be sure, this did not happen in a vacuum. It was a huge part of the historic shift from agriculture to the modern industrial world. The revolution was over which class would benefit and under what conditions modernization would take place.

The Chinese Revolution which began in 1911, was a long, drawn-out, bloody, historical period. The years of social chaos, invasions, civil wars and economic collapse saw the formation of modern classes and their mutual, violent struggle to achieve hegemony over the revolutionary process.

To understand the Chinese Revolution, we must start with a deep understanding of what is the communist movement. The masses of people have deep strivings, which express, and are tied to their economic well-being. In the revolutionary process the various ideological groups compete for mass political support. The group that wins mass support is able to take the ideological movement and make it a shell within which the historic economic and social struggles and striving of the people fit and move forward. The communist revolutionaries succeeded because they learned to do this under the most complex conditions. Their call was for "New Democracy," redistribution of the land, a guarantee of food for all and most importantly, the rebirth of China.

The Chinese have the oldest continuous culture on earth. Intensely proud and patriotic, they had been humiliated for 150 years. The Communists, to succeed, had to take serious account of this national

pride and striving for independence. On this basis, they united China. Mao summed up this sentiment when announcing the formation of the People's Republic. He simply said, "China has stood up." This mass sentiment was proven during the American war against Korea. The Chinese lost a million soldiers; the people contributed billions of hours of free labor and donated their jewelry and savings because they correctly saw the ultimate aim of the American war against Korea was to subjugate China again.

China has about a billion minds at work, each of them to some degree contradicting all the rest. Under such circumstances, nobody and no political party is going to get what it wants the way it wants it. Ideological leaders cannot lead from the standpoint of ideology, but by compromising ideology with the economic demands of the masses of people. Stalin summed this up perfectly when he wrote (in *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*), "The essential features and requirements of the basic law of socialism might be formulated roughly in this way: the securing of the maximum satisfaction of the constantly rising material and cultural requirements of the whole of society through the continuous expansion and perfection of socialist production on the basis of higher techniques."

Revolutionaries should be ideologically firm and they should strengthen the ideological conviction of the people. But that is only part of the historic struggle. Supporting ideological conviction, the Chinese or any people must perceive communism as the path to that well-being or they will not defend it. This was the tragic experience of the Soviet Union that may well repeat itself in China.

### **WHAT HAPPENED DURING THE CUBAN REVOLUTION?**

The Cuban Revolution is an objective, historically evolved social process. The revolution created and then was guided by its subjective element, the revolutionaries. At the same time, it is very important to understand the reciprocal relationship between the form and the content of the revolution. One is constantly interpenetrating the other and taking on each other's features. The content, or cause, is carried out through the historical process.

If that form cannot accomplish the cause, the revolution takes on another form. For example, look at the revolution in Peru. Clearly, the content of the revolution is for the original inhabitants to reclaim the land. This centuries-old struggle has been led by many groups. As they failed to return the land, the revolution discarded them and accepted the form offered by another. In other words, the communist revolution is a way, proposed under particular circumstances, to achieve these historic goals.

This concept applies to all revolutions. Cuba has been in turmoil since the revolutionaries under Jose Martí attacked the decrepit Spanish colonialists. The cause was national independence and the consolidation of the peoples of Cuba into one cultured, democratic, national family. National independence is the goal of the national bourgeoisie in all oppressed countries. The lofty idealism of Martí, the passionate generalship of Maceo and the fact that Maceo was black and the liberation army was 80 percent black, pushed the subjective demand for an integrated, democratic society into the realm of content.

Cuba, historically, was a brutal slave society and the color question was and is a real social and political problem. I recall reading about a prerevolutionary incident in Havana when a white barber refused to cut a black Cuban's hair. It turned into a real struggle. Here in the United States, we wouldn't even dream of going into a white barbershop. Another incident that might illustrate the point was when mixed-blood dictator Fulgencio Batista entered a social gathering of the white elite. The string quartet stopped playing, the guests turned their backs and there was silence until embarrassed Batista left the room. This black thug was good enough to govern the country for them, but not good enough for their social gatherings. The color question was different from that in the U. S. In a small country with a large black population, the discrimination was even more galling. Before the revolution, Cuba was 30 percent black. This was a large enough section to objectively thwart the revolution if it didn't deal with this content. Today, Cuba is 70 percent black with all this implies for the revolutionary process, and its relations to the U.S.

I would like to say a word about Cuban “nationalism.” It is qualitatively different from any love of country I have ever seen. There is no chauvinism connected to it. I can only say that the Cubans are married to Cuba. They love it and express that love in everything from their song and dance to their calm determination to die for Cuba if war should come.

All social revolutions are divided into their dialectical counterparts. The first stage of social revolution is the destruction of the old society. This stage goes from social disorganization to the overthrow of the existing political order. The next, more difficult stage is social reconstruction. In Cuba as in all social revolutions, numerous bits and pieces of social and economic classes participated in the process. After the fall of the state, representatives of all the various groups jockeyed for position. Fidel Castro finally emerged as the paramount leader because he possessed the qualities the revolution required at that particular moment.

Today, socialism has been thoroughly grasped by the masses as the necessary form of the revolution. It has become a material force because it allows for the constant expansion and consolidation of the content of the revolution. Is counterrevolution possible? Yes, it is. It is possible because Cuban society does not have the material foundation for communism. Until they achieve this material foundation, which is in the distant future, ideological firmness is the key to whether the revolution can withstand the tremendous pressure the counterrevolution exerts against it.

### ***WERE THE 1960S REVOLUTIONARY TIMES?***

The 1960s was a time of great social unrest. It was a time of hard-fought battles to reform the capitalist social order on the basis of advances in the means of production. All struggles for reform have a certain revolutionary aspect, just as all revolutions have a certain reform aspect.

The dialectic of society is that one aspect, the means of production is very mobile while the other aspect, economic relations are quite static. The economy is mobile because expanding

profitability depends upon the constant development and expansion of the means of production. Society is static because the property relations in production and the method of distribution are stabilized by law and backed up with force. A pecking order of privilege evolves within these relations of production and distribution that affects and stabilizes everyone into definite social categories. Economic relations open the door for and spur on advances in the means of production. But things don't stand still. Eventually, the immobile social relations become a fetter on the development of the means of production. In other words, relations that opened the door to development turn into their opposite and slam that door.

Let's look at the basis of the struggles of the 1960s. Racial discrimination was the fundamental social relation in the United States. Jim Crow laws and traditions kept five million Blacks working for almost nothing in Southern agriculture. That kept six million whites in the same economic condition. That kept the entire South as a region working at 50 to 60 percent of the wages of the North. This was super-profit and allowed the Northern industries to expand and develop.

Two things happened almost simultaneously. One was that, starting with textiles, big sections of industry became so highly unionized the companies could not maintain their former rate of profit. They began looking for low-wage areas to move to. They discovered the South. We're talking about the 1948-52 period. By that time, the cottonpicker and weed-killing chemicals were perfected and sharecroppers were driven off the land by the millions. The Blacks flowed into the Southern inner city where they could feel and see their new political and social muscle. By 1952, although there was a recession in the North there was a labor shortage in the South. The needs of the Northern bourgeoisie coincided with the needs of the Blacks. Sound familiar? The so-called Second Reconstruction was under way.

So we see how the development of industry finally collided with the social organization. The social organization, in this case Jim Crow, had to go. It didn't go without massive struggle,

bloodshed, deaths and cities set afire. When people speak of the 1960s the pictures of the flower children come to most minds. Actually, the entire movement was an outgrowth of the struggles of the Blacks of that period for freedom and equality.

When the battle subsided, at least de jure Reconstruction had taken place and essentially the social order had been aligned with the needs of industry and a whole new economic expansion got under way.

chapter **3**

SUE YING



**R**evolution and  
**U.S. History: Class,  
Gender, and Nationality**

## ***DOES THE U.S. HAVE A REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY?***

Absolutely. Here we are using the term revolution to mean the overthrow of the existing political power and the assumption of power by the rebelling class. In this sense, the U. S. is the most revolutionary country in the world.

The U. S. is uniquely revolutionary because it is purely capitalist. The country is so big and so rich in natural resources that it takes a long time for society to pass through all the stages of capitalist development. Each stage, it must be noted, has been marked by violent and bloody struggle. No country on earth except the U. S. has gone into civil war over the transfer of political power from the agrarian to the industrial bourgeoisie. From the national democratic revolution to the consolidation of finance capital, each stage of development of capitalism has been marked by terrible struggle, if not outright war.

One of the features of revolution in the U. S. and elsewhere is that each revolution creates the conditions for the next one. There are two sides to a revolution: one is the overt, objective, economic side; the other is its subjective expression, the political goals, its cause and the mobilizing, inspiring vision it creates. The two sides are closely connected and feed into one another. The objective side of a successful revolution achieves its goals by creating the conditions to free up the new productive forces.

Successful revolutions achieve their cause, but the conditions are never quite ripe to actually achieve the revolutionary vision—the mobilizing, social, subjective side. The cause in the Revolutionary War was independence. The vision was stated in the Declaration of Independence. Since that vision was not fulfilled, another revolution was inevitable. The cause in the Civil War was to preserve the Union. Implicitly, that meant union under the Northern industrialists. But the vision as stated by Lincoln was a Nation (not a union) conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. The changing economic base that created the revolution had not yet been sufficiently developed for the revolution to realize its vision. It must then fight again. The vision of one revolution becomes the cause of the next.

People fight for ideals. People fight for their vision even when they cannot achieve it. Each time they gain at least part of what they

fought for. As technology advances, the further development of the means of production creates new causes, visions and demands amongst the new generation. They cannot be satisfied with the partial victory their parents had won. They again go about intellectually and organizationally preparing for revolution. Nowhere is this clearer than in American history.

### ***WAS THE 1776 REVOLUTION A NEW THING IN HISTORY?***

The Revolution of 1776 ushered in a whole epoch of national liberation. This process went on for another two hundred years. It reached its peak with the tidal wave of national liberation uprisings between the late 1940s through the 1970s.

The 1776 revolution was a new thing in history. The French bourgeoisie and the British bourgeoisie had a revolution to free themselves from feudal political restraints. The U. S. was different. The United States was a colony. That meant it was owned by England and its purpose was to ship goods and resources back to the mother country. For the first time, a revolution for national liberation was bound up with the revolution against feudalism: the American bourgeoisie wanted freedom from the restraints of feudal England.

Canada was a colony, too, so why did Canada take on the features of a feudal economy and the United States never did? Within the answer lies the reason the United States had a revolution and Canada did not. You can go to Canada and still see the remnants of the acceptance of a colonial regime. As a result of Canadian feudalism there is still a noblesse oblige. The people feel they have a right to be cared for—such as a health care system. The government feels an obligation to take care of its people to a certain degree—to maintain a floor below which the standards of living cannot fall.

The United States is the only country in the world, certainly in the Western Hemisphere, that was never tainted with feudalism. Canada was, Mexico was, and everything south of the border was.

What happened is that the United States was colonized by capitalist companies; the land grant companies, the tea and rice companies. One of these tea companies owned all of Maryland, another all of Delaware.

Each capitalist concern received one land grant. Canada was the king's land colonized by loyal British subjects. Immigrants came in and settled and that's why they maintained such loyalty to the Crown.

The clearest thinking people in 1776 understood that unless the national liberation revolution emancipated the slaves they would have to fight the revolution over again. In this sense, the Civil War was a continuation of the revolution of 1776. In the same sense, we see in the revolution that's growing today that the subjective side is inextricably connected to the vision proclaimed by the Civil War, but which was not and could not have been achieved. The vision was mass democracy.

We should pose the question: What is democracy? Democracy, the rule of the people, rests upon the ability of the people to make choices freely. That, in turn, demands independence. Independence rests upon a person's secure access and control of the necessities of life. If I depend upon someone else for my food, shelter and clothing, then I am that person's slave. In the final analysis I am compelled to do that person's bidding no matter how subtle the command may be.

The concept of Jeffersonian democracy rests on this understanding. Hence, the demand for independence provided by the small family farm. The revolution did not achieve Jeffersonian democracy. The seeds were thus planted for it to be fought out again. We see that there is a spiral connection. History seems to keep repeating itself on a higher and higher level. The movement keeps demanding the same thing under changing conditions and each time the demand advances the revolutionary process. In this sense, there is a chain of demands from one revolution to the next, culminating in the outbreak of warfare.

The specific features of the current revolutionary process can be traced back to the unique character of the revolution of 1776.

### ***HOW DOES THE CIVIL WAR MANIFEST OUR REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY?***

This is a complex question. It's also something I've spent much of my life studying so I may go on and on, but it is really key to understanding our history and our future. Let's break it into its parts.

## ***HOW DOES THE CIVIL WAR CONTINUE THE REVOLUTIONARY VISION OF 1776?***

Essentially, the United States, up until the time of the Civil War, was a Southern country. All the centers of gravity were in the South and they were connected to the capitalist market of England. This was shown at the Continental Congress. While debating the question of the future of slavery, two states absolutely held out, saying they would not join the Confederation if the slave trade was abolished. One was South Carolina, which had the greatest number of slaves; the other was Georgia. They were strongly supported by Massachusetts, whose prosperity was based on the slave trade. Massachusetts built and manned the ships that not only brought the slaves from Africa, but just as importantly, carried the commerce created by slavery. The whole country was organized around the core Southern states. Economically, everything swirled around them.

The industrial revolution in England and later in the Northern states relied on slavery. Slavery was the pedestal upon which it stood and developed. The leaders of Virginia, Georgia and North Carolina recognized that if they maintained slavery they could not conclude the Revolutionary War. They understood that someday they would have to fight again to bring that war to its conclusion. It should be noted, however, that those people who struggled against slavery at the Continental Congress kept their slaves. It is also interesting to note that the leader of the revolution, George Washington, was the biggest slaveholder and the richest man in the United States. When the Civil War began, Jeff Davis was the biggest slaveholder and the richest man in the United States. He was the Confederates' George Washington, fighting the same fight, but from the next rung up on the ladder.

To say that the revolution of 1776 was a democratic revolution is not saying enough. It was an agrarian bourgeois revolution. That revolution could only be completed when the foundations for an industrial bourgeoisie were completed and they assumed political power. The United States, unlike England with its common law, has a rigid constitution. This rigid constitution makes it difficult, if not impossible, to quantify social progress. Change could only take place by a war to complete the 1776 revolution.

So let's look at the Civil War—the second edition of 1776. Most people today say that slavery was the cause of the Civil War. That is certainly true, but that is not enough. When we talk about slavery and the Civil War, we have to see the process.

### ***HOW DID THE ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE SOUTH REFLECT THE REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS OF THE CIVIL WAR?***

There were real contradictions in the South because of slavery. The Virginias are a good example. West Virginia didn't separate from Virginia because of opposition to slavery; they were in opposition to the slave power. Since the slave power refused to pay taxes, the uplands poor whites paid all the taxes for the improvement of the roads and harbor systems that benefited only the big planters. By the time of the Civil War, there was a West Virginia, West North Carolina, West South Carolina, North Georgia. In other words, there was a hill country politically oppressed by and in economic competition with the big planters.

I once took a flight from Washington, D.C. to New Orleans on a crystal clear bright day. I could see so clearly the distinct geographic features of the Black Belt—the Deep South. From the seacoast to the Piedmont mountain range it was green and flat. Then with the rise of the mountains I saw the necessary difference in the economies of these two areas. The Black Belt, named for its rich, black soil, was suited for the plantation system and the slavery that upheld it. In the valleys and on the foothills were the small farms.

Especially in the ten years before the Civil War, the ability of Southern whites to enter the slave-owning class is absolutely amazing. The Southern political leaders understood that they had to overcome the economic contradictions between the slave-owning and non-slave-owning whites. Their answer was to make it possible for all whites to become slave owners. They turned to the developing banking and insurance system. The state of Alabama guaranteed the loans to make almost any white man a small slave owner and tie him into the system. A man in Alabama with as little as \$250 could buy a slave, a wagon, a mule and elementary farm equipment. The mortgage on the slaves

covered the whole thing. You could come out with an investment of almost \$4,000 and the only collateral you really needed was the slave that you purchased for that \$250 down. Therefore, the more that slave was driven, the greater became the productivity of the whole damn thing. If you had forty or fifty acres of cotton you were on your way to getting rich. There was so much money in cotton at that time. The whole industrial world revolved around cotton. You had to do some brutal things, but you could get rich.

The opposition to slavery by uphill folk and the people of the upper part of the South wasn't on the basis of human rights. It was on the basis of breaking the political back of the slave power. Yes, there were contradictions within the classes. But it was not a class struggle in the sense that we use the term. Both of these groups were owning groups, the small farmers who owned their own land or were purchasing their own land, and the slave power. There was a tremendous gap between the wealth and culture of the two groups. While there was struggle, there was unity. Governor Wise of Virginia made a very important speech just before the Civil War broke out entitled "Slavery is a Poor White Man's Best Government." It is absolutely true what he had to say. First, he said that as long as you have slavery the white man is shielded from the worst of what happens in life, because that's going to be borne by the slave. Second, Wise said that the only way you can consolidate a people is to have an outsider in your midst. That was such a revelation to me. It was such a simple thing to understand. The importance of having an outsider in your midst. It is an indispensable unifying force.

There were some pockets of up-country folks who were militantly opposed to slavery and wouldn't allow slavery in their territory. This was especially true in Tennessee. The day before the Civil War broke out, the state of Mississippi hanged five whites for planning a slave insurrection. Plenty of Southerners were morally opposed to slavery, but in the final analysis, everybody's morality, not just the Southern white's, is linked to the pocketbook. Nobody can have a morality over a long period of time that contradicts his or her economic well-being. (I remember a discussion I had with a Southern white soldier during World War II. We were overseas in the Pacific and he was telling me

of his opposition and that of those whom he called “decent folk in the South,” to what was happening to the Blacks. He said the only way to really oppose what is happening is to join the Blacks, but concluded, “we can’t do that.”)

The truth about the South and the Civil War and the immediate period before the Civil War is only now beginning to come out. For example, the military desertion rate for the Southern armies was almost fifty percent higher than the desertion rate of the Northern armies. As the war dragged on, the burden fell more and more heavily on the poor white. At first, the war was a dashing, heroic, cavalier sort of a thing. You ride up against these damn Yankees with your swords and your banners and you come marching triumphantly home. As that dribbled down to the blood and misery and destruction that the Civil War really was, people began trying to look out for themselves. Read the letters of the wives of poor whites to their husbands on the front. The women and children were starving. I don’t mean uncomfortable; they were starving. Many Southern soldiers said, “Damn this war.” Only now are we beginning to get the statistics on the number of Southerners who joined the Union Army, or the assistance Southerners gave the Federal troops.

So the contradiction between the planters and the hill folk wasn’t a moral question. It was a question of the Southern elite owning all the best land in the South. Ten percent of the Southern population owned seventy percent of the arable land in the South. Showing the revolutionary character of the Civil War has to start with challenging the propaganda that the South was solidly behind slavery and the Confederacy.

### ***HOW DOES THE ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE SOUTH AND THE NORTH REFLECT THE REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS OF THE CIVIL WAR?***

The North began as the absolute economic servant of the South. The slave trade was more a foundation of America than was the actual physical act of slavery. Industry grew faster than agriculture as agriculture was much more labor-intensive. The whole process of industry

promotes rationalization through labor-saving devices. In the South, it was more profitable to purchase slaves and work them to death than to rationalize production. The whole economy was based on this terrible expenditure of slave labor. If you rationalized Southern agriculture, you were interfering with the shipbuilding industry, which was at the heart of the Northern industrial development. If you interfered with the shipbuilding industry you were interfering with the universities that were set up to study astronomy in order to guide those ships, you were interfering with engineering. I mean, if you messed with the slave trade you were messing with the foundations of the United States.

The North was dependent upon slavery and the manufacturing that resulted from it. The “good things of life,” the luxuries, came from England but all the necessary things of life came from the North. Northern industrial development began by supplying the manufacturing and foodstuffs that the South required. The planters could not afford to have a slave do this kind of work; it was cheaper to have the immigrant worker of the North do it. As industrial productivity developed, the North was thrown into contradiction with England over how much trade the North was going to be able to take away from England. The industrial capacity of the North was outrunning the consuming capacity of the South, but that was only under the conditions of free trade with England. To expand the Southern market, the North had to raise tariffs against British imports. Of course, the planters refused to do this.

A look at a topographical map will show that large-scale migration and commerce between the East and West was almost impossible. The Allegheny Mountains were an insurmountable barrier, and the rivers in the U.S. run north to south. Therefore, all trade and migration was between North and South, not East and West. Consequently, the Northwest—western Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota—was sparsely settled, primarily by Southerners. This combination made the Northwest a political reserve for the slave owners. A turning point came with the explosive growth of the Northwest. The construction of the Erie Canal changed the rules. Suddenly, the markets of New York were open to the rich farmlands of that area. Democratically minded settlers from the East and from

Europe flooded into the Northwest. Now there was more money to be made trading with the East than with the South. The North soon needed a railroad that would run from the western part of Minnesota all the way through Milwaukee, through Chicago, right through all these industrial cities of Indiana, and into the East or into the canal system so they could begin shipping their produce more cheaply.

There was a rapid growth of the cities in the North, especially Chicago. But it could not continue because of the stranglehold of the slave power on the appropriation of funds for infrastructure. Anything that the North needed for this new wing of the capitalist class to develop was inhibited by the South. The Congress, dominated by the Southern planters, refused to pass bills to improve the harbors or build the railroads. Understanding the potential political danger, they refused to grant funds. On this basis, the Northwest became a hotbed of anti-Southern and finally anti-slave sentiment. At the same time and just as important, the rich prairie farmlands of the Northwest economically wrecked the commercial farming of the Northeast. The South agreed to abolish the African slave trade so they could utilize the worn-out areas for commercial slave breeding. With farming economically marginal and the African slave trade abolished, the Northeast turned to industry. They needed expanded harbors and a tariff. Once again the South, sensing the danger of an economically, and hence politically, independent North refused to allocate funds. Massachusetts went from the most pro-slave to the most anti-slave state in the Union.

These economic contradictions set the stage for the introduction of new ideas, particularly abolitionism. The murder of the Rev. Elijah Lovejoy by Southern ruffians to stop his anti-slave writings marked the actual beginnings of the war. Anti-slavery propagandists planted the seeds in fertile soil—"the slave power is destroying the right of free speech and intends to take away the liberties of a free people." At that point you began seeing the rise of an ideological opposition to slavery.

The real opposition, however, was to the slave power. If the South could have compromised, I doubt that the North would have moved against slavery at that time. The planters understood they would lose in twenty years what they finally lost in five. And it would have

been an easier loss. The stonewalling from the South made it impossible to reconcile the economic and ultimately moral demands of the North against the slave power. That, then, made the Civil War absolutely inevitable. The slave power couldn't give in for a lot of reasons. One was the ties to England. Trade with England was forcing the North and the South to develop as two separate countries. The culture of the slave-owning South—violent, cavalier, chauvinistic—was another reason that did not allow for compromise. Moreover, compromise was unlikely because the city (industry) has to dominate the country (agriculture) in order to survive.

### ***HOW DOES THE STRUGGLE WITHIN THE NORTH FOR POLITICAL POWER REFLECT THE REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS OF THE CIVIL WAR?***

As the interests of the North and South began to polarize, there was tremendous struggle between the social groupings in the North. There were struggles between the dirt farmer and the developing banking system. The development of agricultural machinery was making the farm more capital- rather than labor-intensive. Therefore, the farmer became more dependent on the banking system to purchase this machinery and to market the larger crops.

There was struggle going on between the developing industrial working class and the new wealth and power of the industrial bourgeoisie.

Another conflict in the North was the struggle by the banks to dominate industry and their final merging to become finance capital. This process was completed during the Civil War. It took decades in other countries. By 1865, we had already achieved that in this country. It determined what happened at the end of the Civil War.

What if finance capitalism had not emerged in the United States, and the industrial capitalist continued to dominate the financier at the end of the war? Then the proposal made by Secretary of War Stanton and this group of red Republicans would have been implemented. They would have broken the plantation South into the “forty acres and a mule” called for by Jeffersonian democracy. That was the only

way they would be able to guarantee that the slave power could never, ever rise again. If industrial capital had remained dominant, there was the possibility of a revolution such as France's 1789, with its bloody and complete destruction of the elite. It was only 65 years earlier and within living memory. The interest of the finance capitalist group lay in absorbing the South as it was, stripped of the slave power but maintaining the slavery, the plantation system and its severe exploitation of labor. None of this was in the interest of the Northern industrialist, but was in the interest of finance capital. Such conjecture may be a waste of time because that isn't what happened. I think it explains, however, why what happened did happen at the end of the Civil War. The defeat of Reconstruction wasn't just an outright betrayal and defeat. It was the victory, the consolidation, of finance and industry to become finance capital.

The Civil War was a struggle for political power between two antagonistic wings of the ruling class, the bourgeoisie. The aim of the new financial industrial oligarchy of the North was to reduce the South to a reserve of industry. The aim of the Southern elite was to transform the entire country, and eventually the hemisphere, into a slave empire. Neither group intended to abolish slavery because cotton was indispensable and there was no productive force to take the place of the slave. For example, because it was in the interest of industry, Illinois had slavery. It's the only state north of the Mason-Dixon line that had slavery. In a constitutional referendum, the people narrowly endorsed slavery for the state. The governor falsified enough ballots to make the measure fail. A special clause in the Illinois Constitution allowed slaves to work in the salt mines in southern Illinois and to do certain other labor, such as loading the boats on the Ohio and Mississippi rivers.

### ***SO, IN THE END, HOW DOES THE CIVIL WAR MANIFEST OUR REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY?***

If the stated aims of neither group included the abolition of slavery, how did it come about? The slaves themselves made the abolition of slavery a military, political and moral necessity. The North needed

about 15 men to support one front-line soldier. The idea of a manpower superiority of the North was done away with by the South's use of slaves to do the support work and every Southern white was available for front-line duty. This, combined with the slaves running away and demanding the right to fight, turned the tide. Without that slender balance provided by the Black soldiers, the North probably would have lost the war. This formulation was acknowledged when the honor for capturing Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy, was given to a Black regiment.

The role of Lincoln cannot be overstated. It has become popular for some militants, Black and white, to swallow the subtle propaganda of white supremacist Southern historians and attack Lincoln on this question. However, no one can deny his long-held revulsion of slavery nor his personal commitment to its destruction. It cannot be denied that once the decision was made, Lincoln alone in the Cabinet never swerved from that course.

With emancipation, the Civil War became revolutionary and it was won. It was revolutionary because the ruling elite was overthrown and society reorganized without chattel slavery.

The war ended with a pro-Southern president in office. All the Southern legislators who had resigned their seats at the beginning of the war showed up to legally reclaim them. What the South had lost on the battlefield they were about to win politically. The radical wing of the Republicans frantically looked for a way to outvote the resurgent Southern elite. They came to the conclusion that they must enfranchise the freedmen. Thus, Reconstruction was born. The aims of Reconstruction were first, to crush the Southern elite, and second, to contain the revolutionary forces that would be unleashed by this process. By 1877, this was accomplished and Reconstruction came to an end. Between 1877 and 1890, the political scene was remapped. The interests of the Southern elite merged with the financial industrial oligarchy. Suddenly, and seemingly without reason, the area that had rebelled against the federal government, became the most patriotic, jingoist, pro-imperialist sector of the country. Historically, the merging of the Southern elite and Northern finance capital was the foundation for the emergence of modern American imperialism.

The defeat of Reconstruction meant that while the cause, the reason for the Civil War and the vision of 1776 was attained, the Civil War vision of freedom and equality was not. The great freedom movement of the 1950s and 1960s finally brought to closure that vision of the Civil War.

### ***WHAT SPECIAL ROLE DO LATINOS PLAY IN U.S. HISTORY?***

Latino refers to a language rather than a people. All the Spanish-speaking people are, I think rather crudely, referred to as Latino. The people who come from Spanish-speaking America are very diverse and have played different roles. The role played by the Puerto Ricans or Dominicans is very different from that played by the Mexicans. As in all aspects of America's political life, color plays a big role. The immigrants from a black republic such as the Dominican Republic are not going to play the same role as say the Argentinean. The form of U.S. imperialist domination of the various countries also plays a big role. The direct colonial status of Puerto Rico places their immigrants in a different political and social relation than the immigrant from a neo-colony. Having said all that, what role do they play?

It seems to me that politically, the most important contributions have been by the Puerto Ricans and the Mexicans. The direct colonial status, political oppression and economic exploitation of Puerto Ricans both here and on the island, give the lie to all the declarations of democracy and self-determination and so forth. The special position of the Puerto Rican in America—economically worse off than the African American—makes them the link between the revolutionary class here and the revolutionary masses of South America and the Caribbean.

As what happened with most very poor immigrants, there was a real effort to turn the Puerto Ricans against the Blacks. This was somewhat successful so long as controlled immigration allowed only very light-skinned Puerto Ricans to immigrate. They, like the Irish and Italians before them, thought that the best way not to be treated as a Negro was to join the whites in the social oppression. This tactic came to an end with the legal opening of the doors to all Puerto Ricans. The following immigration was to a great extent black and

brown. They had their choice. Unite with the Blacks or be crushed as not only black, but “foreign” as well. In the centers of Puerto Rican immigration, such as New York and Chicago, they have played an outstanding role in the struggle against racism and for democracy.

Anyone who has been associated with the Puerto Rican revolutionary movement can testify that they bring to our revolutionary movement a passion and determination that can hardly be found elsewhere.

Since Mexico is a very large country with a unique revolutionary history and tradition, their immigrants have played a different role in the shaping of our political life. First, we should say a few things about Mexico and the United States. In an unprovoked aggression, the U.S. took Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, California, Nevada, half of Mexico’s national territory. Without this territory the U.S. would be facing Europe and inevitably come under its control. At the peace treaty, the U.S. promised to maintain open borders forever.

The first great test came during the Civil War in the United States. When Lincoln spoke of the “last best hope of mankind” he was referring to the fact that political reaction had conquered all of Europe. The ruling class of every country supported the Confederacy. Protected by French arms, war material poured from Europe into Mexico and from there into the Confederacy in exchange for cotton. If the Mexican national army under Juarez had been defeated, it was very probable that France and probably England would declare war on the U.S. and invade from Mexico. Although hard-pressed, Lincoln transferred arms and gold to Juarez who finally defeated the French and along with the Federal campaign in Texas, shut off the flow of arms to the Confederacy through Mexico. Cinco de Mayo, the Mexican national holiday that celebrates their victory over the French at Puebla in 1862, should be celebrated by all Americans.

African Americans have had a close relationship with Mexico. The Texas-Mexican border was an important if little-known terminal of the Underground Railroad. The African American has always enjoyed relative social democracy in Mexico. Mexico had proportionately the same percentage of African slaves as there were in the U.S., about ten percent. After their emancipation, the government enforced a no discrimination policy and the amalgamation of the African into

the Mexican population was an object lesson for the American Blacks. If they could do it, why haven't we done it?

For many years, the Mexicans we knew were those whose forebears lived in the half of Mexico conquered and annexed by the expansionist war of 1846-48. Over the generations, the ties with Mexico were at least weakened. Beginning with the "Bracero" program during World War II, and rapidly expanding during the past twenty years, Mexican nationals have come to play an increasingly important role in the labor and revolutionary movements. Here again, we see how the Mexican workers physically unite with the workers here, then ideologically with those first in Mexico and then in Central America. When the revolutionaries of the United States call for international unity, their best support is to engage in the revolution where they are.

I'm sure that in the future we will see a strengthening of the specific contribution of the Puerto Rican and Mexican workers. Only these workers can politically and physically connect the Anglo-American workers with the ongoing Central and South American revolutions.

### ***IN WHAT WAY ARE WOMEN A UNIQUE FORCE IN AMERICAN HISTORY?***

The role of women in society has changed with every single change in the means of production and their final liberation is going to rest upon the absolute elimination of the social division of labor that assigns them to "kitchen, church and children." Such tools as the washing machine, the vacuum cleaner, the dish-washer, did away with much of the unpaid and unaccounted for labor that tied her to household drudgery. Coincidentally, the introduction of electronics in the work-place has more and more pulled her into social production. This resulted from declining wages that demanded a two-worker household as well as from instruments that freed her from housework.

Even if you had the computer, and didn't have a washing machine and didn't have a vacuum cleaner, a woman would still have to spend all her time in the house, making it possible for her man to go to work. The man could not go to work if he had to come home and clean the house and do the dishes and cook the food and shop and raise the

children. This is the historic, patriarchal division of labor within the family, between husband and wife. She is his helpmate. That's the word they use which means you make it possible for me to go to work to support you. It's more than just a one-sided thing, it's a two-sided thing.

Women's liberation depends upon their entering fully and equally into the productive process. They can't enter into the productive process unless they are freed from the drudgery of housework and that depends upon the development of the means of household production. You have this thing going constantly back and forth around in a circle or a spiral. The point is that the position of woman in the family is a result of the development of the means of production. We have seen that the recent changes in the means of production have changed not only her place in the family, but have changed the family itself.

Women have played a very revolutionary role in American history and still have a unique role in the revolution. Women may not be an economic class, but women as women have suffered certain special economic privation in the United States and throughout the world. I'm just seventy-seven, but I can remember when no woman was really equal to men in her economic stratum. My mother participated in the first voting that took place for women in the United States and she is only 106. If we are going to deal with the question seriously, I think we have to view women as a class of people who have been denied their rights because of their gender. I think that anybody who refuses to look at this is showing his or her male supremacist feathers.

Let's look at the women's movement and the struggle of women. What was it that placed women in the position of inferiority? The only way any group becomes inferior is to become dependent. If you are not dependent, nobody can place you in a position of inferiority. So therefore, they have to first take away from you the instruments that allowed you to be economically independent, whatever those means of production were. We look at the American Indian, we look at the ancient peoples of Europe or of Africa and we find that so long as there was a hunting and gathering society, the women maintained or had their hands on the essential means of production. That is to say that the gathering of fruits and nuts and berries and elementary agriculture was

the stable foundation for living. Preparing the foods and maintaining the foods for lean times was the stable section of life. The hunting for animals was not as important. They called it a hunting and gathering society but it was really a gathering and hunting society. Of course, with such conditions you had matriarchy. That did not mean the subjugation of men. It meant the leading role of women in the social division of labor and therefore their leading role in the society.

Then, as the transition to animal husbandry took place and men gained control of the herds and of the land itself as private property, we find the greatest revolution history has every known. That revolution was the transfer of power from the women to the men. The subjugation of the women took place over a very long period of time and was upheld by new religious literature and new moralities that justified the revolution and the dictatorship of the men over the women. It takes a long time to stabilize a new division of labor. Until the old division of labor was destroyed, the matriarchal system continued.

So we went for thousands and thousands of years through different economic epochs and eras. Each of these eras was a shifting in the level of the means of production. Each epoch separated women more and more from the means of production and increased their dependency. There could be no reversing this process until a new means of production allowed for the sort of social revolution that would make equality possible. We waited all the way up until the middle nineteen fifties before the foundations of the women's revolution were in place. To show you how recent this process is, in 1936, we were the first family in our little town to have a washing machine. It was an EASY washing machine with a great big copper vat and a hand wringer. This was an amazing advance over taking three or four tubs out in the back yard and chopping wood and getting that water and boiling those clothes. That was an all-day job. They used to say you wash on Monday and iron on Tuesday and clean on Wednesday and cook on Thursday. A woman's day was never done. It's true. (Of course, I learned it differently. I learned that a rich man works from sun to sun but a poor man's work is never done. When a child, I said that and my mother laughed about it, because that's not the way she learned it).

Women's work was never done; it was NEVER done and so long as her work was never done she was at the mercy of the person who fed her because she could not feed herself. It's the same as the slave in America. The slave grew all the food, the slave harvested all the food, but was dependent upon the master for something to eat! That's exactly what we are talking about here. The man could not possibly have made the living, so to speak, except for the underpinning of eighteen-hour-a-day work by the women. While he was at the tavern drinking after his ten-hour-day work, she was still scrubbing and cleaning and cooking and canning and so forth and so on. A certain percentage of women have always worked beside the men in the mines and factories. The fact was that when work for the capitalist was done, her work for the family began.

Beginning about 1935, a series of developments and inventions "lightened" the woman's work in the house. Such developments were the vacuum cleaner, the washing machine and great advances in ovens and other paraphernalia for cooking, cleaning and raising children. Women began having a little bit of time on their hands and that time went to getting a job. Most of them got jobs as industry needed more workers for the war and the industrial expansion after the war. The real "liberator" of women has been the new machines that changed the character of housework. Today, it's no big deal for a guy to come home from work and grab the vacuum cleaner and spend five minutes vacuuming the rug. It was a big deal when you had to spend two hours on that rug, beating it up. And the same goes for washing the dishes and drying the clothes and ironing the clothes and all the rest. Who irons clothes anymore? We have material that doesn't need ironing.

Women didn't get liberated because somebody said, "Well, this is terrible; we shouldn't treat women like this." Women's liberation came about the same way that anybody else gets liberated. They get kicked out of their situation. When the sharecropper was kicked off the plantation that was his liberation. Women got kicked out by the vacuum cleaner and the polyester. When women had time on their hands, the natural inclination was to go to work—to be independent. Also, the mechanics of the capitalist system is that if someone can go

to work, he or she must. So once they became relatively free from the drudgery, they could address the question of their liberation and integration into society.

This process, of course, is going through stages. The first stages of the women's social or political movement began years and years ago with the bourgeois women fighting to inherit their husbands' wealth, rather than having it go to their first son or a male relative. They fought for the right to sign checks and to go into business. Now, this didn't have anything to do with the slave woman or the woman living in a shantytown and working for fifty cents a day. So it wasn't really a women's movement at that time. It's wasn't a movement of women as a class. It was a struggle to quantify the equality within the upper class.

The point I'm trying to get to is that the struggle of women as a class could only develop when the means of production allowed them to do so. Outstanding individuals always visualize maturing possibilities long before the material basis for that vision is fully formed. We look back at the tremendously heroic role women played during the pre-Civil War period and the Civil War period, as an example. There is a dialectical relationship between the material base and the vision. One reinforces the other. The struggle for the vision helps create the conditions for the vision. This is shown in every revolution. We should also say this about the American women's movement: it has always been fired up by, linked to, and guided by the struggle of the African Americans. The two struggles have been very close. Partly this is due to the position of the African American women. But it is also because women suffered the same kind of destruction and oppression as the African Americans as a whole. They found common cause very early on with the linkage being the African American women.

The movement today, however, is a different movement. The movement started during World War II, when Rosie the Riveter showed women could work in industry beside men. You know the story about a team of riveters; it was a very popular story during the war. Two riveters worked as a team and they never saw each other. One of them was on one side of the hunk of aluminum or steel they were working on and the other one was on the other side. Their faces

were covered and they never saw each other until one day they finally met. One riveter was a white man and the other was a Black woman, and this was a time when such associations were not acceptable.

At any rate, after the war, it was not possible to drive the woman back to the kitchen and her little toddlers, no matter how much they promoted the creation of the nuclear family. It didn't fly because women had some time on their hands to think about what they were doing. Back in the fifties the big deal was women getting together and playing canasta. What kind of ridiculous thing is this? Finally human beings have got some time for their intellectual and social and physical betterment and they are just going to sit down every afternoon and play canasta? Nonsense. That was kind of forced upon them and it didn't fly. Nobody even knows what canasta is anymore. The point is a very simple one: women were liberated by the qualitatively new means of production. The vacuum cleaner is an instrument of production; it produces a clean rug. A washing machine is an instrument of production; it produces clean clothes. These new things for cooking are instruments of production. As they changed in quality it was no longer possible to maintain the women where they were. So it was inevitable that sooner or later this women's movement would encompass women as a class rather than as various economic strata of women.

When the National Organization for Women first started, it addressed itself primarily to the needs of the middle-class Anglo-American woman. Now we have an organization for women that is making every effort to ground itself in the most oppressed and exploited section of women in the United States. And this is the reason why the Cheri Honkalas, the Marian Kramers, the Ethel Long-Scotts and the Michelle Tingling-Clemmons are making such an impact on it. The women who chair such organizations recognize that this isn't the same old game. If they don't ground themselves amongst the most oppressed section of women they cannot maintain an organization. They are doing a very admirable job on this level.

The women's revolution is a real revolution. It's a real thing because it is connected to the means of production. It changes with changes of these means of production and it is heading toward a collision with the state power in order to consolidate what gains women

have achieved. Let's look at Anita Hill, for example. She could not represent the African American woman. She had to represent woman. Look what spawned off of her heroic stand! Movies, books, courses in colleges. She was able to touch a raw nerve because she stood up and took a position for women, not any particular stratum or nationality of women.

Here we have a revolution taking place within a revolution for a whole new world. The upshot is that it's becoming absolutely impossible to talk in terms of any serious social movement that doesn't have women, not just as a part of it, but integrated into the leadership of it. One of the things in the favor of the League of Revolutionaries is that we inherited a conception and a policy of seriously training and advancing the women, not because we want to look good, but because of the nature of the revolution and the revolution within the revolution. It is only going to be possible to consolidate a revolutionary movement when the majority, and women today are the majority in both the work force and in the population, are real leaders of the movement. Today, it is not possible to lead a vast mass of people with a minority, the men, in control of the leadership. We are no longer talking ideology, but basic revolutionary tactics.

Just as the game has changed in the factory, it has also changed in the relationship between men and women. I think the sooner that people recognize that, the sooner the struggle will move forward. We must begin seriously struggling to find out how men and women relate under these new conditions. How do we relate in an equality that is based on the differences between us? It's a very difficult whole new ball game out there. What is the special revolutionary role of women? They're the numerical majority in society, and they are the majority in the working class and they are the majority in this new class created by electronics. This is a political statement that cannot be avoided. Sweeping statements are dangerous, but our experience has been that, at least in the League, the women are less competitive, more given to collectivity, more objective, but less self-confident. The dialectic of revolution is this: those who must lead if the revolution is to succeed are the least prepared to lead. The women, the downtrodden must quickly develop self-confidence, must educate themselves, must

quickly and boldly step forward to make their indispensable contribution or the revolution cannot win.

### ***HOW IMPORTANT ARE YOUTH IN U.S. REVOLUTIONARY HISTORY?***

First, who are the youth today? Time was when people under 30 were considered “the youth.” Today, the youth are much younger. People 12 and 15 years old played an important, and at times, decisive role in the freedom movement. Today, people of 10 and 12 years have to make decisions about drugs and sex and their place in society. The youth are becoming younger and we must learn to approach them at that level.

The youth have played very, very important roles in every revolution. If you go back to the American Revolution, for example, to the key battle at Brooklyn Heights, George Washington wrote in his diary that the game is up. He wrote that over half his army is fifteen or under. Now, does that give you an idea about how important the youth were to the American Revolution? Nobody ever tells you this. I just happened to come across this fragment of his diary.

Wherever we look in any revolution we find the youth playing a very special role. They play that role because they are youth. Many of them don't have a family to feed and very often they don't have a job to go to every day. They can spend time passing out leaflets and participating in street demonstrations. They can spend hours and hours in chat rooms and discussion groups and building web sites. Moreover, since they are youth they aren't settled into any specific economic class. We may call them working-class youth, but they don't have the political outlook of the workers. They are not old enough; they haven't been there long enough. What they do have is morality. We keep hearing about how terrible young people are. Yet, the most moral group in a society is its youth. They have ideals, they are looking for something that's better than what they have.

The youth are in an objective position to play an important role in the revolutionary process. They have the special problem and unique opportunity of integrating themselves into a society that is in change. In the United States, in the past thirty years, there has been

very little organized revolutionary youth activity. But don't kid yourself that there isn't a youth movement out there. There is plenty of a youth movement that just isn't organized. It's beginning to get organized and the political left is beginning to find openings. I think the left has always wanted to organize the youth, and work with them, but has never been able to find the openings where they would be received. Now, it's just beginning to open up. As the maxim goes, "Whoever gets the youth is going to win this revolution." I would like to add that whoever gets the youth are the ones who appealed to their morality, not to their material well-being, but to their morality. If we look back at our own youth, we see that this was the overwhelming force in our life. If we look back, we see that there are a whole lot of things that we wish we would have done, but didn't. We didn't think it was the right thing to do.

We have a very, very big youth movement in the United States. At this point it is pretty unmanageable, but it is a movement. When I was a youngster nobody could fool me about what's going on. I think that this is true of every young generation. They know what's happening. What they see is that there isn't any future for them out there. They grew up under certain ideological restraints that have closed their minds, to some extent, to the revolutionary movement. But they know that they can't make it under this situation, under this system. Their rebelliousness at this particular moment is one that sometimes takes on an anti-social character. That's not their fault; that's our fault.

We are the ones responsible to see to it that the youth are pulled in the proper direction. The overwhelming thing is that not only do they think they have no future, the objective reality is that they do not have a future in this system. The youth are going to be pulled in either to the fascist skinheads or to the revolutionary movement. They are going to be pulled into something that says, "Look, let's change this thing." Again, they're not saying, "Let's change it so we can make some money." They are saying, "This is wrong, this is no good, this thing sucks, let's change it." The people who say this, too, are the ones pulling the youth towards them.

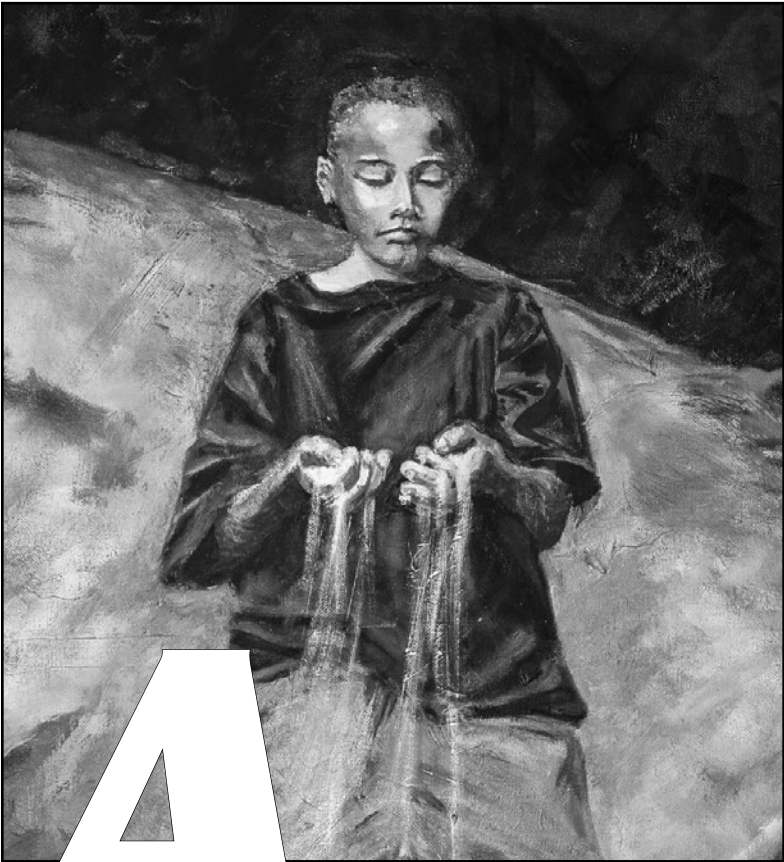
There has never been the potential, the revolutionary potential, amongst the youth that we see today. The objective situation is

ripening. There has never been such a favorable situation as far as youth work is concerned. That time is coming, and it's not far off when the young people will be open to what the revolutionary movement has to say to them. We had better be sure we have something to say.



chapter **4**

DIANA BEREK



**A**frican American  
**History and U.S. History**

## **WHY IS AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY THE HEART OF AMERICAN HISTORY?**

To suggest such an analysis is bound to make the majority of eyebrows arch upward. African Americans have always been looked upon and treated as if they were at best on the periphery of our country's history. Their being marginalized in the social and economic sense reinforces this outlook. Nevertheless any serious inquiry into history will show that the control, manipulation and exploitation of the African American was at the heart of every major and most of the minor decisions of state prior to the Civil War, and a good many of them afterwards.

Let's start at the beginning. For a number of ideological and political reasons, the American colonies resisted African slavery, preferring to populate the New World with European indentured servants. In the Caribbean, the plantation and slave system was being fine-tuned. There, unheard-of fortunes were accumulated on the basis of the most reckless expenditure of human life known to history. A goodly portion of the colonies' economic intercourse was servicing the slave system of the Caribbean. The colonies were never disconnected from African slavery. It was not some inopportune landing of a Spanish ship carrying twenty African captives that inaugurated African slavery in the colonies. As the capitalist system evolved from the slave trade and the Caribbean plantations, capitalism became firmly planted in the colonies and slavery was its inevitable result. Every colony had slavery, and none of the colonies, north or south, could have accumulated and economically moved forward without the brutal working to death of the slave.

Rudimentary capitalist agriculture—that is agriculture for the market, rather than consumption—never reckoned with ecology or preservation of the land. This is especially true of cotton culture. The solution was the constant westward motion for virgin land. I often laugh at these falsifiers of history who wave the flag and talk about the westward move of liberty. In fact, it was the westward move of slavery. Two examples that come to mind are the removal of the five “civilized” (i.e., slave-holding) Indian tribes from their native lands to the Oklahoma Territory. The “Trail of Tears” is an indelible moral

condemnation of U.S. state policy for the expansion of slavery. The Indians suffered terribly on that journey. Can you imagine the condition of their African slaves?

The other instance was the annexation of Texas and later the war against Mexico and the ripping-off of half her national territory. There was no other reason for this expansionism but the promulgation of slavery. The westward march of liberty is a joke.

Most people understand that the Civil War was fought over the African Americans' condition as slaves. Few realize that Wilson probably would not have been elected if Blacks were able to vote. Certainly, Roosevelt would not have won his third term without a solid African American vote. This goes for Truman and a number of presidents who changed the political direction of the country.

Take a look at the body of law developed around the control of labor. Every single one of these oppressive laws had their foundation in the control of the African American. If we go beyond the written law it is easily seen that the control of a disjointed working class was achieved through uniting the white worker and capitalist to exclude the African American.

In the realm of culture, if it weren't for the African Americans we would still be dancing the minuet. At the heart of American culture beats the culture of the African American people. They would not have created this culture if not for the isolation, brutality and segregation that lies at the heart of the African Americans as a people. Eleanor Roosevelt put it quite well when she said that apart from the culture of the Indian, the culture of the African American is the only American culture. Clearly everything else was an ethnic culture brought over from the old world. The other aspect is, it is becoming a world culture. Every time I've gone abroad, I've been shocked by the breadth of the assimilation of this culture into French, British, Egyptian—what have you—popular culture.

So when we say that the African Americans are at the heart of American history, we don't mean to imply that they were in control of that history. The sad fact is that up until the integration period, controlling and manipulating the Black ten percent was the way to control the white majority. This is the only way we can make sense of

a history that gives the world the most exalted visions along with the most brutal and callous exploitation and destruction of human life.

How did the development of modern American imperialism affect the African American's struggle for freedom and equality?

Since the Black Belt South, which was the main concentration of African Americans, was the first colony of this new imperialism, it had a huge and destructive effect.

By 1875, the Southern elite understood that chattel slavery was gone forever and their future lay in unity with the Northern financial-industrial oligarchy. It took a few more years to win a significant section of the Southern whites to this position. However, by the late 1890s, the merging of the Southern elite and the Northern financial-industrial oligarchy was a fact. This unity created the conditions between 1875 and 1890 for the rise of what we refer to as modern imperialism. The consequence for the African American people was that they were no longer needed as the political force to subdue what had been a rebellious Southern ruling class. They were abandoned by the North and turned over to the tender mercies of their former masters.

### ***WHAT DID THIS NEW UNITY MEAN FOR THE SOUTH AS A WHOLE?***

The movie "The Birth of a Nation" expresses this stage of American history. I hate that movie, but it shouldn't blind me to the fact that it is an important film. It shows that the birth of the modern American nation resulted from the wedding of the interest of the Southern elite with the Northern financial-industrial oligarchy. This junction was expressed in the South moving from hatred of and rebellion against the North to becoming the most patriotic, chauvinistic, jingoist section of the whole country. The Army became Southern, the Navy became Southern. It was the birth of a nation because it spelled the end of political sectionalism. For the first time the ruling circles of all sections of the country were basically united. All this was accomplished by the political compromise of turning the ex-slaves over to the now-secure plantation owners or managers without the interference of law.

Let's be clear. The Northern interests controlled the South by politically controlling the African Americans. That control was the basis for breaking the political independence of the Southern elite. As that independence was broken, the elite was forced to unite with their economic masters. At that point, the goals of Reconstruction were accomplished and it could be dismantled as a political and military institution. But cotton still had to be picked. The unity of Northern and Southern political and economic interests was the foundation for the counterrevolution that drove the African Americans back into a near slave-like condition.

One of the first steps toward controlling the South was through the enfranchising of the Blacks. Then the ruling class turned to a new tactic. They moved to control the whites of the South by using the Blacks as Virginia Governor Wise's "outsider in our midst." They declared Blacks a bogeyman, a demon, and thereby frightened and bribed the whites into all-class white unity. "The Birth of a Nation" was used to change the ideology of the white people of the North from their democratic support of the struggle of the Blacks to acceptance of the segregated, racist South as a leading partner in the declared manifest destiny of the nation. How was this accomplished? The central purpose of the movie was to show that the manifest destiny of the American white rested on the battle for racial purity and that demanded "keeping the Negro in his place." The tactic was to portray the African American as the brutish enemy of all whites. Relentless bourgeois racist propaganda spread this image. Segregation sustained it.

What was the outcome of the Civil War?

The result was that suddenly there was a new economic-political situation. Slavery, as a poor white man's best government, was done away with. The Southern poor white was ground down almost to the level of the Black, with one exception. The whites could form the lynch mobs. They had social privileges but very little economic privilege. In 1947 or 1948, an issue of LIFE magazine was devoted to the South. It showed the near-equality of economic conditions between the white and Black sharecropper with the one exception of social privileges. It also showed some minor, mild unity of these

sharecroppers based on the fact that they were living almost next door to each other and shared similar economic problems.

No longer was a Southern poor white able to say, “If I could just get that 250 bucks and buy a slave, I can beat it out of him to go from one to the next, to the next, to the next, and I can become rich.” Suddenly they couldn’t become rich and the only thing that held them together was the ideological conviction expressed by “The Birth of a Nation.”

Now, there is no question in my mind that the creation of this new nation meant a colonization of the core plantation area and the semicolonial exploitation of the South as a region. It wasn’t the British, or French or German form of colonization. It was something absolutely new: financial colonization. Everything starts somewhere. Financial imperialism has remote roots, but the American form of colonization that was applied to Latin America was first applied to the South in the 1870s. This meant buying up the productive process and then concentrating on, or creating, contradictions between the people that they conquer. Just as the Indians conquer India for the British, the Southern whites, who had been in such antagonism with the Northern whites, conquered the South and maintained the South for these same Northern interests.

Although the political and social history of the South was striving to go in one direction, the new economy was going in another. The economy, essentially, was going in the direction of a colonial economy. It is clear there was not just a quantitative difference between the situation of the poor in the North and the poor in the Black Belt of the South. There was a qualitative difference, and that difference can only be explained on the basis of a colonial relationship. It cannot be explained as just a regional or sectional problem. Imperialism cannot exist without colonies. The emergence of Yankee imperialism and the creation of the “Negro Nation” as a colony were simultaneous.

## ***WHAT CAUSED THE DEVELOPMENT AND THEN THE DISPERSAL OF THE AFRICAN AMERICANS AS A PEOPLE?***

Let's spend a moment examining the African Americans as a people who exist across the country as apart from the concept of the "Negro Nation." There is a sharp line of demarcation between the Negro Nation (the Southern Black Belt named for its rich, black soil) that is composed of all the people who live there, and the African Americans as a people who live everywhere in the United States.

A nation and a people embody the same characteristics except that a nation shares a common territory. As the Negro Nation consolidated as a colony, white supremacy through segregation and discrimination consolidated the African Americans as a people throughout the country. Common historical experience and the special common oppression by white supremacy made them into a people. They were held together by the violence of segregation and oppression everywhere. On the other hand, the Negro Nation is held together by historically evolved economic factors. The African American people, feasibly, can be integrated. The Negro Nation cannot.

Apart from the common oppression by whites, through slavery and its legacy, however, the African Americans have nothing in common that made them into a people. They are not like the Tutsi of Rwanda who came from one tribe, embraced one national religion, etc. When they are fully emancipated, if we can say that, they will still be Tutsi. Every time the pressure is off the Blacks, they immediately move toward their natural place in the general American society, as do all other Americans. The Black bourgeoisie has to deny this. The reason the Black bourgeoisie is raising all this sand about the "African American community" is that it's the only thing they can lead. Nevertheless, it's disintegrating and it began disintegrating with the development of the cotton-picking machine. That machine was the material basis for ending sharecropping and farm day-labor. With that gone, it was possible to end at least de jure segregation. When segregation goes, the pressure is off and sections of the African American people begin to drift toward their economic counterpart in general American society. The first thing that happened was a huge section of Blacks left or were forced off

the plantations and joined their fellow workers in industry. They joined as unequals, but they got in.

Many happy things happen in history. One of these was that the mechanization of Southern agriculture, which liquidated the economic base for segregation, coincided with the move of industry from the North to the South. Remember how President Eisenhower set aside fifteen billion dollars to assist industry's move from the union towns in the Northeast into the non-union South? This move was not only to break the unions, but also to industrialize the South. Thus, as the Blacks were driven off the plantations, they had a place to go. They went first into small-scale Southern industry and into the larger industry of the North.

At that time, there was a recession and a labor surplus in the North. Simultaneously, there was a labor shortage in the South. A joke circulating then demonstrated the obvious. A CEO of a company with a plant in the South called down there complaining, "Why is ten percent of the plant idle?" The manager answers, "I can't get the labor." The Northern boss yells back, "What the hell you mean you can't get the labor? What about all those Black people lying around? I see they don't have any jobs." "I can't hire them... There is a law... I can't put them in the same place." "Well, damn the law!"

We saw the temporary unity of interest between the Northern oligarchy and the political and social strivings of the Blacks in the South. And the temporary unity made the Martin Luther King wing of the freedom movement possible. It was the missing ingredient in the struggle prior to World War II. At that time, there was no section of the economy whose interest lay in doing away with segregation. Therefore, we could not win. The sad truth is that until a section of the white ruling class's interest lay in doing away with segregation, it could not be done away with, no matter how hard we fought.

This period during the late 1950s to early '60s is often referred to as the Second Reconstruction. There are important parallels. Northern financial and industrial interests had to move into the South. To do so, they had to exploit African American labor. To do that, de jure segregation had to be repealed. The bloc of Northern reactionaries and Southern conservatives blocked every move by this new international

financial group. The only way to outvote them was to enfranchise the Blacks. The struggle for the ballot, however, could not be won without some assistance from the legal arm of the state.

As the bloc of Northern Republicans and Southern Democrats was broken, the government set about mending the political fabric of the country. We see the beginnings of integration with two classes. One is the Black bourgeoisie and the other is the African American in the new class created by electronics. As changing economic conditions negate the political pressure to maintain segregation, the remaining classes of African Americans will integrate. Different from the ending of Reconstruction, the government has not and cannot move against the African Americans as a people. Thirty-five million people would be a huge force if the government attacked and united them. Today, the attack is against the new American proletarian class, which they first portrayed as Black.

### ***HOW DID CLASS DIFFERENCES EMERGE AFTER THE CIVIL WAR?***

After Reconstruction and prior to the passage of the civil rights acts of the 1960s and 1970s, all classes of African Americans were tied together by and in the common struggle against second-class citizenship. First, the struggle for the abolition of slavery, and then the struggle to overturn the Jim Crow laws overlay any contradictions within the African American community.

It must be pointed out that laws in this country are more opportunities than rights. A law that gives you access to something doesn't help if you lack the wherewithal to take advantage of it. Therefore, when integration took place, the only people who got integrated were those with the resources to do so. The only group that integrated, at least in the beginning, was the upper stratum of the Black bourgeoisie.

The African American elite (as distinct from the Black bourgeoisie as a class) is in a strange position. This elite is today primarily composed of political persons and those outside electoral politics that represent the community through control of organizations. They cannot be an elite without doing contradictory things. One, they

must represent the strivings of the Black masses to the Black masses. Two, they must be integrated into or have real access to the white elite in order to have the influence to attract the Black mass. Third, the Black mass must not achieve the goal of equality or the basis for them being an elite will be gone. The Black elite is an extension of the “big shot,” the Black leader who knows how to “deal with the white man.” At the same time, he has to prove that, indeed, he is the man in control.

Consequently, Black movements have always been tightly built around the charismatic leader. This gave the power structure a single person to control as opposed to trying to control the mass of people. Also, if the single leader gets out of control, he can be easily removed. Without an organizational structure resting upon and being part of the mass base, the movement has always died with the leader. Convergence or all-class unity was the main motion when all Blacks were under the same gun. Divergence or class separation is happening now. It is part of the inevitable dispersal of nations under imperialism. This dispersal means that there is a gradual but steady loosening of the national ties. In this case, the culture of the African American is becoming part of the American culture. The dividing line between white and Black is little by little fading. The specific way this divergence or integration takes place is conditioned by the particular relationship between the African Americans and the white majority in any particular locale.

I would like to add one more word about Black nationalism and the Black bourgeoisie. The Black bourgeoisie is very dependent upon politics. They must have a cohesive social base to be politically influential. They must be politically influential in order to continue their development into a full-fledged bourgeoisie. Not necessarily as individuals, but as a class, they must have government assistance. They will get that assistance only if they are politically necessary. They will remain politically necessary only if the Black voters are a compact political group and uphold the demand of the Black leadership for government support of Black capitalism. In spite of their ranting about “the Black community,” however, the Black bourgeoisie refuses to do anything about the Black destitute. Their projection is the same

as the Southern white politician: more prisons and more cops. They have to keep screaming “racism” as a pressure to hold their social base together. “Racism” is a commodity for both the Black leadership and the racists. The Black bourgeoisie is morally bankrupt and today faces its greatest threat since the ending of Reconstruction.

### ***HOW IS AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURE THE BASIS FOR AMERICAN CULTURE?***

Culture, in the sense of high art, expresses popular perceptions, strivings and conceptions. These cultural expressions—paintings, the dance, literature—increasingly reflect a developing American culture based in the culture of the Black people of the United States. No maturing nation, and the United States is still maturing, can have a culture that is an extension of another nation. The process of maturing in part means the creation of a distinct national culture. There are only two sources for American culture: the Native Americans and the people of the Black Belt. Even in the Black Belt, the very important contribution of the rural whites is based in the culture of the Blacks.

Do you remember during the 1950s when a battle for culture broke out? White youths were flocking to the rhythm and blues and rock and roll festivals and picking up on the “race” dances. Cleveland, Ohio’s disk jockey, “Moondog” Alan Freed, sponsored a rock and roll concert attended by ten thousand people, many of them white. The terrified city government alerted the National Guard. President Eisenhower condemned the music and dance spreading out of the Black Belt and said that the minuet was the most beautiful dance in the world. A president making that statement today would be laughed out of office. I can thank Eisenhower for my ideas on this question.

The reactionary sector of the ruling class very well understands that the cultural arena is the front line in the struggle to isolate and oppress the Blacks. As the ethnic whites become “Americanized” they drift away from European culture. “Negro culture” is filling the vacuum. Hence, the separateness of the African American people is being abolished, not enforced as it appears.

If my cup of water is sitting apart from yours, but you pour your cup into mine, my cup of water ceases to exist as an independent entity. Very few people are involved with the Lawrence Welks of today. This rising American culture is the only cup of culture around, except for the culture of the Native American Indian. The historic importance of Elvis Presley is that he transported the musical aspect of Black mass culture to the whites. I see the white youth mimicking every high sign and gesture that Blacks make in sports. Sport is a close second to music as the highway to make Black culture American culture. It is the process of creating and broadening and nationalizing the culture of the Black Belt and especially of the African American people.

A few years back, I went to a small, isolated town in Southern Ohio to talk to a youth group. I was surprised not only by their unsophisticated democratic outlook, but that their every expression could have come out of South Chicago. When I asked them where they learned all this, the answer was simple. "From MTV."

My generation saw very important things happen in America. For example, in 1932 the vast majority of American whites knew nothing about the Blacks except what they saw from Al Jolson. I remember the first broadcast of the Fisk Choir on their new program "Wings Over Jordan." For the first time white America heard Black America speak. From 11:00 until 12:00 on Sunday morning, huge sections of white Americans tuned in on these beautiful spirituals. They began getting a different conception of Black America than the happy-go-lucky darky tap-dancing along the street with no job, no money, clothes tattered and torn, but happy.

The invention of the radio allowed this to happen. It was a significant cultural journey from 1932 when "Wings Over Jordan" came on the radio to 1968 when the Mormon Tabernacle Choir recorded a whole album of "Negro spirituals." The songs no longer belonged solely to the African American people—these songs belong to America. You can be sure that more whites than Blacks are watching "Soul Train" on Saturday mornings.

Two things happened relatively simultaneously. One was the nationalization of African American culture. This Americanization

of African American culture came through the radio, through sports, through dance, through everything. Alongside this process arose African Americans who express the best of European and American culture. Consider the route from a Marian Anderson who was not even allowed to sing in the Constitution Hall to outstanding opera stars who are Black, such as Leontyne Price and Kathleen Battle.

The development of African American culture into a national culture can be shown very simply. A Welsh miner's son's recording of "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands" outsold Mahalia Jackson's rendition of the same spiritual. Then, as now, we heard a great hue and cry from the Black nationalists that "the white people are stealing our culture." They are not stealing it. They are inheriting it. This is the process of the Americanization of Negro culture, the process of creating a truly American culture.

### ***WHAT HAS BEEN THE PROCESS FOR THE ECONOMIC INTEGRATION OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN POPULATION?***

The question of all-African American unity raises an immense amount of tension. This call comes from the white political left and from the Black bourgeoisie. Although nothing is a bed of roses when it comes to integration, there is no economic or historic reason that the African Americans should remain an exclusive community. The two most important Black institutions are the church and the schools. The schools have, to some degree, been integrated and there is a broad and important movement especially in the South to break the rigid de facto segregation in religion. White and Black ministers are preaching to one another's congregations and some churches have merged.

The absence of any serious class contradictions within the African American community should not be taken as a response to this call. The reality is that the white ruling class still has the power and connections to appoint most of the Black "leaders." The rest are murdered, jailed or so demonized as to be rendered ineffective. The seeming rallying around Black "leaders" is mostly an expression of justified fear of the man. A recent name recognition poll conducted

among African Americans showed Jesse Jackson in the lead but with only 36 percent name recognition.

As we look at history we see that, as slavery ground to an end, the impulse and strivings of the ex-slaves were to enter American life according to economic status. For example, grocery stores and restaurants (which seemed to be favorite entries into capitalism, since they were closely connected to the small neighborhood farm) didn't seek out a Black clientele. Neither did the barber nor any other sector. As the Southern elite regained the upper hand, they legally as well as ideologically, imposed the segregation that forced this very weak Black bourgeoisie to organize and depend upon "their" market. At that point, "all-Black unity" again emerged. The degree of "all-Black unity" expresses the pressures of de facto segregation and ruling class violence.

For a moment let us look at the Black migration to the North as just another migration. Take away the color factor and you will see that the Blacks improved their economic status in the North at exactly the same rate as any other immigrants. They were probably a little better off than the Italian immigrants were when they came into the U.S. The improvement of the economic conditions and eventually the social conditions of the Blacks was proceeding in a very normal manner. Education, the emergence of the Black woman as a wage earner and her struggle for equality within the Black family, were all moving ahead on about the same path as any other immigrant. At a certain point of Irish immigration suddenly there was Irish domination of politics; similarly for the Italian or the Norwegian. Likewise, there was an emergence of Black politics as the Blacks moved into these ghettos. The difference is that in the main, the Black politician's influence was limited to the ghetto, while the ethnic white's influence became national. Actually, I hate the use of the term ghetto, because it's really not a ghetto. To get out of the ghetto all a Jewish person had to do was to publicly renounce his religion and he could leave. The Black doesn't leave by renouncing his being an African American. He gets out when he has the money to leave. The Blacks didn't have any choice. It is not a ghetto; it is a segregated slum.

The concentration of Blacks in these inner cities created the conditions for the rise of Black politics and a Black politician whose interest lay more and more with the segregation and isolation of his constituency. Do you think Richard J. Daley's machine could have existed for ten minutes without the most loyal support by the Black political criminals—the political criminals who were ripping off the city right along with the Daleys? The Black politicians were the ones who sold the idea of these public housing high rises such as Cabrini Green and the Robert Taylor Homes. They knew good and well the only reason for these public housing projects was to permanently segregate the Blacks. They also understood that permanent de facto segregation with de jure integration was in their interest.

So Blacks went into the factory the same way that the Irish or Italian went into the factory, as immigrants. That is to say taking the simplest jobs at the lowest wages and then begin working themselves up. Little by little they inched ahead. Then suddenly, in came automation that wiped out the unskilled and semiskilled sector—the sector where they worked.

Today there are growing sections of African Americans who are struggling to get out of that ghetto, out of the still-segregated slums, and some are succeeding. I am constantly amazed at the stability and growth of the Black bourgeoisie. Actually, it's really a professional and upper working class, while only a small part is truly bourgeois. A Black bourgeoisie that is a real bourgeoisie is growing. Atlanta is the epitome of this. It's just amazing what has happened. It is clear that there are two Atlantas. There is an impoverished Black Atlanta on the one hand and then there is an Atlanta of Black Americans who occupy and have refurbished the antebellum houses and who own big businesses.

### ***WHY DIDN'T A CLASS STRUGGLE EMERGE WHEN BLACK PEOPLE BECAME FACTORY WORKERS?***

When the African Americans entered the factories, the employers' major card of "racial" separation began to weaken. But this was only the beginning of the beginning. Blacks and whites began to

work together, belong to the same union; they began to understand they had the same enemy. That is one side of the coin. The other is the polarizing and sharpening of racism. Every step toward integration was met by the most determined resistance on the part of the ideological racists. We must never forget they had and have a base to maneuver from given the history of the country.

On the other hand, one of the particularities of the Black migrant is that many were sharecroppers. Sharecropping is a business, even if it doesn't sound like it. Many sharecroppers didn't have inside toilets, or running water. They often didn't have shoes on their feet, but they worked for themselves, supposedly. They had a contract with their employer that dealt with shares of the farm's production. Despite the poverty, this business relationship creates a certain petty bourgeois mentality. There is quite a step between this mentality and class consciousness. This petty bourgeois mentality is still very strong amongst Blacks but it was much stronger back in the 1940s and 1950s. This idea of having your own thing, and translating it from your own plot of land to your own little business was natural.

The reality of it was that most Blacks arrived from the South absolutely broke, destitute. Their extended families got them into the factories, or whatever service jobs they might enter. They were very rapidly proletarianized. They very rapidly entered the working class in all senses of the word. This rapid transition was expressed culturally as well as economically. Suddenly you had all these blues songs about the killing floor and the assembly line. The song, "I Don't Mind Working, I Do Mind Dying" was part of that process. So, it was a very rapid thing and part of the rapidity of it was because there was a section of the Blacks who were always laborers. They were farm laborers, they were industrial laborers. They were the most class conscious section of the working class. They constituted the most oppressed and exploited section of the class. Because of them, consciousness amongst the African Americans developed rapidly. History prepared them for it.

African Americans were becoming an integral part of the working class. Unfortunately, the section of the working force they were becoming part of was, at the same time, being eliminated. The last

stage of labor-saving devices was eliminating the common laborer, which is the entry point into the working class.

I remember the first thing I saw in this respect and I'd like to describe it. I was laying brick, which is a very "iffy" way of making a living—between strikes and weather conditions. I learned to do almost anything for a living. We used to have what we called "the soup kitchen." You have one here in Chicago, too. These big freight yards, where the freight is transferred from trucks to freight trains or from freight trains to trucks, needed a tremendous amount of casual labor. If you were out of a job, you went down to "the soup kitchen" and unloaded boxcars. I went down one day and saw this overhead rail with a forklift on it. A train came up and situated itself at a certain position and then came this rail forklift thing, it came down and entered the boxcar. The boxcar was full of bricks. It was loaded in such a way that the fork came under the pallet and lifted a whole pallet of five hundred bricks. We were used to doing eight bricks in this hand with a tong, and eight bricks in this hand. All day long, we were running between the truck and the boxcar. This thing picked them up five hundred at a time. The truck was positioned. The crane positioned the pallet on the truck and then went back up along the rail into the boxcar and took the next pallet of bricks. Suddenly there were hundreds of men standing around this freight yard and there was no work for them to do. And now, this wasn't really a robot; this was just the beginning of a union of the hoist and the computers in such a way that by positioning pallets in an exact manner, that allowed the hoist to do the work.

At that time, I assumed a wholesale offensive by the white capitalist was underway that aimed to drive the Black worker out of industry. This offensive didn't have anything to do with color. It had something to do with profitability. It was just incidental that the person who got hit was Black. If it happened fifteen years before, it would have been a Slav. The color factor is there and it would have taken place differently, but it would have taken place. Whoever was in the position of a common laborer would have been eliminated.

The Blacks went into the labor process as a discriminated work force. Yet, the needs of the whites, despite the hatred, the segregation

and all the rest of it, demanded they be incorporated into the unions and the conditions of work protected. The way they got around this was that the white skilled section of the factory maintained a monopoly on the bargaining processes. As a matter of fact, one of the factors in the rise of the CIO was to protect the assembly workers and give them a voice in the bargaining. In the 1936, '37 period, the time of the development of the CIO, the segregated, isolated section of the factory was Slavic. They were outside the process. I remember a time when the Slav was really segregated. When I went to Cleveland you saw solid Slavic slums. It was only after the war that they began breaking up and some money began coming in. To be Romanian or Slavic was to be discriminated against. I saw a document in New York about the wage scale for building the Brooklyn Bridge. White labor was to be paid at fifteen cents an hour and Black labor at nine cents an hour and Italians at seven cents. My point is that in this system, most people are unequal. The Black had and has it the worst, but they were and are not alone.

The CIO was the union of the unskilled white production worker. The union got them into the process. Then along comes the Black and he is the isolated, segregated, section of society but the same thing happened. In order for the skilled trades to hold their position they had to organize the production worker. They didn't want to. I can remember when I first went to work in steel that the only work a Black could have was the labor gang. They could not hold a post in the union. That is one reason I always hated that damned Steelworkers union despite the fact that the controlling force of the Steelworkers today is Black. The interconnection was that it was not possible to maintain the privileges of the white worker without the organization of the Black worker.

History has set the stage for the social struggle. The first stage and cutting edge is the overriding struggle for equality. Whatever is going to happen is going to happen within that context. Only now are the objective realities in place for the developing social and class consciousness. That process is only beginning.

## ***HOW HAS RACISM CHANGED SINCE WORLD WAR II?***

When fundamental things change, everything dependent upon them must also change. This does not imply that results of change are direct or immediate. However, scientific thinking demands that we find the motivation for change, place such changes in their proper context and make some estimate of their consequences.

The African American question has undergone great change since the end of World War II. Few people today even attempt to describe the question. Historically this description has been a question of caste, a special question of class because of the color question, a national question or a national-colonial question. Most political activists assume that there has been no change in the dynamics, and organizations continue to be formed around these various conceptions.

These descriptions were based on observation over a long period of time. What were some of these observations? The first was that since the color line was the dominant factor, all African Americans regardless of education or wealth were subjected to the same oppression, segregation and discrimination. Secondly, that segregation had produced the essential elements of a distinct culture expressing an “African American people.” The conclusion by the left was that racial discrimination could not be overcome except by the destruction of the capitalist system and the reconstruction of society on a socialist basis.

Four elements have intervened to change this situation. First and foremost was the determined and militant struggle of the African Americans themselves. Seldom in history has such a small group—around 12 percent of the population—carried out such a heroic struggle against such a pervasive social ideology and against such a brutal state apparatus of oppression. Without this element, none of the other elements could have brought about change. The second element was the mechanization of Southern agriculture. That was the basis of the freedom struggle. Third, the Cold War was the context for the totality of the final stage of that struggle. The struggle between the Soviet Union and the United States opened doors that would have remained shut. The Soviets constantly used African American oppression as one of their most effective propaganda

weapons in the struggle for allies in the “Third World.” Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson—all were forced by the State Department to take steps in dismantling legal segregation. The fourth element was the introduction of electronics in production and communications and the subsequent globalization of the commodity and labor market.

Today, we must describe the African American question within this context.

The end of one stage of the struggle came with the African Americans using their newly won political power—often in alliance with progressive whites—to elect their representatives into the various organs of government. An example of this was the situation around Carl Stokes who in 1967 had been elected the first African American mayor of Cleveland, Ohio. Black kids walking through their changing neighborhood were attacked by whites with baseball bats and one of the whites was stabbed to death. (The stabber was eventually acquitted on self-defense.) A white mob prepared to storm the mayor’s mansion. When white police said they could not stop the mob, the Black police who had organized themselves to protect the mayor warned the white police that they would open up with automatic weapons if the mob crossed the last street between them and the mansion. Black police were defending the Black representative of the Black community. Or take the case of Harold Washington, former mayor of Chicago. With his election, all the white council members save one formed a solid bloc of opposition that practically stopped the city from carrying on its business. For that moment, African American politicians were coming into office from two different directions. One group’s base was the white power structure. They entered the Black community from that direction and represented that interest. Another group of African American politicians arose from the Black community to confront that power structure. This group, which won many important offices, represented “Black Power.”

It is clear that such outstanding persons as Colin Powell or Condoleezza Rice do not represent the African American community, nor do they symbolize “Black Power.”

Profound economic and political changes consolidated America's economic, political and military position as the world's sole superpower. For this superpower's government, racial discrimination became a profitless, politically embarrassing anachronism. Business organizations such as Denny's restaurants learned by paying out millions of dollars that the government would not defend nor tolerate blatant racial discrimination where they were involved.

The Clinton administration illustrates these complex changes and their effects on African Americans. No one can say Clinton is a racist, and he is immensely popular amongst the African Americans. Yet, he did more to damage the economic and social stability of the African American masses than did most of his blatantly racist predecessors. In order to stabilize the declining profits of the rich, he was forced to transfer money from the poor in the form of the welfare "reform" bill. The African American masses are not simply Black, they are poor. Clinton showed that poverty is a class rather than a color question.

Why wasn't there a greater outcry from the African Americans as the welfare bill went through the House and Senate? The African American intellectual elite, the traditional spokespersons for the community, was well on the road of integration into the ruling class or at least secure in the military, governmental or business bureaucracy that served the ruling class. They had no reason to oppose such legislation. The so-called revolutionary movements were too often led by highly paid professors who knew which side of the bread the butter was on. They drove their Mercedes down to the ghetto only on special occasions and had no reason to mobilize the poor.

A selective "cultural" integration is taking place. If an African American will think, talk, act and have the same motivations as members of the ruling class, the doors are opening to them. The scores of Black generals, admirals and CEOs of big corporations, the Black politicians and governmental bureaucrats all testify to this. Below them, a growing layer of Black professionals have practically no connection to the strivings and aspirations of the vast mass of African Americans. As this elite—the talented tenth—deserted the masses, there could be no effective resistance.

The days of the “representative of the African American community” and consequently of “Black Power” are numbered. In the ghetto, the leaders of the Black masses cannot raise one single demand that is not in the interests of the poor of all colors, and against the interests of the wealthy no matter their color.

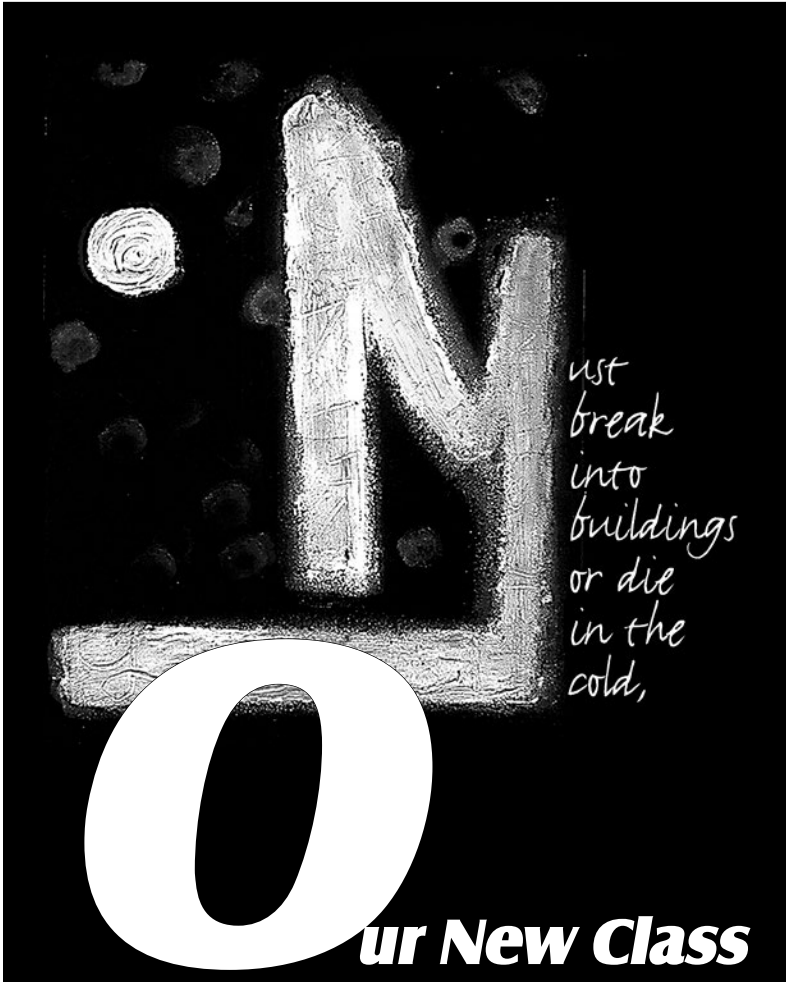
Does this indicate that racism is on the decline? Not at all. It indicates that racism is changing its form. We must never forget that the brutality of racism is and was not always directed solely by color differences. The racist nationalism of the fascist Japanese government against the peoples of Asia, or the slaughter and enslavement of the Slavic peoples by fascist Germany are only recent examples. In history we see racism in a religious garb as well. The thing that is clear is that racism, no matter its veneer, facilitates exploitation and is an integral part of capitalism. Therefore, as the needs of capitalism change, the forms of racism will change to accommodate it.

There is plenty of old-fashioned racism around and it will continue. The thing revolutionaries must grasp is that a new form of racism is developing. Change in social motion is difficult to grasp because the content begins to change before its form. This new racism is directed against the “ghetto Blacks,” the “illegal immigrant” and the white, so-called “trailer trash.” In other words, the class and cultural difference with the ruling class, not color, is emerging as the ideological basis for the savage economic assault against the poor.

The art of revolution lies in recognizing what is new and growing and dealing with that, rather than remaining stuck with old ideas and formulas even though they still appear strong and stable.

chapter **5**

JACK HIRSCHMAN



## **WHAT IS OUR NEW CLASS? WHO ARE THEY? WHY DO THEY EXIST?**

A new social group is forming. They have been driven outside the marketplace of the capitalist economy, but as human beings they must eat—they must consume. This new class is growing daily through the process of technological innovation.

Classes are formed by the introduction of new productive equipment. That is, by the reorganization of the production of the means of life. Almost always, the new class is tied to and works with the new means of production. Today's new class is shoved away from the means of production and out of society.

Here is a historical example. The introduction of slavery into Rome drove the working class out of the fields and factories and created the proletariat, a new class of permanently unemployed. In like manner, automation with computers and robots is shoving the working class out of the factories and into the streets as a modern proletariat. This new class is a real proletariat. Temporary and part-time workers already make up 30 percent of the work force. The minimum-wage workers are expanding rapidly. The permanently jobless are the core of the class.

Like anything else, today's new class developed over a period of time. It went through certain quantitative stages of development inside the industrial system. While employed, they were the "marginally employed," the unskilled and semi-skilled laborers. When labor-assisting devices gave way to labor-replacing devices, these workers were permanently shoved out of production. They became the first wave of a new class of low-wage, part-time and permanently unemployed workers. Successive leaps in technology has hit all sectors of the working class and now, certain layers of management are being wiped out.

Over a period of time, social scientists noted there was something different about this new group. They were permanently poverty-stricken. Scholars began grappling with it in such books as *The Truly Disadvantaged* (William Julius Wilson, University of Chicago Press) which was published in 1989. They finally described this new class as an "underclass." The term became quite popular. I don't agree

with this term, but let's go back and see what happened to make this new class what it is.

There has always been unemployment and poverty under capitalism. The capitalist system couldn't agree on a wage structure without having a poor, unemployed sector to balance the highly paid employed sector. Today's unemployment and poverty is something new. The economists are calling it structural unemployment because it is an integral part of the emerging economy and cannot be eliminated.

The tendency toward structural unemployment was first expressed with the mechanization of Southern agriculture. Although qualitatively different, there were many similarities between the mechanization of agriculture and the introduction of robotics.

Right after World War II, literally millions of people were quite suddenly tracted off the land and thrown into the streets. Mechanization drove them out of what had been a manual labor agricultural system. These castoffs had nothing to contribute. They became outsiders, no longer welcome North or South. The color factor, added to the beginnings of automation, blocked many of them from becoming economically integrated. By 1985-86, the inner-city Black became the core of the permanently unemployed.

Fortunately, just as they were driven off the land, Northern industry was undergoing a tremendous expansion. Many people had the opportunity to go to cities like Chicago and find the doors of industry open to them. During that period—the 1950s and 1960s—20 percent of the American people annually changed residences. A good proportion of them were moving from the South to the industrial North. It is interesting to note that in 1994, 16 percent changed residences. More and more people today have no place to go, so they stay put, no matter how difficult it may be.

Not only did the Southern Black face the stigma of being Southern, but the color factor seemed permanent, North or South. The Southern Blacks were immediately pushed into the "Black" jobs. The white immigrants went into unskilled labor, too, at first. They rose very rapidly out of the unskilled labor category for two reasons. First, they merged with the white majority and second, as

the whites moved up the ladder, the Blacks were there to take their place. The Blacks settled into industrial production at the final stage of electro-mechanics. Even before the introduction of what we now call robotics or electronics, the structural layoffs began. During this period, sociologists began to notice that, “Hey, this unemployment isn’t the same as the old unemployment. This unemployment is structural, it’s built into the system.”

Every quantitative stage in the development of electro-mechanics fertilized and prepared the ground for the leap to robotics. Laborsaving devices had become so finely tuned that one person was doing ten or fifteen people’s jobs, especially in the manual labor sector. The machines were becoming more sophisticated and evolving toward a leap from laborsaving devices to laborreplacing devices. It was a very dialectical process marked by quantitative stages of development until electro-mechanics could go no further. Then came a leap to a new quality—robotics. At that point the millions of structurally unemployed people became known as an “underclass” that would never again enter production. So, we see that the origins of this new class go way back.

The use of robots created a situation where a lot of people ended up in the new class. It also created the conditions where some workers are very, very well-placed. Moreover, a new class of speculative capitalists is arising who also have little relation to production. Thus, we have to talk about what is happening throughout society, to discuss the new class in its actuality: that is, within the existing system of production and exchange, understanding that the impact of electronics will be wider than simply economic or social.

The advantage a Marxist has over general social scientists, no matter how decent they might be, is that we do not deal with just a jumble of facts and try to find what is common about them. We try to understand the inner relations of a problem. Problems are contradictions. The first task is to find the basis of the contradiction and then assemble the jumbled facts on the proper side of the contradiction. Therefore, with a relatively limited amount of factual information, but with the use of the dialectical method, we are able to suddenly leap ahead and come to conclusions. The social scientists take this

mass of facts and try to come to conclusions by examining the external and subjective relations. For example, I went to school and a guy with blue eyes hit me in the mouth. I got to school and a teacher with blue eyes gave me an “F” on my paper. Then I went to the liquor store and a guy with blue eyes overcharged me for my bottle of booze. The fact that all these people had blue eyes is an external relation. Nonetheless, an accurate empirical study could come to the conclusion that people with blue eyes are out to do me in.

I think we need to seek the truth. Truth is the dialectical relationship of facts. It expresses a process. We must not just grab some commonality, but try to see where the whole process is going. On the one hand, the information we get from the bourgeoisie is absolutely indispensable. We can't gather it ourselves. On the other hand, we have to be very, very careful that we don't use their method of empiricism and come to a pragmatic conclusion.

I have been struggling to understand these new social and economic phenomena for at least ten years. We started out with the understanding that people don't create new social phenomena because they want to. They change their social situation because the platform they are standing on, so to speak, changes and they have to change in accordance. People don't change first and then the world changes. Something essential changes and people change accordingly.

Bourgeois analysis of any sector of the lower classes is bound to be political. The new economy was forcing the ruling class to cut back on the welfare state. To do so they had to rely on and proceed from the existing social and political thinking of the people. They had to awaken the latent racism and exacerbate the active racism in order to do this. Their analysis of the welfare system ended up with the conclusion that the Black welfare queen was pulling down the living standard of America. They were quick to disregard white poverty and concentrate on Black poverty for this purpose. They could not afford to examine objective causes of welfare or why it was now necessary to cut back. They started out with a conclusion that supported their political projections. It is not possible for the ruling class to be objective about the lower classes any more than a slave owner could be objective about the conditions of his slaves.

The important thing is to see that the new American proletariat is outside bourgeois society, and more and more being forced into a position where they must attack and destroy this society in order to live. Despite its current disorganization and political impotence, it is a revolutionary class and is destined to organize all the non-capitalist mass of people around itself for the transformation to a practical kind of communist society.

### ***WHAT GLOBAL CONDITIONS LED TO THIS NEW CLASS?***

To get to the core of the question, we have to look at a whole economic era, not simply of American history, but of world history. Let's start with Japan at the end of World War II. By the end of World War II, the United States had already made up its mind that it was going to stop the Chinese Revolution. They could not do so without having a base on the mainland, in Korea. It could not do that without having Japan under its hegemony. In a real sense of the word, even the Philippine Islands were too far away. So they made a deal with Japan. The United States would occupy and defend Japan. The Japanese wouldn't need a defense industry to gobble up her national income.

Japan couldn't recover by itself. Never in history has a nation been so thoroughly defeated as the Japanese in World War II. Its entire navy was at the bottom of the sea. Their troops suffered an eleven-to-one ratio of getting killed. Their forces, scattered across Asia, were isolated and starving. Their elite imperial army was destroyed in a week of Soviet offensive. There was nothing left for the Americans to bomb. Tokyo and the major cities were in ashes. Two atom bombs totally destroyed Nagasaki and Hiroshima. The new American Flying Fortresses found little left to bomb so they would bomb and burn out the imperial forests. Japan's industry, which was never really a big deal, was gone. They used to make those Mitsubishi and the Zero fighters with their little motors and lacquered canvas sides in the basement of individual homes. Their steel production was something like 20 percent of American steel production. They weren't an advanced industrial nation, and what they had was absolutely liquidated.

Japan had to recover on the basis of loans and technical expertise. We are talking about the building of steel mills. When I was working in steel, a steel mill cost about ten billion dollars. I don't mean just one facility. I mean the whole thing from the coal mine to the transportation system. Where would Japan get ten billion dollars? Where would an American financier get ten billion dollars? They don't have it. Where would a Swiss financier get ten billion dollars? They don't have it either. But they could pool their resources and get that ten billion together and loan it to Japan at a very, very lucrative rate of interest. The finance capitalists in every country were already striving to move outward with their money. The national markets were becoming saturated. By the middle 1950s we noticed the tendency of a group of finance capitalists to pool their resources on an international basis to fund huge projects. We called it supranational capital. It is totally above any conception of nations.

The Japanese, unburdened by a defense budget, set out to rebuild Japan on the very latest technological basis. That would require a considerable amount of sacrifice. Japanese students went around the world to get the latest technology. The Japanese people worked very hard to go from following an ox, so to speak, to electronic technicians in one generation. As the Japanese built their industry on the latest technological basis, they began immediately looking for clients, for people to sell things to, and to do things for. It's interesting to note that the World Trade Center, at that time the tallest buildings in the world, was made in Japan and shipped section by section to the United States and put together. That's how far ahead they had leaped. The development of advanced electronics in Japan had two effects. One, it forced sectors of United States industry to turn rapidly to electronics. That threw a huge section of the work force into unemployment. Two, it became cheaper to have advanced production made in Japan. This forced the wages in traditional production down to a level that was morally unacceptable in the United States. New methods of industrial production, assembly and transport made it possible to shift much traditional manufacturing to areas where subsistence wages were enforced by fascist governments.

As electronics developed, electro-mechanics declined. The development of the inner-city “underclass” wasn’t the major or the only thing that happened. The major thing that happened, the most important thing that happened, was the development of the “Rust Belt.” People are taught to separate these two things. The media focuses their attention on the problems of the inner-city poor. It is a racially identified or color-identified phenomenon that the white poor could counterpoise themselves to and distance themselves from, even if it means identifying with their class enemy. The development of the Rust Belt was a history-changing process that has thrown millions of people, tens of millions of people into, or at the verge of, this new class.

As long as people see this new class as Black and inner-city, nobody is going to do anything about it. They may study it and write books about it, but they aren’t going to attempt to solve the problem. The actual problem, of course, is the growing poverty of the American whites. The ruling class put them into a state of denial and the white poor joined in the attack against their fundamental interests. As the old story goes, you can deny that the bear is scratching at the back door all you want, but when the door goes down and the bear comes into your house, you are going to have to deal with it. The Rust Belt is the bear. The similarities between the inner-city Black and the people in these semirural, one-horse, industry towns that now have no way to make their living are undeniable. Sometimes whole towns, often 60 percent of a town, are on welfare in this belt of Ohio, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan.

This new proletarian class that began around a core of common laborers has been and is being reinforced by technicians and highly skilled workers whose jobs have been eliminated by electronics. The government is fighting the social effects of electronics by assisting in the creation of low-paid jobs to offset the mass unemployment that would follow the full utilization of robotics. (These include the ten million jobs Bill Clinton claims to have created.) So this class is very diverse and growing very rapidly. The development of this new class is the dialectical opposite of new forms of global capitalist corporations and financiers. We went about finding a new name for this new

phenomenon taking place. We searched through *Business Week* and all the leading bourgeois economic magazines to see what the bourgeoisie called this group. They were grappling in a more awkward way than we were.

Let's step back a few decades and trace the development of the global capitalist class. At the end of World War II, there arose again this tendency of the major capitalist nations to erect barriers, to erect tariffs in order to protect their war-wounded industries, to get their industry back on its feet. They needed protection from the unscathed tremendous expansive capacity of the United States corporations. Finally, one large corporation which had been tariffed out of the French market decided to build a plant inside the host country and avoid the tariff. Thus the modern multinational corporation was born. It's interesting that the first company to do this was the Cleveland Screw Company. I don't know if there is any significance, but the world has been in trouble ever since.

The multinational corporation stabilized. Then, suddenly we began seeing something else. A corporation emerged that was across nations rather than being simply a corporation that had plants in foreign countries. Such a transnational corporation might have its headquarters in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and have its affiliates all over the world. It was something different than a multinational corporation. Then, at the end of this process, we saw the international financial conglomerate. I think that this came to a head during the so-called bauxite wars. There was a tremendous demand and a mountain range of bauxite was found in Guinea. An investment of fourteen billion dollars was required to recover the bauxite. Rivers had to be straightened out. Dams and locks had to be built. A city and all its infrastructure had to be built. Huge smelters and factories had to be built. No nation has that amount of cash. The nations of the world put up the money.

The Eisenhower administration was the last of the liberal Republican administrations that were trying somehow or another to hang onto the last stage of financial, industrial, national development. This administration represented the union of the national financial capitalists and the national productive capitalists. They set aside some

fifteen billion dollars for the transfer of the textile industry from the Northeast to the South. They were capitalists rooted in the national economy and I don't think they knew what they were doing. This was the beginning of the outward motion of industrializing colonies rather than simply using them as a source of primary products. As the iron ore in Minnesota began giving out, the steel industry was threatened. The government, along with Canada, spent another ten or fifteen billion dollars to straighten out the St. Lawrence River and build the locks. Chicago became an international seaport. Their idea was to create the international infrastructure to bring in Brazilian or Liberian iron ore to keep the steel mills of the United States operating.

The Kennedy gang was the political spokesperson for the rising group of international financiers. They looked at this as a waste of money. So when the Kennedys got into office, economic nationalism came to an end. The first thing they did was practically close down the St. Lawrence River. They said, "Why in the name of God do we have to ship iron ore from Brazil or Liberia all the way up the St. Lawrence River to Chicago? Move the damn steel mill to Brazil." "Well, we don't have any place there." "Well, build it!" So they built a booming industrial city in Brazil. Gary, Indiana, the pride of American steel production, was locked into the Minnesota iron range. It could not move and it was doomed. The most advanced steel complex in the world was built in Brazil and the result was the destruction of Gary. The internationalists are going to invest wherever the profits are the greatest, whether it's Liberia, Chicago, or Tokyo.

I would say that the development of this supranational group is the direct and dialectical reflection of the development of the poverty-stricken new American proletarian class. The productivity, the very nature of electronics demands internationalism. Electronics makes it possible to have an office in Chicago that controls production in low-wage factories in South America and Asia. The "faster, cheaper, better" production by electronics demands not only internationalized production, but truly international markets. As this international class of billionaire financial groups consolidated, so did this international class of totally destitute people.

## **WHAT IS MEANT BY THE NEW POVERTY? ARE THE CURRENT FORMS OF UNEMPLOYMENT NEW?**

Things are much more serious than the average person thinks or realizes or that the media lets people know. The reality is that no matter how much you are talking about the expansion of the economy, the poor are getting much poorer. The poverty is spreading in this country. The wealth is consolidating at such a rapid rate that even the wealthy are beginning to say, "We can't do this. We can't become a nation of haves and have-nots." The stability of America has always rested upon that huge section of the population that had just enough to give them the hope that they were going to get some more. So long as they had that hope, they wouldn't change the system for love nor money, no matter how hard they were hurting. They weren't going to change the system because they believed there was a golden egg up there somewhere. They were the ones who stabilized America.

All of us have seen the magazines that speak frankly to the bourgeoisie, seen the articles that point to the danger of this polarization of wealth and poverty continuing. It's one thing as long as you can say that poverty is colored and it's related to a lack of industrious, Protestant habits. When you have the poverty spreading out, people look at one another and say, "You know, it's not true this is a Black problem, or a brown problem. It's a problem of a growing section of society." Now, the problem becomes: How do you stop it? The polarization of wealth and poverty isn't somebody's idea. It's a result of changes in the mode of production. When products made by robotics are sold as if they were made by human beings, the capitalists are going to get rich, and I mean fast! You don't have much of a labor overhead and you are kicking these products out. Now, how do you spread out that wealth? You can't, and you cannot stop the process. A couple of years ago, there were eight billionaires in America. Well, it's now 154. The number of millionaires doubled between 1995 and 2000. Imagine where that money came from. Another million people lost a good portion of their livelihood.

What are the billionaires to do? How do you stop being a billionaire? Go back to the old means of production? Go back to a drill

press or a typewriter? You can't. You are not going to do that. Either he is going to be a billionaire tomorrow or he is going to be homeless. The capitalists have to continue to accumulate. That's the way the system works. You can't decide to quit. You've got to make more money and more money and more money or you are going to lose the money you've got.

This scramble, the polarization of wealth and poverty that's so rampant in the Western world and especially in the United States, is going to continue. We can look forward to what that means. It means that little by little, the poor and propertyless are going to recognize themselves as poor and propertyless. We have to help them understand that. We have to help them understand that they are part of a new class. The objective conditions for us doing that are becoming more and more favorable and there is no force on the face of the earth that can stop it.

I was listening to the "Stock Market Observer" channel today. They were glibly talking about the satisfactory expansion of the economy. They were talking about how many goods and services are being produced. Let's look and see if that means an expansion of employment. No, it means a contraction of employment. If you expand the production of teacups that should be a very good thing because the people who make teacups would then be getting a bit of the action. But that's not at all what's happening. Every expansion of teacups means that there are more unemployed teacup-makers, and more automated production. The only way to profitably sell anything today is to cut costs. And cutting costs means downsizing. The situation is exactly what we said five years ago, four years ago, three years ago, two years ago, last year and last week. The process is not only continuing, it is necessarily accelerating. It won't go away and we are heading for a very, very dangerous situation in the United States. The capitalists are calculating that, in the final analysis, if they can't handle this then they have to let the police handle it.

There is a reaction to this already. This is not the Russia of 1903 where the people, to some degree, accepted the hangman's noose, the whip and the prison. This is the United States of America. Abe Lincoln said, "You can fool some of the people all of the time and

all of the people some of the time, but you can't fool all the people all of the time." There is a tremendous reaction developing today against the police. It's interesting to note that this reaction is on the basis of the unjust police activity amongst the African Americans. It should tell us something, it should tell us that the American people, as a people, want to see a just society and they went along with this terrible destruction and oppression of the African Americans because they thought it was just. But now since the Rodney King case, they began to see that this is not just. This shouldn't happen to any human being in America. Lenin once said, "Dialectics is so powerful because it's true." It's true materially and it's true on the psychological level. You cannot unleash the police against just the African Americans, you unleash them against a certain class of people. Sooner or later that collides with what the Americans call the American way of life—fair play, justice, decency.

Getting back to this question of the new poverty. We're clearly heading for some kind of a social response to the continued economic destruction. We've seen a million man march, a million woman march, a million mom march and a Latino march. I hope that we have a million youth march and so forth and so on. Whatever form it takes, we are beginning to see resistance. We are beginning to see an answer given to this repression and threat of repression. Would this have been feasible three years ago, five years ago? No, it wouldn't. There is something very, very important happening in this country. It is underground right now, so we can't see it and we can't hear it, but we know that it is there. A Marxist, a dialectician, has the advantage of knowing it's there. Even though they don't know how it's going to erupt they do know that it is going to erupt so they make preparations for it. The non-Marxist says, "Well, I don't see anything happening, so nothing is happening."

The situation has continued along its line of march. Once a process gets started you can't will it to change. It has to run its course. The capitalists cannot halt the downsizing and the development of a whole new class of people, of workers, throw-away workers and part-time workers. They can't put a stop to it because they are beginning to see that it's not a very good thing to do. They can't turn it around;

nobody has ever turned anything around. Every time I hear this phase, we can turn it around, I start laughing. You ever heard of a freight train turning around? It's going to run its course. Again, I want to say that this is a tremendous advantage that a dialectician, a Marxist, has over the average person. They understand what cause-and-effect means and how absolutely impossible it is to break that chain of reciprocal causes and effects. But if you sit back and watch the process, you are able to visualize what's going to happen with the next level of causes and effects. We are heading for a very serious, very difficult time. It's going to happen as an eruption, it's going to be very widespread, and the result is going to be a real drive towards fascist reorganization of the state. It's going to be the beginning of the political aspects of the revolution. We're deep in the economic aspects of the revolution and deep in the social aspects of the revolution. We as yet haven't had any deep political response to the economic and social revolution. One reason is that the political response is subjective—it is an intellectual process. It depends on agitators and propagandists providing this knowledge to the movement.

A few years ago, there wasn't any social response—only an economic process. Then came the social responses. Now, with the founding of the Labor Party, we're seeing the first organized efforts toward political independence from the ruling class. We're on the verge of seeing a full-fledged political response. And it's going to be interesting to see how this plays out.

### ***WHAT WAS THE CAUSE AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LOS ANGELES REBELLION OF 1992?***

I imagine that 90 percent of the American people would immediately reply that the uprising was caused by the not guilty verdict rendered in favor of the Los Angeles police who were videotaped beating Rodney King. Such an answer would be like saying the forest fire was caused by a person throwing a lit cigarette into the underbrush. These perceptual acts were catalysts rather than causes.

The cause of the rebellion is to be found in the changing economic and social relations of Los Angeles and throughout the

country. Automated production is replacing and pushing a section of the working class out of bourgeois relations of production. These new part-time, unemployed, minimum-wage, and temporary workers form a new class at society's edges. Computerized control opened the door to shift production to the lowest-wage areas of the world. Opening the neocolonies' national boundaries to financial investment and industrial production destroyed the subsistence economies and unsettled literally millions of workers, who then migrated to foreign countries including the United States. The social unrest was wide and deep in such cities as Los Angeles. As you can imagine, the cops of L.A. feared and hated this unstable and unruly new section of the population. That fear and hatred was returned with interest. L.A. held a large number of this new class. They were Black, white, Asian, Native American, Mexican and Central American. They were united by the fact that they were outside of and oppressed by bourgeois society and its property relations. In a word, by 1990 this new class was an uprising looking for a place to happen.

As for the historical significance, the Los Angeles rebellion will be remembered as the opening round of revolution by the new class created by robotics. The uprising, its multiracial character, its stubborn resistance to the state forces means that all the elements of social revolution are in place and functioning. Social revolution has two phases. The first is the destruction of the existing society. The second is reconstruction of a new society. The destruction phase has two aspects, the objective and the subjective. The objective side is carried out by the introduction of electronics, undercutting wage labor which is the foundation of existing society. The age of electronics, eliminating the industrial working class, brings to birth a new class. The subjective side is the rejection of existing society by this new class. It is not possible to overthrow a society which you respect and whose laws you obey. The rebellion was contemptuous of anything smacking of bourgeois law, order or property relations. In this respect, the real world taught the combatants more than the revolutionaries have.

The uprising was not a second edition of Watts. Watts fully integrated the struggle of the African Americans into the worldwide

struggle of the colonial peoples against United States imperialism. By doing so, it completed and spelled the beginning of the end to the era of national liberation struggles. The rebellion of 1992 ushered in a new era, the era of class struggle and class revolution.

### ***WHY DOES THE NEW CLASS REPRESENT AN OBJECTIVE COMMUNIST MOVEMENT?***

This question requires a rather complex answer. Perhaps the long way around is the fastest way home. So let's take that route.

First, it might be worthwhile to restate what communism is. Communism is a social organization based on the common ownership of socially necessary means of production. Historically, there was an objective necessity for communism because of the low level of the means of production and the consequent impossibility of life without a collective effort. The greatest part of human history was carried on within some communist form. Communism isn't Marxism, although Marxism is the scientific current within the struggle for communism in the epoch of capitalism.

Let's get back to the idea of an objective communist movement. I know when those words are spoken, the hairs at the back of necks begin to rise. "Such a statement doesn't make sense" is the first reaction. I understand that reaction, because, since the decline of primitive communism, the communist movement has been the sum total of people who joined the movement because they believed in communism. Since such a movement rests on thought or conviction, it is subjective. The contradiction is that anything subjective must reflect something objective. Any other position is in contradiction with the foundations of materialist philosophy. Since there was no actual movement of the masses of people for communism, this contradiction could not be solved.

What then is the Communist movement that has existed for the past 150 years? It is a movement that declares itself for communism, but has led the militant struggle for reform. It is a movement of people who believe in communism. There have been objective revolutionary movements and objective reform movements, but there

has never, in modern times, been an objective communist movement. The point is that the spontaneous, objective mass movement has not moved in the direction of communism.

The destruction of primitive communism was not possible until new means of production made private property possible. In somewhat the same way, the destruction of capitalist private property is not possible without new means of production that make capitalist ownership impossible. This is happening before our eyes. Expanding electronics means replacing human labor by machines. Yet the owning class demands that we pay for the necessities of life. The result is that greater and greater wealth becomes concentrated in fewer and fewer hands and greater and greater poverty for greater numbers of people. If we look at the economic world as an advanced center made up of the ten or twelve economically most advanced countries surrounded by rings of less and less advanced countries, we see this center absorbing the wealth of the world and economic collapse creeping inward. Half the world is in poverty and it's getting worse. Something will have to give.

When we speak of an objective communist movement, we are speaking of the three billion people who are demanding to be fed, housed and educated even if they don't have the money to pay for it. This movement is just beginning, but the more advanced are becoming politicized to the point of understanding that they must take over this automated equipment and run it to the benefit of humanity, rather than for the profit of the few.

At this point, there is little or no ideology involved in this movement, only the practical need for food and shelter. Until today, our weakness was an ideological movement without a practical base. The problem today is the development of a practical movement without its subjective or ideological expression. The tasks of today's revolutionaries are clear.

### ***WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF UNITY FOR THE NEW CLASS?***

Only equals can unite. Today, just as the new American proletariat is objectively communist, the people are becoming objectively

equal. The next step is uniting the class subjectively—politically and ideologically.

First of all, though, I think we have to look at the historical and economic situation in the 1930s when the Communist Party USA (CP) raised the slogan of “Black and White, Unite and Fight.” At that time, the Blacks, to an overwhelming degree, were agricultural laborers in one sense or another. They were sharecroppers, or they worked for wages on the farms. In the North, they may have been involved with service work but with few exceptions, they weren’t working in the same area as the white industrial worker. That is where the CP was concentrated. The Northern industrial workers couldn’t win their fight because the Southern senators and members of the House of Representatives held the balance of power. They held that power because the African American couldn’t vote. Moreover, they held the chairmanship of practically every major committee. The lack of voting privileges for the Blacks allowed the fascists and reactionaries to maintain a grip on the Congress. All the progressive votes in the North could not upset Southern reaction. The only way to break that grip was to see to it that the Blacks voted and voted these people out of office. The only way to accomplish this was to unite on the basis of the democratic demands of the Blacks. The white workers were not prepared to do that because of economic competition. So, what you ended up with was unity between the white petty bourgeois liberals and the Black workers.

It was an act of desperation to put forth the slogan, “Black and White, Unite and Fight.” In the main, Blacks and whites were in different areas of work and economically they were disunited. That made it difficult for the Communists to come up with a slogan that could actually call for the political unity of Black and white. They kept the slogan abstract. Well, Black people and white people couldn’t unite because the only people who can unite are qualitatively the same. It’s like chemistry. You cannot unite two disparate things; they have to be of the same quality. As long as Blacks and whites had different agendas, they could not unite. The agenda of the Blacks was equality. The agenda of the whites was economic expansion. They could not put forth a slogan of “Unite on the basis of equality of opportunity.”

The socially privileged whites would not buy it. It was the best thing going at the time, but it would never work.

***WHAT ARE WE ABOUT TODAY? DOES THE LEAGUE MAKE THE CALL: "BLACK AND WHITE, UNITE AND FIGHT?"***

No, we don't. We are perfectly comfortable saying that the homeless must unite, that the poor must unite, the unemployed must unite. All the colors can unite where they are objectively, economically equal. "Unite" is a political slogan. We have the Black, white, brown, red, yellow and so forth. We have them all. We don't have to make a distinction on the level of color. We don't have to emphasize the color question. Racism cannot be fought with anti-racism. It has to be fought with practical political activity of unity. Radicals are quick to say that race is a myth, but then they accommodate it by fighting against it as if it were a real thing. The practical fight for unity where there is economic equality is the way to deal with this myth.

A few years ago, a white off-duty cop murdered a Black homeless man. The homeless man had attempted to wash the cop's windshield, the cop objected, and words were exchanged. The cop got his revolver out of the trunk of the car and murdered the man. Most people immediately raised it as a racial murder. The homeless and their advocates objected and demanded that the crime be placed on class, rather than racial lines. A white homeless person is also subject to murder, and knows it.

The CP back in the '30s and '40s tried to bridge the objective reality of inequality with a political slogan. A political slogan is subjective. You can't make an objective thing happen with a subjective demand. Our position is entirely different. There is no doubt in my mind that we have the real, objective, historical and economic situation that will allow us to pull together those who have never, ever been pulled together before. That situation is the progressive elimination of the social and economic bribery of the white workers and their reduction to the economic level of the Black worker.

## ***HOW DOES THE NEW CLASS UNITE AS A CLASS?***

Do we have any tradition of class consciousness in this country? Not in a widespread manner. America is a huge country with regions that trade with one another. This internal trading is one of the reasons for the country's economic strength. One region produced steel and auto and refrigerators, then another section of the country put out the textiles, another agricultural produce. So pulling the American working class together as a class was very difficult, if not impossible. A couple of years ago, we celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Pullman strike. It was the most political and the most violent strike in the history of the United States. This was the strike led by Gene Debs. There were leaflets calling the workers to arms, not just to defend their union, but to take over the Chicago area and run it in the interest of the working people. The workers in most of the country didn't have much connection to them. It was a disjointed thing. Even today, the American working class isn't united. They don't have a common trade union organization. All they do is bargain locally, within a few industrywide general agreements. They don't have a political party, but they do have the makings of one in the newly formed Labor Party.

The block to trade union unity, the block to the unity of the working class was the regional color and wage differentials. There have been strikes of sugar cane workers and timber workers in the South when the trade unions might send them five hundred bucks. However, there has been little effort to unite the class around the struggle of a particular region. That would jeopardize their privileged position. Let's say you organized a strike to support the timber workers who were on strike in Mississippi and Alabama back in the '30s. What you were saying is that, "I'm going out on strike and I'm not going to get a wage increase out of this strike, I'm not going to get better working conditions out of this strike. The only thing that is going to happen to me during this strike is that I am going to lose my job." So they didn't do it.

Look at this new class. How differentiated are they?

Barely, if at all. They are all relatively in the same position. I want to spread the definition of this class out to include everybody

who's been in any way displaced by or held jobs that resulted from computers and robots. This includes the McJobs and temp jobs and all the people working several part-time jobs. They are just beginning to form consciously as a class, which means recognizing that they are all the same and it's got to be "one for all and all for one." When they achieve this consciousness, there is no force on the face of the earth to stop these people. No one can bribe them out of supporting the rest of their class. How do you bribe a group essentially outside of society and hostile to it? It is only a matter of consciousness. Winning the new class to that consciousness is our job. It is an easier job than the Communist Party faced in the 1930s. There are no economic blocks preventing us from doing what needs to be done. That's really important because you can overcome political problems, but you cannot overcome economic problems. You cannot change what's objective.

You cannot unite a poorly paid worker with a very well-situated worker. The worker who is well-situated understands that his high wages, in the final analysis, depend upon the low wages of the other worker. Nobody can strike against their belly. Nobody can have a morality that contradicts their economic well-being. That's the first law of revolution. So you have to have a situation where there is an equality of "economic well-being" and then you can talk in terms of unity of action.

The key to a revolutionary organization is that it must be the political or subjective expression of an actual movement. This doesn't mean that there aren't very highly advanced revolutionaries who are thinking way ahead, or that the revolutionary organizations should not put forth slogans that are a bit ahead of the mass activity. The secret is to understand where the objective movement is and where it is going, then have the political movement, in this case the League of Revolutionaries for a New America, actually reflect that reality. That's the only way you can organize people. You can't organize somebody on the basis of something other than what they are striving to do. This is the difference between organizing a movement and organizing individual struggles. The tendency is to organize the struggles instead of the movement.

We are at the beginning. There are two interrelated beginning points and I want to make sure we understand just where we are. On the one hand, there is the revolutionary development of tools which is quite advanced. Then there is the application of these tools. That is not as far advanced, but it's moving quite rapidly. First we had the tremendous wave of computerized tools which are capable of displacing human labor power. Now, we have the displacement taking place stage by stage. It starts with the most unskilled section of the most highly concentrated sector of the class. It didn't start in a grocery store where a guy is moving a box of tomatoes or something like that. It started in General Motors where some guy is moving a stack of motors or engine heads. Society was able to absorb a lot of the original consequences of this by expanding its social welfare system. The introduction of robotics necessarily lowered the standard of living of the working class. Our wages have been going down ever since 1972. Consequently, the employers could afford to hire more workers.

Then come the social consequences. Society begins to be disrupted by the consequences of the economic revolution. The country seems to be adrift. It is unable to orient the next generation towards what they are going to be doing. My generation—I graduated from high school in 1942—had already been oriented around where they were going and what they were going to do. I don't mean the war. After the war they were going to go to work in factories, and coal mines, and timber. They were going to work and they were going to produce. The young generation today doesn't have any orientation whatsoever. Even those people who are able to get very highly skilled jobs in electronics see the computers and the robots moving in on them.

A television program recently showed the worst nightmare coming true. Here was a robot building a robot. This process is moving outward and physically displacing the worker. The basic thing is that it is undercutting the foundations of the capitalist economy. The basis of this society is value and that is based in the expenditure of labor. That was not true in the feudal system. It wasn't true in any other system. This is what makes capitalism capitalism. It is

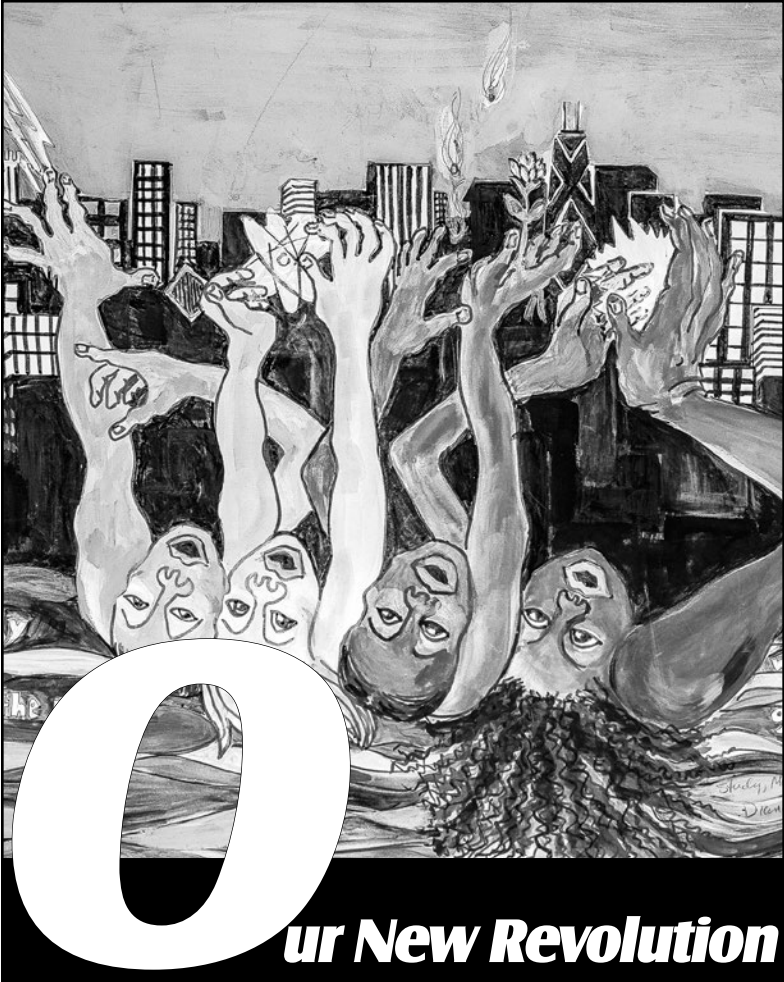
what capitalism is all about. Price is connected to and expresses the value system. The robot is destroying the value system. It's producing without human labor and there is no way to say what something is worth. The basis of pricing is: How much does it cost to raise the working class? That's what they have to earn back otherwise they won't be alive. How much does it cost to build a robot in relation to the cost of creating a worker? In this way it's cutting and destroying the value system. That's going to pull the system down. Not so much that the worker is being displaced. They will either find something to do with him, shoot him or put him in jail. What is the capitalist class going to do when the system itself is called into question? That's the real consequences of the economic revolution. The new unemployment is just the expression of the destruction of value, an ending to the buying and selling of labor power, which is the foundation of the capitalist system.

As the new American proletariat begins to understand this process, as they become socially conscious, they will identify their class enemies and their class friends. Then they will form their own political party.



chapter **6**

DIANA BEREK



O

**ur New Revolution**

## ***WHAT IS OUR NEW REVOLUTION? IS IT AMERICAN? WORLDWIDE?***

So many people use this term without describing what they actually mean. A revolution is a complex and contradictory process. It is composed of interconnected stages of development, each having its objective or material and subjective or intellectual sides. These stages are: (1) a revolution in the material means of production. The changes in the means of production force (2) a revolution in society or social revolution. The social revolution is crowned by (3) a political revolution wherein representatives of one of the contending classes seize power and social reconstruction begins.

Let's examine this process.

Society is built around the way people produce and distribute the means of life, especially distribute them. Production and distribution under capitalism is a very complex system of buying and selling and selling and buying where every producer is a consumer and every consumer is a producer. This interlocking made us a specific kind of society. Now, an economic revolution comes along that results in the consumer not producing and the producer not consuming. Hey, this ain't the way it's supposed to be. That ain't the way it functions. You had a society based upon the consumer producing and the producer consuming. Then along comes the robot and suddenly the producer or a growing number of producers no longer consume. Consequently, even a greater number of consumers no longer produce. How are they going to consume if they don't produce? And how are they going to produce if they don't consume? The whole economic structure is being revamped and going into revolution. The economic revolution, that is, production by a non-consuming producer and the creation of a class of non-producing consumers begins threatening and shaking and destroying the society that's built around the interlocking buying and selling.

All we have to do is take a look at any neighborhood in any city in the United States. Thirty years ago, there was a neighborhood around a factory. The taxes were high; the property was very valuable because it was near the factory. The factory hired two thousand people or whatever. Everyone was consuming and producing. The factory owner was consuming and producing and the people who

worked in the factory were consuming and producing. The land was valuable, the wages were high, the community was stable. Then the boss introduces a producer that doesn't consume. (A similar process holds when they took the plant to Mexico.) Suddenly the thing that made the community viable—that kept the streets clean and kept the garbage picked up—was gone. With the factory gone, the land becomes worthless. You can't tax worthless land. If you can't pay taxes, I can't send my truck out to pick up your garbage. If the garbage isn't picked up, who in the hell is going to live in that community? The destruction begins taking place. The beginning of any revolution is destruction, destroying the old, tearing away the rotting lumber in order to reconstruct the new.

It would be wrong and dangerous to present these polarities of revolution as categories. They are polarities and all intertwined, but it is almost impossible to talk of them that way. We are in a very advanced stage of economic revolution and in the beginning stage of a social revolution. The beginning stage of social revolution is the destruction of the existing society. If you have any doubt that this society is being destroyed, just step out into the street and take a look.

Now, the third phase is the political revolution which is the basis for the reconstruction of society. Political revolution comes when people recognize the old society is doomed and yet have to go on living. If we take the Chinese Revolution, for example, we see that few people attempted to maintain the old feudal society. It was doomed, and the bloodshed was over what kind of society was going to take its place. Then comes a war, a political war or a military war, or sometimes both, to see how and who is going to construct the new society. That's the political aspect of social revolution. We haven't gotten that far yet, but we are heading in that direction and it's a one-way track. The freight train is not going to back up. We are going to continue. The social destruction has advanced to the stage where we are already beginning to gather forces that will fight it out in the political revolution. It's a predictable sort of a thing—dangerous and scary, but predictable.

About fifty-two years ago, I was on an island in the South Pacific. We used to throw our garbage off a cliff and the sharks would come

in to eat it up. They were very smart. They knew exactly what time this garbage was going to be dumped and they would come in by the thousands. One day I watched a monster shark, as he saw his tail and started eating on it. Part of the shark doesn't have any nerves in it and so he was thrashing around trying to eat his tail. The more he ate on it, the more blood got out and the more sharks came out and pretty soon all the other sharks were eating on him too. And I said, "Damn, that sure is a stupid shark. He thought he was going to fill his belly by eating up his own tail and the only thing he did was call in a lot of other sharks to finish him off." That's the way the ruling class is operating in this country.

### ***CAN THE RULING CLASS STOP THE ECONOMIC REVOLUTION?***

They cannot. The only thing that they can do is accelerate it. But the more they accelerate it, the more they create the conditions for their own destruction. As a matter of fact, the more they accelerate it, the more they are calling in the other sharks to attack them.

So, the ruling class is faced with this dilemma: "I cannot stop downsizing; I have to up production and cut labor costs in order to compete. If I do this, I'm creating a class of have-nots who are potential revolutionaries against me. I used to control them by the discipline connected to the job. If they don't do right, I'm going to fire them and if I fire them, they are going to lose their house or car or their kid is going to come out of college." But you can't use that discipline with people who don't have a job.

### ***HOW ARE THEY GOING TO CONTROL THE NEW CLASS?***

Well, you know the famous statement about how to control a slave: "Make them stand in fear." They tortured and whipped and sold children and did the most god-awful things to make the slaves stand in fear. That's the only way they could control them. That's the only way the ruling class knows to control anybody or anything. The time is coming now when they will try to terrorize the American people into being afraid of them. Will the American people be docile? No. There is no way for the ruling class to win this fight. They will

kill some people, they are building jails hand-over-fist. They make a poverty-stricken mass and then the poverty-stricken mass spawns revolutionaries. Their tactic is to put the revolutionaries in jail. The way to do it is to stop creating the poverty-stricken mass. But they can't, so therefore the more they fight, the more they build the army against them.

It's like the shark attacking its own tail and the objective reality is they will try fascism, but fascism isn't going to work in this country. We are not used to anybody coming to us and shouting "Achtung!" and we snap to. We don't have that background. We didn't have it even in the days of slavery, that's why they had racks to break your back, and whipping posts. They used them too, but they couldn't stop the resistance, could they?

Recently, in one of the Eastern colleges when a fraternity party broke up at about one o'clock, three Black students were walking towards their fraternity house laughing and talking. Cops pulled over, roughed them up and took them down to jail. When the cops realized who they were, they released them. The three young men went back to their dormitory and turned on the computer. They composed an email and every single student on that campus was aware of what took place. Today, we're not talking about standing up on a street corner passing out a leaflet. We're talking about getting in touch with ten thousand people by punching a few buttons on a computer. So how are you going to have fascism under such circumstances? How are you going to have fascism in a country of three hundred million? This country is three thousand miles wide and eighteen hundred miles from north to south. How are you going to have a fascist dictatorship in that huge area? Despite all the police terror and the police-state laws the ruling class is passing, ultimately, they can't do it. And, of course, the Internet technology doesn't stop at the borders. The new American revolution to build a cooperative society won't stop at the borders either.

## ***HOW WILL THIS NEW REVOLUTION TAKE PLACE?***

We should first restate our conviction that a political revolution in the United States is absolutely inevitable. Revolution is not the result of subversion of the existing order, nor does it come about through conspiracy. Revolution is the first and inevitable step in the creation of a new social order on the basis of a new economy. The new economy develops spontaneously, automatically. Advanced thinkers, revolutionaries, must work hard and sacrifice much in order to guide the inevitable growing discontent of the people into the channels of revolution.

The ruling class isn't going to sit back and just let this process develop. They are already experimenting with how to contain this growing mass of poverty that the revolution will arise from. Let's look at Detroit. They were building a wall between Grosse Pointe, the upscale community where the owners of the auto industry live, and Detroit. This wall contained certain openings where they were going to put guards. All the well-to-do people were going to live inside the walls. This is not a color question; there are plenty of big shots in GM who are Black, brown, and every color. They were going to live back there while people without any jobs were going to be living in Detroit. Even in Detroit little islands are forming where they have a plant or an office that controls production in foreign plants. Around this factory or office there are new houses and beautiful situations while five blocks away everything is razed and barren. So, are we going to be like the barbarians on the outside or are we going to deal with this thing while we still can? I don't believe that a fascist dictatorship can last long in the United States, because it cannot solve the economic problem. I don't think the new American proletariat is prepared to live very long on a bucket of wheat and a television set in a ramshackle house or in an urban camp.

The first stage is to make the growing, spontaneous, "fight back" movement—not the individual struggles, but the movement—conscious of itself.

Let me give you an example of what I mean. Take the Black liberation movement. At one stage of the movement, at one point in the marches in Birmingham, Alabama, all the adults who would participate were in prison. They had gone out every day and marched,

and every day those who marched went to jail. There was an injunction that they couldn't march and finally the leadership of the struggle had to make a determination to call it off as they did not have any more people to march. Someone suggested the children. All that was left were the kids, and so they organized literally thousands of these ten-, nine-, eight-year-olds, fifteen-year-old kids to march down into Birmingham. You all remember the picture of the fireman turning the hoses on these children. But some of the children marched all the way downtown, and as this rank of little children approached their destination, they stopped where the police had formed a line across the street. You may also remember the charming picture of the cop who—knowing he was on TV—held his club behind his back, bent down and asked, “Just what do you want, little girl?” And the little girl looked up and said, “F'eedum!” She could hardly pronounce it right. That epitomized the movement—that was a movement, the movement for freedom. It had become a movement, not the struggle for a cup of coffee, not the struggle for a job, not the struggle against police brutality, but something that caught the whole thing up into one word, Freedom. Today, when you say “the freedom movement,” everybody in the United States knows what you are talking about.

I don't know what the slogan of this movement will be, but the first thing we have to do is form this movement. We cannot create it. That is in the category of history. We determine what kind of movement it will be. We cannot do this so long as everybody is simply involved in the struggle for a cup of coffee. We have to convince people that there is a difference between fighting to get this family off the street or fighting for a cooperative set of houses and a political movement that takes in the whole thing, but is more than the sum total of its parts. We don't have to worry whether there will be a spontaneous or “fight back” movement; the people will provide that. Conscious revolutionaries don't have to worry about that. People have to eat, they must have a place to sleep. The demands of people to satisfy their immediate, specific practical needs create the spontaneous struggle. Conscious revolutionaries have to create a different kind of movement, a revolutionary movement with ideology, vision, and a scientific strategy to make that vision a reality.

The first stage of the revolution is to politicize our class, to make them socially conscious, give them an understanding of what our society really is. We must teach them to identify with one class and stand in opposition to the other class. This stage is completed by the formation of a political party of the class. Until now, the ruling class has made it almost impossible to form a stable party in opposition to the two-party system. The question's set up so the formation of a workers party automatically means the worst of the two evils will win the election. The formation of a workers party indicates that the people are aware of the real meaning of the "lesser of two evils" line. They understand the necessity of having their own party, and not being frightened into supporting the lesser of the capitalist evils.

I want to emphasize that we are not referring to a "third party," such as are being formed today. These are populist or mass parties that attempt to be all things to all men. If they don't take a class position, they inevitably end up being political apparatuses to take the militant edge off the struggle for social consciousness.

The second stage is the formation of a different kind of party, a party to guide the revolution itself. This party's task is to bring political or class consciousness to our class. Social consciousness means to take a class stand. Class consciousness means to demand political power to achieve the things that they need to do. Building such a party is going to be very difficult. The ruling class is not just going to sit there and let it happen. We will have to work long and hard on the structure of such a party. It must be accessible to the people, but protected from the political police. This is a new situation. We must study the historical experience of the revolutionary movement, but given electronic surveillance and the concentration of the people in huge cities, we will have to find our own way. Given this situation, it seems to me that revolution can only be accomplished in this country through a mass uprising. That is much more difficult to bring about than say a coup. During this stage it will be necessary to begin the formation of the special kind of organization that will actually guarantee the reconstruction of society through the seizure of political power.

The third and major stage is the time of social reconstruction. That's the real revolution. This time it is going to be different, I

think, because the economic foundations of this new society are laid to such a great extent within the old society. With every revolution there has been a severe drop in the standard of living of the people as they organize the new society, but I don't think we will have to go through that decline. We will not have to hold society in check, or hold the aspirations for a new society while we build the factories and roads, while standards of living are steadily declining. In all other revolutions, it was necessary to accumulate the capital to do it. That meant taking it out of the backs of the people who made the revolution. I don't think we are going to go through that. I think that everything we need for a paradise on earth is already here, or at least in formation. So we should be able to reconstruct without the objective economic conditions for a counterrevolution. The electronic means of production already existing within capitalism can produce an abundance of goods. We have to construct a society to distribute that abundance in such a manner as to steadily raise the social and cultural standards of the people.

### ***IS OUR NEW REVOLUTION A COMMUNIST REVOLUTION?***

We have the economic foundations for communism today. When Engels put forth the concept that socialism was the first stage of communism wherein the laws of value still operated and where society had to build the economic foundations for communism, he was observing societies long before electronics and robotics. Looking back, it's easy to see that no matter how it was organized, the industrial society could not lead to communism. Already, practically all the manual labor is done by machines, and a huge section of the intellectual labor is done by machines that add up four columns of figures and program other computers and robots. It is unlikely that the economic stage that the Soviet Union had to go through or that China is going through will be applicable in the United States. We are already past that.

We have the economic foundation today to give everyone in the United States the fundamentals for a cultured, orderly, decent existence. Everybody tonight could go into a nice home; tonight

everybody could eat a sumptuous, healthy meal; tonight everybody could go to the opera. The material wherewithal exists right now. It will be expanded and made better, but we don't have to create it. The Soviet Union was organized to industrialize the country. This country is already industrialized. We don't need a state that is the owner of all the means of production to guarantee their development. I think the state as we know it today will collapse almost immediately. We need a government that regulates things, but not people. We will need, for instance, an agency that determines that if there will be ten million babies born this year, we will need so many million diapers this year. Somebody has to do that.

That's the kind of government that we are going to have, a government that organizes the distribution of the necessities of life, but is not ordering people around. There would be no need to do so, for what are you going to order them to do? Order them to go to the movies? The questions of the cultural development of the people will most likely be left in the hand of the locals. The local people will figure out how to ensure their education, their recreation. Some work will need to be done, of course, but the allocation of human resources for that work could be done on a local level. Reconstruction will be so much easier to organize because of the tremendous productivity of the machinery that we have.

When I start explaining the vision, the abundance and what's possible for humans today, it always makes me feel good. And it makes others feel good and makes them want to talk about revolution and the science of getting there. But do I sound naive about how brutal and bloody the objective conditions already are? Don't I think that during the process of destruction, a lot of the means of production that are already being developed will be destroyed, too? They might, but we know how to put a team of robots together to work building robots. If the people are politically organized and ideologically united, the handful of counterrevolutionaries will be easily contained. The real battles will come before, not after the seizure of power.

## ***IS THERE A ROLE FOR A UNITED FRONT? WHAT ABOUT A POPULAR FRONT?***

The United Front concept arose out of the situation in Germany during the struggle against fascism. Anti-fascist organizations were kept apart and fighting one another because the class ideology of one group was anti-communist as well as anti-fascist and other groupings were against bourgeois democracy as much as they were against fascism. After Hitler's parliamentary victory, it became clear that at least in Germany, and perhaps in the whole world, the political question was not communism or capitalism. The political question was whether or not to have a democratic society. That society may be bourgeois democratic, even a reactionary democratic bourgeois society. The alternative was a bourgeois state without democracy and very hostile to democracy. So, after the defeats in 1932 and 1934, the revolutionaries came to the understanding that, "Hey, if we're going to defeat fascism, we are going to have to pull every possible class force into the struggle and we have to drop our sectarian or even class demands and make one single demand—defeat fascism!" Well, it worked in a certain sense of the word. In the final analysis, the United Front was the factor that finally mobilized the masses of the people of the world. They centered their fire on the fascist danger rather than constantly arguing communism versus fascism.

Is that where we are today? I think everything has changed. The objective situation, the psychology of the people, everything has changed. Today, the defeat of fascism means the victory of the revolution. There is no way to talk in terms of anti-communist organizations that are anti-fascist uniting with communist organizations. The situation is different. World War II proved that, yes, you could have the victory of bourgeois democracy, you could have the victory over fascism and still not have a communist country. Is that possible today? No. The entire bourgeoisie is moving to embrace fascism.

The possibility of a united front was contained in the Communist International's description of fascism as the dictatorship of a section of the bourgeoisie. The International was referring to the industrial capitalist. The industrial capitalists have already been defeated. They have been defeated by the robot, have been defeated by the reality

that industrial capitalism cannot produce for the market at the same pace as post-modern production can do and has done. So the concept that the Comintern put forth is no longer valid. So what is valid? New situations demand new thinking. We have to free up our minds. We have no intention of “throwing out the baby with the bath water.” We are not rejecting the dialectical path to political clarity. What we’re rejecting is the idea that you should ossify yourself at a certain period of time, a certain stage in history. Just because something worked backed then doesn’t mean we should hang on to it when conditions have clearly changed. No, we want to move ahead.

Today, there is no fundamental contradictory interest within the capitalist class, despite the fact that there are a lot of political differences. These political differences are going to increase. Is there any principal difference between Bush and Gore? Is there any principal difference between the Republican Party and the Democratic Party? There is not. They are only fighting for sectarian advantages. I don’t think the Democrats were interested in health care for the American people. Maybe Hillary Clinton was. There is no way for the presidential candidates to separate themselves from the needs and the dictates of the insurance companies. They can’t do it, don’t want to do it. Clinton was trying to avoid making health care a revolutionary issue. As for class differences between them, I don’t think that Clinton and Gore represent one section of a class, and Dole and Bush represent another section of the same class. Roosevelt represented a definite section of finance capital. Eastland and Rankin and Bilbo and the fascist groupings they represented were a definite, definable, distinct section of industrial capital. That is not true today. The United Front was based upon this difference.

So now, we have to talk in terms of what we said before. How do we mobilize the mass on the basis of their own needs—mobilize a mass movement in the United States for the acceptance of revolution? The thing we must keep our eye on, it seems to me, is this little thing, this little teeny conception, that the mass movement, the spontaneous movement today, actually is, objectively, a communist movement. It is objectively communist because its goal of the distribution of necessities of life according to need is communism. For

the first time in history, the political movement for communism can be based upon the practical communist movement. It's so important we see this. It's so important that the revolutionaries really deeply understand this. The failure of every communist revolutionary movement in history, including the Bolsheviks, has been that there was not an objective communist movement upon which to build the subjective communist movement. You have to have an objective, practical communist movement to have a subjective or political communist movement.

In the United States there was a "communist" movement that was communist in its rhetoric, but in its practical life, it had to be the left wing of the "progressive" and reform movement. McDonald, who was the head of the Steelworkers union, said it better than anybody. His statement stuck in my mind, because something didn't gel with me for years. Sometime in the late 1940s, McDonald said something to this effect, "Bill Foster (the longtime chairman of the CPUSA) was the greatest strike organizer and steel workers' leader this country ever produced. That Bill Foster is welcome in my home anytime." Of course, "my home" is the Steelworkers union. He went on to say, "Bill Foster, the communist, the international terrorist is not welcome." There really were two Bill Fosters and they were absolutely separated. The reason for the separation was that the practical movement in the United States was for the reform of capital and not for its destruction.

Now then, is the practical movement in the United States for the reform of capitalism or is it moving in the direction of its destruction? Never mind what people are saying they want. What is the practical motion, the practical activity? It is toward the destruction of capitalism, it is toward the distribution of food and the necessities of life according to need, not according to money. Fewer and fewer people are earning money, or at least, enough money. Any statistics show that the American people are getting poorer and poorer. Thus, the struggle they face is for the distribution of the wherewithal of life on a different principle than how much money you have. For the first time in history we have a practical, an objective communist movement upon which to build a subjective, political communist

movement. The unity of these two things, this dialectic, makes our victory absolutely inevitable. Now that we have this, we must have an ideology that reflects it.

The hardest thing in the world is to grasp the question of change, the significance of a practical communist movement and its consequences. We must grab this bull head-on and wrestle it down. To do so we must not back away from the anti-communism. We must defend the achievements of the Soviet Union and understand that it, like the Paris Commune, was an idea whose time had, for objective reasons, not yet come. Communism today is the natural outgrowth of labor-replacing machinery. Hey, man, I'm not talking about Lakota Indian communism, I'm not talking about Soviet communism, I'm not talking about French Commune Communism. I'm not talking about any of these things that have gone on before. I'm talking about right now. The only way we can transfer the necessities of life to those who need it is to do so without money. The American people are basically willing to listen to this.

What then is a Popular Front? In some areas and especially in France this concept arose during the struggle for the United Front of trade unions. The influence of the Church and the right-wing trade union leaders made it almost impossible for them to create a United Front. French politics are more clearly defined than politics anywhere else. It was impossible to pull the entire Social Democratic and Catholic trade union leadership over towards a stable anti-fascist coalition. So the French Party decided to approach it some other way than through a formal agreement with these organizations. They decided it could be done by a mass movement: that is, a movement of the small apparatuses, of individual trade unions and so forth. That's what the Popular Front is, a mass front. The United Front was an agreement between the Social Democratic and the Communist parties, or the Catholic Party or the Peasant Party. It was an official front with signed agreements about what you'll do and what we'll do. The Popular Front was a mass movement created by the French Party and this popular movement forced the creation of a United Front in France.

Since there was no basis for a United Front in this country, the concept of a Popular Front became very, very popular. The fight for the Popular Front was based primarily around the struggle for equal rights, and civil rights and upon moral and ideological considerations rather than on real political considerations. It still is today. The Popular Front doesn't mean anything today. Society is polarizing into definite classes and we are concerned with class. We're faced with the question: How do we get over to the American people the vision of what is possible and what is necessary given the means of production that we have today?

***WILL THERE BE A COUNTERREVOLUTION?  
WILL THE SECURE AND WELL-PAID WORKERS BE PITTED  
AGAINST THE GROWING SECTIONS OF THE POPULATION  
THAT ARE ALIENATED FROM PRODUCTION?***

There may be some of that, but probably not much, because there isn't any other than the communist road. That doesn't mean that the ruling class is not going to try. It is clear that they are preparing a police state to hold this restless mass in check. But they know ultimately they cannot do that. They have to have something more than cops and an army to hold people in check who are striving to live. The Roman Empire could not do it; neither can the United States. The only way that Hitler was able to do it was through constant and incessant warfare.

The only way you can have a privileged position is through control of scarcity. But if there is plenty, you can't have privileges. Today it's a privilege to have a Rolls-Royce and a Cadillac and BMW or an MG or a Lexus. If everybody has adequate transportation to get to where they need to go, then a status symbol doesn't mean anything. Remember, once upon a time wearing an ermine coat was a status symbol. Today few want an ermine coat. Some people obviously want them because some people have them. But the average person doesn't want an ermine coat. They want a warm, lightweight, easy-to-care-for coat. And that's what they buy. The point is, to the extent that you do away with shortages, you do away with privileges.

Part of the process is changing people's conceptions of what they want. These ideological changes play a certain role in the development of any revolution and will in this one too. The people have to be won over to want to contribute to society. More than that, they must embrace an ideology which declares that contributing is a source of satisfaction; it is what makes your life worthwhile. I agree there are going to be problems of counterrevolution, but the economic foundations are here to solve problems that could not have possibly been solved in Russia during Lenin's time or Stalin's time.

The ruling class is moving to implement a fascist rule because they have no other choice. They will take advantage of whatever will allow them to maintain their power and their privilege. But their constituency isn't very big. Our constituency is very, very big. Germany can almost fit inside the state of Texas. We're talking about a huge country with certain ideals that are extremely hostile to fascism, despite the fact that the people might be asking for fascism. They're asking for fascism to maintain those ideals. When they find out that fascism can't maintain those ideals, they will reject it. They beefed up the police forces and now they are beginning to understand that the police are out of control. The police are the enemies of the very ideals that they were hired to protect. A real anti-cop backlash is developing in the United States. Can the fascists really shut up the American people? Only under one condition. A rapidly expanding economy was the condition for McCarthyism. It expanded for everybody. It didn't expand equally but it expanded enough to where everybody had a stake in anti-communism. Everybody. Is that true today? Is that what's going on? Not at all, not at all. It goes back to what we were saying before. The thing is on track. It's predictable.

We see what's happening. Are they going to try a fascist dictatorship? Of course they are. Are they already trying it in certain areas? Of course they are. They can no longer isolate a tiny section of the American population and impose such a dictatorship against them—not politically or racially or any other way. They have created a monster. They have created a section of the population that has to consume, but has no way of being part of the productive process anymore. Maybe the game's not up, but I am saying the revolution is on course. It is on the

line of march of history. Therefore, we prepare for the counterrevolution to the degree that we can. We prepare for a fascist offensive that cannot succeed, although it will be bloody and deadly. That's different than preparing for a fascist offensive that might ultimately succeed.

### ***WHAT ROLE DOES POPULISM PLAY?***

Populism was a turn-of-the-century, non-class, mass movement of the small farmer, the craftsman and the small businessperson against the encroachments of monopoly. During the late 1800s and the beginning of the 1900s, it played a generally progressive role. However, we should not forget that along with the progressive aspects, the movement included the Ku Klux Klan and other fascist gangs that supposedly spoke for the small businessperson, against the radicals, big business and especially against the African Americans.

One of the major roots of the Communist Party, USA (CPUSA) was the populist movement. We have to look at this root of the Communist Party to see why populism continues on the left long after the objective conditions for progressive populism have disappeared. The populist movement was the embodiment of the "anti-monopoly coalition" that was the banner of the CPUSA. The victory of monopoly capitalism in this country was absolute by the turn of the century. Even the combinations of small businesses that grew out of the Depression, out of the struggle against monopoly, became monopolies. Nevertheless, populism was a major current in the CPUSA well into the 1940s. By about 1936, the progressive struggle of the populist movement was over, but the slogan "the "anti-monopoly coalition" still sounded great. The CPUSA is still talking about an anti-monopoly coalition as if the defeat and dispersal of monopolies is possible under these circumstances. They did not see the good and progressive side of monopoly. One side of monopoly is good in the sense that it's the stage of concentrating, expanding and developing the productive forces. Such concentration and development is indispensable to the development of a communist society.

Today, there are not two sections of capital opposed one to the other, as during the populist era. There are some hangovers of this,

but it's more apparent than real. Reagan's strongest, most stable base was the capitalists who, in the early eighties, were purchasing their wherewithal primarily within the United States and were selling it within the United States. By the end of the Reagan administration, that had entirely changed. No longer was any significant section of capital trading only within the United States or purchasing their raw materials or manufacturing solely within the United States. By the time the Bush administration took over, this whole thing was internationalized. Today the economy is truly global.

Clearly, though, there are still contradictions between sections of the ruling class. Let's look at the reasons for the development of the Republican Party in the South and the Southwest, for instance. It does not represent a shift of class interest. The Democratic Party was in absolute disarray. The coalition of women, Blacks, and Indians, and this and that and the other, almost seized power in the Democratic Party during McGovern and Mondale's leadership. The party could not do what the capitalist class as a whole wanted done. So now we have the Republican Party in the South with the same program as the old Democratic Party of the South.

I think it is necessary to understand that whatever party rules this country, it must be based in the South, especially in the Black Belt. The Democrats who switched to the Republican Party did not change their program, only the party labels. There has never been a fundamental difference, and now there is barely a superficial difference, between these parties. Neither the Democratic Party or the Republican Party are fundamentally opposed on any basic social issue of this country.

Today, when we speak of populism, we are speaking of the Pat Buchanans and David Dukes, fascists who attempt to get their program over in an anti-government, anti-big business package.

Globalization has finally spelled the end to any progressive all-class or cross-class movement. Globally, we have entered the period of defined class war. Any attempt to gloss over the class character of the emerging struggle is simply a ploy of fascism.

## **WHAT IS THE STRATEGY WE NEED FOR OUR 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY REVOLUTION?**

Strategy—military or political—flows from an assessment of the objective factors and capabilities. The first thing we must do is look at the objective forces in motion such as the new machinery, the wealth of human labor, the level of intelligence of the country's population and their training. Then, we must ask what kind of a society, what kind of a world can these factors create? In this process we come up with the vision that inspires us to fight for that new world. Then, we have to analyze the objective situation and describe what stands between us and that vision. What do we have to overcome? What do we have to accomplish to achieve that vision?

When that question is answered, we must create a political party to undertake that task. It is not correct to try to create a party apart from the task such a party has to accomplish. The task has to be intimately connected to the vision. The vision arises from an analysis of what could be done with the objective forces that are at hand today. If we do this, we can talk about what kind of party is needed and its strategy.

We have to create a strategy not so much for a party but for the revolution itself. Such a revolutionary strategy begins by looking at electronics, the concentration of people in the cities, the breadth of the country, the control that the bourgeoisie has over the population. Considering all things, there is no way in the world to transfer power in this country from one class to another except by a mass uprising. Any motion by a specific grouping or in specific parts of the country can be easily contained. If the ruling class can contain it in other countries, they can certainly contain it in the United States. The idea of a coup is just not feasible. I make a distinction between the concept of a coup apart from the masses and a seizure of power by a highly trained organization in the midst of revolutionary turmoil. On the one hand, the seizure of power cannot be accomplished by the masses. It has to be accomplished by a specific organization, by people who are trained to take power and to wield that power. A coup generally means a blow that is thrown apart from the mass movement. We will get back to this question of seizure of power shortly.

The first problem we have is that we live in a country that is three thousand miles wide and eighteen hundred miles from the Canadian border to New Orleans. So, we are talking about a massive, huge, continent-size country. When we talk about a transfer of power by a mass uprising, we're talking about fifty or sixty million people, at a minimum. It's a monstrous job and up to this point, the left has tried to do whatever seems easier rather than what must be done. The first thing we need to do is to define what we mean by the mass uprising.

Watts in 1965 was an example of a mass uprising. Given the psychology of the people, the common problem of poverty, the common problem of police brutality, the rest of the common problems that bound that community together, any uprising had to become a mass uprising. There was no underground network of communications or organization, although that would have been better. The point is, the blow was struck when and where the iron was hot. An incident of police brutality touched off a mass uprising. Can that be a model for the future? Given extensive propaganda and a tightly knit core of revolutionaries, I think it could. We're not going to be able to set a time for insurrection. It is going to happen and we have to be prepared to take advantage of it.

The essence of revolutionary strategy is to spell out who is for us and who is against us. Strategically, we can make a dividing line between those, on the one hand, who are ultimately for, or are going to be for, the transfer of power and the reconstruction of America. On the other hand, there are those people who are going to oppose it to the bitter end. We then must work with those people who basically are going to be on the side of the revolution. Many do not actively side with the revolutionary movement today, but a combination of education and the degeneration of society will bring them over. It's possible to bring over something like seventy million, seventy-five million people. This is a huge section of the population. We're talking about better than a quarter of the population, we are talking about a mass uprising.

When we talk about a mass uprising we don't mean every single individual in the United States. We mean the decisive revolutionary

section. So what is this section? It goes from those who are in absolute poverty, such as the homeless, all the way to those who have jobs that are very tentative. Plus, there is a section of stable, well-situated people who are morally opposed to what's going on today. They just cracked a murder case here in Chicago where a ten-year-old kid beat an eighty-five-year-old woman to death. This child was a neighbor of this woman and he beat her up and cut her throat in her bathroom. The neighbors were steadily saying, "We didn't think it could happen here."

Such incidents are growing and are going to move a certain section of the population that is economically well-situated. Such social destruction will leave them open to propaganda and we'll bring them over to the side of the revolution. I'm not making a mechanical thing out of this at all. I am saying that the basic strike force, strategically speaking, will be that section of the population that cannot compromise with the situation, with capital. The immediate reserves are those people who are essentially in economic trouble. The more remote reserves are those people who are anti-communist, yet are moving into moral opposition to the situation today. So we need a party that can do the educational job with these various sections of the people. It's a very difficult thing. This education cannot consist of simply handing out leaflets or passing out papers or holding forums. We must be involved in the practical struggle, in such a way that we constantly are teaching on that basis. To do this, two things are necessary. One is to make clear the distinction between our role in the destruction of the system and our role in the reconstruction of a new system. Our major weakness as conscious revolutionaries has been that we have paid no attention whatsoever to reconstruction and consequently have limited ourselves in our propaganda efforts. What we have been able to do is concentrate on destruction of the capitalist system and have developed fairly decent agitation skills. We can only be effective when we connect the agitation to propaganda.

We necessarily used these terms, agitation and propaganda, before we knew what they really meant. I started off with what Lenin said they meant and then little by little have honed them down, molded them to make them fit what we need today. What we need

is essentially a propaganda that is a vision based upon the objective realities, a vision of what kind of world we are after. The People's Tribune gets letters that say, "You people are so negative. Do you know what are you for? You're just against everything. What are you for? You've got a nice paper, but you are not for anything." That taught me—we are not going to be able to do anything unless we have an organization that can connect the fight against the system to the vision that we're trying to accomplish. Developing this skill and consciousness is a pretty big task. It will take a lot of internal education. I think this is the biggest task that we have in constructing the kind of party that we need.

Our strategy is to divide society according to who is for and who is against this vision. I think this is the basic strategy of a revolutionary organization at this particular moment. To accomplish this, the organization has to have its own vision about where it's going and how to get there. Let's look at this question of agitation and propaganda. Just saying those terms doesn't mean anything unless we are able to spell out what we mean today. What I meant last year by agitation and propaganda is not what I mean by agitation and propaganda today. Agitation develops on the basis of the practical movement, on the actual activity of the masses of the people. We must approach them in their actual situation. On that basis we must find the way to raise the question of the property relations and capitalism. The other part—and not apart from it, but absolutely connected with it—is the propagandistic question about what is possible to build. Outside of that, I don't think the organization can have any strategy at this particular time. I don't think you can talk about maneuvering forces just yet. The first step is to gather your forces.

### ***WHAT KIND OF ORGANIZATION DO WE NEED FOR OUR 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY REVOLUTION?***

Right now, we need an organization of agitators and propagandists—an organization that's built around, but not restricted to, the production and distribution of our press. If we don't do that we are not going to do anything. We've said these words over and over

and over again because Lenin said them. We now have a different conception of what we mean by the production and distribution of the press. Although our first goal is an organization of propagandists, we have to begin preparing the soil for the party that we are going to need at the next stage of development. Eventually we will need a party that is capable of maneuvering the mass of people and figuring out what the practical steps are for intensifying the struggle and ultimately transferring political power in this country. But right now, we must organize around the question of agitation and propaganda. That spells itself out as the most widespread distribution of the press connected to the actual practical activity that is taking place.

The second aspect of the appropriate strategy for an organization is the role of Marxism-Leninism, the role of science, the role of ideology. The creation of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America as a non-Marxist organization in no way calls Marxism-Leninism into question. What we do call into question is the Leninist form of organization. The Leninist form was constructed for the seizure of power in the process of a social revolution under the specific circumstances of two hostile classes fighting a common enemy. The fundamental reason for the split between the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks was the fact that Lenin insisted the bourgeoisie and the workers could not unite to overthrow the czar. They could and should march side by side under certain circumstances. The intent of the Lenin group was the seizure of political power, not simply the overthrow of czarism. Lenin eventually created a party for that purpose.

Now, what do we need? We need a very large mass party, a very large organization. Anybody can tell you that the smaller and tighter a party is, the greater are the qualitative aspects of that party. A small, tight party will have a much higher level of organization. But the small party, no matter how high its level, or how great its qualitative development cannot accomplish the task we laid out for ourselves. Therefore, we had to think in terms of dropping the Leninist form, not drop Leninism, but drop the Leninist form of organization in order to accomplish task number one. That task is the broadest possible distribution of our propaganda by our members participating

in, and talking to the spontaneous movement that's developing in the United States.

What we are doing is dropping a form that was adapted for one specific period of time. The highest form of Marxism-Leninism is to be honest and creative and proceed from the objective situation, to utilize science and ideology to accomplish what we set out to accomplish. Ideology isn't science, although the left in the United States has attempted to substitute ideology for science. Ideology is a body of ideas that you develop in order to accomplish what you are trying to accomplish. Ideology consequently changes with every change in the stages of development of a process. We don't want to mix up science and ideology. We want ideology to be the subjective expression, the subjective social, political, moral expression of the scientific conclusions we arrive at, at every stage of our development.

The first thing we say on this question is that ideology is absolutely indispensable to a revolutionary movement. Ideology is an outlook that prepares a person to suffer, to die, to place the cause above their own individual desires. This cannot be done in a revolutionary movement if that ideology does not reflect the needs of the movement. In this sense, ideology must be the truth. We must have an organization whose ideological level is very high and passionate but is based upon a cold, scientific analysis of where we are in history. In the League, we are still weak on this. We have intentionally been weak because we didn't want to develop an ideology that didn't reflect our scientific progression. We are only now at the point where we scientifically understand where we are in history, where we are going and what we need to do. Now we've got to set about creating an ideology that will facilitate and advance the understanding of the cause of human liberation.

### ***HOW CAN SOMEONE JOIN THE REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS?***

To reach the young people, we've got to reach them with a vision. The revolutionary movement is not going to grab the young people on the basis of their immediate poverty. You might get some older people who are forced to grapple with it on a daily basis, but

the only way to get hold of young people, say of thirty and under, is as visionaries. It's up to them to lead, to create this new world. To do this, though, we have to tell them what they are going to have to do. One, they are going to have to organize, to become part of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America. They are going to have to become disciplined. They are going to have to accept an ideology that says they are less important than the movement as a whole. The strength of the bourgeois ideology is exactly the opposite. It says, "The hell with all that! I'm all about me." We have a big job to do in that respect and yet the young people are the most open to revolutionary ideology. We simply have to tell them, "Look, you can either sink down further, or take the steps that involve a certain amount of sacrifice, which isn't sacrifice at all, for a cause. What choice do you have? You either come in here and contribute to this common cause or else you're going to end up as a police statistic."

The first step is to join the League of Revolutionaries for a New America. What are the minimum conditions of joining? That you are prepared to live the kind of life that allows you to contribute. Do some reading, some studying and be an example to the people that you associate yourself with. You should learn to exemplify the revolution.

All revolutionary organizations have to deal with this. Some people try to make that example by wearing leather jackets or black boots. What attracted me to the communist movement was the intelligence, straightforwardness and social activity of the communists. It wasn't their leather jackets. I can remember a time when you could spot a communist woman a mile away. She had a black leather jacket and motorcycle boots. That attracted very few people. The thing that attracted me was that the communists were socially active. They kept their nose clean. I don't mean from the law, but they didn't get involved in things where their neighbors would say, "I don't want my kid around this kind of apparatus." One of the major things that attracted people to the Young Communist League was the fact that they had a purpose. They were into something; they were doing something. Above everything else, we learned to live a life that did not contradict what we were trying to do. I'm not talking

about bourgeois morality. I am talking about the essentials of proletarian morality, which is: Don't lead a life of contradiction. There is only one life to get where you are going. You don't have to be a monk or anything like that. Dance, drink your beer, drag race; do whatever you want to do, but do it in such a way that it doesn't contradict the goal.

The next step is to learn to move as an organization. The stirring revolutionary Chinese song "Chi Lai" starts with, "many hands—one heart." It's a natural thing. We are an organization like any organization. Whether it's a trade union or church group, you must learn to move as an organization, no matter petty differences. How we do that depends to a great degree upon what kind of people we are, what our backgrounds are. One of the reasons we want an organization is because we recognize the diversities that are represented by individuals. The diversity makes us successful.

For the revolution, as for life itself, the tasks of the young people are the same. They've got to learn to be whatever they are trying to be. A youth movement must learn how to create the new world they are going to occupy. People over sixty are not going to have too long a time in this new world; they are not going to create it. They can help prepare the youth, and help them prepare themselves for this new world. This is the reason we want to organize the youth. We cannot build a revolutionary youth movement with those who are simply incensed with the system. We concentrate too much upon trying to build with people who are angry with the system. We don't need malcontents; we need thinkers with a vision of the kind of world that is possible.

*conclusion*

CARLOS A. CORTEZ



**W** *hat Kind of  
World is Possible?*

The major question in the world today is peace. Peace between different ethnic groups, peace between nations. What is the basis for strife if it's not the division and redivision of scarcity? The control of scarcity is the foundation of social strife. Today that can be eliminated. We're talking about abundance. We're talking about a world where the electronic means of production are cranking twenty-four hours a day. We're talking about a world where everybody becomes involved in the development of society, not so much its material development as its spiritual development. We're talking about a world of happy people. We're talking about entering a stage of development that's no longer controlled by scarcity. We can talk in terms of abundance and that abundance obviously is here. All you have to do is look into these dollar stores. There is plenty of plenty.

### ***HOW DO WE ACHIEVE HAPPINESS?***

The foundation of happiness is contentment and its foundation is the elimination of strife. It is a negative thing. It flows from a negative thing. Contentment grows when you are no longer troubled. Our troubles arise from material scarcity. When we do away with that, we can begin to build the positive thing, happiness. Happiness is an emotion that arises with contribution. This contribution can be in the form of raising a child, of painting a picture, of building an organization or a neighborhood. Happiness is a social thing. The idea is to have as full a life as humanly possible. This demands, first, that we struggle to create the conditions for a full life while we are here. Second, we have to look at death as part of life, not as the end. Life goes on. I don't want to go like the ancient myth of the Eskimos. After the grandchildren are weaned and they have their teeth, and grandma has taught the daughters how to raise babies, she goes out and sits on the hillside and the bear eats her up, knowing that they'll eat the bear and life goes on. I am saying that for now we cannot stop the cycle of youth, maturity, old age and decline and finally the ceasing of the functioning of their human resources. In that sense, death is going to continue. But there isn't real death. Oh yes, we can look at it individually, "Oh my God, I'm dying; that's the end of it, that's

the end the world. When I die, the world ends.” We can just as easily have a different ideology, an ideology that sees birth and rebirth as a constant, continual thing. “I come here, I serve my time, I enjoy my life, I procreate, I do all that is human. When I get ready to lay down and die, I do so, at least with contentment.”

Marx said that the end of class society was going to be the beginning of human history. Thus, in the death of class society there is a real birth. Up to this point all we’ve really been is animals. Reacting to scarcity, struggling to get food, struggling to get clothing, struggling to get a house, struggling to get an education, struggling for all these things. If these necessities are in abundance then we can turn to the real matters of life, the intellectual, cultural and interactive well-being. So for the first time we will truly create our own history. We create our history now, but under defined circumstances that limit our choices. In other words, we are not liberating ourselves. We’ve created our own history, but it’s been a limited history. What we’ve created has been limited by the circumstances wherein we carry out our struggles. For example, the struggle against slavery couldn’t really end slavery, it could only transform slavery. We’re talking about an end to the struggle over allocation of scarcity. We’re talking about no longer having to struggle about getting a house. They will be stamped out by a robot at a factory. We will no longer worry about getting food, no longer worry about getting an education. Then we can go ahead and create.

Some people say this heaven sounds a little dull. But if things were dull in heaven, so many people wouldn’t spend so much time and effort trying to get there. We are still going to be boogying and falling in love and raising our babies. We are going to do all the things that make us happy. Raising that kid, seeing her graduate from college, being assured of her well-being. These are things that make us happy. What’s going to be dull about it? The only dull thing that we’ll get rid of is groping along for a living. Piling those bricks two on one, one on two. That’s the dull part of my life. Dancing and reading books has never been dull to me.

The history of all hitherto existing societies has been the history of class struggle. Now, when class struggle is over and when real

human history begins, what does history mean? Up to this point, I think history has meant the development of the means of production and societies reorganizing on that basis. In that sense of the word, it's only been a mass record, it's been a mass record of action and reaction. What we are talking about now is the ability of human beings to grab hold of themselves and their destiny and create a history of accomplishments, rather than this action and reaction. Accomplishments will be things that we choose to do, not that which we have to do, but which we choose to do.

When we set about reconstructing the earth, for example, reclaiming the earth, becoming part of the earth again, I think that will be a real accomplishment. The first task of communism is to rebuild the earth, to clean it up, understand its rhythm, and become part of that rhythm. The first part of it is to stabilize the earth, and consequently stabilize humanity. Happiness will arise in that process.

What would you do with yourself if you no longer had to worry about your food, shelter, and clothing? I know what I'd do.



## ***AFTERWORD***

The questions in this book are only the beginning. They arose from questions at collective meetings, book readings, forums, study groups, academic classes and from my neighbors. And so, the answers reflect my audience. For each, however, I try to bring my experience, my understanding and my observations. But most of all, I try to apply my training in the philosophy of dialectics and the theory of Marxism.

As we better understand our history, we can better figure out our future and our strategy to get there. For this revolution to go forward, each of us needs to ask the questions and seek the answers. The dialectician understands the world is knowable and studies relentlessly to learn and contribute.



## **ABOUT THE ARTISTS:**

**Diana Berek** is a self-taught artist from a blue-collar working class family. Summers spent in the Chippewa Valley in Wisconsin instilled an appreciation for the land, and for different perspectives of rural and urban, agricultural and industrial, immigrant and indigenous. Her struggle to unite these aspects of her experience informs her work.

Cover and Chapter 1 (p. 14): detail adapted from “Mandala for the New Working Class”; Chapter 4 (p. 74): “Manchild Considers Promisedland.com”; Chapter 6 (p. 120): “In The Daily Life of the People.”

**Carlos Cortez Koyokuikatl** was a master printmaker and poet. He put his art to service for the Industrial Workers of the World, the United Farm Workers union, and other groups. He died in 2005.

Conclusion (p.146): “Dos Esperanzas.”

**Jack Hirschman** has been one of San Francisco's most active poets for more than a quarter century. In 2006, he was appointed Poet Laureate of San Francisco by Mayor Gavin Newsom. He is also an acclaimed visual artist.

Chapter 5 (p. 96): “Must Break Into Buildings” (from *Culture and Struggle*, 1995).

**Sue Ying** was a visual artist who fought injustice for more than 50 years. She helped found Artists for (Chicago Mayor Harold) Washington, Artists Against Homelessness, and the Guild Complex in Chicago. She helped educate and inspire young people and artists. She died in 2002.

Chapter 2 (p. 34): “Solidarity: Women Grow Half the Food”; Chapter 3 (p. 48): “Celebrating Joys and Struggles of Working Class People.”