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on the Working Class,
Liberation Movements
& Social Strata

HENRY WINSTON

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WRITE FOR COMPLETE CATALOG

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

HENRY WINSTON, National Chairman of the Communist Party U.S.A. since 1966, was born in Mississippi in 1911. His grandfather was a slave. At the age of 19 he joined the Young Communist League and entered the struggles of the unemployed in New York City. In the 1930s he was a leader of the YCL. He participated in the National Hunger March to Washington in 1932, aided the defense of the Scottsboro Boys, and took part in other major struggles. During World War II he served in the Army engineers and received an honorable discharge. Over the years he has held a variety of leading posts in the Communist Party. In 1956 he began an 8-year prison sentence under a Smith Act frameup. While in prison he became blind as a result of deliberate neglect of his health by the prison authorities. World-wide protests brought about his release in 1961. Henry Winston is the author of numerous articles and pamphlets. During the attempted frameup of Angela Davis he gave special attention to organizing the movement which led to her acquittal. His first book, *Strategy for a Black Agenda: A Critique of New Theories of Liberation in the United States and Africa*, was published in 1973 by International Publishers.

This pamphlet contains the text of an address delivered to a meeting of the Communist Party's Central Committee in New York, December 7-9, 1974.

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STRATEGY FOR A PEOPLE'S ALTERNATIVE

**A Critique of New Theories on the Working Class,
Liberation Movements and Social Strata**

By HENRY WINSTON

A MASS PARTY OF THE PEOPLE

That the present situation in this country demands a mass people's party is beyond question. Formation of such a party must become a top-priority concern for all seeking a way out of the monopoly-imposed crisis of existence for the working class and, especially, the Black, Puerto Rican, Chicano, Native American and Asian-American minorities—in fact, a crisis so all-pervasive it encompasses not only the working masses but every social stratum outside monopoly's ranks.

The current situation demands unity around a program that will unleash the potential for struggle of every possible anti-monopoly current—multiple and varied in class and social character—to speed formation of a mass people's party as an alternative to monopoly's two-party system. Past or present differences must not be allowed to become an obstacle to unity around such an anti-monopoly program.

Within this context, "An Open Letter to Activists and Organizers of the Present and Past on the Need for a Mass Party of the People," has been issued by a group called The National Interim Committee for a Mass Party of the People. Among the members of the group, mostly professionals, are Arthur Kinoy of the National Lawyers' Guild, and leaders or members of a

variety of other organizations, including the New American Movement.

Regretfully, the perspective offered by the "Open Letter" (it includes no program) does not correspond to the necessity for a unifying strategy and policies for a mass alternative to monopoly's two parties of racism and reaction. The 20-page "Open Letter" is an abridgement of a much longer document by Arthur Kinoy; although modified in some respects from the original, it retains its key features.

It is really unfortunate that after months of discussion by the National Interim Committee of a document in which Kinoy warns the U.S. left against "imported models," the "Open Letter" takes its ideological direction from an "imported model" of French origin, derived especially, as we shall see, from Roger Garaudy's writings. Not only does this "imported model" fail to run in an anti-monopoly direction in the U.S.; it has already been rejected by the working class in the country of its origin.

"URGENTLY REQUIRED SOLUTION"

The "Open Letter" states:

A society in which the natural resources, accumulated forces of production and creative energies of the people are at the services of the people's needs—a socialist society—has been the dream of the most advanced thinkers of every important social movement in the country's history: the abolitionists, the first organizers of trade unions, the leaders of the early movements for women's rights, and many others. Today fulfillment of that dream is on the current agenda of history—the crisis of the system has thrown it forward as the urgently required solution to the immediate problems of daily life.

Nonetheless, we activists and organizers and everyone concerned for the present and future must face a harsh truth: a socialist solution to the crisis of American capitalism and imperialism is not the immediately inevitable alternative. (Page 2.)

The reference of the "Open Letter" to the "abolitionists" and "the first organizers of trade unions" is apt indeed because these "most advanced thinkers" of their time, influenced by Frederick Douglass and Karl Marx, recognized that the "urgently required solution to the crisis" of their time—slavery—depended on the widest possible realignment of forces within a strategy to break the slave power's domination of national government. But the "Open Letter" fails to make the connection between this historic experience and the "urgently required solution to the crisis" today.

Bypassed by the "Open Letter" is today's historic necessity to link the future abolition of capitalist wage slavery with the immediate strategic imperative of building a people's alternative to monopoly domination through its two-party system. This alternative—a mass party based on the leadership of the multi-racial working class within the framework of a great anti-monopoly formation—is the only strategic alternative to racism, repression, poverty and war; it is the strategy for linking the fight for the "urgently required solution to the immediate problems of daily life" with the fight for the future revolutionary transition to socialism. However, the "Open Letter" appears unable to distinguish between immediate and ultimate goals for its projected mass party, and does in fact change its mind as to which is which from one page to another.

For instance, on page 2, the "Open Letter" states, "a socialist solution to the crisis of American capitalism and imperialism is

not the immediately inevitable alternative." But, two pages later, the "Open Letter" asserts that its proposed mass party would have as its "fundamental program for this era the transfer of power from the capitalist state and the corporations to the people." Since this "transfer of power" is not the "immediately inevitable alternative," how would it take place? By conjuring into existence through an impossible act of voluntarism a new "historical bloc" to make a "great leap forward"?

Apparently so, because the "Open Letter" goes on to assert that "the taking of political, economic and social control is a serious and realistic objective . . . we are organizing now the political instrumentality to reach this goal." (page 6.) And, clearly, this "political instrumentality" is one that would substitute Roger Garaudy's "historical bloc" for a strategy of working-class leadership of a wide movement against monopoly. The "Open Letter"'s concept of a "political instrumentality" is based on a revision of Marxist-Leninist ideas of the role of the working class, particularly basic production workers, in the struggle around immediate issues and for the goal of scientific socialism. This concept accounts for the "Open Letter"'s ambiguity regarding immediate and ultimate goals, and thus diverts from both—since ultimate goals will be won from struggle developing out of immediate issues within an anti-monopoly strategy.

The "Open Letter"'s ambiguity is reflected not only in its swing from questioning whether socialism is an "immediately inevitable alternative" to projecting an "immediate" outlook for "transfer of power," i.e., making the transition to socialism. The "Open Letter"'s ambiguity is also revealed in its projection of another "immediate alternative": "In their desperate efforts to retain control, those in power will undoubtedly turn to the classic last resort of 20th century capitalism, the attempt to impose a relatively open terrorist dictatorship . . ." (Page 3.) Therefore,

according to this document, the "immediately inevitable alternative" is either socialism or fascism.

But the "alternative" is not fascism or socialism. Today's alternative is either fascism or democracy. The false choice posed by the "Open Letter," reflecting a fatalist acceptance of the "inevitability" of fascism, also flows from its adoption of Garaudy's concept of a "new historic bloc," which diverts from an anti-monopoly strategy. What is required to fight every step that could lead to fascism and war is a great new anti-monopoly formation headed by the working class, the only strategy to advance the struggle for "transfer of power."

"GROUP" OR CLASS?

The "Open Letter" describes its proposed "political instrumentality" for "the taking of political, economic and social control" as "a new historical bloc which unifies the struggles of all sectors of the working class with those of all other oppressed groups. Such an historical bloc *must* rest first and foremost on the working class." (Page 7. Emphasis in the original.)

Despite this assertion, it soon becomes apparent that the adherents of Garaudy's "new historical bloc" idea reject the Marxist concept of the working class by denying the basic production workers' decisive role in unifying the workers and oppressed. The "Open Letter" states:

The party must carefully analyze the expanding nature of the working class in the 20th century. Not only blue collar workers but, for instance, white collar workers in service occupations and government, technicians, people on welfare, unpaid workers in the home, prisoners, and students are increasingly coming to share a common class interest in the

overthrow of capitalism. (Page 7.)

The document goes on to say,

What we must understand is that the bankruptcy of the capitalist system has so infected and poisoned every aspect of society that today all oppressed groups have an objective and real stake in doing away with the power of the corporate rulers. (Page 8.)

Of course, "all oppressed groups have an objective and real stake in doing away with the power of the corporate rulers." However, all the oppressed and exploited do not have a similar position within the system. In fact, the "Open Letter" deemphasizes the production workers' special role even further by substituting "group" for class, thus slurring over class struggle as the motive force for change.

The "Open Letter" asserts:

From time to time, one or another of these groups will take the initiative in the struggle, and this in turn will stimulate other groups to respond to the degree that mutual confidence and understanding has been established in the course of daily work and struggles. (Page 8.)

It is certainly true that the sharpening economic, social and political crisis will evoke "initiative in the struggle" from forces within the growing numbers of scientific, service and professional workers. And as the crisis of capitalism continues to deepen more and more "groups" and strata will come within the scope of the alliance between the working class and all who suffer in any form under monopoly's rule. To the extent that the

“initiative” of “one or another of these groups” and strata relates to the crucial issues of the day, their actions will stimulate positive repercussions in the struggle for an independent mass alternative to the monopoly-imposed crisis of existence. But the “Open Letter” does not project such a perspective. Instead it counterposes the potential “initiative” of these “groups” to the primary initiative of the working class.

The increasing polarization within the crisis of capitalism pushes new segments into the working class, and also imposes on many “groups” and non-working-class strata conditions close to but not identical with those faced by the working class. But in its concept of the “expanded working class,” the “Open Letter” misinterprets the changing status of these sectors of the population. The intensifying crisis brings such forces closer to the orbit of working class leadership but—contrary to the “Open Letter”—does not merge them with it.

The “Open Letter”’s ideological starting point is a two-fold revision of the Marxist conception of the working class: while denying the leading role of the working class, especially basic production workers, the “Open Letter” advances the corollary view that the “initiative” of “one or another” of a variety of “groups” will replace the primary role of the working class. Thus we see that the “Open Letter”’s interpretation of the “expanding nature of the working class” is in reality a break with a class analysis and perspective.

To challenge the view that a variety of “groups” can substitute for working-class initiative is not to diminish the potential initiative of the multiple “groups” suffering under the crisis of capitalism. But to assert that such “groups” can replace working-class leadership denies the necessity for an alliance between the working class and various “groups” and strata—which can be built only through the primary role of the multi-

racial working class.

On the surface, the difference between the "Open Letter"'s concept of a new "historical bloc" and the call for a mass anti-monopoly formation may seem purely semantic. In reality, however, it represents the difference between an independent class position and one that bypasses the working class, thus diverting the struggle for an independent people's alternative to monopoly's two parties. Such an alternative cannot be built by "groups" alone, but only through the involvement, the *primary* leadership of the working class within a strategy combining all the oppressed and exploited with all non-monopoly "groups" and strata.

Interestingly, an early challenge to anti-Marxist concepts of the "expanded working class" and a new "historical bloc" to be led not by the working class but by various "social groups" came from Lenin—who wrote that such conceptions ran counter to the processes of the class struggle.

Certainly Lenin did not underestimate the potential inherent in various "social groups," in "classes and strata of society" outside the working class. However, he emphasized that initiative from such "social groups" depends on the inspiration and guidance of the working class. Lenin stressed the need to

. . . strengthen our faith in the might of the labour movement we lead; for we see that unrest in the *foremost revolutionary class* is spreading to other classes and other strata of society, that *it has already led*, not only to the rousing of the revolutionary spirit among the students to a degree hitherto unparalleled, but to the beginning of the awakening of the countryside, to greater self-confidence and readiness to struggle on the part of social groups that have until now (*as groups*) not been very responsive.

Public unrest is growing among the entire people in Russia, among all classes, and it is our duty . . . to exert every effort to take advantage of this development, in order to explain to the progressive working-class intellectuals what an ally they have in the peasants, in the students, and in the intellectuals generally, and to teach them how to take advantage of the flashes of social protest that break out, now in one place, now in another. We shall be able to assume our role of *front-rank fighters* for freedom only when the working class, led by a militant revolutionary party, while never for a moment forgetting its special condition in modern society and its specific historic task of liberating humanity from economic enslavement, will raise the banner in the struggle for *freedom* for the whole people and will rally to this banner all those of the most varied social strata. . . . (*Collected Works*, Vol. 5, pp. 288-289, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1964. The word "freedom" emphasized in original; other emphasis added—H. W.)

ANTECEDENT OF "OPEN LETTER" CONCEPTS

An antecedent of the "Open Letter"'s substitution of social "groups" for the role of the working class, for struggle between classes as the motive force in history, can be found in Roger Garaudy's concepts—in, for example, his theory of a "current mutation."

In his book, *The Crisis of Communism: The Turning Point of Socialism* (Grove Press Inc., New York), Garaudy asserts that a "drastic 'rethinking'" of former conceptions of the working class is needed (page 10). The reason? A "current mutation" in the contradictions of capitalism (page 39). And "the key," as

Garaudy puts it, to this "current mutation" is provided by the scientific and technological revolution.

"The first and most decisive of those consequences [of the scientific and technological revolution] in the United States," declares Garaudy, "is a *shift in the contradictions inherent in capitalism.*" (*Ibid.*, page 49. Emphasis in original.)

Thus, Garaudy asserts that the "mutation" caused by the scientific and technological revolution "shifts" the "contradictions inherent in capitalism" *away* from class conflict. Or, to put it another way, he says the basic contradictions of capitalism can no longer be found in the antagonism between working class and bourgeoisie based on their relationships to the means of production.

However, since the once predicted obsolescence of the working class has not occurred (on the contrary, its numerical increase is evident), Garaudy goes on to add that the "shift" does not mean "the old contradictions have disappeared, but rather that they have been profoundly transformed by fresh contradictions." Hence, "What we have to consider, besides the new type of growth [is] the transformation of classes and of class relations. . . ." (*Ibid.*, page 49.)

This "transformation of classes" has created, according to Garaudy, a "working class in the broadest sense of the term . . . jointly constituted by the white collar workers and the blue collar workers." (*Ibid.*, page 63.) This force constitutes the "new historic bloc," the "only factor capable of involving even wider social strata in a vast movement for the renewal of American society." (*Ibid.*, page 63.)

However, while Garaudy speaks of a "working class . . . jointly constituted by the white-collar workers and the blue-collar workers," he makes it clear that blue-collar workers, far from being "front-rankers" in the fight for a "renewal of Ameri-

can society," won't even have *equal* status with the white-collar workers. In fact, it is the white-collar workers *furthest* from the point of production who are assigned the leading role in Garaudy's "new historic bloc":

There can be no doubt that a primary role . . . will be played by the engineers, the technologists, and the cadres, as also by a great many intellectuals, and this for objective reasons—namely, the new structure of the productive forces and the corresponding importance of organized intelligence. (*Ibid.*, page 66.)

In stating that the "shift" does not mean "the old contradictions have disappeared," Garaudy is acknowledging their existence only to declare them an anachronism—for, in his view, the "current mutation" "shifts" the basic contradiction far from the arena of class struggle and the primary role played by the basic production workers.

"HUMAN SUBJECTIVITY"—OR CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS?

According to Garaudy, the "mutation" brought about by scientific and technological developments has not only expanded but *altered* the character of the working class and the class struggle:

. . . what is forcibly emerging in opposition to the blind mechanism of industrial civilization, is *human subjectivity* in this, the era of the scientific and technological revolution. (*Ibid.*, page 19. Emphasis in the original.)

In other words, to Garaudy the primary motive force for change is not the class struggle but the scientific and technological revolution. Using the alleged "mutation" of the character of the working class and the class struggle as his rationale, he "shifts" from a class position, substituting "human subjectivity" for class consciousness—and for Marxism-Leninism, the highest form of class consciousness. (The "Open Letter"'s idea that "one or another" "group" can replace the *class* role of the working class also derives from this "mutation" concept.)

Another reason, says Garaudy, why the "current mutation" has altered the character of the working class is that "the computerization of production as also of administration tends to place man at the *periphery* of direct production. . . ." (*Ibid.*, page 24. Emphasis added—H. W.) This is why the basic production workers are subordinate (if not irrelevant), in Garaudy's "new historic bloc," to the scientific and professional workers "at the *periphery* of direct production."

At this writing, the miners are being forced to prepare for a strike against government-supported mine owners. It would be news to these miners (and to all the millions of workers *directly* involved in production) to learn that the main force and struggle against the bosses comes from the minority of scientists and engineers "at the *periphery* of direct production." If the strike takes place, the miners will of course welcome the support of every engineer and technician, on and off the picket lines. But the miners, as well as auto, steel and all other workers involved directly in production, well know that the primary strength and leadership of every struggle comes from those at the center of production and transport. Moreover, they know that not all those "at the periphery" will side with them; many of the engineers, technicians, etc., will enforce the interests of the bosses. Those "at the periphery" who do have common interests with

the direct production workers can defend these interests only in conjunction with the *primary* struggles and leading role of the production workers.

A TIME-WORN TACTIC

As part of his attempt to prove that scientific and technological workers "at the periphery of production" have not only fused with the working class but replaced basic production workers and class struggle as the primary force for change, Garaudy turns to the time-worn tactic of quoting Marx to falsify Marxism:

. . . when, as foreseen by Marx, science is becoming a leading force in production, it is an objective fact that a growing number of non-manual workers (notably engineers and research workers) are coming to form part of the "collective laborer" and to evince the class criteria corresponding to those applied by Marx when he defined the working class. (*Ibid.*, page 98.)

But, unlike Garaudy, Marx does not equate the "collective laborer" with the working class. Marx showed that because of scientific advances, more and more categories are involved in the collective process of production, ranging from workers at the direct point of production to personnel at different supervisory, scientific and professional levels. Each level tends to be further removed from direct production and closer to management, yet all form part of the "collective laborer." Marx wrote that in the "collective laborer" process, the capitalist

. . . hands over the work of direct and constant supervision of the individual workmen, and groups of workmen, to a

special kind of wage-laborer. An industrial army of workmen, under the command of a capitalist, requires, like a real army, officers (managers), and sergeants (foremen, overlookers), who, while the work is being done, command in the name of the capitalist. (*Capital*, Vol. 1, International Publishers, New York, 1970, page 332.)

Marx went on to say,

As in the natural body head and hand wait upon each other, so the labor-process unites the labor of the hand with that of the head. Later on they part company and even become deadly foes. The product ceases to be the direct product of the individual, and becomes a social product, produced in common by a collective laborer. . . . (*Ibid.*, page 508.)

Marx also wrote:

Included among these productive workers, of course, are all those who contribute in one way or another to the production of the commodity, from the actual operative to the manager or engineer (as distinct from the capitalist). (*Theories of Surplus Value*, Part I, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1969, pages 156-157.)

Garaudy's attempt to enlist Marx to contradict Marx falls apart under the impact of Marx' clear distinction between the "actual operative" and "the engineer," "the manager," etc. at other levels. Marx' distinction applies equally to today's "actual operative" at the point of production and scientific and other personnel at the "periphery of direct production."

To Marx, however, the term "collective laborer" encompassed

the modern, large-scale social process of capitalist commodity production—a process including “the engineer,” “the manager,” etc., along with “the actual operative.” When Marx wrote of the “collective laborer” he neither confused nor equated this concept with the working class and class struggle. But Garaudy manipulates Marx’ words to make it appear that, according to Marx, those “at the periphery of direct production” have *merged* with the direct production workers within the class struggle historically destined to abolish capitalist commodity production.

Of course, the engineers, scientists and managers “at the periphery of direct production” all contribute, as Marx put it, “in one way or another to the production of the commodity.” But through his distortion of Marx’ concept of the “collective laborer,” Garaudy obscures the fact that in the class struggle—the workers’ struggle against exploitation within the process of capitalist commodity production—a distinct differentiation takes place: the “collective laborer” breaks down according to the relationship of each of its segments to direct production.

And it is in the segments “at the periphery of direct production”—the leading players in Garaudy’s “new historic bloc”—where vacillation appears. It is, after all, the function of certain segments within the “collective laborer” to “contribute in one way or another” *not* to the struggle of the direct production workers, but to upholding the aims of capitalism. Thus, certain segments of the “collective laborer” “part company” with the direct production workers and even become their “deadly foes” in the struggle against wage slavery, the struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie.

Garaudy distorts Marx’ concept of the “collective laborer” by obscuring the distinction between the commodity production process and class struggle, which originates in the contradiction between classes in relation to the means of production. Garaudy

does this to advance a major thesis of his book, the alleged "shift" in the "contradictions inherent in capitalism." It is unfortunate that the "Open Letter" reflects Garaudy's basic error in this connection.

In addition, both Garaudy and the "Open Letter" misinterpret the changes in working class composition arising out of scientific and technical developments in the production process. Both, for example, take the numerical increase in scientific and professional workers to mean a numerical decrease in direct production workers—somehow managing to overlook the several hundred percent increase in the industrial working class since capitalism arrived at its monopoly stage.

Because the ratio of scientific and professional workers is now larger than in the past, Garaudy concludes that the direct production workers and those "at the periphery" are now fused into one indivisible entity, the "collective laborer." From this premise he advances the theory of an expanded working class in which the new scientific and professional workers play the primary role, replacing the basic industrial workers.

As we indicated earlier, Garaudy's misuse of the "collective laborer" concept to buttress his anti-Marxist "new historic bloc" idea is a time worn tactic. In fact, the last word on those who would use Marx to refute Marxism was had by Lenin in 1908.

"A number of writers," Lenin stated, "have this year undertaken a veritable campaign against the philosophy of Marxism." He then went on to say:

All these people could not have been ignorant of the fact that Marx and Engels scores of times termed their philosophical views dialectical materialism. Yet all these people, who, despite the sharp divergence of their political views, are united in their hostility toward dialectical materialism, at the

same time claim to be Marxists in philosophy! Engels' dialectics is "mysticism," says Berman. Engels' views have become "antiquated," remarks Bazarov casually, as though it were a self-evident fact. . . . Yet when it comes to an explicit definition of their attitude toward Marx and Engels, all their courage and all their respect for their own convictions at once disappear. In deed—a complete renunciation of dialectical materialism, i.e., of Marxism; in word—endless subterfuges, attempts to evade the essence of the question, to cover their retreat, to put some materialist or other in place of materialism in general, and a determined refusal to make a direct analysis of the innumerable materialist declarations of Marx and Engels. This is truly "mutiny on one's knees," as it was justly characterized by one Marxist. This is typical philosophical revisionism, for it was only the revisionists who gained a sad notoriety for themselves by their departure from the fundamental views of Marxism and by their fear, or inability, to "settle accounts" openly, explicitly, resolutely and clearly with the views they had abandoned.

Lenin added:

At the moment I would only remark that if our philosophers had spoken not in the name of Marxism but in the name of a few "seeking" Marxists, they would have shown more respect for themselves and for Marxism. (*Collected Works*, Vol. 14, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1968, pages 19-20.)

LETTING THE BOSSES OFF THE HOOK

With undeniable logic, Garaudy balances off his exaggeration of the role of scientific and professional workers at the "periph-

ery" by dismissing the role of workers at the direct point of production. For this he gives the following theoretical justification:

The scientific and technological revolution, however, has affected the development of the American trade union movement in two different ways. Firstly, it has progressively atrophied the movement's social function. Because the great mutation has enabled the employer to increase his profits by a technologically induced rise in productivity rather than by *direct over-exploitation*, it has been possible to rally the administrative organs of the trade unions and, in their wake, the main body of the working class, to the aims and to the nefarious consequences these entail—the policies relating to armaments and war. . . .

The second effect the mutation has had upon the trade unions arises out of the first. Having been reduced to a purely economic role which they have in any case already played out by obtaining all there was to obtain through collective bargaining, their function inevitably becomes bureaucratized—the trade union becomes an organ of the system. Thus integration and bureaucratization are two aspects of the present impasse. (*The Crisis in Communism: The Turning Point of Socialism*, pages 63-64. Emphasis added—H. W.)

Who but the bosses could accept Garaudy's assertion that a "great mutation" arising out of the scientific and technological revolution has allowed employers to increase profits by a "technologically induced rise in productivity rather than by direct exploitation"!

No longer, according to Garaudy, is state monopoly capital-

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No longer, according to Garaudy, is state monopoly capital-

ism the workers' enemy—because a “great mutation” has brought about increased profits without “over-exploitation”! Nor are the class collaborationist labor lieutenants who control the trade union apparatus the workers' enemy—because the trade unions have “already played out” their role “by obtaining all there was to obtain through collective bargaining”! And no longer do the masses of white workers experience “direct over-exploitation,” nor do the three million Black workers in basic industry and transport suffer double and triple “over-exploitation”—because profits come not from speedup, etc., but from a “technologically induced rise in productivity”!

To dispel any lingering doubts that Garaudy's “new historic bloc” concept is anything but a “new” variant of old class collaborationist policies, one need only examine his view that the mass of basic production workers are now integrated into the system—i.e., won “to the aims” of capital, their material needs well satisfied because they have gotten “all there was to obtain through collective bargaining.” (Isn't this exactly what the bosses tell the workers when they demand a pay increase!)

Such an analysis of the U.S. trade union movement is simply an apology for the corrupt, racist, anti-Communist AFL-CIO officialdom. Further, from reading Garaudy's analysis one would never dream that the role of slavery and racism in capitalism's development has had anything to do with the class struggle and present level of consciousness and organization of the working class. Rejecting the relationship between the economic and the political struggle, as Garaudy does, is the logical outcome of a retreat from class struggle to class collaborationist policies.

BLACK PEOPLE AND CLASS DIFFERENTIATION

It should be noted that, unlike Garaudy, the “Open Letter”

does not deemphasize the oppression of Black people in general. On the other hand, the "Open Letter" does reflect Garaudy's influence in its failure to deal specifically with the triple "over-exploitation" of Black workers, and in its treatment of Black liberation without regard to class differentiation—in fact, it does not make a single reference to Black workers as such. For example:

The party of the people [i.e., a party representing a new "historical bloc" based on the "expanding nature of the working class"—H. W.] must be a party in which Black people participate fully in the initial organizing, the thinking, the planning and development—that is, a party in which Black people take a leadership role. ("Open Letter," page 8.)

But a strategy for Black liberation—as well as a strategy for building a mass alternative to monopoly's two parties—must first of all recognize the special role of Black workers within the Black liberation movement as a whole, and in the general class struggle of the multi-racial working class. In this respect, the "Open Letter" parallels Garaudy's assignment of non-working-class strata to the working class, while minimizing the decisive role of the basic production workers.

Despite the divisiveness of racism, the objective historical process is merging Black workers with the general class struggle. But, contrary to the impression given by the "Open Letter" of a merger of the Black people as a whole with an "expanding working class," the Black liberation movement as such does not and will not merge with the working class. To advance the idea of such a merger can be of assistance only to those who would ideologically disarm the Black workers, and divert them from their dual historic role of participating fully and leading

equally in the general class struggle, while leading the Black liberation movement. To convey the impression that the Black people as a whole merge into the working class obscures in particular the responsibility of white workers in building an alliance between the multi-racial working class, the Black liberation movement and all the oppressed as central to the anti-monopoly struggle.

THE "INTERNAL COLONY" THEORY

While the "Open Letter" bypasses the special role of Black workers within the multi-racial working class and the Black liberation movement, it embraces a current and seriously misleading concept that defines the Black condition in the U.S. as an "internal colony":

. . . a fundamental conflict is built into the very heart of U.S. capitalist society—an internal contradiction between imperialist country and oppressed colony which in most other capitalist countries exists only as an external contradiction. The embedding of this colonial contradiction within the heart of the most powerful capitalist system in the world has extraordinary importance. When the dynamics of the upsurge to complete the struggle for Black liberation and the unfulfilled democratic revolution of the internal colony merges with the power of working class struggles against capitalism, as Blacks increasingly participate in and give leadership to workplace conflicts, an insight into the special and particular features of the history of this country opens up. This insight constitutes a unique key to shaking the foundations of capitalist rule. (Pages 8-9. Emphasis in the original.)

It is a fact that the "Open Letter" does not mention a single burning demand of the Black people, nor a single issue around which Black people, and particularly Black workers, are fighting. This truly astounding omission can be traced directly to the "internal colony" theory, which gives rise to a separatist strategy and goals leading away from the struggle against racism and super-exploitation—thus contradicting the objective historical processes of the class struggle and the Black liberation movement, and the demands at the center of Black liberation and working class struggles.

The "unique key" to a Black liberation strategy does not lie in an "internal colony" theory—which conceals instead of explains the Black condition in the U.S. This condition is, as we shall see, very different from that of a colony—which in no degree lessens the oppression and exploitation of Black people, but *does call for a liberation strategy "unique" from that of a colony.*

The "Open Letter" speaks of the "dynamics of the upsurge" of Black liberation as the "internal colony merges with the power of working-class struggles." In reality, however, the orientation of the "internal colony" theory—corresponding as it does to the condition of oppressed colonial majorities beyond U.S. borders and not to conditions in the U.S.—contradicts rather than "merges with" the "dynamics" of the Black liberation movement and the multi-racial working class struggles. Thus the document offers a perspective counter to the requirements of the struggle against racism and super-exploitation in the "workplaces" of this country.

There is a built-in contradiction between the document's rhetoric about a Black liberation movement that "merges" with "workplace conflicts" and its "internal colony" concept—which leads away from the concerns of millions of Black and other workers in the nation's "workplaces." For example, auto "work-

places" in Detroit, Lordstown, Tarrytown, etc., are shutting down, temporarily or otherwise. Tens of thousands of Black, as well as non-Black, workers are being catapulted into the swelling tide of unemployed—at a time when even a weekly paycheck does not provide escape from the disaster of monopoly-enforced inflation.

Now one must ask: Will the Black workers' fight for jobs be directed within the so-called "colonies"—i.e., ghettos—scattered across the country? Can Blacks find a solution to their triple oppression—as workers, as a people, and racially—within these alleged "colonies" scattered across the country? Or is the solution to be found via a rejection of the "internal colony" theory, and the adoption of a strategy recognizing the inalienable rights of Black people and the realities of Black liberation?

The unemployed Black auto workers are not looking for jobs in the ghetto—where they do not exist. Their demands are aimed at those who control the jobs. Their fight, unlike that of the masses in a colony, is not against an *external* oppressor and exploiter; it's against the racist monopolists controlling *this* country's *entire* economy.

Even the total of all oppressed minorities in this country (the Black people plus the Puerto Rican, Chicano, Asian-American and Native American peoples) does not constitute a majority, as do the oppressed in a colony. In the U.S., the "colony" idea conflicts with the "dynamics" of struggle: here the interests and struggles of *all* the oppressed and exploited "merge" into a common battle against an *internal* enemy, monopoly capital.

Yet the "Open Letter," in total disregard of the reality of the "dynamics" of Black liberation in the U.S., insists that policies stemming from the "internal colony" concept are the "unique key to shaking the foundations of capitalist rule." The docu-

ment, for instance, states:

Since the problems created by the special oppression of Black people are unique and distinct, the party will recognize the need for and respect the *autonomy* of separate political organizations and nationalist groups working specifically for the emancipation of Black people from domination. Thus, the party will under no circumstances attempt to *compete* with, *dictate* to, or *superimpose*, an outside perspective on such groups. The party will specifically fully support both the right to and the profound impact of strategies for self-determination of Black people. Acting in support of these initiatives the party will develop the closest possible alliances and working relationships with Black political organizations. (Page 9. Emphasis added—H.W.)

Through its promotion of the "internal colony" concept, the "Open Letter," ironically, would "superimpose" upon the Black liberation movement an "outside" strategy of "self-determination" that applies to Asian, African and Latin American countries—but not to the struggle for Black liberation *within* the U.S. To "superimpose" such an "outside" perspective on the Black liberation movement is to divert from the "unique key" to liberation of all oppressed and exploited in the U.S.

By adopting this "outside" orientation, the "Open Letter" pursues a course tantamount to "competing with"—in fact, "dictating" *against*—the objective direction in which the Black liberation movement in particular and the class struggle in general are moving.

The "Open Letter" proffers support to those "initiatives" corresponding to its "internal colony" perspective. But such "initiatives" are in fact separatist detours counter to the direc-

tion of Black liberation. Such "initiatives" divert from the initiatives corresponding to—and the strategy accelerating—the objective process of struggle against class and racist oppression in the United States.

The "Open Letter" speaks abstractly of "workplace conflicts." But the policies arising from its "internal colony" theory contradict the actual fight being waged by the Black people as a whole and especially Black workers—in the "workplace" and beyond—for an end to racism and oppression. By dwelling on a concept of "self-determination" applicable to colonially oppressed majorities in African, Asian and Latin American countries with separate economies dominated by external oppressors, the "Open Letter" advances not a strategy of liberation, but one of defeat for a Black minority fighting for liberation—not within a separate economy, but throughout the total economy of U.S. state monopoly capitalism.

DECODING THE "CODE" WORDS

A really regrettable feature of the "Open Letter" is its use of anti-Communist "code" words to "superimpose" on the struggles of the oppressed in the U.S. a strategy unrelated to reality in this country. One such "code" word (and a particularly notorious one) is "outside," readily translated into "Communist" by any reader having even the slightest familiarity with the language of the mass media. (Was this redbaiting in anticipation of the fact that the Communists would enter into the discussion and take issue with the unscientific "internal colony" theory and its harmful consequences?)

The divisive implication that an analysis based on Marxist-Leninist principles is an "outside perspective" should be left to the racist ruling class. But, and again ironically, the "Open

Letter" shows anew that not only anti-Communists but also those who, regrettably, fail to resist anti-Communist ideology invariably counter a Marxist-Leninist perspective in the only way possible: with "outside"—i.e., bourgeois influenced—policies; policies arising outside of and against the interests of the working class and the oppressed, and objectively serving the *outside* interests of the monopolist oppressors. The policies arising from the "internal colony" concept unfortunately fall into this category.

Far from providing insight into the character of Black oppression in the U.S., the "outside" colony analogy—by transplanting concepts applicable to African, Asian and Latin American countries—obscures the special features of the development of the Black liberation struggle in the U.S.

A colony is a *separate* society, having a *separate* economy within a common territory. In freeing itself from domination originating from the *separate* economy of its imperialist oppressor, a colony opens the way toward taking control of its own resources, economy and future.

The super-exploitation of a colony, therefore, arises from its domination by a *separate* "mother country." But the racist ruling class's super-exploitation of Black people in the U.S.—first as unpaid, then underpaid labor—has never taken place within two separate societies. This is the unique difference between the Black condition in this country and a colony.

Even during the period when U.S. economic and political power was divided and shared between the slave owners and the rising capitalist class, two separate independent societies did not exist. The slavocracy could not survive as a separate society, but only so long as chattel slavery served the accumulation and expansion of capital in non-slave areas of the economy. The economy in the chattel slavery areas and that in the "free" labor areas were never fully separate; on the con-

trary, they were interconnected and interdependent, each evolving with an interrelated process of capital accumulation based on the unpaid labor of Black slaves and cheap labor of white workers.

Today, when the U.S. economy continues to be ever more completely consolidated under the control of state monopoly capital, it becomes increasingly apparent that the triple oppression of Black people has not evolved within a separate, detachable "internal colony"—but that the reality of an historic process has locked Black people and the oppressed minorities, along with the white masses, into the single society of state monopoly capitalism.

A "VERSATILE" THEORY

A corollary to the crisis of capitalism is the crisis of anti-Communism. The crisis is evident, for example, in monopoly's desperate and escalating attempts to counter scientific socialism, the Marxist-Leninist analysis of class and national liberation; with other, more "revolutionary" theories. Unlike Marxism-Leninism, such theories are so versatile they can be adapted for use by ruling class as well as radical circles.

One theory in this category is the "internal colony" idea which turned up, for instance, in the *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, popularly known as the "Kerner Report." As handled by the Kerner Commission—appointed by President Johnson following the 1967 ghetto upsurges—the super-radical "internal colony" concept becomes a "warning" that the country is divided into two, and this alleged condition may become permanent.

To continue present policies is to make permanent the di-

vision of our country into two societies; one Negro and poor, located in the central cities; the other predominantly white and affluent, located in the suburbs and outlying areas. (*Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, Bantam Books, New York, 1968, page 483.)

The similarity between this view and that of the radical adherents of the "internal colony" theory is only too evident. Whether described as "two societies" by ruling class circles or an "internal colony" by radicals, the theory of separate societies within this country serves to disguise the special character of the segregation and triple oppression of Black people—which takes place not within a separate society, but within the *same* society, the *same* economic system, controlled by the *same* racist monopolists dominating the lives of the masses of this country—Black, brown, red, yellow and white.

Not only does the "Open Letter" ignore the contradiction between its "internal colony" theory and the absence of a basis for a separate, viable economy within a common territory where self-determination for Black people in the U.S. could be achieved. It also fails to link the question of "self-determination" for the "internal colony" to the all-important matter of state power.

The slogan of self-determination applies to countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America because separate state power can be achieved within the territory of a former colony such as Guinea-Bissau, or in Angola, Mozambique, etc. But state power cannot be attained in the U.S. ghettos or any other separatist or artificially conceived form. Nor can Black people alone bring about a change in control of U.S. state power. The power of state monopoly capitalism, which controls this entire country, can be broken only by the power of a nation-wide anti-monopoly

coalition, with the multi-racial working class as its foundation and leadership.

The "internal colony" theory fosters the idea that Blacks alone—without the alliance of all those whose interests lie in opposition to monopoly—can advance separately against the class that owns the decisive sectors of the economy and, through this ownership, exercises control over the total economy, in and out of the ghetto. But it is impossible for any single section of the oppressed and exploited—even the exploited majority of white workers—to effectively take on even a single major corporation in the fight to improve conditions.

When workers take on even one major corporation, they are met with the collective power of monopoly—backed up by government—against their demands. This is the reality of state monopoly capitalism whose consolidated power is decisive in the lives of the working masses, whatever their color or origin. If no stratum of the workers—not even the white majority—can effectively challenge even one corporate monopoly, how can the Black minority take on the collective power of all the monopolists, state monopoly capitalism?

But the "Open Letter," through its promotion of the "internal colony" idea, would have all segments of the working class, as well as the Black, Puerto Rican, Chicano, Native American and Asian-American minorities as a whole, reject a strategy of collective opposition to the collective power of state monopoly capitalism.

When the conditions for separate economic development do not exist, "self-determination" is a fantasy. The reality facing Black people in the U.S. is how to break monopoly's control of state power, which it maintains with its prime weapons of racism and anti-Communism. The "internal colony" idea must be seen for what it is: a concept that diverts from the basic question

of forging a powerful anti-monopoly coalition in this country. If the multi-racial masses were to accept this concept advanced by the "Open Letter," they would be left without a strategy of unification to oppose the unified strategy of monopoly.

A REVEALING CONTRAST

If one contrasts the status of Puerto Rico as a colony with that of Black people in U.S., the differences are revealing. However, the "Open Letter" conceals rather than reveals these differences:

Puerto Rico and the plight of the Puerto Rican people poses an especially sharp challenge at this moment in history. Puerto Rico provides a classic example of an external colony . . . [in the U.S.] in a context of intolerable working conditions, Puerto Ricans suffer double oppression, as refugees from an occupied nation and as members of the working class. As with the internal Black colony, this dual oppression points to a tremendous revolutionary potential . . . (*Ibid.*, page 11.)

It is true that the extra oppression of Blacks and Puerto Ricans in the U.S. represents a special revolutionary potential within the working class. It is also true that the Black Americans and the people in the Puerto Rican colony experience some of the same features of oppression.

However, by describing the Black condition in the U.S. as an "internal Black colony," the "Open Letter" obscures the profoundly different situation of the Black liberation movement in the U.S. from the Puerto Rican independence movement in the struggle against U.S. imperialist oppression. Consequently,

it doesn't make the vital distinction between a strategy for the liberation of Black, Puerto Rican and other oppressed minorities in the U.S., and one for Puerto Rican independence.

The people of Puerto Rico occupy a territory in which they are not only a majority but—apart from a handful of agents of U.S. imperialism—the *entire* population. Although Puerto Rico's economy is now dominated by U.S. imperialism, it is—as was Cuba's—detachable from the U.S. economy. And—as in the Cuban struggle that opened the way for liberation—the first demand of Puerto Ricans is for political independence. This is the starting point of the Puerto Rican strategy to break out of the grip of U.S. imperialism and establish control of the Puerto Rican government and economy.

Puerto Rican bourgeois nationalists, however, counterpose the demand for independence with the fantasy of Puerto Ricans *jointly* determining their future with U.S. imperialism within the "Commonwealth"—i.e., colony.

Any formula for so-called joint control of Puerto Rico is a sham. The Puerto Rican liberation movement is not demanding joint control or participation in the U.S. economy in any form; it is out to end "joint" control of the Puerto Rican economy.

By contrast, the Black liberation movement—representing a minority in the multi-racial U.S. population—demands equality in determining the economic and political life of the U.S. But the monopolists use everything from discrimination to assassination to prevent Black people from "jointly" determining the policies of this country.

Of course, the goal of the U.S. oppressed and exploited is not to become the "partners" of U.S. monopoly. The job of the masses of the people, whatever their race or origin, is—under the leadership of the working class—to end monopoly control of the country. This fight cannot be carried on by the Black

minority alone. Only the unity of all the oppressed and exploited can win *joint control* of the economy by the people.

It is ironic that U.S. imperialism—which uses its economic and military power to oppose self-determination for African, Asian and Latin American countries with separate economies to at least some degree—encourages the fantasy of “self-determination” for Black people without a common territory or separate economy in the U.S.

The strategy of the liberation movements of Puerto Rico and other countries outside the U.S. is to break the links binding their economies to imperialism. But a liberating strategy for Black people in the U.S. does not call for a break with the U.S. economy. Instead, such a strategy must aim at ending the exclusion of Blacks from full participation in the U.S. economy. The goal here is complete equality within the total economy.

The “internal colony” theory leads away from this strategy. In effect, it tells Black workers to give up the struggle against the monopolists who exploit them at the point of production, and instead to fall in behind those who advocate the fantasy of Black capitalism, of “self-determination” in the ghettos.

“STRUGGLE IN EVERY ARENA”

In a section on electoral policy, the “Open Letter” states:

. . . we must shake loose from doctrinal disputes of the past. A party of the people must be prepared to *struggle in every arena available*. (Page 16. Emphasis added—H.W.)

However, far from “shaking loose” from past “doctrinal disputes,” the “Open Letter” projects onto the current scene strong elements of both right opportunism and “left” sectarianism

which, if not corrected, could, as these tendencies have in the past, adversely affect the building of a people's alternative to monopoly's two parties. The "Open Letter" goes on to say:

The decision to participate must reflect the solid conviction that the particular tactic specifically advances and sharpens the struggle for the people at that moment, and needless to say must *never* be an opportunist maneuver to aid a liberal capitalist "lesser evil." (Page 16. Emphasis in the original.)

This is a resurrection of "doctrinal" concepts that would isolate radicals from classes and strata already in motion against monopoly, thus retarding the formation of a mass electoral alternative. Such rhetoric and tactics—projecting an image of radicals as part of the problem, rather than a force for solving problems—inevitably evoke right opportunist reactions: frustrated by the projection of a pseudo-radical non-alternative, many would lose confidence in the left's ability to help bring about a massive breakaway from the two-party system, which can occur only through a complicated, multi-level process.

Broad multi-racial anti-monopoly forces in and out of the labor movement, not yet ready to break with the two-party system, are moving increasingly into struggle around crucial issues. Such forces will look upon the "Open Letter" 's electoral tactics as an obstruction to dealing with the problems of the day, thus an "evil" in themselves. Instead of helping to provide an alternative to the "lesser evil" syndrome, the "Open Letter" 's orientation would prop it up: knowing that such a narrow approach could not win others, many forces who could help in building an effective mass electoral alternative would instead see no hope for it and therefore remain within the two parties' "lesser evil" orbit.

Millions of Black and other oppressed peoples—including mounting numbers within the multi-racial working class—are taking initiative around crisis-of-existence issues. Even though these forces are still electorally within the two-party framework, their struggles represent a new stage in the process by which millions are putting a greater and greater distance between their aspirations and the policies of monopoly's two parties. But the "Open Letter"'s tactics run roughshod over this reality.

Inherent in the "Open Letter"'s divisive rhetoric is a clear, even though unconscious, reflection of racism: by consigning all elected officials not yet ready to break with the two-party system to the "liberal capitalist 'lesser evil'" scrapheap, the "Open Letter" writes off the vital bloc of Black Congressional Representatives. In dismissing these and hundreds of other Black elected officials across the nation the "Open Letter" reveals a giant contradiction: What becomes of its promise never to "compete with, dictate to, or superimpose an outside perspective on" Black people? And what of its avowal that the "party of the people" will "respect the autonomy of" and develop "the closest possible alliances and working relationships with Black political organizations"? In its handling of the "lesser evil" question, the "Open Letter" does indeed "compete with and dictate to" Black people. It shows disrespect for their decision-making rights by attempting to impose an "outside perspective" on them—instead of supporting the struggle for Black representation on every level. What the "Open Letter" projects is a head-on collision with the most significant electoral developments since Reconstruction.

It ignores a most significant fact: that is, the uneven development of the struggle for an independent, anti-monopoly formation.

It fails to take note of the advanced demands and specific forms of development of the Black Liberation movement. It also fails to see that the Black Liberation movement at one and the same time seeks maximum unity of its people and an alliance with the working-class movement, as the road toward a people's alternative to monopoly.

It would be well if the authors of the "Open Letter," instead of issuing pronouncements from the mountain top, would learn from the experience and present struggles and demands of the Black people. This would deepen their conception of, and "support" for, the policies and goals now emerging from "inside" the Black liberation movement.

Most unfortunately, though certainly unintentionally, the "Open Letter" parallels the policies of the Jacksons, Eastlands, Fords, Rockefellers, Reagans, Goldwaters, etc.—the enemies of Black representation. Whereas these reactionaries see the growing number of elected Black officials as an "evil," the "Open Letter" dismisses Black electoral gains as a "lesser evil." One may be sure that millions of Black voters would view such pseudo-radical rhetoric as a reflection of the racist evil. And millions of white voters—including voters in white majority districts—who have helped elect Black officials in the South, West, North and Midwest would also reject the "Open Letter" 's direction.

One must ask: is it possible to contribute to building an independent people's alternative by adopting tactics that "compete with" and "dictate to" the forces showing a growing potential for breaking out of the "lesser evil" syndrome? An independent alternative won't be advanced by policies that isolate radicals from these trends, but through a strategy encompassing all currents that can be won to the leadership of the multi-racial working class in the anti-monopoly struggle.

“POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITATIONS”

Having disclosed its tactics in regard to the “lesser evil” problem, the “Open Letter” goes on to reveal another carryover from “doctrinal disputes of the past”:

The party will never propose participation in electoral struggles as the ultimate solution, but will always realistically project the possibilities and the limitations of electoral struggles and victories. (Pages 16-17.)

It is, of course, impossible to advance toward—let alone bring about—the revolutionary transformation to the “ultimate” socialist goal without a strategy involving the many-sided aspects of mass electoral and non-electoral struggles.

But radicals who place such emphasis on the “*limitations of electoral struggles and victories*”—at a time when those who must be won to a mass alternative have not yet broken with the two-party system—do not “realistically project the possibilities” inherent in mass struggle. Such super-revolutionary speculations on the “*limitations*” of future struggles can only divert from today’s central strategy in the U.S.: formation of a broad people’s alternative that will abolish the historical anachronism represented by corporate capital’s monopoly of the electoral arena.

It is certainly necessary to “realistically project the possibilities” of “electoral struggles and victories” at a particular point in time. But to simultaneously project “ultimate” “*limitations*” on the outcome of future struggles in either the electoral or non-electoral arena weakens the fight around urgent *immediate* issues while in no way clarifying the form or content of future

struggles. In fact, the "Open Letter" fails to show the relationship between present struggles and an "ultimate solution"; instead it creates a loss of confidence in the value of a mass alternative to break through the *present* "limitations" imposed by monopoly in and out of the electoral arena.

By placing "limitations" on the future potential of particular mass struggles, the "Open Letter" implies that the form in which the revolutionary transition to socialism will take place is predictable in advance. It is saying, in other words, that the ruling class—whatever the historical context—will impose the form in which the "ultimate" transition will be fought out. This emphasis on form rather than the content of revolutionary transition confirms anew the "Open Letter"'s underlying weakness: an orientation away from the working class content of *both* present and "ultimate" struggles.

This weakness accounts for the "Open Letter"'s primary emphasis on and implied prediction of the form of transition. In reality, however, the specific form of revolutionary transition cannot be predicted; it will be determined in each country by specific class relations, internal and external situation, etc. However, what can and *must* be predicted is *class content*: whatever the form of the increasingly sharp class struggles required to lead to the revolutionary transition from capitalism to socialism, the *content*—i.e., the shift in state power from monopoly capital to the working class heading an alliance of all exploited and oppressed—is *unvarying*.

Yet for all its bold talk of "the taking of political, economic and social control" and its super-revolutionary implications about the form of transition, the "Open Letter" denies the *class content* of the revolutionary process—a denial inherent in its call for a new "historic bloc," with the "initiative" of "groups" replacing the primary role of the working class. That its new "historic

bloc," its "instrumentality" for "taking . . . control" is an abstraction, unrelated to the reality of classes and the role of the working class, is underscored when the "Open Letter" states that,

. . . for the first time in history, a victorious [U.S.] people after ousting their capitalist rulers, would be faced with the perspective of being able to construct a society in which the material forces of production are already more than sufficiently developed to provide an economy of plenty, not only sufficient for every person in this country but capable of participating in the efforts of all countries to achieve the level of productivity necessary for an economy of abundance . . . The objective conditions may exist for the first experience in human history of the "withering away" of the coercive form of state after the taking of power by the people. This is a fantastic possibility which profoundly shapes the nature of the new society which we can build. (Pages 17-18.)

From this statement emerges a striking paradox in the "Open Letter"'s predictions. On one hand, it indicates in essence that those now in control of the U.S. will continue to be so powerful that the "ultimate" transition from capitalism to socialism can be made only through armed struggle. Then—swinging from leftism to right opportunism—it projects a future in which the "withering away" of the necessity for state rule of the working class in alliance with the formerly oppressed and exploited takes place right after monopoly capitalism is dislodged! Thus the "Open Letter" contradicts the very purpose—i.e., "taking political, economic and social control"—for which it has conjured up a new "historical bloc"!

This fantasy of the instant fading away of the most powerful exploiting class in history, the instant disappearance of its

heritage of racism and oppression—without a period of transition with state power in the hands of the multi-racial working class—denies the very essence of the class struggle and its relationship to state power, of the class content of revolutionary transition from capitalism to building a socialist society. It falsifies Marx's concept of the "withering away" of the state, and substitutes a strange amalgam—from Bakunin to Kautsky to Garaudy—of opposition to Marxism.

Of course, a victorious people in the U.S. will have the "perspective of being able to construct a society in which the material forces of production" are far in advance of those in Russia at the time of the October Revolution and in Cuba when its revolution took place. This U.S. advantage emerges from a long history of slavery, super-exploitation and oppression, domestically and internationally. But the already existing "objective conditions" for an "economy of plenty" do not alter the *class content* of a perspective of sharp class struggle, culminating in the rule of the working class allied with the masses of oppressed and exploited.

The "Open Letter"'s "perspective" is one that merges Roger Garaudy's concept of the scientific and technological revolution with Karl Kautsky's reformist idea of higher levels of "material forces of production" evolving into socialism. Both these views are based on levels of technology, rather than class struggle, as the motive force for social change.

AN INEVITABLE INTERRELATIONSHIP

Inevitably, there is an interrelationship between the "Open Letter"'s analysis of imperialism's internal contradictions—from its un-Marxist interpretation of the "expanding nature of the working class" as the basis for a new "historical bloc" to its "in-

ternal colony" concept—and its analysis of the contradictions between imperialism and anti-imperialism on a world scale.

After a declaration of its anti-imperialist objectives—"The party of the people will be totally dedicated to the destruction of imperialism at home and abroad"—the "Open Letter" goes on to state:

The party must not only organize support for these many liberation struggles which are shaking the very foundations of imperialist rule, it must be prepared to open within the imperialist country itself struggles in every area against those policies of the imperialist ruling class which perpetuate its domination around the world . . . [Events] are exploding which require and will continue to require militant mass intervention by the people of this country acting in alliance with oppressed nations and peoples internationally. A party of the people built in the homeland of the most powerful imperialist rule, must as a basic and fundamental aspect of its purpose help organize appropriate forms in the development of these struggles to overthrow and destroy imperialism as a world system of exploitation. (Page 15.)

The anti-imperialist goals expressed in the "Open Letter" can, of course, be won only through policies that stimulate united anti-imperialist action. However, for the "Open Letter" 's policies to evoke "appropriate forms" of struggle—in other words, for its policies to point in the same direction as its goals—requires, among other things, correction of a not-so-slight factual error.

Imperialism is *not*, as the "Open Letter" has it, a "world system." It lost that status with the October Revolution! Today there are two systems in the world: the socialist system—with

the socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union; and the capitalist system, which has been losing ground (literally and figuratively) ever since the birth of the USSR. And the *primary* global contradiction is between the socialist system and the U.S., as the main support of declining capitalism.

Another area where the "Open Letter"'s policies conflict with its anti-imperialist goals is in its treatment of liberation strategy; as we have seen, it regards a liberation strategy for colonially oppressed majorities in countries dominated by an *external* imperialist oppressor as *interchangeable* with a liberation strategy for Blacks and other oppressed minorities *within* the U.S. Contradictorally, while the "Open Letter" promotes as interchangeable a strategy that can't be transplanted from one country to another, it in effect rejects what *must* be interchangeable: anti-imperialist solidarity within the triple currents of the world revolutionary process—the solidarity of the socialist camp, the working classes and oppressed peoples in the imperialist countries, and "third world" nations.

The reason for the "Open Letter"'s objective rejection of international solidarity is that while calling for the "people of this country" to act "in alliance with oppressed nations and peoples internationally," it omits from this "alliance" the socialist camp—the very countries that have abolished oppression in their own lands and are now the single most decisive support for the world liberation movements, the force that has already tipped the scales to the side of liberation throughout most of the "third world"! Whether intended or not, this implicit anti-Communist, anti-Soviet orientation can be of assistance only to the strategy of neo-colonialism, which has already found such a helping hand from Maoist opposition to solidarity against imperialism.

“PRESENT DAY REALITIES”?

Not only does the “Open Letter” exclude the socialist camp from its proposed actions in support of the “third world” peoples. It also substitutes a future “vision” of what socialism in the U.S. will do for the “third world” countries for an anti-imperialist obligation to support *present* policies and actions advancing the immediate needs of the oppressed internationally and at home. The “Open Letter” states:

We must struggle to find understandable and concrete ways to always place our vision of a socialist society within the context of present day realities and what socialism in this country will mean to people’s lives here and throughout the world.

For example, for the first time in history a victorious people after ousting their capitalist rulers, would be faced with the perspective of being able to construct a society in which the material forces of production are already more than sufficiently developed to provide an economy of plenty, not only sufficient for every person in this country but capable of participating in the efforts of all countries to achieve the level of productivity necessary for an economy of abundance. (Page 17.)

One might well stop to consider what it means for North Americans speaking as revolutionaries to tell African, Asian and Latin American peoples struggling against neo-colonialism that they can expect support from U.S. anti-imperialists *after* a “socialist” “economy of plenty” has been attained in the United States. Can the “third world” peoples interpret this as anything

other than a reflection of the influences of national arrogance and chauvinism?

Central to "present day" realities for the "third world" peoples is mounting political and material support for their liberation movements from *existing* socialist countries. Instead of telling "third world" peoples to reject what they're now getting from the socialist camp and wait for what they'll get from a future U.S. society, North Americans must fight *now* to break U.S. imperialism's neo-colonial links to the "third world" as part of the struggle for socialism in the U.S.

"Present day" reality for many "third world" countries means taking a non-capitalist path—economic and social development leading toward socialism—in order to consolidate their newly won independence. This is a paramount reason why these countries consider policies that would isolate them from the Soviet Union and the socialist camp neither "socialist" nor "anti-imperialist"!

Surely it is an opportunist "vision" of what "socialism in this country will mean to people's lives here and throughout the world" that denies the "present day realities" of what the socialist camp is doing *now* to build societies without racism, oppression and exploitation at home—while at the same time giving increasing political, social and material support to African, Asian and Latin American liberation struggles. Moreover, the existing socialist camp is the strongest force in the fight for peace—the fight to reduce imperialism's options for intervention in the lives of peoples struggling for peace, liberation and social progress.

This fight for peaceful coexistence, for detente, is central to the anti-imperialist struggle at home and internationally. Yet the "Open Letter" says not a word about what this means now or in the future to "people's lives here and throughout the world"

—a silence that can only be interpreted as indifference or opposition. But the “third world” peoples—those who have won independence and those still fighting for it—are among the first to reject opposition to detente as counter to their interests, to reject all anti-Communist, anti-Soviet policies aimed at separating them from their most decisive allies, the socialist camp.

By contrast, those U.S. radicals who would postpone united anti-imperialist support to “third world” struggles until the arrival of socialism in the U.S. rationalize this objective retreat from the anti-imperialist fight by asserting that support to policies of detente, of peaceful coexistence, slows the revolutionary process. Such radicals claim the fight for detente is an abandonment of the class struggle, nationally and internationally.

If the revolutionary meaning of the fight for detente—its connection, for example, to the struggles of the multi-racial U.S. working class—escapes the “Open Letter,” it’s not lost on an increasing number of jobless workers. For instance, an article in the *New York Times* (November 18, 1974), based on interviews with laid-off Detroit auto workers, reported the following:

“They done pushed the people too hard,” said a man called Stash, “and now they’re giving them a hard luck story. Cuba wants cars. Why not swing a deal with them?”

In speaking of Cuba’s need for cars and his own need for a job, this auto worker dramatizes the mutual stake of all peoples in the revolutionary struggle to end the crumbling imperialist blockade of Cuba, to break imperialism’s economic, political and military hold on African, Asian and Latin American countries, and to stop its escalating nuclear threat against the socialist camp.

LIBERATION AND DETENTE

How can one reconcile the "Open Letter"'s call for "struggles in every area against those policies of the imperialist ruling class which perpetuate its domination around the world," with the "Open Letter"'s silent dismissal of the struggle for detente and peaceful coexistence?

Isn't the crushing armaments burden imposed by imperialism linked to the crisis of existence for the exploited and oppressed here and in all capitalist countries? Isn't the struggle to force imperialism's retreat from its cold war positions of intervention and armed confrontation central to the anti-imperialist struggle in Africa, Asia and Latin America—i.e., "in every area"? How can one talk about stopping U.S. imperialism without forcing it to respect the right of peaceful coexistence for the Soviet Union and the socialist camp? The struggle to make peaceful coexistence irreversible is the core of the anti-imperialists struggle for liberation and social progress, for the right of all peoples to coexist in a world free from imperialist economic, political and military intervention in any form.

And how can one reconcile the "Open Letter"'s call for a party of the people "totally dedicated to the destruction of imperialism at home and abroad" without calling for struggle against imperialism's greatest threat—nuclear war? There is no alternative to the danger of nuclear destruction except the fight for detente, for curbing the imperialist-imposed armaments race. And this is a fight that cannot be postponed until the "destruction of imperialism at home and abroad"—since prevention of nuclear destruction is paramount to achieving that goal.

Indifference or opposition to the policy of peaceful coexistence generates a kind of negative logic, in the form of a sequence

of concepts and policies contradicting the struggle against U.S. imperialism. For instance: the "Open Letter" eloquently calls for North American support to the Puerto Rican independence movement. But it weakens and contradicts this appeal by failing to call for an end to U.S. imperialism's economic blockade against socialist Cuba. Undoubtedly, this contradiction arises from the notion that the fight for peaceful coexistence slows the struggle for liberation.

But it is, of course, not support to the policy of peaceful coexistence that slows the liberation struggles, but opposition to it. For example: smashing the blockade against Cuba would open a perspective for trade—which at the same time mutually benefits socialism in Cuba and the anti-monopoly struggle in the U.S.—for peaceful coexistence between Cuba and the U.S. But, according to certain radicals, peaceful coexistence slows the revolutionary process. Therefore, these radicals make a separation between the necessity for unity around the struggle for Puerto Rican independence and the struggle for Cuba's right to exist.

But this logic of the absurd cannot conceal reality: every step toward detente, for the right of socialist Cuba to coexist and accelerate its building of a socialist society in this hemisphere, gives incalculable impetus to Cuba's escalating impact on the struggle for Puerto Rican independence. Therefore, the fight to break the U.S. economic blockade of Cuba and the fight for Puerto Rican liberation are two parts of a *single* anti-imperialist struggle: the right of nations to exist off the shores of the U.S. without interference from U.S. imperialism.

Developments leading to the forcing of U.S. imperialism to end its economic blockade of Cuba, and compelling its retreat to a position of peaceful coexistence with socialist Cuba, would simultaneously have a powerful impact on the Puerto Rican

independence fight and on all Latin American struggles for independent existence and the right of each country to choose its own path for social progress.

If one recognizes the significance of peaceful coexistence for Latin American liberation, then one can begin to comprehend the immense global significance of the struggle to make detente and peaceful coexistence irreversible between the U.S. and the Soviet Union and the socialist camp—with which Cuba is united.

It is the revolutionary dynamics of the fight to enforce the right of peaceful coexistence being waged by the socialist camp and the Communist and Workers' Parties of the world that accelerates and adds new dimensions to the scope of the world revolutionary process—encompassing the forces of socialism, and of class and national liberation.

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