

We wish to thank the publishers of *450 Years of Chicano History in Pictures* and *La Raza Magazine* for the use of many of the photographs which appear in this book.

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FORWARD

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The Struggle for Chicano Liberation

League of Revolutionary Struggle (M-L)

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Introduction

The League of Revolutionary Struggle (Marxist-Leninist) is a multinational communist organization with a long history of struggle in the mass movement. We trace our origins, in part, to the struggle of the Chicano people for liberation. Many of our activists came out of this movement. We have learned through our own practical experience of the vast revolutionary potential of the Chicano liberation struggle. How to win the leadership of that struggle, and how to build an alliance between the Chicano national movement and the workers movement is one of the most important questions facing communists and all other revolutionaries in the U.S. today. The answer to these questions cannot be found ready-made in any book, or in this or that formula. It can only be found by applying Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought to the actual reality of the U.S. and Chicano struggles, by integrating with those struggles and developing, on that basis, a fighting line and program for Chicano liberation. It is in that spirit, and in the spirit of seeking unity with all Marxist-Leninists and revolutionary activists, that we offer this position as a contribution to the struggle to reconstruct a new communist party, to the struggle for the self-determination of the Chicano nation, and to the struggle for a socialist United States.

Our position is contained in a Central Committee resolution on the Chicano national question, an article on the history and contemporary conditions of the Chicano people entitled, "The Struggle for Chicano Liberation" and a "Program for Chicano Liberation." □





Resolution on the Chicano national question

The development of the oppressed Chicano nation is part of the general historical development of the United States. The murder, enslavement, plunder and oppression of peoples and nations has been an integral part of U.S. history. It begins with the attempted extermination of the American Indians and includes the exploitation of African slaves in the South and the annexation of the Southwest from Mexico. It is within this general context that we must view the development and oppression of the Chicano nation in the Southwest, and its struggle for liberation.

* * *

There are between 10 and 12 million Chicanos in the United States. Eighty-five percent of all Chicanos are concentrated in the southwestern part of the United States. In many areas of the Southwest, Chicanos are a majority of the population. Chicanos suffer the most brutal forms of national oppression in every aspect of their lives. They are an oppressed nation in the Southwest, fighting for freedom and equality. The hands which strangle the national aspirations of the Chicano nation belong to the monop-

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oly capitalist class. This class is the source of all oppression and exploitation in the United States.

The working class and the Chicano people have a common enemy. They have the task of rising up and uniting together against the rule of the monopoly capitalist class. To win victory over such a powerful enemy there must be unity among the workers of all nationalities, and unity among the oppressed masses of all nationalities. This unity can only come about if the working class fights against all forms of national oppression, and fights for the right of the Chicano nation to self-determination. The working class must support the right of self-determination, not because of any moralistic or humanitarian reasons, but because the oppression of the Chicano nation is a pillar of U.S. imperialist power. Imperialism cannot survive without oppressing nations and peoples. The fight for self-determination is, therefore, against imperialism. The working class supports the right to self-determination in order to win its own emancipation.

The current economic and political crisis of the United States is causing an intensification of the national oppression of Chicanos. The cold-blooded killing of Chicanos by the police has become common fact of life in the Southwest. The minimal health and social services in the Chicano community are being drastically cut back. Chicanos fill the unemployment lines, and their standard of living gets worse all the time. The quality of their education, their health care, their housing, etc., continues on a steady decline. Chicano youth are victimized by drugs, alcohol and the sense that they have no future in U.S. society. Chicano students are being forced out of colleges and universities, under the rationale that their demand for equality in education is "reverse discrimination." The simple demand of Chicano farm workers to unionize and raise their standard of living is met with the full fury of armed goons, attack dogs, and police helicopters.

The Chicano people are, of course, fighting against every aspect of their oppression. The working class cannot stand on the sidelines and watch this fight. Its stand must be clear-cut: "Your fight is our fight." The working class must take up the fight for Chicano liberation and concretely uphold the right of self-determination for the Chicano nation. In order to fulfill this responsibility, it is critical to understand the history of the Chicano people, and have a profound grasp of the practical aspects of their struggle for liberation.

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The Chicano people have a 400 year history in the Southwest during which they developed into a nation, "a historically evolved, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture."¹ Chicanos have lived in the Southwest since the 16th century and helped build some of the oldest settlements in North America. They lived in the areas now called southern California, southwestern Arizona, New Mexico, southern Colorado and southwestern Texas. This was then part of the northern territory of Mexico, at that time a colony of Spain. Most of the inhabitants of these early settlements were mestizos (mixed Spanish and Indian heritage) who labored as *peones* (serfs) on the large farms, ranches and missions of the feudal Spanish ruling class. During the 300 years of Spanish rule the inhabitants of the area developed a common language and culture.

After Mexico won its independence from Spain in 1821, the Spanish-speaking inhabitants of the Southwest started to become part of the young, but not yet fully developed, Mexican nation. Capitalism also began to develop in the area, mainly through the beginning process of trade between the different settlements. Because of the weaknesses of the Mexican government, it did little with the Southwest and was not able to complete its capitalist development. The area soon fell under the expansionist eye of the United States.

The southern slave owners wanted the Southwest in order to establish new slave states, while the northern merchant capitalists wanted the ports of California to increase their trade with the Orient. After first taking over Texas, the United States launched the War of 1846 against Mexico. The better-equipped American army swept into Mexico, plundering, murdering and raping the civilian population. The U.S. won a quick and bloody victory, and annexed 45% of Mexico's territory. In the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which formally ended the war, the United States pledged to respect the property and land rights of the conquered population of the Southwest. The U.S. also promised that after one year's time the conquered people would be granted the full rights of American citizens. But the U.S. ruling class treated this treaty as a meaningless scrap of paper.

Following the war, the U.S. bourgeoisie consolidated its rule over the Southwest region by region. In 50 years' time they trans-

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formed the semi-feudal character of the area into a capitalist one. First of all, they brutally suppressed the conquered people who continued to resist the U.S. occupation. They then systematically eliminated the feudal and semi-feudal relations of production by seizing Chicano lands and property. Thousands of Chicanos were shot, lynched and burned out of their property. Millions of acres of land were stolen by violence and fraud.

The dispossession of the Chicano people cleared the way for the complete capitalist development of the Southwest region. The Chicano people were now to become welded into a nation through the common experience of capitalist exploitation and national oppression. A complete change in the class structure of the Southwest occurred with the elimination of the feudal system. The Chicano people, who had mainly been *peones* before the annexation, were transformed into proletarians, semi-proletarians, small farmers or tenant farmers. A small part of the former landholding class became capitalists, closely linked economically and politically with the U.S. bourgeoisie. A number were pushed into the working class. The old artisan, craftsmen and trader strata were transformed into a strata of small businessmen, professionals and intelligentsia.

In addition to changing the class structure of the Chicano people, the rise of U.S. capitalism in the Southwest also served to link the formerly scattered areas of Chicano settlement into a single cohesive market. The railroad played a major role in this development, breaking down the isolation of the Chicano areas of settlement and making possible, at the same time, the rapid and efficient exploitation of the riches of the Chicano nation. The Chicano proletariat, laboring under the most oppressive conditions, helped to build the great railroad network which connected Texas with New Mexico, southern Colorado and Arizona, and those areas with California. Chicanos were also superexploited and forced to dig up the huge deposits of gold, silver, copper, coal and other riches of their nation. It was also superexploited Chicano labor which made possible large-scale farming and ranching operations throughout the Southwest.

At the same time that the economic transformation of the Southwest occurred, the U.S. bourgeoisie consolidated its political domination over the Chicano people. The political rights "guaranteed" by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo offered no protection against the widespread killing and repression of the

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Chicano people. The U.S. bourgeoisie tried to exterminate the Chicano people. It stripped them of all political rights, robbed them of their lands and property, and denied them any representation in the political process. The U.S. ruling class also encouraged massive Anglo immigration to the Southwest in order to try to change the character of the region.

The Chicano people were never allowed to assimilate into the dominant Anglo-American nationality. Instead, Chicanos were forced into a subordinate social and economic position, and their common experience of oppression and exploitation helped to forge them into a new nation. Their previous 300 year history had given them a common language and a common culture. The century of domination by U.S. capitalism linked the Chicano people together in a common bond of oppression and resistance to oppression.

By the beginning of the 20th century the Chicano people formed a distinct nationality within the borders of the United States. They still lived in the areas of historic Spanish settlement, spoke the Spanish language, and had a distinct national personality forged in the course of domination by both Spain and the United States.

After the First World War, the population of the Chicano nation rapidly increased due to the large migrations of Mexicans over the border. Many of these immigrants became incorporated into the Chicano nation because of the common experience of oppression and exploitation, common historical experiences, a common language and cultural similarities. For the most part, while most Mexican immigrants were welded into the Chicano nation, they also retained certain distinctions in terms of culture and their kinship to Mexico. In practice Chicanos and Mexicans faced common oppression and often united in a common struggle. But not all immigrants viewed themselves as Chicanos. Besides settling in the Southwest, many Mexicans also immigrated to the Midwest, following the rail lines to Chicago, Detroit, Gary and other industrial cities. Large concentrations of Mexicans and Chicanos developed in these cities, living in barrios and facing a similar oppression to that of their brothers and sisters in the Southwest. Like many other nationalities who immigrate to the U.S., and who become part of a particular nation or national minority, Mexicans face their own particular situation which is not exactly like that of Chicanos. Spanish is often their only language

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and this is made a handicap by the bourgeoisie to finding decent employment, obtaining necessary medical and social services, credit, etc. More than any other nationality, Mexicans are victimized by the use of deportations. Of the million or so persons who are deported by the U.S. each year, the overwhelming majority are Mexicans. This hangs as a constant threat over their heads, and is one of the most bitter forms of their oppression.

Today the Chicano people remain concentrated in the Southwest and constitute a majority, or near majority, throughout New Mexico and in contiguous parts of Texas, Colorado, Arizona and California. Although they make up only about 12% of the total population of the five southwestern states, they make up over one-third of the poor families in that region. Most Chicanos still live in overcrowded and overpriced barrios, suffer police repression on a wide scale, and are discriminated against on the job, in the schools and in their own communities. They must fight a continual battle for the survival of their language and culture against a ruling class which teaches the Anglo-American population to look down upon them. The laboring people suffer the most as they are still being driven off their lands, and are forced to work for the lowest wages and under the worst conditions.

An important part of the history of the Southwest is that of different American Indian peoples in the area. American Indians trace their history in the Southwest back for thousands of years. They have withstood the attempts of both Spain and the United States to exterminate them. All of their lands have been stolen and they have no political rights. Many of them have been forced onto reservations which resemble concentration camps, and which are run completely by the U.S. government without any regard for the rights, customs or sentiments of the Indian peoples. During the course of their long history, the different American Indian peoples have developed their own distinct national characteristics. At the same time, their common experience of oppression and their common struggle against it has created a common bond of solidarity among the various Indian nationalities. The Indian nationalities, like the Chicano nationality, have also been denied their national rights and are waging a struggle for their complete national liberation from U.S. imperialism.

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A revolutionary solution to the Chicano national question

The national question in any country is always a complex question. All peoples and nations develop differently, according to their own concrete historical conditions. Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought serves as a guide to finding a solution to the national question. Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought represents a scientific summation of the struggle of the working class. Armed with this theory, communists are able to analyze the history and present conditions of the revolutionary struggle in order to determine how to lead it to victory in the socialist revolution.

A scientific analysis of the Chicano national question shows that the source of the oppression of the Chicano people today is the monopoly capitalist class. To end national oppression, the working class and its allies must overthrow the capitalists and replace the imperialist system with socialism. With the power of the state in its hands, the proletariat will recognize the equality of all nationalities, including the right of self-determination for oppressed nations, and solve the problems left over from the old society.

It is not enough, however, to know the goal we want to achieve. We must also know how to achieve it. In order to defeat the bourgeoisie, communists must be able to unite the proletariat, win the leadership of the Chicano national movement, and direct these two movements against the monopoly capitalist class.

To do these things it is necessary to uphold the right of self-determination for the oppressed Chicano nation. This right means that the Chicano nation has the right to determine its own destiny free from the force or coercion of another nation. The Chicano nation may decide to secede and form its own state; it may decide to federate with Mexico, or even with the United States. In any case, only the Chicano people have the right to determine the future of their nation.

While communists uphold the right of self-determination, they must evaluate how it is to be exercised according to the concrete conditions which exist at the time. The state of the revolutionary movement in the United States and Mexico, international conditions, the strength of different forces in the Chicano national

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movement, among others, are factors which must be taken into account.

As long as imperialism rules in the U.S. it will be very difficult for the Chicano people to win their right of self-determination. To do so would require a protracted revolutionary struggle and a favorable combination of international and domestic crises which would weaken the hold of the U.S. bourgeoisie over the Southwest. Even so, without the complete overthrow of U.S. capitalism the national oppression of Chicanos cannot be totally eliminated.

In the final analysis, to uphold the right of self-determination means that the working class of the oppressor nation repudiates the annexation of the Southwest, fights to end all national privileges and inequalities and is the most consistent fighter against national oppression. Annexation, national inequality, national privileges and national oppression are a component part of imperialism. To fight for the Chicano nation's right to self-determination is, therefore, to fight against imperialism. This is the only way that the bitterness and mistrust of the Chicano people towards the oppressor nation, including the oppressor nation proletariat, can be overcome. This mistrust is rooted in their domination and enslavement by another nation. There is no other way to unite the multinational proletariat.

The bourgeoisie tries in every way that it can to sabotage the struggle for socialism. It tries to divide the workers through a system of national privileges and by spreading the poison of great nation chauvinism and racism. The capitalists try to justify, in the minds of white workers, the oppression of nations and peoples by saying that the oppressed nationalities are "inferior." To overcome these divisions and raise the political consciousness of white workers, communists must educate the proletariat about the oppression of the Chicano people, fight every manifestation of chauvinism and racism, and uphold all the just demands of the Chicano people, including the right of self-determination. This stand, better than any other, will show the Chicano people that the working class has absolutely no unity with the imperialists who oppress the Chicano nation.

It is also important for communists to uphold the right of self-determination of the Chicano nation in order to help lead the Chicano national movement in a revolutionary direction. This demand, once taken up by the Chicano masses, will lead them into struggle against the U.S. capitalist class. As opposed to other par-

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tial demands, the right of self-determination presupposes a struggle for power and is aimed at a central pillar of imperialism. Self-determination simply cannot be won without a revolutionary struggle.

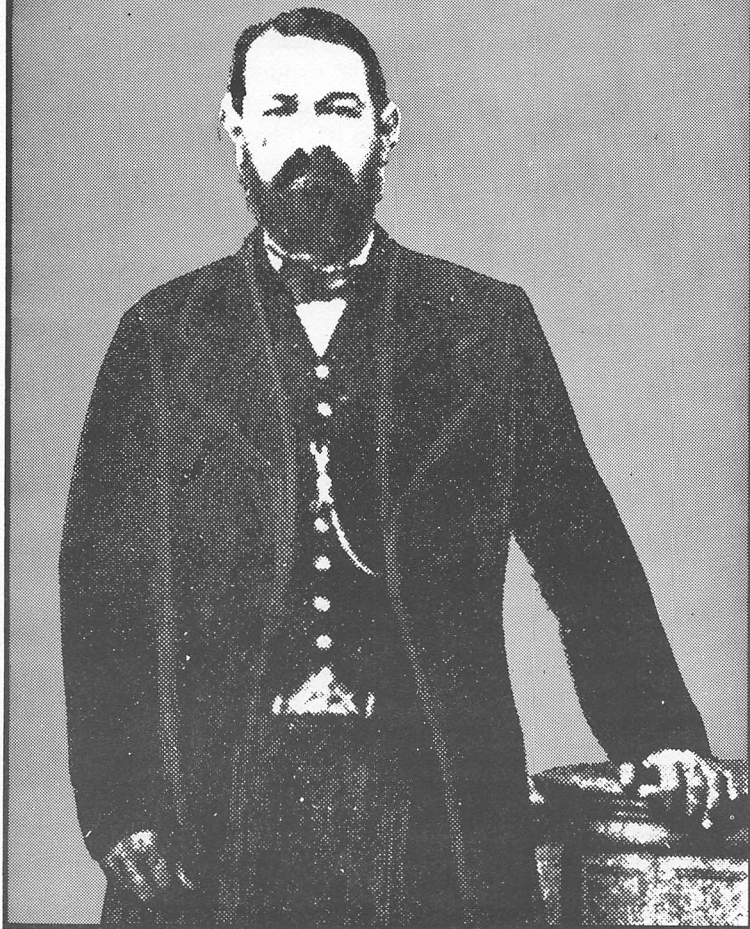
The Chicano people have a long and glorious history of struggle against their oppression, beginning with Spanish colonialism, through the days of U.S. conquest, up to the present. This resistance has included armed fighting, revolts, mass demonstrations, campaigns, strikes and other forms. Chicanos have played an important role in the history of the U.S. labor movement through their struggle in the mines, railroads, fields and factories of the Southwest. The Chicano struggle has produced a large number of revolutionary fighters, many of whom have become communists. The demand for self-determination itself has been raised consistently throughout the history of the Chicano people.

Communists have a long history of struggle in the Chicano national movement. Many U.S. Marxist-Leninists developed out of the Chicano national movement of the 1960's and 1970's. They have continued to play an important role in helping to organize and lead many struggles of the Chicano people. Communists must consistently uphold their responsibility to fight in the forefront of the Chicano national movement, taking up all of the day-to-day struggles of the Chicano masses, linking these struggles to the demand for self-determination and the struggle for socialism. Lenin said that, "Every act of national oppression calls forth resistance on the part of the masses of the population, and the tendency of every act of resistance on the part of oppressed peoples is the national uprising."² Communists today must, as many have in the past, take the lead in combating national chauvinism and narrow nationalism, strive to unite all who can be united in the struggle against national oppression, overcome the influence of reformism and revisionism in the national movement, and win over and recruit the most advanced elements from that struggle to become communists. A systematic and patient carrying out of these tasks will help communists to win, during the course of the long struggle, the leadership of the Chicano revolutionary movement. By doing so we will be upholding the basic interests of the working class, the Chicano people, and the interests of the proletarian revolution. □

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There being no crime on our part than that of being Mexican by birth Our conduct will give evidence to all the world that all Mexican aspirations are rolled into just one, that of continuing to be free men.

—Juan N. Cortina



Juan Cortina was a great Chicano revolutionary from Texas who fought against the oppression of the U.S. ruling class in the 1850's. His struggle is a great inspiration to the Chicano movement today.



History of the Chicano people

I. The historical development of the Chicano nation

The Southwest under Spanish and Mexican rule

The history of the Chicano people goes back over 400 years in North America. The ancestors of today's Chicanos founded Santa Fe, the oldest provincial capital in the U.S., more than a decade before the pilgrims even left England on the Mayflower.

The history of the Chicano people begins with Spain's efforts to colonize the "New World" in the 16th century. Over the next three centuries, first under Spanish and then under Mexican rule, the national characteristics of the Chicano people began to evolve: a Spanish-speaking people of Mexican, Indian and Spanish ancestry concentrated in a territory stretching from what is now southern Texas through Arizona and New Mexico to southern California. The ancestors of the Chicano people were a part of the developing modern Mexican nation up to 1848, but the U.S. annexation of the Southwest in that year radically altered the destiny of the Chicano people.

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Spanish colonialism

Spain set out to colonize the “New World” in hopes of finding gold and other riches such as copper and silver. In Mexico they discovered tremendous wealth and enslaved the native peoples to work in the mines extracting the precious metals. Between 1560 and 1821, when Mexico declared its independence, the mines of the Americas produced \$4 billion for Spain. In this period, two-thirds of the world’s silver passed through the Mexican port of Veracruz. The mines of Zacatecas in northern Mexico alone, produced 20% of the world’s silver supply.

The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black skins, signaled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production.¹

It was the quest for silver and the fabled “seven cities of gold” that brought the Spanish eventually to explore and then colonize the Southwest. The explorer Francisco Vásquez de Coronado roamed the area in the 1540’s searching for the legendary but nonexistent villages covered with roofs of gold and jewels.

The first colonization effort in the Southwest — or what was called at that time *Nuevo México* — began in 1598 and grew out of the discovery of silver in Zacatecas and the founding of the mine there in 1584. Juan de Oñate, one of the four richest men in Mexico, who made his wealth off of the Zacatecas mine, set off with 400 men, 7,000 head of stock and 83 wagons of supplies bound for the upper Rio Grande Valley.

There the Spanish found hunting and gathering native peoples. Along the river they found settled farming tribes. At the edge of the desert was the Seneca, to the north at the foot of the mountains was the Taos pueblo. On the east of the Rio Grande, beyond the mountains lived the Gran Quivira, Manzano and Falisteo pueblos. And to the west were widely separated clusters of the Acoma, Hopi and Zuni. In the half dozen or so villages of the Rio Grande there were probably 40,000 native people living at the time of the Oñate expedition, with another six or seven thousand living in the mesas

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to the west. Surrounding the pueblo Indians were the nomadic Apaches. All in all, some 50,000 Indians lived in this region during the colonization period, but their lives were brutally altered with the coming of the Spanish.

Many of these peoples would be forced to labor for the Spanish colonialists. They and their offspring would till the soil, build the



The conquering Spanish enslaved the Indian peoples in Nuevo México and founded settlements there as well as in Texas, Arizona, and California. The Mestizos were the ancestors of the Chicano people.

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settlements and become the artisans for the Spanish. The Spanish were not able to secure the entire area at first, due to the hostility of the native peoples; but by the latter part of the 17th century 14 Spanish towns and villages in *Nuevo México* became permanently established. The Mexicans, who had been brought along by the Spaniards, and the Indians became the main inhabitants of these settlements. These were the ancestors of the Chicano people.

The Spanish settlements in *Nuevo México* clustered about Santa Fe on the upper reaches of the Rio Grande and formed the core of Spain's attempt to colonize the Southwest. Later the Spaniards sent expeditions to Texas, Arizona and California to expand their settlements.

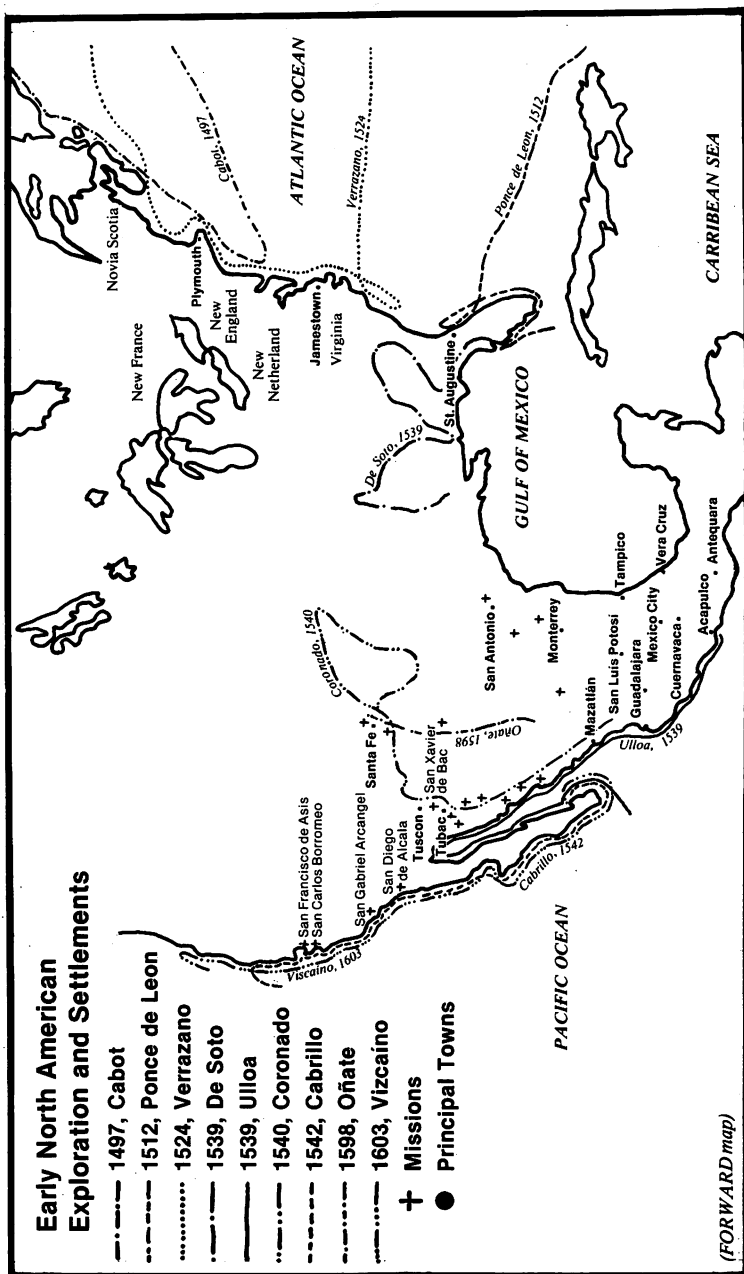
In southern Arizona the Spanish founded towns beginning in 1687. In Texas, they established 25 missions, the main settlements being San Antonio, Goliad and Nacogdoches. And in California, the Spaniards set up 21 missions and three forts along the coast from San Diego to San Francisco beginning in 1769.

In all of these regions, the Spanish destroyed much of the primitive communal societies of the Indians and introduced feudalism. There were two main ways the Spanish settled the area: through the *encomienda* (land grant) and mission systems.

There were three principal types of land grants given out by the Spanish crown: individual grants to prominent or wealthy persons; joint grants given out to groups; and communal grants for a number of settlers. Over a period of time though, most of the land became controlled by a handful of the largest landlords. These became the *patrón* class, usually of Spanish nobility or military background. The rest of the society became *peones* (serfs), most of them being Mexican or Indian, tied to the *patrón*. A small number of others formed an artisan class of blacksmiths, handcraftsmen, weavers, potters and so on.

The *patrones* gradually took over the common lands, which were usually used for pastures, as their herds of cattle or sheep dominated the grazing space. More and more of the small landowners, too, were forced to give up their property as their plots became too small when succeeding generations divided up the original grants. Villagers were then forced to depend on the large livestock owners to supply meat and supplies and became increasingly indebted to the *patrón*. The most common way to repay the debt was through the *corvee* system whereby a *peón* worked a certain amount of time each week on the land of the *patrón*.

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(FORWARD map)

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The *patrones* made up only one-fiftieth of the population but they owned almost all of the best land and held the largest share of livestock. The *peones* counted on the *patrones* not only for supplies but also for protection from the raids of nomadic Indians. In turn the *peones* had to give an annual tribute to the *patrón* in the form of maize or cotton as well as labor.

Another form of the *patrón-peón* relationship which developed in *Nuevo México* was called the *partido* system. Under this system a small landholder "borrowed" a breeding herd from the *patrón*. At the end of each year he was required to give the *patrón* 20 lambs for every 100 ewes he had borrowed for breeding. All lambs and wool had to be sold through the *patrón* and the borrower was responsible for all costs and losses incurred. The *peón* had to return a breeding herd of the original size on demand of the *patrón*. In return, the borrower could keep other new lambs and the profits from the sale of the wool. He would also receive rights to graze on the *patrón's* land. It was a system which also led more and more *peones* to become indebted to the *patrón*.

While the *encomienda* system predominated in *Nuevo México*, the Spanish relied on the mission system in California. There the Spanish did not find a sedentary and concentrated Indian population as in *Nuevo México*. Rather, the California Indians were more scattered and had to be forcibly assembled to labor for the Spaniards. The missions became the center for this activity.

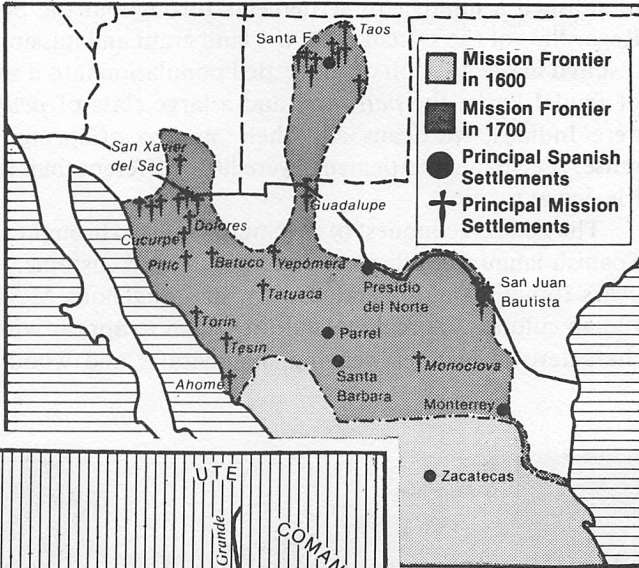
The labor of the Indians in California had more of a forced character compared to that of the *peón* system. Under the whip and gun, the Indians were coerced into tending the fields and livestock of the missionaries and producing the handicrafts. The missions were, in essence, religious prisons for the native peoples of California.

All land and property belonged to the Catholic Church, which made California less attractive for individual settlers. This accounted for the slow development of the California colony as compared to *Nuevo México*.

In other areas of the Southwest such as in southern Colorado, Arizona and Texas, the Spanish settlements also used the land grant or mission systems. These settlements, however, were established only after many years and with great difficulty due to adverse geographical and climatic conditions, and because of the strength of resistance from different Indian peoples.

By 1821, after more than 250 years of rule, the Spanish had

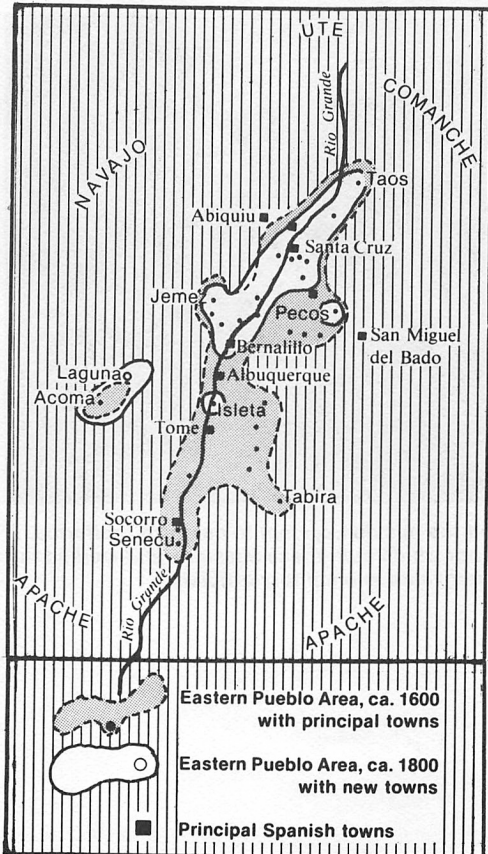
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(FORWARD map)

▲ **Seventeenth Century Northern Mexico frontier.** The missions were an effective colonizing tool of the Spanish.

◀ **Native and Spanish settlements 1600-1800.** Map indicates the continual erosion of Native people's lands by the Spanish.



(FORWARD map)

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established a number of settlements throughout the Southwest. Regardless of the system used, the land grant and mission systems resulted in the division of the settled population into a small class of feudal lords, the *patrones*, and a large class of *peones*, who were Indians, Mexicans and their mestizo offspring. In this sense, the Spanish settlements were little different than the rest of Mexico at the time.

The Spanish conquest of the Southwest also brought with it the Spanish language, religion (Catholicism) and customs. Over the years though, these blended with the indigenous Mexican and Indian cultures. A regional culture began to appear with its own characteristic blanket weaving, handicrafts and wood carving.



Spain used the Church and the mission system to colonize California. It was Indian and Mestizo labor which built these Missions and worked the land of the rich Spanish clergymen and military officials.

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The region also began to produce its own music and oral ballads that described the difficulties of life in the region, the conflicts with the Apaches and the experiences of the travel along the trade routes from Mexico.

The Southwest had gone through a radical change during the two and one-half centuries of Spanish rule. The Spanish had succeeded in establishing a feudal mode of production in scattered settlements stretching from Texas to California. But over the next several decades the transformation of the region would be accelerated, with a profound impact on the development of the Spanish-speaking people.

Mexican rule

In 1804, war broke out between Great Britain and Spain, and for the next several decades Spain was embroiled in a series of conflicts with other European powers. This turmoil, and internal conflicts between church and state, greatly weakened the Spanish throne. In turn, Madrid stepped up its taxation of its colonies, such as Mexico, to finance its wars.

This situation alienated increasing numbers of the Mexican people including the landowners, merchants and local church officials. In 1810 a Mexican independence movement arose, led by Miguel Hidalgo, himself a wealthy landowner and priest. Although the Spaniards captured and executed Hidalgo a year later, the independence movement he initiated continued.

Finally in 1821, the Mexican revolutionary army succeeded in capturing the Spanish viceroy and forced him to resign. The Mexican clergy, traders and property owners took political power and declared independence from Spain.

The economic state of the country, though, was in ruins. The revolutionary war for independence had been drawn out and destroyed much of the farming land, ranches, mines and cities of Mexico. The new government was weak and its treasury depleted. Spain refused to recognize Mexican independence until 1836 and launched attempts to recapture its lost colony.

Furthermore, immediately after winning independence, the new ruling forces began to fight among themselves. On the one side were monarchists (or "Centralists"), which included the feudal landlords, clergy and generally the conservative old order; on the other side were republicans (or "Federalists"), composed of merchants, liberal priests and the rising Mexican bourgeoisie.



Padre Miguel Hidalgo issued his famous "Grito de Dolores" and initiated the 1810 Mexican independence movement which united Mestizos, Indians, landowners, and the Church against Spain.

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This conflict went on throughout the 19th century and was not resolved until the Mexican Revolution of 1910.

At various times, the influence of one or the other force on the central government helped shape the developments in the Southwest.

One of the main concerns of the new Mexican government was to consolidate its northern provinces which were sparsely populated and constantly threatened by the Indians and foreign powers. The Mexican government, therefore, adopted a number of measures to encourage more settlers into the area and promote its development.

In California the Federalists, in 1822, decided to open up the California ports to foreign trade, in particular with England and the U.S. The Mexicans found ready buyers for their California hides, tallow and cattle. Cattle ranching was restricted though, because much of the best grazing lands were held by the Church. The ranchers and merchants of California subsequently pressured the Mexican government to end the mission system.

Finally in 1833, the Mexican government secularized the mission lands of California (that is, they seized and sold or granted the land to private individuals). The huge mission tracts were carved up into *ranchos* (ranches) and *haciendas* (large farms) and often stocked with cattle taken from the missions. While there was sale and distribution of small plots to the *peones* and Indians, most of the land was given out in huge parcels to a few individuals. Eight million acres of land were distributed to just 800 individuals.

As a result of these measures, and other acts such as allowing foreigners to settle in the province, conduct business and own land, California's population began to grow and its economy developed.

In *Nuevo México* (which at that time included what is now known as Nevada, New Mexico, Colorado, Utah and western and southern Texas) the Mexican traders and merchants expanded the trade that had been built up under Spanish rule. This trade was with the Indians, routed between *Nuevo México* and Mexico City by way of Chihuahua. Some of this trade had developed to substantial proportions. By the time of Mexican independence the sheep drives to Chihuahua from the north reached 400,000 head a year.

After independence, livestock production increased and with the opening up of the famous Santa Fe Trail between Santa Fe and

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Independence, Missouri, in 1822, the Mexican merchants stepped up their trade with the U.S. This trade included furs from *Nuevo México* which brought a high price on the East Coast. Mexican handicrafts of wood carvings, wrought iron products, blankets and woolens also stepped up. By the 1820's some artisans in *Nuevo México* began producing solely for sale to California, St. Louis or Mexico. This trade was greatly stimulated when the Old Spanish Trail was opened up between Santa Fe and Los Angeles in 1829.

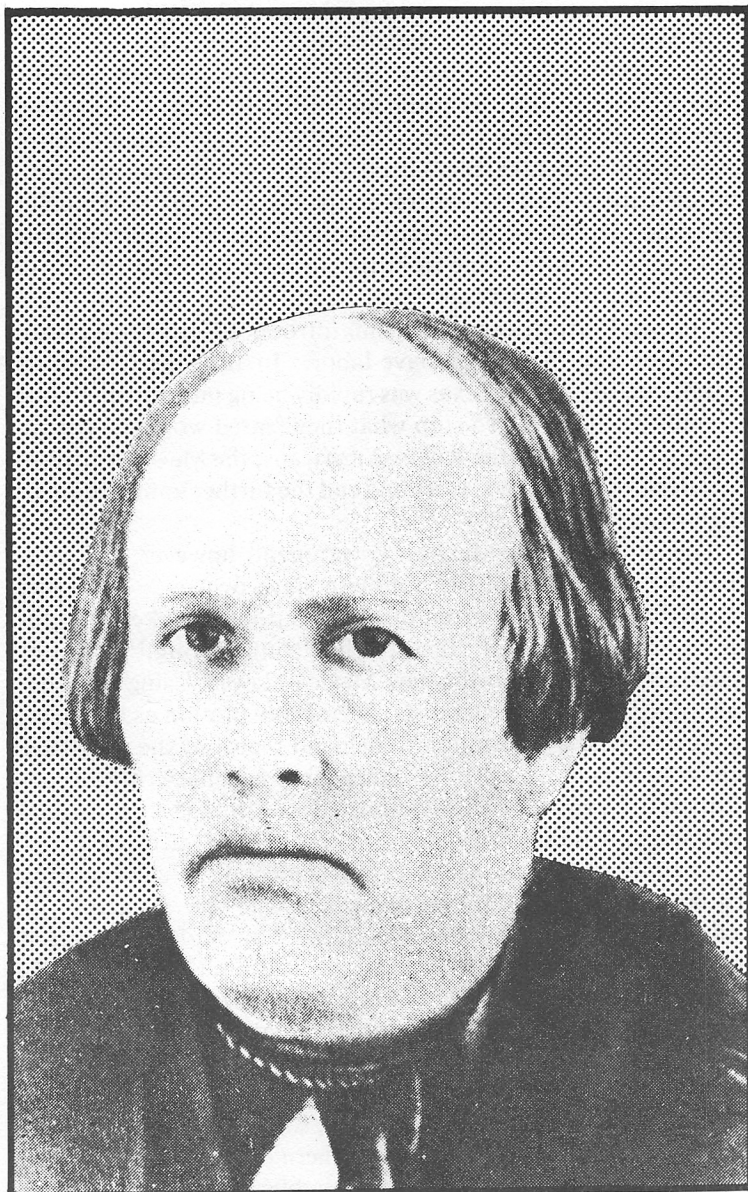
In Arizona, the Mexicans discovered gold and copper, and mining operations quickly developed. There had also been some suppression of the Apaches which allowed for expanded farming and ranching in the region.

The Mexican merchants, traders and handicraft producers in the Southwest represented a rising Mexican capitalist class. The merchants in *Nuevo México*, in fact, came into increasing conflict with the Church and Centralists in Mexico City who obstructed the growing power of the merchants. An example of one of these merchants of *Nuevo México* was Antonio José Martínez who owned several small ranches and a flour mill. He opposed the power of the Church, seeing the Church-owned lands as its base. In 1834 he published the newspaper, *El Crepúsculo de la Libertad* (*The Dawn of Liberty*) in which he called for the elimination of the tithe, by which the Church claimed one-tenth of the produce and livestock in the area. He also opposed the policy of large land grants to individuals and instead advocated the popular distribution of the land.

The central government feared the growing strength of the merchants in the Southwest and tried to tighten its grip over the territory, imposing taxes and trade restrictions in 1835. This resulted in a revolt against the Centralist government. The local forces, led by Antonio Martínez, overthrew and executed the Mexican governor and replaced all government posts with local people. While the revolt was eventually suppressed, the incident illustrates the growth of the merchant forces in *Nuevo México*.

In Texas, a different situation arose having far greater consequences for the Mexican government. Shortly after independence, the Federalists in Mexico City passed a lenient colonization law to encourage the development of Texas. The new law permitted Anglo-American immigration into the area for the purpose of permanent settlement, provided they agree to obey Mexican laws,

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Antonio Martinez demanded that the large landholdings of the Catholic Church in New Mexico be distributed to the peónes. In 1834 he published the newspaper The Dawn of Liberty which challenged the power of the Church to collect tithes from the peónes.

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become Mexican citizens and adopt the Catholic faith.

In 1821 Stephen Austin founded the settlement of San Felipe de Austin (later Austin, Texas). Soon Anglo-Americans received land grants from the government and settled in Texas in increasing numbers. By 1830 there were about 20,000 Anglo-Americans in Texas, along with 2,000 Black slaves. These settlements were concentrated in eastern Texas where the Spanish and Mexican colonies had failed. The Mexican government hoped that these settlements would act as a buffer zone from Indian raids for its territories in southern and western Texas.

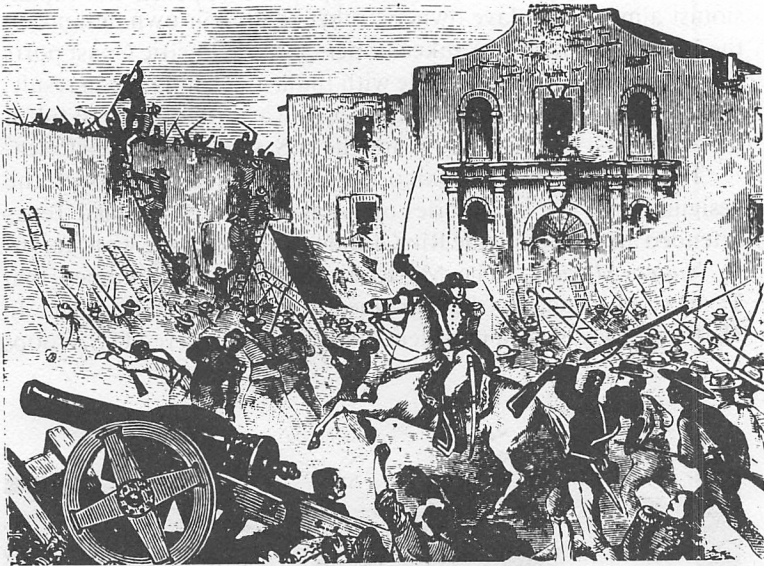
The Anglo-American settlements introduced into Texas cotton production and the use of slave labor. In 1830 the Centralists became concerned that Texas was rapidly being integrated into the economy of the U.S. To stop what they feared would be certain seizure of the land by the Anglo-Americans, the Mexican government decided to outlaw slavery and end the further immigration of Anglo-Americans.

The actions of the Mexican government, however, only hastened the aggression of the Southern slave owners. There had already been several attempts by Southern-backed Anglo-Americans to "liberate" Texas. This "filibustering," as it was called, stepped up with the new Mexican laws. Using the Centralists' repeal of the Federalists' liberal constitution as a pretext, the Texans held a convention to demand repeal of the restrictive immigration laws. In 1833 they met again, this time writing a constitution for a virtually autonomous Texas. In 1835 a provisional government was established and "independence" declared.

To suppress this, the Mexican government dispatched an army of 4,000 led by General Santa Ana, which after several victories — including the Alamo battle — was defeated by the Texan forces at the battle of San Jacinto. The Texans had built their forces by attracting from across the U.S. notorious Indian fighters such as Davy Crockett, slave traders such as Jim Bowie, soldiers of fortune and outlaws to fight the Mexicans.

Shortly after the defeat of Santa Ana, the Texas Republic quickly sought admission into the U.S., something that would not be achieved for nine years due to Northern opposition in the Congress. During this time, the Texas Republic claimed territory extending far west of its actual boundaries, deep into *Nuevo México* and far south of the Rio Nueces to the Rio Grande. It was this disputed claim that would later be the pretext used by the U.S. for

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The battle of the Alamo is portrayed by the ruling class as a heroic defense against Mexican tyranny. In reality, the defenders of the Alamo were slave owners and traders like Jim Bowie or notorious Indian killers like Davy Crockett.

its expansionist war with Mexico in 1846.

The Southwest under U.S. rule: 1848–1900

The Mexican-American War

The southern plantation owners for some time coveted the huge northern area of Mexico as a region in which to expand slavery. They needed to create more slave states to augment their power in Washington in their fight with the northern industrialists. Marx commented that the reactionary slave owners could not maintain their position without “constantly throwing out to their white plebians the bait of prospective conquests within and without the frontiers of the U.S.”² The conquest of the Southwest became a key objective of the slavocracy in the 1830’s and 1840’s.

After the “independence” of Texas was declared in 1836, the South hoped to divide the Texas Republic into several states and admit them all as slave states. The North fought the South’s plan for years, but finally all of Texas was admitted as a single state in 1845.

While many of the northern capitalists opposed the expansionist aims of the slave owners, others had their own designs on the Mexican territory. Yankee traders saw the Pacific Coast ports as doorways to expanded trade with India and China. As a result, Washington pressed closer and closer to war with Mexico to fulfill the "Manifest Destiny" of having the U.S. stretch from sea to sea.

The conflict with Mexico came from a dispute over the designation of the boundaries of Texas. The U.S. claimed Texas extended all the way to the Rio Grande river and to the west, far into *Nuevo México*. The Mexican government maintained that Texas reached only to the Rio Nueces, the traditional border. In 1846 the newly elected president, James Polk, ordered U.S. troops



Greedy for more land and wealth, the rulers of the United States pushed Mexico into war in order to grab Mexican territory. The U.S. ruling class justified its annexations with the doctrine of "manifest destiny."

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under Zachary Taylor to cross the Nueces and hold the disputed area. A short time later Taylor's troops engaged a Mexican patrol and the war was on.

The annexationist nature of the war was obvious. Ulysses S. Grant, who fought as an officer in the war (and later became noted in the Civil War and then elected president) wrote:

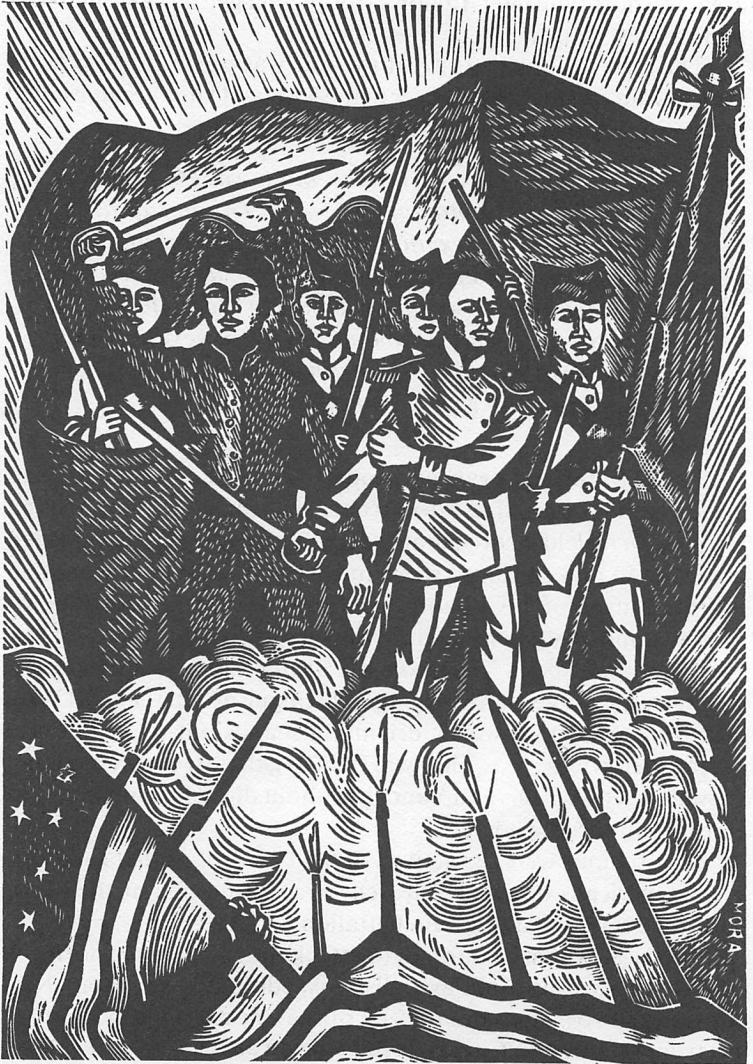
*We were sent to provoke a fight, but it was essential that Mexico should commence it The occupation, separation, and annexation were, from the inception of the movement to its final consummation, a conspiracy to acquire territory out of which slave states might be formed for the American union. Even if annexation itself could be justified, the manner in which the subsequent war was forced on Mexico cannot.*³

The U.S. forces advanced steadily into Mexican territory and conducted a campaign of extreme brutality. Commanding General Winfield Scott admitted U.S. troops had "committed atrocities to make Heaven weep and every American of Christian morals blush for his country. Murder, robbery and rape of mothers and daughters in the presence of tied up males of the families have been common all along the Rio Grande."⁴ Lieutenant George C. Meade, later distinguished in the Civil War, said the U.S. troops were "driving husbands out of houses and raping their wives They will fight as gallantly as any men, but they are a set of Goths and Vandals without discipline, making us a terror to innocent people."⁵

So atrocious were the actions of the U.S. troops that some 250 Irish-Americans deserted and went over to the side of the Mexicans to form the San Patricio battalion.

The U.S. sent armed forces to attack the Mexicans in northern and southern California as well as expeditions throughout New Mexico and Arizona. But the end of the war came when Scott led his troops to Mexico City. The fight began on September 13, 1847, and soon the U.S. troops occupied the capital. The war was over.

The U.S. extracted a huge booty from the defeated Mexican government. The U.S. took almost 50% of Mexico's territory, the entire Southwest. (The U.S. continued to have designs on the rest of Mexico throughout the 19th century.) *Nuevo México* alone was equal to five times the size of New York state. The Southwest, too,



After only 25 years of independence from Spain, Mexico was forced into a war with the U.S. Chapultepec hill in Mexico City was the last battle of this war. Six teenage Mexican cadets, "Los Niños Héroes," fought to their death to defend the hill, rather than surrender to the Yankee aggressors.

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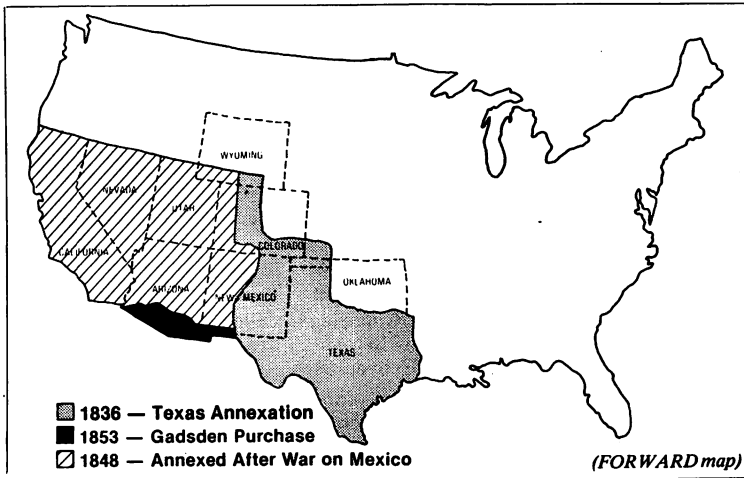
was extremely rich in mineral wealth, agricultural land, forests, pastures, rivers and ports.

The annexation was formalized with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2, 1848. This treaty was an important document as it contained provisions concerning the treatment of the 100,000 Mexicans remaining in the Southwest. The U.S. agreed to safeguard the property rights of the Mexicans and guaranteed their civil and religious rights. Their culture as well as their land grants were to be respected. The Mexicans were to receive full U.S. citizenship within one year.

If the U.S. had adhered to the treaty the Mexican people in the Southwest very well might have escaped national oppression. The U.S., however, never lived up to its promises and immediately violated all the rights of the Mexican people in the Southwest.

Post annexation

Following annexation, the U.S. set out to confirm its rule over its newly conquered territory and economically exploit it. In this process, the U.S. bourgeoisie systematically subjugated the Chicano people in the region and firmly established capitalism over the existing feudal system.



Almost 50% of Mexico's territory was annexed by the United States between 1836 and 1853.

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The U.S. capitalists, however, were unable to do this all at once throughout the entire Southwest and so adopted a step by step process to consolidate each territory. Texas and California quickly became states in 1845 and 1851 respectively, while New Mexico and Arizona remained colonies and were not admitted into the Union until 1912, a full 64 years after they were taken from Mexico. The U.S. government was also becoming increasingly preoccupied with the conflict between the North and the South which culminated in the Civil War of 1861-65. This hampered its efforts to rapidly consolidate its rule over the entire Southwest.

One of the first things the U.S. bourgeoisie did throughout the Southwest was to unleash a campaign of violence against the

Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo formally ended the U.S. war against Mexico. The treaty contained specific provisions concerning the rights of the Mexican citizens living in the annexed territory. Article X of the treaty declared that the United States would respect the land grants of the Mexican citizens in the Southwest. It was later deleted, but a protocol was signed in May of 1848 which promised that the deletion of Article X did not mean that the U.S. would not respect the land grants. Following are excerpts.

Article VIII Rights of Mexicans Established in Territories Ceded to United States

. . . Those who shall prefer to remain in the said territories may either retain the title and rights of Mexican citizens, or acquire those of citizens of the United States.

In the said territories, property of every kind, now belonging to Mexicans not established here, shall be inviolably respected. The present owners, the heirs of these, and all Mexicans who may hereafter acquire said property by contract, shall enjoy with respect to it guaranties equally ample as if the same belonged to citizens of the United States.

Article IX How Mexicans Remaining in Ceded Territories May Become Citizens of the United States

Mexicans who, in the territories aforesaid, shall not preserve the character of the Mexican republic, conformably with what is stipulated in the preceding article, shall be incorporated in the Union of the United States, and be admitted at the proper time (to be judged of by the Congress of the United States) to the enjoyment of all the rights of citizens of the United States, according to the principles of the Constitution; and in the meantime shall be maintained and protected in the free enjoyment of their liberty and property, and secured in the free exercise of their religion without restriction. . . .

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Chicanos. Thousands of Chicano and Mexican farmers, herders, peasants, miners and laborers were shot or lynched. Between 1850 and 1930, more Chicanos were lynched in this area than Blacks in the South during the same period.

Hired guns such as the notorious Billy the Kid, the Clanton Gang, Kit Carson and others made their reputations shooting down Chicanos. Will Hale, a cowboy associate of Billy the Kid, wrote in his memoirs:

I wrote father a letter telling him I wanted to come out and help him shoot Mexicans and Indians, but father wrote me back a letter saying it would be better shooting crawfish than Indians and Mexicans.⁶

Big U.S. ranchers like Richard King of the immense King Ranch in Texas set up groups like the Texas and Arizona Rangers to “legally” terrorize and subdue the conquered population. A stanza from a Chicano ballad of the times said this about the rangers (*los rinches*):

*The ‘rinches’ are very brave
that cannot be denied.
They hunt us down like deer
in order to kill us.⁷*

The big Anglo ranchers and merchants hoped this terrorism would drive the Chicano people out of the area to Mexico or at least decimate much of the population. In Los Angeles, in the one year of 1854 alone, an estimated 360 Chicanos were killed in that city. All this, of course, was rationalized by the most vicious, racist slander against the Chicano people.

The U.S. government at the same time vigorously promoted Anglo migration into the Southwest to try to stabilize their political rule and to change the character of the area. The overall population of Texas and California quickly became predominantly Anglo, although the southern parts of both states along the border remained mainly Chicano. This is one of the reasons why Texas and California were the first areas of former Mexican territory to be admitted into the Union. In New Mexico, however, where Chicanos constituted over 90% of the territory’s population up into the 20th century, the federal government relied on establishing a number of military bases to rule over the people.

The Anglo capitalists also deprived the Chicano people of

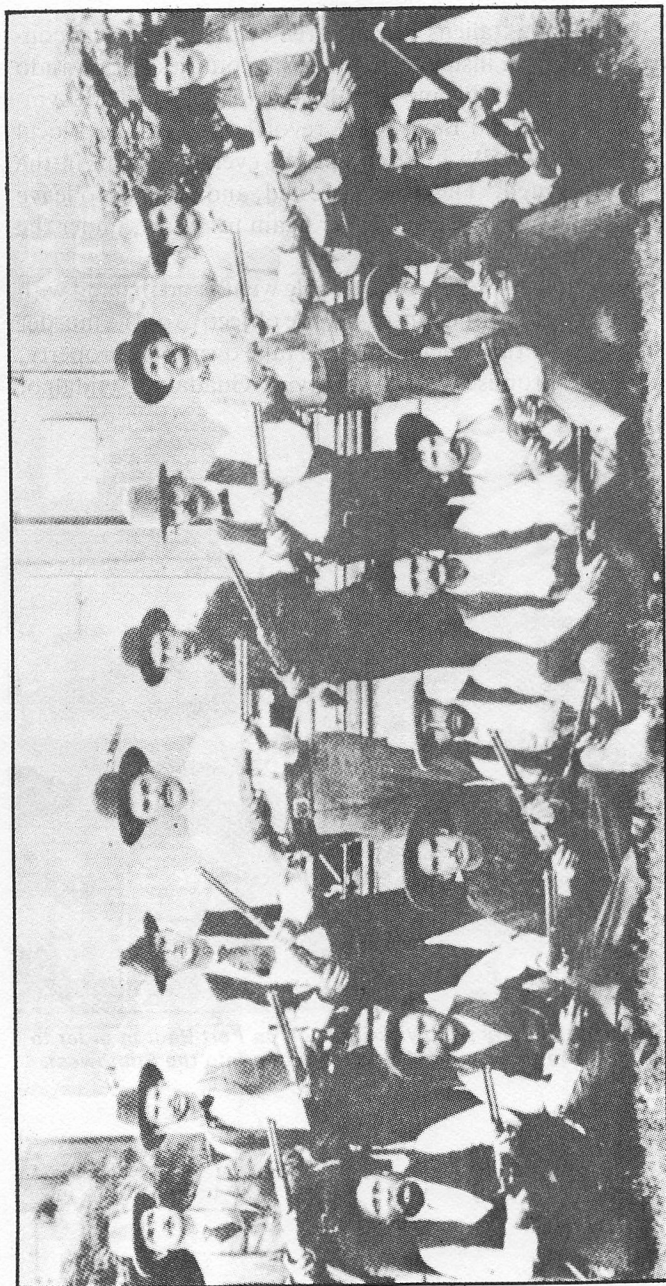


Thousands of Chicano farmers, herders, peasants, miners and laborers were shot or lynched in the Southwest between 1850 and 1930. These killings were instigated by the U.S. ruling class in order to completely subjugate the Chicano people.

political rights and power. In California by 1880 no Chicanos could be found in public offices where previously they held legislative, judicial and executive positions throughout the state. Originally designated as a bilingual state (Spanish and English), the second state constitution for California in 1878 wrote out Spanish. As early as 1855 the California government required all schools to teach exclusively in English. Special taxes and restrictions were levied on the Chicanos in California as well, such as the "Foreign Miners' Tax,"* which was used to drive Chicano miners out of the gold fields. There were also laws prohibiting or restricting traditional Chicano customs such as *fiestas*.

Similar situations developed throughout the Southwest.

* The tax was also used against Chinese miners.

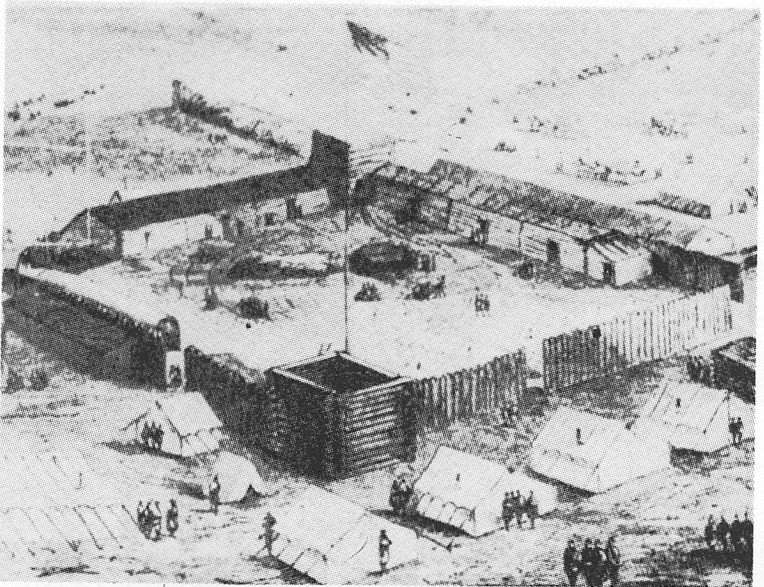


Formed to protect the interests of the rich cattle barons and ranchers, the Texas Rangers were given legal sanction to beat, torture and kill Chicanos. The Rangers used terrorism to help maintain U.S. control over the Southwest.

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Chicanos were made “aliens” in the area of their historical concentration. In 1856 for instance, in the Texas counties of Colorado and Morta Gorda, the Chicano population was suspected of sympathizing with a planned Black slave revolt. As a result, a local newspaper reported, “Without exception, every Mexican in the county was implicated. They were arrested, and ordered to leave the county within five days, and never again to return, under the penalty of death.”⁸

The persecution of the Chicano people went hand in hand with the theft of their lands. In many cases, the objective of the murder and violence against the Chicanos was to take over their property, regardless of the promises in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo.



The U.S. organized military supply posts such as Fort Bent in order to maintain its rule and to promote Anglo migration into the Southwest.

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The great land grab in the Southwest by the big Anglo merchants and ranchers is second only to the massive theft of Indian lands. The loss of this property had a profound impact on the Chicanos and was a cornerstone of their national oppression.

In Texas, the Rangers and vigilante groups simply shot hundreds of Chicanos and took over their property. Not a single Anglo, however, was ever convicted of killing a Chicano in Texas in the 50 years immediately following annexation. Many Chicanos simply abandoned their land out of fear of murder. Chicano towns such as Victoria and Goliad became nearly deserted after Texas broke off from Mexico. All in all, it is estimated Chicanos lost 20 million acres of land in Texas alone.

In California and New Mexico the Chicanos lost much of their land through legal maneuvers, squatting, claim jumping and exorbitant taxes. In 1851 California passed a "Land Act" which required that Chicanos go through a complex process to prove title to their land. This was very difficult to do in many cases since the lands often were owned in common or accurate records never kept. Furthermore, the government dragged out the process — the average time for processing settlements was 17 years, causing much land to be given up by default alone.

In New Mexico, 80% of the grant holders lost their property. Most of these were held by small farmers and herders. In particular, unscrupulous lawyers from the East preyed upon the Chicanos. One out of every ten Anglos who went to New Mexico in the 1880's was a lawyer. The Chicanos nicknamed them the "black vultures."

A particularly infamous group of mainly Anglo merchants, lawyers, bankers and politicians became known as the Santa Fe Ring. The conspiracies of this group included land speculation, seizures of cattle ranches, public lands, mines, treasury notes, manipulation of the Indian Bureau and monopolizing army contracts. They controlled the territory's courts and government. The Ring consisted of people such as Stephen Elkins, president of the First National Bank of Santa Fe; Le Baron Bradford Prince, who became Chief Justice of New Mexico in 1879; and Thomas Catron. Catron himself accumulated some two million acres of land and another four million in partnership through his swindles.

Because of growing Chicano protest to the land theft, the federal government in 1891 finally established a Court of Private Land Claims to settle land "disputes" in Arizona, New Mexico

and Colorado. In its 13 years of existence the court, composed entirely of Anglos and conducted in English, heard cases involving 35.5 million acres. The court upheld the original claims of less than two million acres. All the rest were denied and the claimants lost their land. Ninety-five percent of these were Chicanos. The court, in actuality, gave legal sanction to the land grab.

The federal government itself was involved in this property theft, especially in New Mexico. Between 1850 and 1900 the federal government accumulated 14.5 million acres of land, the majority of this from individual or communal Chicano land.

During this period the U.S. government also waged a systematic war against the Indian peoples aimed at exterminating them and stealing their lands. Tens of thousands of Indians were killed in these wars, and millions of acres of land were stolen by the U.S.

The disposition of the land from the Chicano and Indian peoples cleared the way for full-scale development of capitalist mining, farming, ranching and commerce in the Southwest, but only after the issue of slavery had been settled.

Texas was admitted into the Union as a slave state and eventually joined the Confederacy. The New Mexico and Arizona territories were legally open to slavery, but it did not develop. California, on the other hand, was admitted into the Union as non-slave. It was only after the end of the Civil War in 1865 and the subsequent construction of the railroad system in the Southwest in the 1870's that capitalism could rapidly develop.

California, that is northern California, developed most rapidly. The gold rush of 1849-52, its ports and large cattle ranches were foundations for California's initial growth. With the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, the markets of the Midwest and East Coast were opened up to California's products (cattle products, light industry and later, agriculture).

The first rail lines in New Mexico appeared in the 1870's and were built along the old trade routes. They first were built along north-south routes connecting Denver with Las Vegas, Albuquerque, Santa Fe and El Paso. By 1885 track had been laid linking Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona and southern California. Other lines soon opened up the markets to the East for the products of the Southwest.

As a result, capitalist manufacturing and industry were stimulated in the Southwest. Mining was one of the first big in-

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dustries. Copper production in Arizona increased from 800,000 pounds in 1874 to 830,628,411 pounds in 1929. By the 1870's U.S. sheep production shifted to the Southwest. In 1860, the ranches produced 498,000 pounds of wool but by 1880 this zoomed to 4,000,000 pounds. Cotton production also quickly spread throughout the Southwest, as well as large-scale production of other agricultural products. The new railroads also gave a big boost to the cattle industry in the Southwest.

As a result of these economic developments, the isolation of the Southwest ended. The centers of population were connected with each other, and trade vastly expanded. The Southwest became a relatively cohesive economic unit. The previously scattered and economically backward settlements of Chicanos were brought together by modern capitalism. By the turn of the century capitalism triumphed over the entire system of feudalism.

Forging of the Chicano nation

As a result of the massive changes in the Southwest in the 50 years following U.S. annexation, the Chicano people were forged together as a nation, as a "historically evolved, stable community of people with a common language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture."⁹ Their national characteristics, though, were very much distorted as they were a nation which developed under conditions of oppression.

By the turn of the century more than 200,000 Chicanos lived in the Southwest, concentrated in an area stretching from southwestern Texas to western Arizona, New Mexico and southern Colorado to the southern extreme of California, an area in which their ancestors had lived for 300 years. Their common language was Spanish and their culture was a mixture of their Spanish Mexican inheritance, Indian influences and their experience at the hands of the Anglo-American capitalists.

All of these elements existed before annexation to lesser or greater degrees, but it required the end of economic feudalism in the Southwest, the development of new classes among the Chicano people, and their severe oppression to transform them into a distinct nation.

Before annexation, the Spanish-speaking settlements in the Southwest were relatively isolated from one another. By the 1840's the Mexican merchant class had developed and stepped up

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their trade in the region. As embryonic modern capitalists these merchants, along with other merchants throughout Mexico, were beginning to break down the isolation and stagnation of Mexico's various regions under the rule of the landlords. U.S. capital after annexation rapidly accelerated this process in the Southwest.

Modern communications and transportation linked up the separate settlements. A clearer distinction between town and country emerged and the overall economic life of the region grew.

While capitalism gradually tied the Southwest in with the rest of the U.S. economy, it also developed the Southwest in a particular way which created a common, but distorted economic life. New Mexico, Arizona and the border areas of Texas and California developed as conquered and "colonial-type" areas. U.S. capital investment, primarily East Coast capital, in these areas was very similar to that which was put into the northern Mexican economy at the same time. Arizona and New Mexico were developed primarily to exploit the vast mineral and timber wealth; the large-scale ranching and later farming grew up with many of the characteristics of the previous patriarchal *ranchero* and *hacienda* systems. Manufacturing was not introduced into Arizona and New Mexico and the border areas until well into the 20th century.

The particular way capitalism developed in the Southwest is also reflected in the classes which emerged from the Chicano people. The landlord class was largely destroyed since their large holdings were taken. Some landlords and Chicano merchants, however, developed into modern capitalists closely connected to the Anglo interests. Miguel Otero, for instance, became part of the Santa Fe Ring. He later became a vice-president of the Atchison-Topeka & Santa Fe Railway Company and director of businesses and banks throughout the territory. His son was appointed governor of the territory from 1896-1906.

Other Chicano traders and merchants developed as a small petty bourgeoisie concentrated in some urban commercial trade and handicraft production. They led a precarious existence as the flood of eastern manufactured goods ruined many of the small local industries. An intelligentsia also emerged as teachers, journalists and writers.

The vast majority of Chicanos who were formerly *peones* and small farmers were transformed into peasants, wage slaves and semi-proletarians, who worked for a wage part of the time and

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worked their own land at other times. Due to the land grab tens of thousands of small Chicano farmers and herders were forced to become tenant farmers or sharecroppers having to lease their land. The wage workers became laborers in the mines, railroads and ranches of the capitalists.

All of these various classes, though, developed in a restricted and distorted way as they emerged under the domination of Anglo-American capital. By the late 19th century, Anglo-American capital was developing into its monopoly stage and was so strong that the Chicano bourgeoisie had extreme difficulty in developing. The discrimination against the Spanish language put the Chicano intelligentsia at a disadvantage. Chicano wage workers had to work under a dual wage system: one wage for Anglo workers and another for Chicanos. In the 1850's Arizona Chicano miners received \$12.50 plus some grain per month while Anglo miners made \$30 per month.

These restrictions inhibited the development of the Chicano people, but at the same time also contributed to forging them together through a common experience of oppression.

At this point it might be helpful to summarize some of the general history of the development of modern nations to compare the development of the Chicano nation with other experiences.

Nations, as was pointed out previously, are historically constituted communities of "language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture."

For most nations these features existed in some form under feudalism, but generally speaking it required capitalism to develop full national characteristics. Stalin uses the history of Georgia in the U.S.S.R. to illustrate this point:

Georgia came onto the scene as a nation only in the latter half of the 19th century, when the fall of serfdom and the growth of the economic life of the country, the development of means of communication and the rise of capitalism instituted a division of labor between the various districts of Georgia, completely shattered the economic self-sufficiency of the principalities and bound them together into a single whole.¹⁰

The fall of feudalism and the development of some nations at the same time meant their conversion into independent nation states. The Gauls, Romans, Britons and others became

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amalgamated into a single modern French nation-state. In other areas of the world, however, a different process occurred. Stalin pointed out that in Eastern Europe where feudalism was not thoroughly eliminated and capitalism was feeble, a politically, militarily or economically dominant nationality formed multinational states consisting of several distinct nationalities. As capitalism arose in these multinational states, the subordinate nationalities were "aroused to independent life." But they

*could no longer shape themselves into independent national states, they encountered the powerful resistance of the ruling strata of the dominant nations, which had long ago assumed the control of the state. They were too late!*¹¹

The awakened nations found themselves restricted in political rights, language, economic activity and education, among other things. At first the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations played the leading role in opposing these restrictions, but in many instances as time went on the masses of proletarians and peasants also entered the struggle against national oppression. As a result the national movement in Eastern Europe was born.

Of course, this is just a broad picture of the *general* development of some nations. Each nation, however, must be studied on its own as each has its own particularities of development. This is why Stalin stressed:

*The economic, political and cultural conditions of a given nation constitute the only key to the question how a particular nation ought to arrange its life and what forms its future constitution ought to take. It is possible that a specific solution of the problem will be required for each nation. If, indeed, a dialectical approach to a question is required anywhere it is required here, in the national question.*¹²

In examining the history of the Chicano people, it is clear that the rise of the Chicano nation in the late 19th century has its own particularities but also has many similarities to the historical experience of other nations. It developed as an oppressed nation within the boundaries of a multinational state.

By the turn of the century, the Chicano nation was forged. During the 50 years following annexation, Anglo-American



Chicanos were driven off of their land by force and by fraud. The large capitalist landowners enclosed Chicano land with barbed wire and treated Chicanos as foreigners in their own land.

capital had launched two contradictory but simultaneous processes. On the one hand, the Anglo-American capitalists strived to transform the Southwest, ridding it of its "Mexican" character. The federal government encouraged massive migrations into the area, particularly into Texas and California. The economic development of these areas also quickly integrated most of these

two states into the rest of the country. Anglo capital had tried to exterminate the Indian and Mexican people of the Southwest, killing them, placing them on reservations, stealing their land or dispersing them into Mexico or the rest of the U.S.

On the other hand, these processes welded the Mexican people into a new nationality, the Chicanos, who endured common experiences at the hands of the Anglo capitalist conquerors. Their former settlements were linked together. Their territory was taken over and exploited. In their areas of concentration in Texas and California they lived as "despised peoples." In Arizona and New Mexico where they formed the vast majority of the population, they lived as a colonized people.

The Chicano people never forgot that fire and sword had put them under the brutal rule of the U.S. state and kept them there.

II. The Chicano people from 1900 to the present

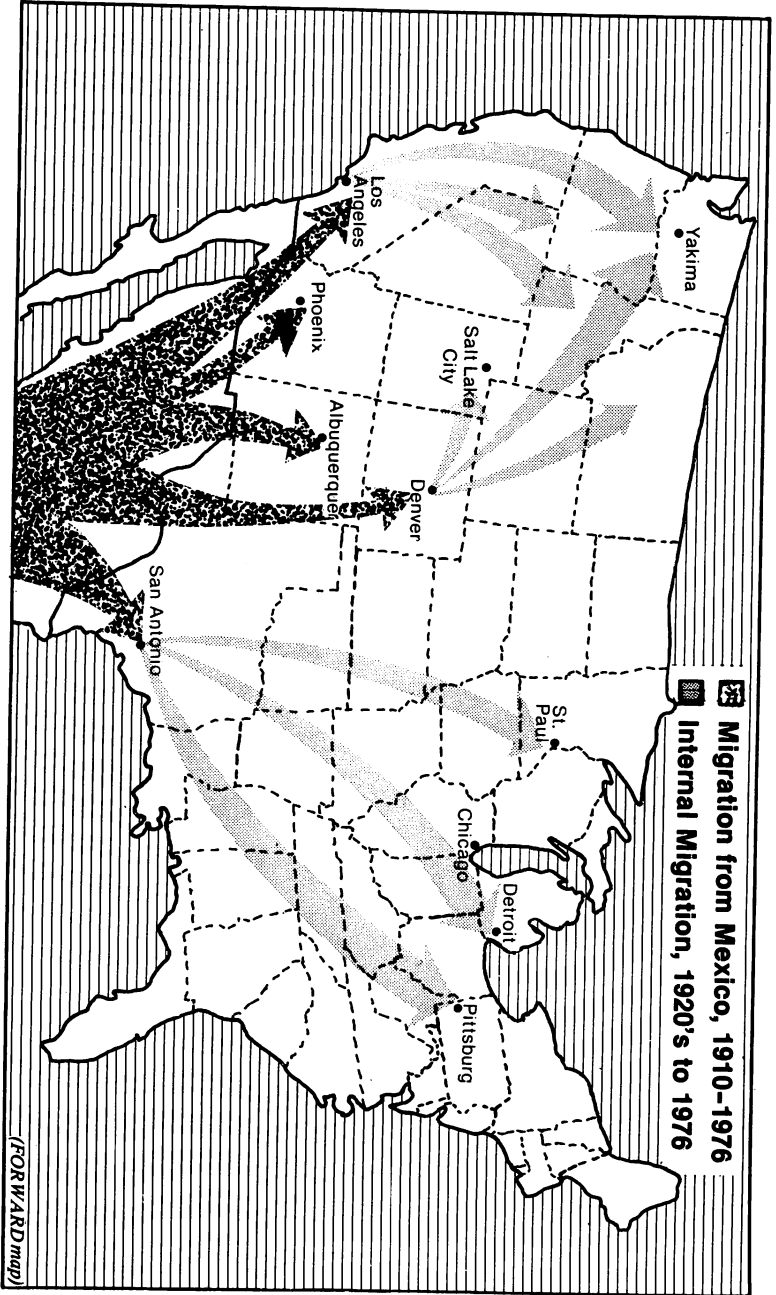
The rise of U.S. imperialism in the late 19th century had a profound effect upon the Chicano people.

For one thing, the U.S. imperialists steadily tightened their grip over Mexico. U.S. investments in the country controlled its economic life and, along with domestic reaction, contributed to the ruin of millions of Mexican peasants. Increasing numbers of Mexicans migrated over the border to survive. The great Mexican revolution of 1910 was directed in part against the Yankee imperialists and involved millions of Mexicans in struggle.

The rise of imperialism also resulted in the intensification of national oppression for the Chicano people in the U.S. Racist campaigns were conducted against the Chicanos. Chicano and Mexican workers in the U.S. became a significant sector of the working class, and were brutally exploited by the capitalists. All of these experiences led to a heightening of the consciousness of the Chicano people and widespread struggle against their oppression. (This aspect of Chicano history will be covered mainly in Chapter III.)



Francisco "Pancho" Villa, a great hero of the Mexican Revolution.



(FORWARD map)

The Mexican Revolution and the first great migration

In 1884 Porfirio Díaz became president of Mexico and for the next 30 years ruled the country in the interests of the big Mexican landlords and foreign imperialists. Millions of peasants lost their land and became impoverished. The country fell more and more into debt to foreign governments and banks. The imperialists stole tremendous wealth from the country. By 1911 the value of U.S.-owned mines in Mexico was estimated at \$223 million, and the British at \$44 million. Mexican ownership was negligible. U.S. monopolists such as the Hearsts, the Guggenheims and Rockefellers held considerable wealth and power in Mexico.

All of this caused increased dissatisfaction among the Mexican people and in November 1910, the Mexican Revolution broke out. The Mexican people demanded "Land and Liberty" and produced revolutionary heroes such as Emiliano Zapata and Francisco "Pancho" Villa. The northern provinces bordering on the U.S. in particular became centers of revolution.

The struggle in Mexico proved to be long and bloody. For ten years civil war raged. An estimated 1 million people lost their lives in a country of 15 million.

This upheaval and the impoverishment of Mexico set off a great migration of Mexicans across the border to the U.S. From about 1910 to 1930 over one million Mexicans entered the U.S.

These migrations coincided with the tremendous expansion of the economy in the Southwest. Mining and ranching operations continued to develop, but the greatest growth came in cotton production and agriculture. In 1902 the federal government started land reclamation projects and irrigation works which eventually turned much of the Southwest into rich agricultural land. Millions of previously arid acres were turned into orchards, sugar beet fields and vegetable fields. Cotton production spread throughout Texas.

Chicano and Mexican workers were the main labor force which developed these industries. During the first several decades of the 20th century, Chicanos and Mexicans became 80% of the agricultural workers, 90% of the railroad laborers and 60% of the miners in the entire West. In Texas alone, during the Depression years, as many as 400,000 Mexicans and Chicanos were migrant

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workers (70% of the total migrant force) traveling back and forth across the state.

These newly arrived Mexicans settled almost exclusively in the borderland areas. Ninety percent stayed within the general area of the Chicano nation. They settled down next to their Chicano brethren because they spoke the same language, lived in a similar fashion and shared many cultural similarities. The Anglo rulers treated the Chicanos and the Mexicans in the same way. Over a period of time, therefore, the Mexicans became amalgamated with the Chicano people. Within a generation or two, almost all distinctions between Chicanos and Mexicans disappeared.

Thus the large migrations of Mexicans actually served to help build up the Chicano nation. The migrations increased the population in the historic centers of Chicano concentration, reinforcing the common language and culture. Rather than dissipating over time, the Spanish-speaking population in the Southwest grew over the decades. The Chicano population swelled from over 200,000 in 1900 to at least 1.5 million in 1930. "The tendency of Spanish-speaking people to concentrate in the Southwest appears to be permanent and cumulative."¹

This Mexican migration should not be seen in the same way as the immigration of other peoples to the U.S. The border over which they crossed had been unstable from its very beginning when set up in 1848. Crossings were made back and forth regularly. Border wars raged for the three decades immediately following annexation and again flared up in 1908-1925. "No Mexican is really an 'immigrant' in the Southwest. The key to this distinction is to be found in the nature of the 'border' which separates Mexico from the United States — one of the most unrealistic borders to be found in the Western Hemisphere."²

It must be remembered that these migrations were into a territory that had been a part of Mexico and taken from her in war. Many in Mexico had never really reconciled themselves to the annexation. As late as 1943, maps were still used in Mexican schools which designated borderlands as "territory temporarily in the hands of the U.S."³ The reminders of Mexican heritage were all around: the names of geographic features (Rio Grande), city and state names (El Paso, San Antonio, Colorado, New Mexico, etc.) among others.

Along with the large migration of Mexicans into the Southwest, Chicanos and Mexicans began in 1916 to move out of the

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Southwest into the Midwest and other parts of the country. Many of them were first recruited out of the Southwest to work in the sugar beet fields in Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and other midwestern states. Others were recruited to work on the rail lines and simply stayed on in the Midwest when the lines had been completed. Also due to the labor shortage of World War I, industrialists attracted the Mexicans and Chicanos to the industrial cities like Chicago, Detroit, Gary, St. Louis, Kansas City and Pittsburgh. By 1928, 20,000 Mexicans and Chicanos lived in Illinois. They were forced to take on the dirtiest and lowest paying jobs, live in barrios and received the worst education, medical and social services.

Outside of their area of concentration in the Southwest, these Mexicans and Chicanos became a national minority. As time went on, the Chicano and Mexican settlements in the big northern cities continued to grow so that today, Chicanos and Mexicans form significant portions of the population in many midwestern cities.

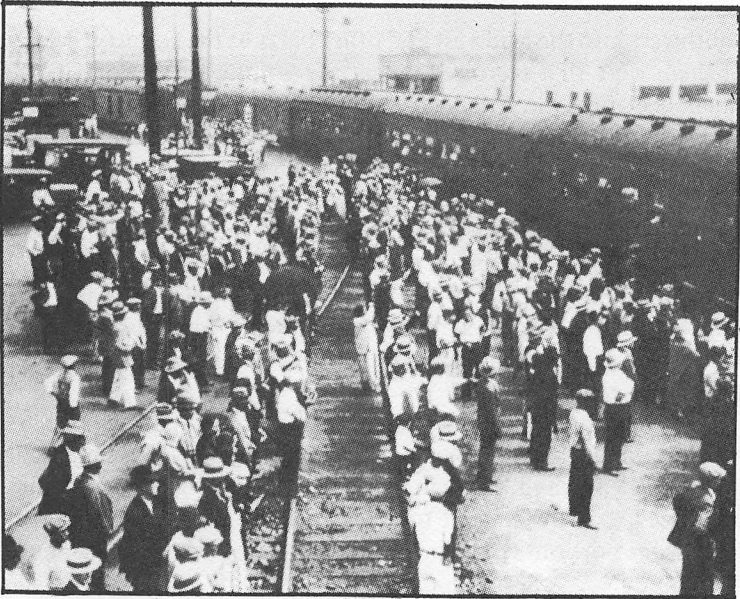
National oppression

The turn of the century also witnessed a heightening of national oppression for Chicanos. From 1908 to 1925, a virtual war broke out along the entire border as the revolution took place in Mexico. No one knows how many American, Chicano and Mexican civilians were killed during these years, but some estimate anywhere between 500 and 5,000. An article in an American journal at the time stated:

The killing of Mexicans . . . through the border in these four years is almost incredible Some rangers have degenerated into common man-killers. There is no penalty for killing, for no jury along the border would ever convict a white man for shooting a Mexican Reading over the Secret Service records makes you feel almost as though there were an open game season on Mexicans along the border.⁴

The *New York Times* stated in a November 1922 editorial, "the killing of Mexicans without provocation is so common as to pass almost unnoticed."

Then in 1929 the Great Depression hit the U.S. and the entire capitalist world. Tens of millions of workers were laid off; wages



Los Angeles, 1931 — Deportation of Mexicans and Chicanos. Mass roundups of so-called “illegals” put at least 300,000 people on trains to Mexico. Chicanos were also deported in the 1930’s for being organizers in civil rights and labor struggles.

were cut by over 50%; industrial and agricultural production was drastically cut. The U.S. bourgeoisie, who for the previous two decades had encouraged massive Mexican migration, now turned on the Mexicans and Chicanos, treating them as though they were now “superfluous,” and launched the most massive deportation campaign seen in U.S. history up to that time.

The government conducted huge roundups of Chicanos and Mexicans in the Midwest and Southwest. It didn’t matter whether one held U.S. citizenship or not — between 1929 and 1939 some 500,000 persons were literally “railroaded” to Mexico.

The capitalists also used deportation as a weapon against civil rights and labor militants among the Chicano people. This actually had been nothing new. As early as 1917 in Bisbee, Arizona, the Phelps-Dodge Company helped round up 1,200 striking miners, primarily Chicanos, forced them at gunpoint into cattle cars, and shipped them into the middle of the Mexican desert where they were left stranded.

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Many Chicano and Mexican workers had become very active in the mine and agricultural struggles during the 1920's and 1930's. The struggle at the Gallup-American Company (a subsidiary of Kennecott Copper Company) in New Mexico illustrates the use of deportations as a weapon.

In the mid-1930's several thousand Mexican coal miners struck the company. The area was placed under martial law for half a year. During this time, 300 miners settled on company-owned land and set up living quarters. Eventually they were forced off the property and an ensuing riot left over one hundred miners arrested. In response a Mexican miner named Jesus Pallares organized the Liga Obrera de Habla Española, which quickly grew to 8,000 members. The organization led struggles which succeeded in gaining some victories for the miners. But in the end Jesus Pallares was arrested and deported to Mexico.

The use of deportations against the Chicano and Mexican people was used again later in the 1950's and is being used today.

As the Depression wore on, more and more Chicanos and Mexicans left the especially depressed rural areas and came into the cities. The majority of Chicanos gradually became city dwellers.

In the urban areas the masses of Chicanos found only poverty and discrimination. They faced segregated housing (in *colonias*), education, and even public parks, swimming pools and movie houses. It was common practice in the Southwest to allow Chicanos into parks, pools and theaters only on certain days of the week so that they would not mix with Anglos. Until World War II again created a labor shortage in industry, Chicanos and Mexicans were able to find jobs only in low paying agricultural work, foundries, mines, garment factories and the service industry. Many Anglo businessmen put out signs declaring "Only White Labor Employed Here." In this way the capitalists kept Chicanos and Mexicans down, while pitting white workers against other nationalities.

When world war finally did break out, some 500,000 Chicanos entered the armed forces and went overseas to fight fascism. Back home, the Chicano people continued to suffer national oppression. A couple of incidents in Los Angeles during the war years dramatized the position of Chicanos in the U.S.

In the fall of 1942, the infamous "Sleepy Lagoon Case" took place, in which the police railroaded 17 young Chicanos into a



Los Angeles, 1943 — Rampaging Anglo racists brutally attacked young Chicanos, especially those wearing “Zoot Suits,” pulling them out of movies and off street cars. Police arrested only the Chicano victims. The press encouraged these racist attacks.

murder trial. The press sensationalized the event and launched a chauvinist campaign against Chicanos portraying them as “crime-bent.” The trial went on until January 1943 and became a focus of struggle for the Chicano people against racism. At first nine of the defendants were convicted of murder. But through the efforts of the Chicano and progressive movements, the entire case, which by then had received national attention, was thrown out of court for “lack of evidence.” The Sleepy Lagoon Case became a symbol of the official persecution of the Chicano people.

Soon after the end of the trial however, in the summer of 1943, the “Zoot Suit Riots” broke out, incited by a racist media campaign. For a week, sailors and marines rampaged through the Chicano barrio of Los Angeles and attacked all the young Chicanos they could get a hold of, especially those who dressed in

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Over 15,000 cotton workers went on strike in 1933 in California's San Joaquin Valley. On October 10, when growers ambushed workers leaving a meeting the police called it the "Pixley Riots" and arrested the strike leaders.

the so-called "Zoot Suit," The Los Angeles riot sparked off similar attacks against Chicanos, Blacks and Pilipinos in other cities across the country, including San Diego, Chicago, Harlem and Detroit.

At the same time that the Anglo capitalists encouraged these attacks on Chicanos, they brought hundreds of thousands more Mexicans into the country to fill the labor shortages caused by the war. The U.S. government put together the "bracero" program under which it would contract Mexican workers to labor in the U.S. exclusively in the agricultural sector. The Department of

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Agriculture itself was the official “employer,” while the workers would be contracted out to an agribusiness company as a “subemployer.” From 1942 to 1947 about 220,000 braceros were imported into the U.S.

Later, during the 1950’s, the number of braceros increased to as high as 450,000 in a single year. While they were supposed to return to Mexico after their work was completed, many remained in the U.S.

The U.S. government agreed that it would respect the rights of the braceros but, in fact, they were paid less than the minimum wage, had no right to form trade unions, and had no protection from the vicious exploitation of the growers. Many Chicanos in the U.S. opposed this program as a form of superexploitation aimed at both the braceros as well as Chicano labor in the U.S. The bracero program caused divisions between Chicano and Mexican workers by forcing them to compete for the same jobs, with the result that the wages and working conditions of both suffered.

In the midst of the bracero program, the federal government also launched another huge deportation campaign against Mexicans and Chicanos called “Operation Wetback.” The U.S.



Braceros at a screening center in Mexico.

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deported two million people to Mexico from 1953 to 1956. As in the deportation campaign during the 1930's, deportation was used as a weapon against labor militants, and as these were the McCarthy years, many Chicano and Mexican communists and leftists also were deported under this campaign. The campaign, of course, was accompanied by a wave of chauvinist propaganda which blamed Chicanos and Mexicans for all the economic and social problems of capitalism.

Despite this, the continuing impoverishment of Mexico caused increasing numbers of Mexicans to migrate across the border to the U.S. Beginning in the post-war years up to today, there has been one of the greatest population migrations in human history over the U.S.-Mexico border. Most of these have been "illegal aliens" who have continued to settle primarily in the Southwest. By 1978, due to these migrations and natural population growth, the Chicano and Mexican population in the U.S. had increased to around 10 million in number.

Summary

After annexation by the U.S., the Southwest went through a radical transformation. The Spanish-speaking and Indian peoples were subdued by force, their land and property stolen, and their rights denied in all spheres of life. At the same time the patriarchal feudal economy of the area was largely wiped out and capitalism rapidly developed in the area, breaking down the economic isolation of the different areas of the Southwest and linking them into a single economic unit, dominated by the U.S. bourgeoisie. This entire historic process transformed the Spanish-speaking people of the Southwest into a new nationality — into Chicanos. They composed an oppressed nation, part of a large multinational state dominated by the Anglo-American capitalist class.

III. The struggle of the Chicano people

From the very beginning of the U.S. annexation of the Southwest, the Chicano people continuously fought against their

oppression. Their brutal treatment by the Anglo-American capitalists has created a profound revolutionary potential in the Chicano people's struggle. From the resistance to annexation and the land grabs, to the struggles in the mines, mills and fields of the Southwest, to the great upsurge of the national movement in the 1960's, the Chicano people have demanded liberation. The struggle for liberation has become a prominent aspect of the common experience and culture of the Chicano nation.

Resistance to annexation

Even before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed to formally hand over the Southwest to the U.S., there was strong opposition to the U.S. annexation among the people in the region. This was evident in the revolt of 1847 in *Nuevo México*.

Soon after U.S. troops occupied the territories of *Nuevo México*, Washington appointed Charles Bent to be territorial governor. Led by José Antonio Martínez (who previously had opposed domination by the Church under Mexican rule) and a *peón* named Pablo Montoya, Mexican and Indian rebels rose up, captured Bent and executed him. The U.S. federal soldiers sent in to quell the rebellion retaliated by laying siege to Taos, the stronghold of the resistance. One hundred and fifty New Mexicans were killed in battle and following the defeat of the rebels, another 30 prisoners were executed.

Thus began 30 years of resistance to annexation throughout the captured territories.

The most famous revolt during the first years of annexation was that led by Juan Cortina. Cortina was the son of a former landowner in the Brownsville area. One day in 1858 he tried to rescue a Chicano who was being beaten by a town marshal. The marshal responded to Cortina's efforts with, "What's it to you, you damned Mexican." When the marshal refused to release the prisoner, after Cortina had fired a warning shot, Cortina shot the marshal in the shoulder and fled with the prisoner to safety.

Hounded by the marshal's posse and later by the Texas Rangers, Cortina took to the hills, gathered others around him and fought against the Anglo occupiers. On September 28, 1859,

his forces even swept down and captured Brownsville itself, replacing the U.S. flag with that of Mexico and demanding justice for the people. In the following years Cortina formed an army of several hundred rebels who fought and defeated time and time again the Texas Rangers and the Brownsville militia. The rebel forces virtually controlled the area from Brownsville to Rio Grande City, an area 150 miles in length.

Cortina formed a secret organization, *Las Águilas Negras* (the Black Eagles) in southern Texas and issued a proclamation for Chicanos to join it and demand that the rights guaranteed by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo be respected. Cortina was eventually chased across the border by U.S. forces led by officers such as Robert E. Lee (later of the Confederacy), but his exploits were memorialized in many *corridos* (ballads) throughout the region.

During these years of Cortina's activities in southern Texas, Chicanos in New Mexico and Texas waged three "wars" against Anglo land grabbers.

The El Paso Salt War of 1877 was a popular uprising against Anglo speculators who took over previously public salt beds near town. At that time all but 80 of the 12,000 inhabitants around El Paso were Chicanos. When the Anglo businessmen began to charge for the salt, the Chicanos rose up, killed several of the businessmen and wrecked their property. Government forces retaliated and a number of Chicanos were shot and several more lynched. Antagonisms over this incident lasted long after the uprising was suppressed.

Later, the Colfax and Lincoln County Land Wars broke out in New Mexico. In Colfax the Chicano and Indian people resisted the Santa Fe Ring's accumulation of land and for months open battles raged between the forces.

The Lincoln County War (1876-78) was similar. The "War" began as a struggle between the Santa Fe Ring and other Anglo-American capitalists. The ensuing struggle engulfed the local Chicano population, who opposed the Ring. A man named Juan Patrón helped organize the Chicanos to fight the Ring.

Later in New Mexico, Chicano peasants organized in several areas against the encroachments of the large landowners. In 1889 in northern New Mexico, peasants formed *Las Gorras Blancas* (the White Caps). This was a secret organization which fought against the fencing off of common grazing lands which had been used by the Chicanos for centuries. They also fought against at-

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tempts of the large Anglo-American ranches to monopolize the water supply. Joining together with some Anglo workers and Indians, *Las Gorras Blancas* issued a proclamation which stated, "We are down on race issues and will watch race agitation. We favor irrigation enterprises, but will fight any scheme that tends to monopolize the supply of water sources to the detriment of residents living on lands watered by the same streams."¹ *Las Gorras Blancas* eventually grew to a membership of 1,500, including some small Anglo farmers and American Indians. It also cooperated with the Knights of Labor in opposing the exploitation of the large railroad corporations which were stealing Chicano lands and exploiting the workers. *Las Gorras Blancas* continued until 1891.

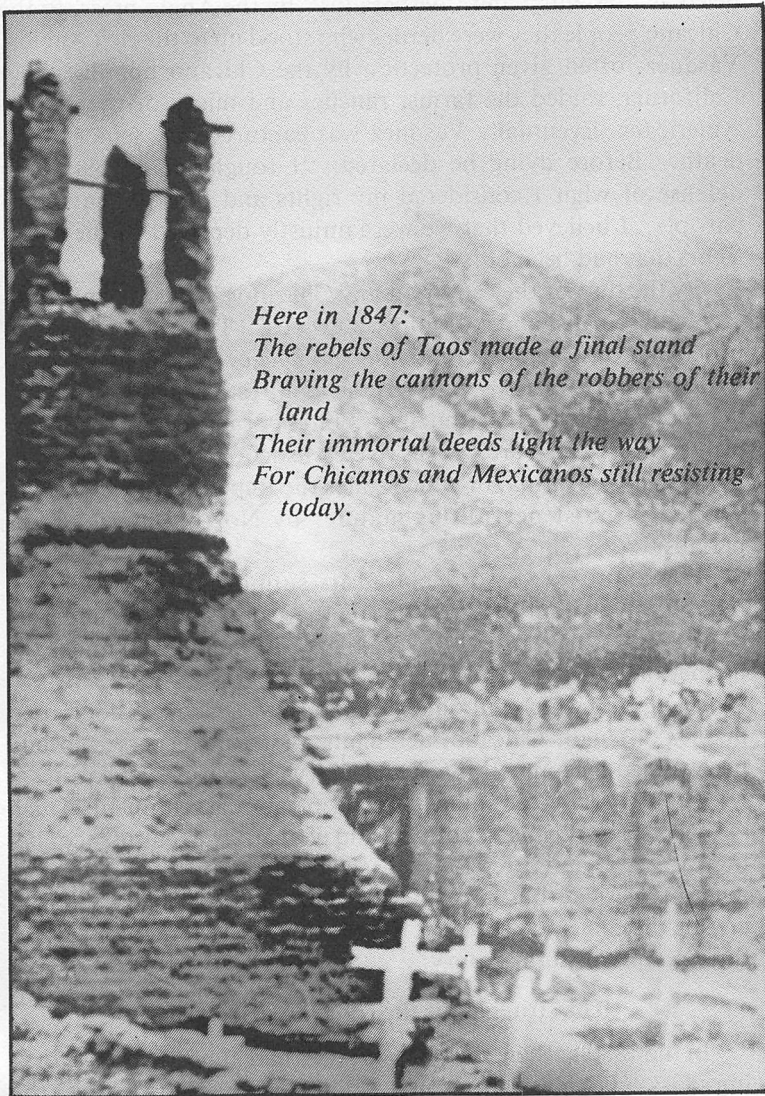
At the same time in northwestern New Mexico, *La Mano Negra* (the Black Hand) was formed to fight the railroads and large ranchers. The railroads not only stole Chicano lands but also charged the small farmers outrageous shipping rates. In one famous incident, a force of 300 Chicanos tore up 9,000 railroad ties belonging to the Atchison-Topeka & Santa Fe railroad. The group also regularly raided the property of the land syndicates. *La Mano Negra* continued until the 1920's.

Also during these years numerous local heroes arose from among the Chicano people's resistance to the conquerors. In New Mexico, Elfego Baca stood up against cowboy shootings of his people. In the Texas Panhandle, Sostenes l'Archeveque, who was born in Santa Fe of a French father and a Mexican-Indian mother, avenged the murder of his father by Anglo-Americans by becoming a one-man armed resistance force.

In California in 1855, a 20 year old Chicano, Francisco Ramirez began publishing *El Clamor Público*, which crusaded against the injustices done to Chicanos. In one article he wrote:

What is the foreigner in California? He is what he is not in any other place in the world; he is what he is not in the most inhospitable land which can be imagined . . . The North Americans pretend to give us lessons in humanity and to bring to our people the doctrine of salvation so we can govern ourselves, to respect the laws and conserve order. Are these the ones who treat us worse than slaves?²

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*Here in 1847:
The rebels of Taos made a final stand
Braving the cannons of the robbers of their
land
Their immortal deeds light the way
For Chicanos and Mexicanos still resisting
today.*

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Through the 1850's and 1870's California produced men such as Juan Flores, Joaquin Murietta, and Tiburcio Vásquez. Labeled as "bandits" and "desperados" by the Anglo press, to the Chicano people they were heroes who stood up to the rich Anglos. Vásquez, often given protection by the Chicano population in California, raided the farms, ranches and mines of the Anglo-Americans. Eventually Vásquez was captured and sentenced to death. Before dying he declared: "I fought many battles in defense of what I considered my rights and those of my compatriots. I believed that we were unjustly deprived of the social rights that had been ours."³

By the turn of the century many Chicanos had come into contact with socialist and anti-imperialist ideas. This was reflected in proclamations such as *El Plan de San Diego*. Issued by Chicano revolutionaries in Texas in 1915, the manifesto called for the "independence and segregation of the States bordering upon the Mexican Nation, which are: Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, and upper California, of which states the Republic of Mexico was robbed in most perfidious manner by North American imperialism."⁴

The manifesto also declared its support for a free Black republic in the South. Furthermore, the group saw itself under no obligation to the Mexican government but campaigned under the banner of "Equality and Independence."

The group which put out *El Plan de San Diego* was composed mainly of small, Chicano merchants and storekeepers who had been ruined by competition from big, Anglo business interests.

The *Plan* reflected some of the deep national sentiments which existed among the masses of Chicano people. The sentiment of being in a conquered territory, of having the land stolen by big Anglo-American business interests has never disappeared from among the Chicano people. It has been the basis of many struggles throughout the 20th century.

The struggles of the Chicano proletariat

In the 1880's a new class of Chicanos had appeared: the working class. Formerly peasants, small farmers and *peones*, the development of capitalism in the Southwest ruined many and transformed them into miners, railroad laborers and field workers. In turn, this gave rise to further struggle. The Chicano working people have an especially militant and heroic history of

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struggle against exploitation and oppression. Their struggles have often been both part of the Chicano national movement, as well as part of the struggle of the U.S. multinational working class.

One of the first workers groups that was formed was organized by miners and railroad workers in the 1880's. Called *Los Caballeros de Labor*, it was patterned after the Knights of Labor, the principal labor organization in the rest of the U.S. at the time.

A main demand of *Los Caballeros de Labor* was for an end to the dual wage rate. It protested the system which gave Anglo workers a higher rate and Chicanos the so-called "Mexican rate." This system was designed to reap superprofits for the capitalists and create a division between Anglo and Chicano workers. The dual wage system was a part of a larger system of national privileges which the Anglo capitalists used to oppress the Chicano people.

Los Caballeros also demanded that Chicano lands be protected from robbery by Anglo land speculators, ranchers and the large railroad companies. The railroads were some of the largest landholders in the Southwest. They controlled some 150 million acres throughout the West.

Chicanos formed *Los Caballeros* and other Chicano labor organizations because reactionary labor bureaucrats, who controlled many unions, refused to allow Chicanos into the unions.

During the 19th century several mine workers' and ranch workers' strikes took place, but the first major struggle involving Chicano workers took place in 1903 and 1904. In 1903 Chicano miners struck the mines in the copper fields of Clifton-Morenci, Arizona. The miners had been organized by the Western Federation of Miners which had socialists and other revolutionaries in its leadership. In Bisbee, Arizona, in 1903 Chicano *mutualistas* (mutual aid societies) led a strike of 3,500 and massive demonstrations of workers and their families to support the demands of the strike. Frightened by the significance of this great strike, the imperialists brought in the national guard to suppress the workers. In Los Angeles, hundreds of Chicano railway workers conducted several strikes against the Pacific Electric Railway and the Los Angeles Railway.

Around this same time, revolutionary ideas and theories began to influence the struggles of Chicano workers. These influences came from the developing socialist movement in the U.S., as well as in Mexico. As early as 1894 a paper called *El Gato* was pub-



The mercury (quicksilver) extracting furnace at the Waldron Quicksilver Mine in Waldron, Texas, 1916. For 12 hours work, mine workers got \$1.00 pay.

lished in Santa Fe denouncing imperialist exploitation of the mines and railroads. It carried an editorial entitled, "The Capitalist and the Worker," which called for class solidarity against the capitalists. In 1905 the Founding Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) was held. Several Chicanos attended as delegates. Lucía Gonzáles de Parsons (Lucy Parsons — who had organized demonstrations for the 8-hour day and rallied support for the Haymarket martyrs all over the country) addressed the convention and called on delegates to draw their inspiration from the revolutionary struggle going on then in Russia. The anarcho-syndicalist IWW had an important role in the Southwest as it organized many agricultural workers and miners. It organized all workers regardless of nationality.

In Laredo, Texas, railroad workers published *El Defensor del Obrero* (*The Worker's Defender*) from 1905–07. It advocated a form of "socialism" as the only solution to the oppression of Chicanos and Mexicans. It supported strikes on both sides of the border. The Socialist Party's paper, *The Rebel*, although printed only in English, had wide distribution in the Southwest. The

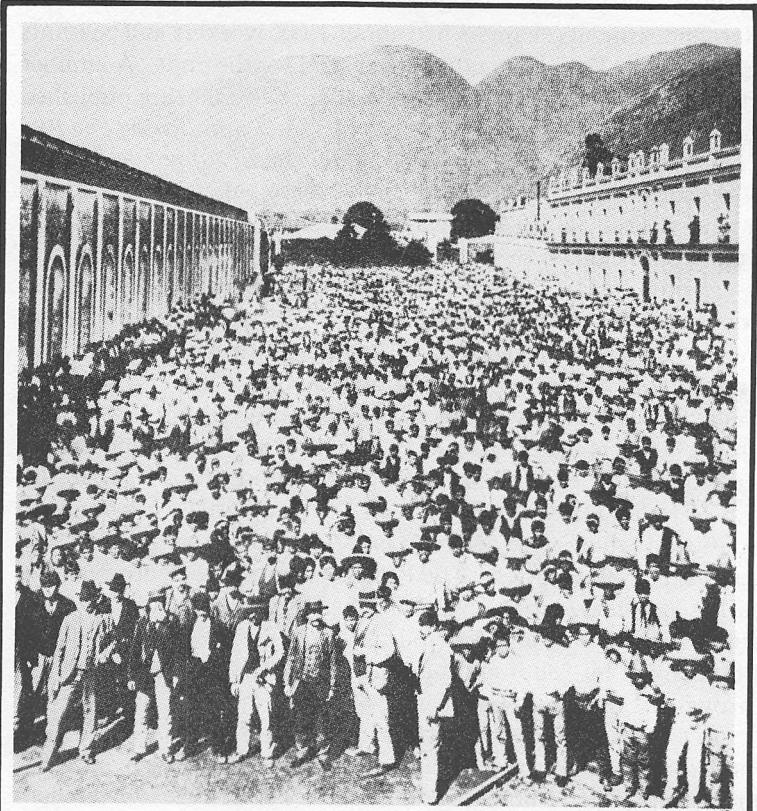
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Socialist Party's Land League of America was headed by F.A. Hernandez and its chapters had about 1,000 workers and peasants as members. The League fought for land for the poor. A number of other anarchist and socialist newspapers were being published in the Southwest at this time. They include *Punto Rojo (The Red Point)*, *Lucha de Clases (Class Struggle)* and *El Amigo del Pueblo (The Friend of the People)*. Each of these papers identified the capitalist class as the enemy and called for unity of all workers against that class.

A particularly influential revolutionary leader in the Southwest was Ricardo Flores Magón. Magón had formed the Partido Liberal Mexicano (PLM) around the turn of the century in Mexico and was active in the famous copper miners' strike at Cananea. The PLM was one of the first groups in Mexico to take up the struggle against the Díaz government. Although Magón was forced out of Mexico in 1904, he continued his work in the U.S. He organized a number of PLM chapters throughout the Southwest which were active in labor organizing and supporting the Mexican Revolution. The PLM's paper in the Southwest was called *Regeneracion*. Magón was imprisoned by the U.S. authorities in 1911 and was murdered by prison guards in 1922. But many of his followers continued to be very active in struggles throughout the Southwest.

In 1914 Chicano workers played a major part in one of the most famous strikes in U.S. history — the Ludlow strike in Colorado. In that year, more than 9,000 miners struck the Rockefeller-owned Colorado Fuel and Iron Company. The workers were mostly Chicanos, Italian and Slavic immigrants. The working conditions at the mines were extremely unsafe, the pay low and the workers were forced to live in company housing camps and shop in company stores. The main demands of the strike were for union recognition, an increase in wages and improvement in safety and working conditions. The company had previously relied on promoting differences between nationalities to keep the workers divided and out of the union. But in this action the workers were united.

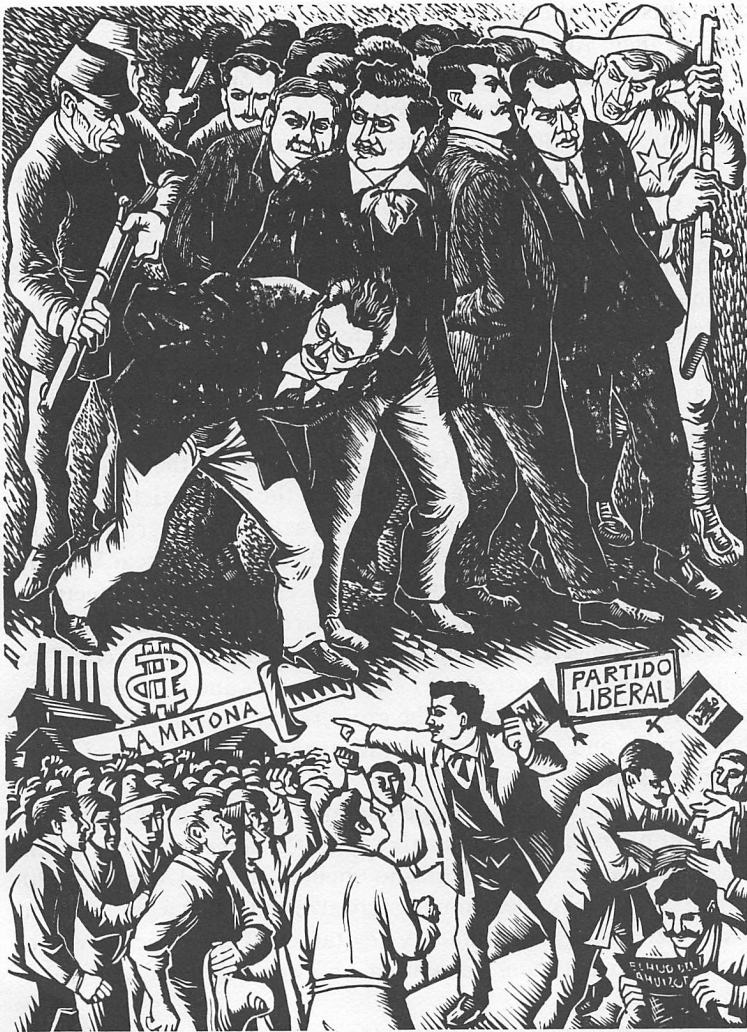
The company evicted the workers from the company housing shortly after the strike started. The strikers then erected their own "tent city" near the mining camp. J.D. Rockefeller ordered the state militia and a private army of hired thugs to attack the tent city. They machine-gunned the camp, killing two women and eleven



Two large strikes broke out in northern Mexico in the early 1900's. In 1906 thousands of Mexican workers struck the U.S. owned copper mine in Cananea, Sonora Mexico, where they slaved for wages of 24¢ to 80¢ a week. Above: In 1907 thousands of textile workers rebelled all over Mexico. It began at the huge Rio Blanco mill near Veracruz. The strike was cruelly suppressed by the Díaz regime, at the bidding of U.S. imperialism. This strike was a bitter prelude to the Mexican Revolution of 1910.

children. Nine of the victims were Chicano. This slaughter became known as the "Ludlow Massacre." In the two weeks following the attacks, workers armed themselves and received support from workers around the country, many coming into the area

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This woodcut shows the persecution by the Diaz regime of the Mexican Liberal Party, which was founded by Ricardo and Enrique Flores Magón, Librado Rivera, Juan Sarabia, Lázaro Gutiérrez and other revolutionaries.

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to battle Rockefeller's army. The workers conducted a number of shootouts with the goons. In the end, 46 persons were killed — most of them Rockefeller guards.

Chicano workers' struggles continued throughout the 1920's in the Southwest and in the Midwest industrial cities. But it was the late 1920's and 1930's that witnessed a great increase in the activity of Chicano workers, especially in California agriculture. Several of the strikes and organizing efforts were assisted by communists.

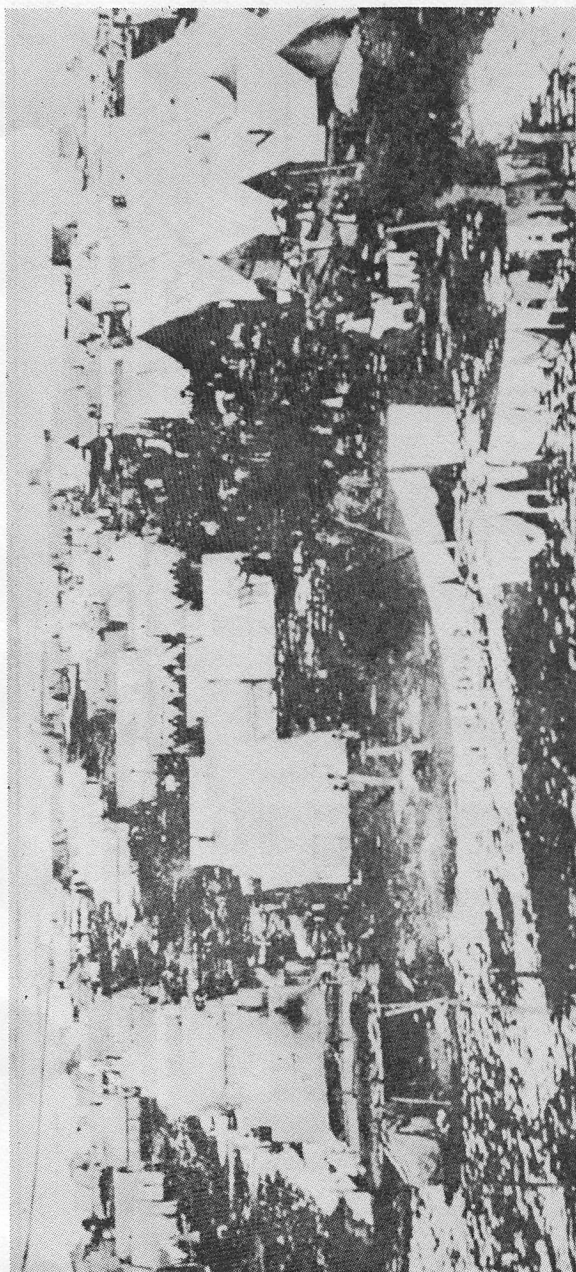
One of the main communist-led unions which played a key role in organizing agricultural workers was the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union (CAWIU). Through the depression years the union led dozens of strikes, including most of the major ones in California, such as the 1933 El Monte Berry strike, which involved 18,000 workers, and the Corcoran Cotton Strike.

In October 1933, 15,000 workers, 75% of them Spanish-speaking, refused to take a cut in pay in the cotton fields around Corcoran. They were fed up with the racism of the growers, the bad housing, and sanitation facilities. On October 10 near Visalia, the growers ambushed farm workers as they left a meeting. Shooting into the crowd, they murdered Delfino Dávila and Dolores Hernández and wounded a number of other workers. The police responded by arresting 17 strike leaders and labeling the incident the "Pixley Riots." The growers were never convicted of their crimes and by the end of the struggle 42 people had been wounded and 113 arrested.

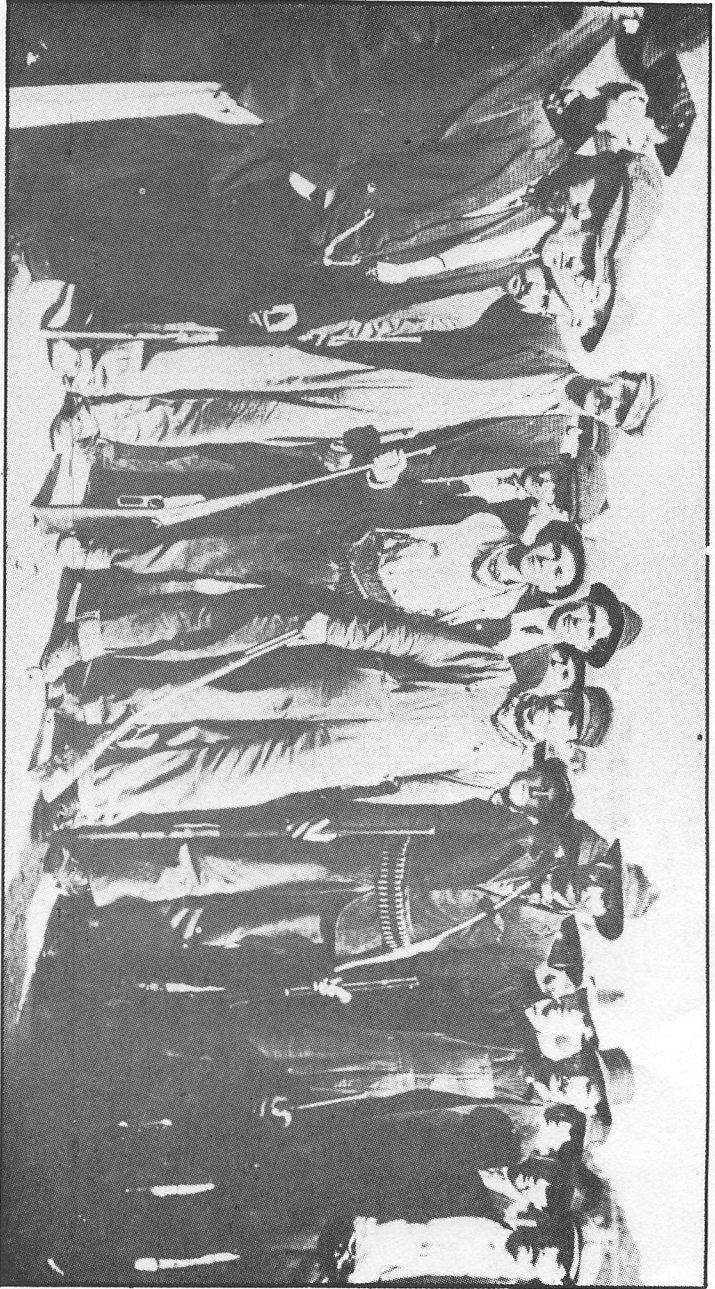
Another important struggle communists helped lead was the San Antonio pecan sheller's strike. In 1938, angered over a cut in piece rates, over 10,000 Chicano shellers stopped work at 130 plants. The local police immediately arrested 1,000 workers in an attempt to break the strike. A key target of the officials was a young Chicana, Emma Tenayucca who was a strike leader and a communist.

The state viciously red-baited the workers and used organizations such as the Mexican Chamber of Commerce, the League of United Latin American Citizens and the local Catholic Church to oppose the strike. But in spite of such opposition, the workers won a union and a pay increase.

In contrast to communist-led workers organizations, there were many trade unions under the leadership of racist labor aristocrats who denied membership to Chicanos and attacked



Ludlow, Colorado, 1913-14 — Tent camp of 9,000 miners who struck J.D. Rockefeller's Colorado Fuel and Iron Co. on April 20, 1914, state militiamen and company goons attacked and burned the camp, killing 18 people.



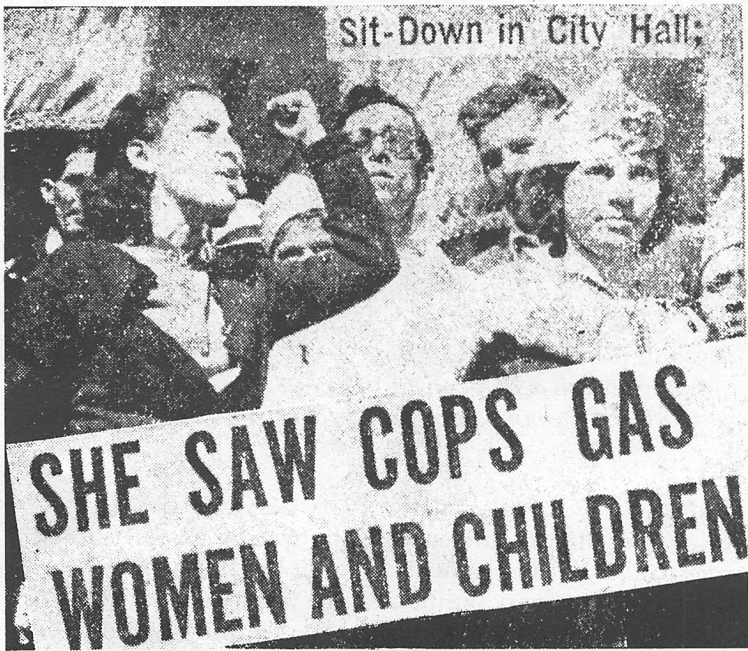
After the "Ludlow Massacre," enraged miners from other places came and killed many company guards. Finally, the U.S. Army was sent in to bring "peace."

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Mexican workers as harmful to American labor.

Chicano workers thus took steps to organize themselves and their brothers and sisters from Mexico. In Los Angeles in 1927, workers held a convention and formed several labor unions under *La Confederación de Uniones Obreras Mexicanas* (CUOM) (The Confederation of Mexican Workers' Unions). Its purpose was to organize Mexican and Chicano workers in the United States, fight for parity with Anglo-American workers, end the dual wage system, and end discrimination against Mexicans and Chicanos. Within a year CUOM had 3,000 members in 20 locals.

The *Confederación de Uniones de Campesinos y Obreros Mexicanos* (CUCOM) (Confederation of Unions of Mexican Farm Workers and Workers) was soon formed which focused on agricultural workers. It helped lead several important strikes including the Imperial Valley Cantaloupe Strike of 1928. A number



Emma Tenayucca was a leader of the 1938 pecan shellers strike in San Antonio. The strike was successful despite the tear gassing, beatings and jailing of over 1,000 picketers.

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of its leaders were imprisoned and later deported to Mexico under the Criminal Syndicalist Act.

Chicano workers also played a significant role in the formation of several organizations which opposed national oppression. In March 1939 the First Congress of the Mexican and Spanish People was held in Albuquerque which brought together representatives of trade unions, small businessmen, religious groups, students and mutual aid organizations to fight such injustices as segregation in the Southwest.

One of the most important events of this period occurred in October 1935 in San Antonio. There, Chicano representatives from labor unions, unemployed councils and mutual aid societies from all over the Southwest met at *La Convención Constitutiva Pro Derechos Mexicanos de Texas* (Constituent Convention of Texas for Mexican Rights). This conference adopted a series of resolutions on different subjects related to national oppression, including the land question. It also adopted a resolution which called for the right of self-determination for south Texas and the border region, which were areas of predominantly Chicano population. In writing about this conference, a member of the Communist Party who had participated in it said:

Thus we in the Party recognized the similarity of the status of the Mexican people in Texas with that of the Negro people in the South and concluded that the remedy would be a similar one. We reached the conclusion that the struggles of the Mexican people in Texas must embrace the demand for the return of the land, for language and cultural rights and the right for political self-rule, even to the point of separation in the South Texas area where Mexican people constitute a large percentage or the majority of the population.⁵

Unfortunately, the Communist Party USA (CPUSA) ignored the resolutions of this conference. While the CPUSA participated in some of the Chicano labor struggles of the 1930's, they never adopted a revolutionary position on the Chicano national question and generally neglected the Chicano national movement. The CPUSA's newspaper, *The Worker*, was given out in the Southwest only in English. Marxist-Leninist literature in Spanish was available mainly through Mexico. The CPUSA's weakness on the

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national question eventually became part of its general degeneration into revisionism in the 1950's.

During the 1950's, due to the sellout of the CPUSA, the repression of McCarthyism and the temporary stabilization of U.S. imperialism, the Chicano national movement, like other social movements in the U.S., went into a period of relative inactivity. However, as with the Black movement, there were some struggles for civil rights. Groups such as the American G.I. Forum (a Chicano veterans' organization), the Mexican-American Political Association (MAPA), the Unity League, and the Community Service Organization in California formed during these years. Their campaigns included voter registration drives, fights to end gerrymandering of districts (which divided Chicano barrios to minimize the Chicano vote) and backed candidates who supported their programs.

But perhaps the most famous Chicano struggle during the 1950's was the Empire Zinc strike in Silver City, New Mexico. In 1951 the mainly Chicano miners of that company went on strike demanding increased pay and equal treatment. When the company got an injunction against the strikers, the miners' wives took over the picket line. They were viciously attacked by goons, the police and scabs. Forty-five women and 17 children were arrested and several were hit by scab-driven cars. The strike became well-known because of the determination of the workers and because it was memorialized in the film *Salt of the Earth* which has become one of the most famous American workers' films.

The quiescence of the 1950's, though, was just the lull before the storm. By the mid-1960's the Chicano people once again rose up on a massive scale along with other oppressed nationalities, workers and students to challenge the rule of monopoly capital.

The Chicano national movement in the 1960's and 1970's

The great upsurge of the Chicano national movement in the 1960's and 1970's was inspired in part by the people of Indochina resisting U.S. aggression, the struggle to build socialism in China and the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles of peoples in Latin America and Africa. The Chicano people also were encouraged by the militant example set by the Afro-American people who rose up in revolt in hundreds of cities across the U.S. in the 1960's.



Strike at Empire Zinc Co. in Silver City, New Mexico, 1951. When the company got an injunction against the strikers, the miners' wives took over the picket line, and stood up to attacks by police, company goons and scabs.

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Most importantly, however, were the actual conditions of life for the Chicano people. For the masses of Chicanos, national and class oppression held them in chains, and it was inevitable that such oppression would lead to rebellion.

In 1960 Chicanos earned \$3,000 less per year in family income than Anglos. Per capita income for Chicanos was \$968, and \$2,047 for Anglos. Twenty percent of Chicanos had white collar jobs while 47% of the Anglo working population held white collar positions. Compared to 7.5% for Anglos, 29.7% of all Chicanos resided in what the government itself designated as "over-crowded housing," and 9% lived in "run down or ramshackle housing" compared to 1.3% of the Anglo population. In the Southwest, the median number of years of schooling for Chicanos was just 8.1 years while it was 12.0 for Anglos. In Texas the median years of schooling for Chicanos was only 4.8 years.

The Chicano population suffered continual police harassment. From the 1960's to the present, dozens of Chicanos have been murdered by police in the Southwest. Hundreds of thousands of immigrant Mexicans *annually* were being deported. Faced with this pervasive and all-encompassing system of national oppression



Dallas, Texas — People protest the police murder of Santos Rodriguez, age 12.

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it is easy to understand why the Chicano people rose up in revolt in the 1960's and why that revolt has continued throughout the 1970's.

One of the struggles which perhaps most dramatized the oppression of the Chicano nation was that of the *Alianza Federal de Mercedes* (Federal Alliance of Land Grant Heirs) based in northern New Mexico and led by Reies López Tijerina. The *Alianza* was founded in 1963 in order to try to regain the Chicano land grants and fight against the impoverishment of Chicano small farmers. As late as 1965 a Forest Service decision to drastically reduce grazing permits forced 20,000 Chicanos to leave their villages and abandon their small plots of land. In its early years the *Alianza* strived to gain its objectives through legal processes, but it was frustrated at every turn. Nevertheless the organization grew rapidly and at its peak its membership numbered 50,000, mainly composed of Chicano small farmers and sharecroppers. The *Alianza* issued proclamations in New Mexico declaring that the "U.S.A. Has No Title for New Mexico," "All Spanish and Indian Pueblos are Free Forever," and the famous cry "*¡Tierra y Libertad!*" (Land and Liberty). These calls struck a responsive chord among the Chicano people.

When the legal processes produced no results for the *Alianza*, it decided to take a militant action to dramatize its demands. In October, 1966, 350 *Alianza* members occupied a national park that had once been a part of a communal land grant. The *Alianza* claimed the land on behalf of the former land grant inhabitants.

The Chicano militants arrested two park rangers for trespassing but then were ousted themselves when the state moved in and arrested their leaders. While awaiting trial for the occupation, the *Alianza* continued its organizing but was constantly harassed by the police who attempted to prevent public meetings from being held and arrested some people for just trying to attend these meetings.

To counteract this harassment Tijerina and about 20 other *Alianza* members armed themselves and went to the Tierra Amarilla courthouse to make a citizen's arrest of the District Attorney responsible for the harassment. They seized the courthouse but did not find the DA. The police tried to intervene and a fight broke out resulting in the wounding of several people. Tijerina and the group then left the area with two lawmen as hostages.

The state responded with the most massive military opera-

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The Chicano land struggle became increasingly sharp in the 1960's. The activities of the Alianza Federal de Mercedes in New Mexico received widespread support from the Chicano movement throughout the Southwest.

tion in New Mexico's history. They imposed martial law over the area and called up several national guard units to track down Tijerina and the others. The manhunt included planes, helicopters, tanks and armed personnel carriers which rumbled through the small Chicano villages of New Mexico. The state detained several hundred Chicano villagers for questioning and investigation.

Tijerina eventually gave himself up and was later imprisoned for several years. But his struggle had an electrifying effect on the Chicano people as it brought to the forefront once again the desire for the return of the lands stolen from the Chicano people.

At the same time as land struggles were taking place in the



The Brown Berets played an important role in the Chicano movement of the 1960's, particularly in the struggle against police repression.

countryside, there was an upsurge in political activity among Chicanos in urban areas. Many Chicano youth began to form groups such as the Brown Berets and Black Berets. Inspired by the examples of the Black Panther Party and the Cuban Revolution, they formed to protect the Chicano communities from attacks by the police and to stop the fights between Chicano youth from rival barrios. The Black Berets which formed out of Albuquerque, New Mexico, put forth a 12 Point Political Program which included the call for "self-determination and liberation for all Chicanos in the U.S.A." and "community control of our institutions and land."⁶ They supported the struggle of the farm workers and Chicano peasants and opposed the U.S. imperialist war. Point Six in their program demanded, "U.S.A. Out of Viet Nam, Latin America, and Aztlán!"⁷ (Aztlán is a term popularly used to refer to the Chicano Nation.) The Black Berets were one of the first contemporary Chicano groups to raise the struggle as one against capitalism, upholding armed self-defense and armed struggle as necessary for liberation.

Another important political development during this time was the birth and development of La Raza Unida Party (LRUP) led by José Angel Gutiérrez. This was a mass organization, first

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formed in south Texas, which called for Chicano independence from the Democratic and Republican Parties. This was a challenge to the long tradition of support for the Democratic Party among Chicanos, a tradition that went back to Roosevelt's New Deal.

The LRUP grew rapidly throughout the Southwest and within a couple of years had over 100,000 registered members and sympathizers in the Southwest. La Raza Unida focused primarily on running Chicanos in local elections and in some cities succeeded in electing its candidates to office. Within LRUP, however, there were some strong differences over its direction. Chicano businessmen and merchants composed one main current of the organization. They proposed that LRUP become a pressure voting bloc which, in return for the Chicano vote, could wring some concessions from the bourgeois parties. They understood "Chicano self-determination" as Chicanos owning their own businesses and electing Chicanos to public office instead of Anglos.

In opposition, a revolutionary current arose which maintained that the enemy of the Chicano people was imperialism, that the struggle of the Chicano people was for self-determination, and that freedom and emancipation could not be achieved within the system of capitalism. This current became a strong force within LRUP. This influence was evident at the 1972 national convention of LRUP in El Paso. With over 2,000 delegates from throughout the Southwest and the U.S., the La Raza Unida Party after two days of debate rejected the "voting bloc" path. Later that year LRUP adopted a program which began with the words, "La Raza Unida Party proclaims the people of *La Raza* to be a nation within a nation endowed with the right and obligation to struggle for self-determination."⁸ This theme became a dominant sentiment in the Chicano movement and was expressed in most of the demonstrations and marches of the time.

Chicano students and youth were some of the most active forces in the 1960's and 1970's. In 1968 several thousand Chicano high school students in East Los Angeles walked out of the schools in the famous "high school blowouts." They protested the discrimination against Chicanos which was normal policy in L.A. schools, against racist teachers who regularly disparaged Chicano history and culture, and for an end to the "tracking" system which kept Chicano students away from college. Underneath it all the Chicano students demanded an end to a school system which

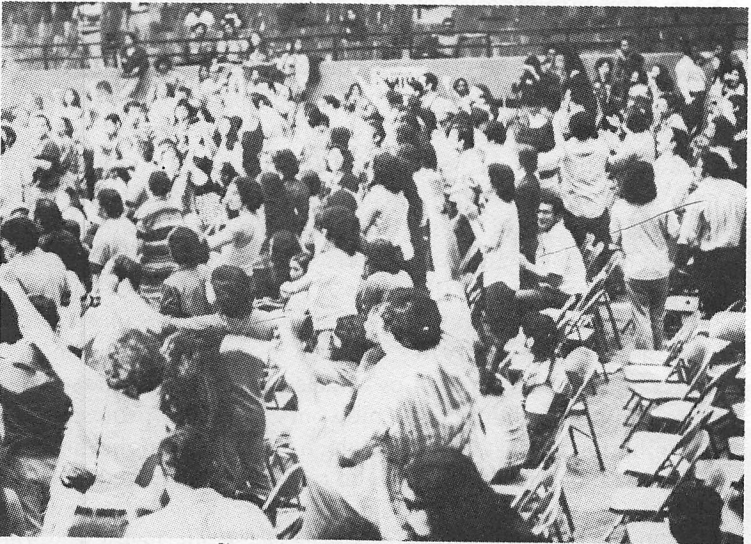
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caused Chicanos to have the highest dropout rate in California, the lowest percentage of high school graduates and the lowest percentage of college students in the state.

As a result of the walkouts and similar actions throughout the Southwest, a number of progressive Chicano student and youth organizations were formed — the MEChAs (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán), MAYO (Mexican-American Youth Organization) and UMAS (United Mexican-American Students).

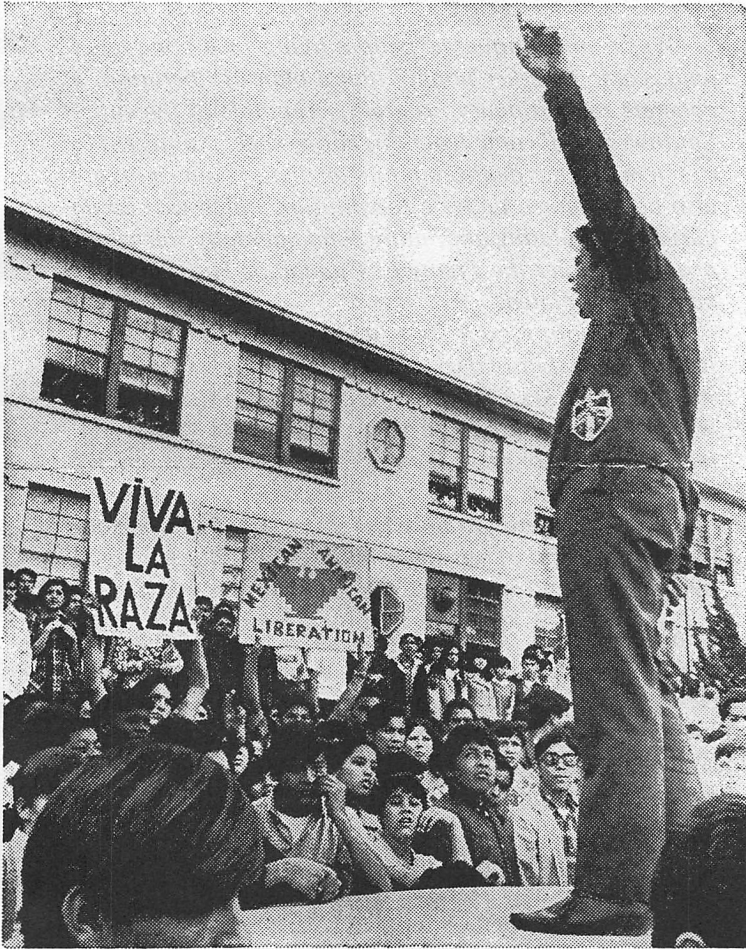
Chicano college students also played a leading role in the Third World Liberation Front struggle at the University of California, Berkeley, and led militant campaigns on campuses in Colorado, Texas, New Mexico, and California. In many of these struggles the students raised the demand for self-determination.

This sentiment too was strongly expressed at the Chicano Youth Conferences held in Denver, Colorado. At the first Conference in 1969, several thousand youth, students, workers and community people adopted the *Plan de Aztlán* which explicitly called for self-determination — “a nation autonomous and free — culturally, socially, economically and politically — will make its own decisions on the usage of our lands, the taxation of our goods,



El Paso, Texas — National convention of La Raza Unida Party held in 1972.

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The Los Angeles high school “blowouts” of 1968 were aimed at ending racism and discrimination faced by Chicanos in the educational system. The students received support from parents, teachers, and community organizations. The “blowouts” set a militant example for Chicano youth throughout the Southwest.

to utilization of our bodies for war, the determination of justice (reward and punishment) and the profit of our sweat.”⁹ At this same conference another important statement was issued by a number of different Chicanos who called themselves the “revolutionary caucus.” Their statement was issued prior to the adoption of the *Plan de Aztlan*:

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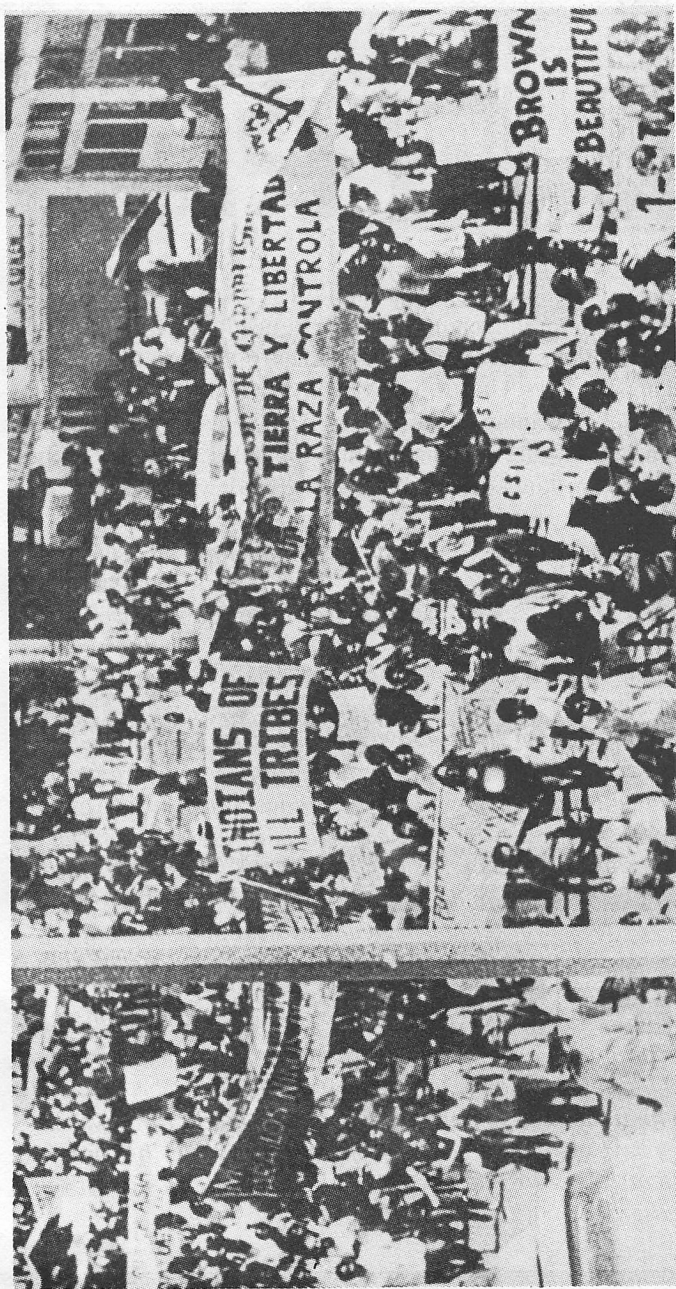
We, a nonconquered people living in a conquered land, come together hoping that a plan of liberation, a concrete revolutionary program acceptable to the entire Southwest, will come from this conference. Subjected to a system that has denied our human dignity, our rights are also being denied under a constitution which we had no part in formulating and, more fundamentally, the rights protected under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo have been violated.

We are oppressed first because we are Chicanos, because our skin is dark. But we are also exploited as workers by a system which feeds like a vulture off the work of our people only to enrich a few who own and control this entire country. We suffer double oppression. We catch double hell.

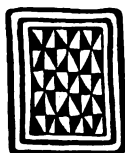
*. . . We will not attain what is rightfully ours, or our democratic right of self-determination without having to overturn the entire system*¹⁰

A high point of these activities was the famous Chicano Moratorium Against the War held on August 29, 1970, in East Los Angeles. The march was organized by a committee made up of revolutionary and progressive Chicanos and was one of the largest Chicano demonstrations in recent times. The march was called to protest the war of aggression in Southeast Asia and the fact that a high percentage of Chicanos were being drafted, killed, and wounded in the war — a much larger proportion than the average. Chicanos made up 20% of the front line troops in Viet Nam, while they made up 3% of the U.S. population. Over 25,000 Chicanos marched through the streets chanting “*Raza Sí, Guerra No*” and “*Raza Sí, Guerra Aquí*” (Chicanos Yes, Our War is Here). The peaceful march was brutally attacked by a force of almost 2,000 police and sheriffs who killed three Chicanos, including Ruben Salazar, a well-known Chicano journalist who was shot in the head with a tear gas projectile while sitting in a cafe. Hundreds more were wounded, beaten and arrested.

In response many demonstrators stoned and fought the police. They put dozens of police in the hospital, and burned 12 squad cars. Demonstrations against the killings went on for weeks following August 29th.



The August 29, 1970, Chicano Moratorium against the war in Indochina. Attended by over 25,000, this historic demonstration showed the strength and revolutionary power of the Chicano liberation struggle.



El Plan

The Plan of Delano was announced by the National Farm Workers Association, later a central part of the United Farm Workers Union, in March 1966 during the farm workers' pilgrimage from Delano, the "capital" of California agriculture, to Sacramento, the political capital of the state. Thousands joined the 300 mile walk which took place at the height of the Delano grape strike. The Plan reflects the deep sentiments for liberation as well as the influence of the Church:

The following are excerpts from the Plan de Delano:

Our sweat and our blood have fallen on this land to make other men rich. Our wages and working conditions have been determined from above, because irresponsible legislators who could have helped us have supported the rancher's argument that the plight of the farm workers was a "special case." They saw the obvious effects of an unjust system, starvation wages, contractors, day hauls, forced migration, sickness and subhuman conditions.

The farm worker has been abandoned to his own fate — without representation, without power — subject to the mercy and caprice of the rancher.

We are suffering. We have suffered unnumbered ills and crimes in the name of the law of the land. Our men, women and children have suffered not only the basic brutality of stoop labor, and the most obvious injustices of the system; they have also suffered the desperation of knowing that the system caters to the greed of callous men and not to our needs.

de Delano

Now we will suffer for the purpose of ending the poverty, the misery, and the injustice, with the hope that our children will not be exploited as we have been. They have imposed hungers on us, and now we hunger for justice. We draw strengths from the very despair in which we have been forced to live. WE SHALL ENDURE!

We shall unite. We have learned the meaning of unity. We know why these United States are just that — united. The strength of the poor is also in union. We know that the poverty of the Mexican or Filipino worker in California is the same as that of all farm workers across the country, the Negroes and poor whites, the Puerto Ricans, Japanese and Arabians; in short, all of the races that comprise the oppressed minorities of the United States. The majority of the people on our pilgrimage are of Mexican descent, but the triumph of our race depends on a national association of farm workers. We must get together and bargain collectively. We must use the only strength that we have, the force of our numbers; the ranchers are few, we are many. United we shall stand!

We shall pursue the Revolution we have proposed. We are sons of the Mexican Revolution, a revolution of the poor seeking bread and justice. Our Revolution shall not be an armed one, but we want the order which now exists to be undone, and that a new social order replace it. We are poor, we are humble, and our only choice is to strike in those ranches where we are not treated with the respect we deserve as working men, where our rights as free and sovereign men are not recognized.

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With the memory of the police attack on August 29th still fresh in their minds, some 300,000 Chicanos and Mexicans came out just two weeks later on September 16 to celebrate Mexican Independence Day. This was a massive sign of resistance to police terror. People held up signs calling for "Chicano power" and "Remember Ruben Salazar."

During the 1960's and 1970's Chicano workers also led struggles, including some of the most important labor battles of the time. The most well-known of them are the farm workers struggle, the Farah clothing workers strike, and the 1973 Los Angeles furniture workers walkout. These struggles were against both national and class oppression, and were noted for the high level of political consciousness, militancy, and determination of the workers.

In 1965 Chicano and Mexican farm workers, who constitute the majority of farm workers in the country, joined striking Filipino farm workers in Delano, California. This was the spark for the organizing efforts of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee, and later the United Farm Workers Union. Tens of thousands of farm workers would be involved in a decade-long struggle to unionize the unorganized agricultural workers in the West. The farm workers battled bosses, police, hired armies of thugs, and the gangster leadership of the Teamsters union. Several farm workers were killed during the struggle, and hundreds more were wounded or jailed. The struggle eventually received national and international support, especially when the workers used the boycott of non-union grapes and lettuce as a tactic against the growers.

Through the campaign thousands of people actively helped propagate the cause of the farm workers and helped in the support and boycott work. The farm workers have achieved a number of successes, though the struggle is still ongoing and is difficult.

The farm workers' efforts to unionize was at the same time a struggle against national oppression. This is because unionization has long been denied to many Chicano workers. It is no accident that the majority of the states in the Chicano nation are right-to-work states. As a result the farm workers also actively supported other Chicano struggles, such as the land struggle in New Mexico.

Another significant strike of Chicano workers during this time was that of the Farah workers. The two-year long strike against one of the largest clothing manufacturers in the U.S. took place deep in the Chicano nation, in El Paso, Texas.

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In 1972 more than 2000 Chicano and Mexican workers in El Paso, Texas went on strike against the Farah Manufacturing Company. The majority of the strikers were women. Their victory in 1974 struck a sharp blow against the capitalist "right to work" policy in the Southwest.

The strike for unionization began in 1972 and eventually 4,000 workers, 98% of them Chicano and Mexican, and the majority women, walked out of Willie Farah's plants. Starting pay was \$1.70 per hour, and not a single person had received any retire-

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ment benefits from Farah in 53 years. The strikers defied the police, the courts, armed goons, and police dogs during the course of their strike. Over 800 strikers were arrested in one incident. Finally in 1974, with the support of people throughout the U.S., the workers won recognition for their union. The victory was a major blow against class exploitation and national oppression in the Chicano nation.

Many of the workers understood their struggle as connected to the Chicano people's struggle against oppression. When a Dallas cop shot young Santos Rodriguez in the head inside a squad car, a number of Farah strikers organized a protest demonstration in El Paso.

A third example of struggles of Chicano workers during this time was that of the furniture workers walkout in Los Angeles in 1973. Several hundred furniture workers from eight plants walked off their jobs for one day to picket a convention of AFL-CIO union bureaucrats. Though not as large as the farm workers or Farah strikes, the walkout was significant because it was a one-day political strike to protest the Viet Nam War and Nixon's wage freeze. Over 90% of the furniture workers in L.A. are Chicano or Mexican.

These examples serve to illustrate the militant and conscious role that Chicano workers played in the great national upsurge of the late 1960's and early 1970's. In each and every case their struggles won support from the broad sectors of the Chicano community. Hundreds of Chicano students filled the jails of the Coachella Valley in support of the farm workers strikes. Hundreds more walked the picket lines of department stores around the Southwest in support of the Farah boycott. A number of MEChA students marched in the picket line during the walkout of the furniture workers. Support was also received from housewives, small businessmen and Chicano professionals who recognized that these struggles were a part of the Chicano people's resistance to centuries-long oppression.

Chicano movement produces revolutionaries

Many revolutionary activists came out of the struggles of the Chicano people in the 1960's and 1970's. They saw that the oppressive conditions faced by Chicanos and other peoples were not accidental, but in fact historical and systematic. They recognized

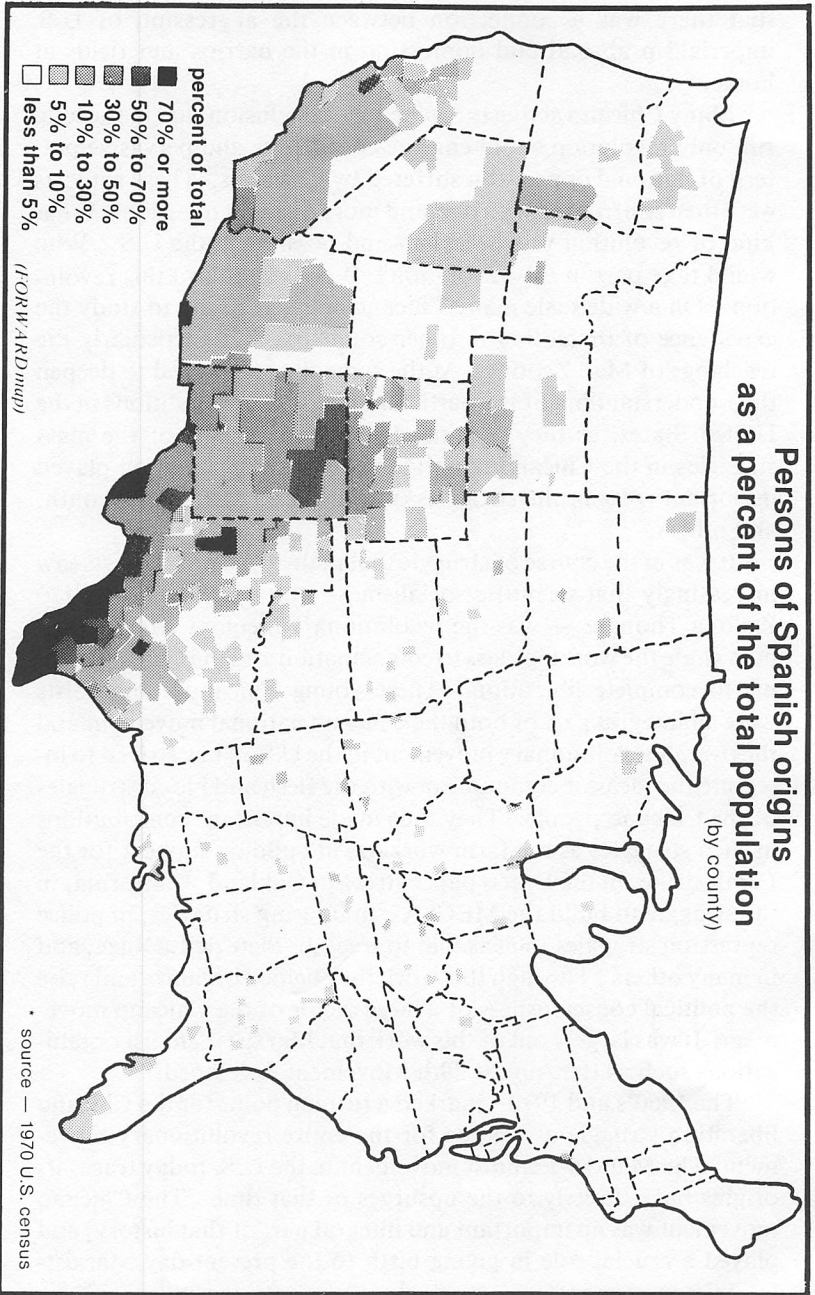
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that there was a connection between the aggression of U.S. imperialism abroad and oppression in the barrios and fields at home.

Many Chicano activists reached the conclusion that in the long run only revolution could end the continuous and pervasive pattern of national oppression suffered by Chicanos. These activists were then confronted with new and more difficult questions: What kind of revolution was necessary and possible in the U.S.? Who would take part in this revolution? Who would lead this revolution? On a wide scale many Chicano activists began to study the experience of revolution in other countries, and particularly the teachings of Mao Zedong. At the same time they tried to deepen their understanding of the particular history and conditions in the United States, as they continued to take up many of the mass struggles in the Chicano national movement. They often played important roles in the struggles of the workers, students, youth, and others.

It was in the course of struggle that many Chicano activists saw increasingly that scientific socialism — Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought — was the revolutionary ideology which could help guide the working class to emancipation and the Chicano people to complete liberation. These young Chicano communists were an integral part of both the Chicano national movement and the overall revolutionary movement in the U.S. They strived to integrate the ideas of communism with the flesh and blood struggles of the Chicano people. They thus made important contributions in such struggles as the farm workers, in building support for the Farah strike, in the Dasco paper strike in Oakland, California, in the struggle to build the MEChAs, in housing struggles, in police repression struggles such as that to free Los Siete de La Raza, and in many others. Through this work they helped organize and raise the political consciousness of a large sector of the Chicano movement. It was largely out of this work that Marxist-Leninist organizations such as the August 29th Movement developed.

The 1960's and 1970's marked a turning point for the Chicano liberation struggle as well as for the entire revolutionary movement. The Marxist-Leninist movement in the U.S. today traces its origins back directly to the upsurges of that time. The Chicano movement was an important and integral part of that history, and played a crucial role in giving birth to the present-day Marxist-Leninist movement.



IV. The Chicano people today and their struggle for liberation

The Chicano people in their areas of concentration in the Southwest form a distinct nation, but a nation which is oppressed by the U.S. monopoly capitalist class. The oppression of the Chicano people is seen in every aspect of their lives and in turn has created a deep revolutionary sentiment. The struggle of the Chicano people for liberation is a component and important part of the struggle against the U.S. monopoly capitalist class and for socialism.

Communists have the task of fighting national oppression as part of the proletarian revolution. Communists must strive to unite with the Chicano national movement, lead it in a revolutionary direction and unite it with the struggle of the working class to overthrow the monopoly capitalists. At the same time, communists must lead the workers movement to support the just struggles of the Chicano people up to and including the right of self-determination of the Chicano nation.

National oppression manifested in every sphere of life

Today there are between 10-12 million Chicanos and Mexicans in the U.S., and 85% of them continue to live in the Southwest where they have constituted a stable community of people for hundreds of years. The overwhelming majority of Spanish-speaking people in the Southwest are U.S. born. The core of the Chicano nation is New Mexico and southern Colorado, but a look at a map which shows the proportion of the Spanish surnamed population by county clearly shows that the Chicano people constitute a majority or near majority in a continuous band of territory along the entire border with Mexico. This band generally constitutes the Chicano nation.

The vast majority of Chicanos in the Southwest continue to hold Spanish as their native tongue. This is the common language

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of the Chicano people, despite attempts by the bourgeoisie to deprive them of their language. The big capitalists have systematically tried to suppress Spanish.

In New Mexico, for instance, in 1876 when the first public schools were established in the territory, 111 of 133 schools were conducted in Spanish, 12 in both English and Spanish and only 10 in English alone. The first trial in English was not held until 1912. But since then, due to the pressure of the U.S. state, English became the required language in all schools in New Mexico and throughout the Southwest. As recently as 1970 a Chicano teacher in Crystal City, Texas, was indicted for conducting a high school history class in Spanish.

Despite the discrimination against Spanish, 80% of the Chicano population in the core area of the nation is Spanish-speaking. The 1970 federal census also reveals that 91% of the Chicano and Mexican population in the U.S. reported Spanish as their native language.¹

The suppression of the Spanish language is one of the blatant forms of national oppression and, of course, this seriously restricts the cultural, educational and political lives of the Chicano people. One of the most outrageous examples of this discrimination against Spanish came to light recently, when it became known that some Chicano children had been put into classes for mentally retarded children, because they did not know English.

Other social statistics clearly show the all-round nature of the oppression of the Chicano people: In 1972, 40% of Chicano families lived on less than \$6,000 a year compared to 24% for Anglos. The median income in 1972 for the total population was \$10,285 while it was just \$7,480 for Chicanos. The percentage of Chicano families living in poverty was 28.9% compared to 12.5% for the total population. (The figure for just the Anglo population, of course, would be much lower than the "total population" as this includes all the minority nationalities.) In the core area of the Chicano nation, the situation is still worse: in 1972, 40% of the Chicano families were in poverty and 50% in Texas. The federal government, itself, just revealed that Brownsville, Texas, which is overwhelmingly Chicano, is the poorest city in the U.S.

National oppression means, too, that the lives of the Chicano people are cut short — the life expectancy for Chicanos is only 56.7 years compared to 67.5 years for Anglos. Chicano farm workers have a life expectancy of only 49 years! This situation is caused by

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poor nutrition, inadequate health care and brutal exploitation. In the poor rural areas of the Chicano nation, the infant mortality rate is 125% higher than the national average, and the influenza and pneumonia death rates are 200% higher.

But these statistics alone do not tell the entire story — they do not tell of the dozens of police murders of Chicanos that have taken place throughout the Southwest over the past decade. They do not tell of the serious drug problems which enslave many of the young people. The statistics, too, do not tell of the racist social treatment of the Chicano people, including stereotyping in the media, segregation in housing and discrimination in employment.

Should it be at all surprising that the hatred for national oppression runs so deep and strong among the Chicano people!

The Chicano people hold no political power in their own homeland — they have been forcibly kept within the control of the U.S. capitalist state. One of the reasons for this has been because the big capitalists have so coveted the riches of the Chicano nation.

The biggest landowners in New Mexico continue to be the federal government, the railroad companies and mining companies such as Phelps Dodge, Anaconda, Kennecott and Kaiser. The big petroleum companies such as Exxon, Tenneco and Standard Oil, too, have large holdings in New Mexico. The state is still largely plundered for its great mineral and timber wealth.

Once mainly peasant and small farmers, the great majority of the Chicano people are now wage laborers. Eighty percent are workers and close to this same percentage reside in urban areas.

1969 U.S. Census Figures

	MEN		WOMEN	
	Spanish speaking	White	Spanish Speaking	White
White collar	18.5	41.4	37.7	60.7
Blue collar	64.4	47.1	29.6	16.1
Farm work	8.7	5.1	1.2	1.7
Service	8.4	6.5	31.8	21.5

A small Chicano peasantry continues to exist, mainly in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado, and there are many small farmers in the south Texas area. In addition, some Chicanos are semi-proletarians, who work for a wage part of the year, and also do some family farming.

With very few exceptions the Chicano bourgeoisie is really a petty bourgeoisie and most of its holdings are in retail and

wholesale trade and construction rather than manufacturing or banking. Of the Chicano owned businesses in 1969 only 50 employed more than 50 employees and only 15 employed more than 100. In contract construction there were just under 400 Chicano firms with gross receipts of more than \$100,000, eight of which have earned more than a million dollars. In manufacturing there were just over 200 firms with gross receipts of over \$100,000. In finance there were 85 with over \$100,000 in gross receipts.² These figures show that the Chicano business sector is just a mere drop in the bucket when compared to the billions in superprofits that the monopolists extract from the Southwest in the form of mineral wealth, agriculture and manufacturing.

The masses of Chicanas (women) suffer the triple oppression of class, nationality and sex. Like women throughout the U.S., Chicanas receive substantially lower pay for the work they do as compared to men, but Chicanas are paid even less than Anglo women. Almost one-half of Chicanas in the work force earn less than \$2,000 a year. Proportionally more Chicanas work than the national average of women and most labor in nonunionized areas in light industry, light assembly and service work. In California in 1970, almost half of Chicano women worked. Nearly 43% of Chicano families were headed by women living close to or below the official poverty line.

Chicanas have had to face an especially brutal form of oppression in recent years in the form of forced sterilization. In Los Angeles, which has a very large population of Chicanos and Mexicans, a number of women were forced to undergo sterilization by threatening them with deportation if they refused, or by making them sign clearance forms printed only in English, or while the women were under sedation, or even while the women were in the middle of their labor.

Chicanas have also had to deal with the particular restrictions which the Catholic Church puts on women. Most Chicanos are Catholic, and this religion fosters the ideas that women's place is in the home, and that women are meant to be the docile tools of men. This has contributed to the idea and practice of "machismo" which has kept the Chicana suppressed — tied to the nursery and kitchen. The Chicano movement of the 1960's and 1970's dealt sharp blows to these ideas, as thousands of Chicanas fought against national oppression, as well as against their oppression as women.

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But the struggle of Chicano women did not begin in the 1960's. It started during the first days of resistance to U.S. domination. Chicanas took part in the Taos uprising, in the defense of Vásquez, Murietta and Cortina, as well as in the great labor struggles of the 1930's, especially in the agricultural fields. Women like Emma Tenayucca played an important part in the San Antonio Pecan strike. Chicanas also played an important role in the Empire Zinc Strike in the 1950's. This tradition was carried on by Chicanas in the great farm worker, Farah and other struggles of the 1960's. Chicanas played important and leading roles in the Brown Berets, in the MEChAs, in the *Alianza*, and in La Raza Unida Party. History has shown that the struggle of Chicanas is an important and component part of the Chicano struggle for liberation.

Tasks of communists

The enemy of the Chicano people is the monopoly capitalist class. They are responsible for plundering the vast riches of the Southwest, for the long history of the suppression of the Chicano people and for their continuing impoverishment. The monopoly capitalists are responsible for the vicious chauvinism directed against Chicanos and the demeaning of their culture and history.

This national oppression is an integral part of the U.S. imperialist system. It has been the source of great profit for the bourgeoisie — the big capitalists make billions annually off of the superexploitation of Chicano workers.

The bourgeoisie has given some privileges to Anglo workers in the form of making English an official language, higher pay, fostering disdain for the Chicano people, etc. But these divisions are aimed only at benefiting the big Anglo capitalists. The masses of Anglo workers have no stake in preserving national oppression and imperialism.

The multinational working class and the Chicano people have a common enemy in the monopoly capitalists. Only with the overthrow of the imperialists will the suffering of the Chicano and working people be ended.

The ultimate solution to national and class oppression in the U.S. requires the victory of socialism and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. This new social system will wipe out exploitation and achieve genuine equality for all nationalities.

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With the power of the state in their hands the masses of people can tackle the massive social and living problems inherited from capitalism. All nationalities will be recognized as equal, and all nationalities will be able to use their languages without discrimination or other interference. The development of culture of the minority nationalities will be encouraged and assisted and not disparaged.

Most importantly, the minority nationalities will be able to hold political power. The oppressed nations such as the Afro-American nation in the Black-belt South, and the Chicano nation in the Southwest, will be able to exercise their right to self-determination. Outside of these areas, minority peoples in areas of concentration can exercise some form of local or regional autonomy over their affairs and take part in the general affairs of the state.

But while socialism is the ultimate solution to national oppression, this cannot be used as an argument against fighting today for the national rights of the Chicano people. In fact, socialism can be achieved only if a determined day-to-day fight is waged against national oppression by the working class.

The fight against national oppression is a particularly important task in the U.S. because the centuries of national oppression have created a profound revolutionary potential among the Chicano people. The contrast between the professed "democracy" and "prosperity" of the U.S. and the reality of life for the masses of Chicanos has created a deep bitterness.

Communists have a responsibility to be the staunchest fighters against the national oppression of the Chicano people. Communists must unite with the struggle of the Chicano people, strive to advance the movement and help forge its unity with the struggle of the working class and other oppressed peoples.

This can be done only if communists show in deeds that they can help lead the Chicano movement in a revolutionary direction and advance the interests of the Chicano people. Words and propaganda are not enough. Many communists already have come from the Chicano people and are continuing to play leading roles in the Chicano struggle.

Communists must also lead the workers of other nationalities to support and unite with the just struggles of the Chicano people. These struggles include the fight against discrimination, for better living conditions, for the equality of languages and against police

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attacks; but they also include the struggle for basic national democratic demands up to and including the right of self-determination for the Chicano nation.

Fighting for the right of self-determination means fighting for the right of the Chicano people to determine the future of their nation without the interference of outside force or compulsion. This means being able to determine the affairs of their nation up to and including secession from the U.S., if they so desire. Whether or not the Chicano people decide to form an independent nation-state, federate with the U.S., become a Mexican province or some other form is entirely up to the Chicano people to decide.

Communists uphold the right of self-determination for the Chicano nation for the same reason that they uphold all the other just demands of the Chicano people — to forge the internationalist unity of the multinational working class and to help lead the Chicano people in revolutionary struggle.

By upholding the right of self-determination, the workers of the oppressor nation prove to the workers of the Chicano nation that they reject the privileges acquired by conquest. Upholding the right of self-determination will serve to break down the mistrust between the workers of the oppressed and oppressor nationalities and replace it with revolutionary trust.

Communists must uphold the right of self-determination now, even if it is not the principal demand of the movement today, for communists must not look just at the present but to the future. It is only a matter of time (and not a question of *if* it will come about) when there will be another great upsurge in the struggle of the Chicano people. And it is very likely that this demand will be raised even more widely and militantly than in the past. At that time upholding the right of self-determination will become an immediate issue upon which revolutionaries will be judged on their *past* and present stand.

Communists must also uphold the right of self-determination for the Chicano nation in order to help lead the Chicano national movement in a revolutionary direction. This demand, once taken up by the Chicano masses, will lead them to struggle against the U.S. monopolists. The right of self-determination presupposes a struggle for political power and is aimed at a central pillar of U.S. imperialism. Self-determination cannot be won without revolutionary struggle.

Can self-determination actually be won? It definitely can be

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won. It will be realized in its most concrete and genuine way when the proletariat makes revolution, destroys imperialism and constructs socialism. Under socialism the most complete and real democracy can be attained, including the realization of the right of self-determination for oppressed nations.

But it is possible that this right may be won in some form before the victory of the proletariat. War, international and domestic crisis, a great revolutionary upsurge throughout the U.S. or some combination of these may result in the Chicano people being able to win some exercise of the right of self-determination. Of course as long as imperialism exists, this self-determination could only be limited or distorted. This cannot be used though, as a reason not to uphold fighting for self-determination as an immediate demand.

While communists uphold the *right* of self-determination, communists must also have their own opinion whether or not a particular expression of the right is advantageous to the proletariat. Upholding the *right* of self-determination does not presuppose communist support for secession or any other specific exercise of the right. Communists decide on their position taking into account the overall conditions of the proletarian struggle and how secession or whatever other form of the right would affect this struggle. In other words, the right of self-determination, as with all democratic demands, is subordinate to the general cause of the proletariat.

For instance, if socialism were achieved in the U.S. and bourgeois elements in the Chicano nation wished to secede, weakening socialism and the proletariat, communists would have a responsibility to agitate against *this* specific proposal to secede.

Communists can formulate their concrete opinion about a form of self-determination only when the possibility of that expression becomes real. To put forth today for instance, that one is *against* secession for the Chicano nation now and in the future, is idealist and detrimental to winning the right itself and to leading the Chicano national movement along a revolutionary path.

Some specific questions

The Communist Party USA: The Communist Party USA (CPUSA), as part and parcel of its revisionism, generally has neglected the Chicano national movement. The program it offers for Chicano liberation is similar to that for other minority na-

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tionalties. It pivots around trying to "outlaw" racism, and enacting a series of liberal-reformist programs to "uplift" the Chicano people, while leaving the system of monopoly capital intact.³ The program completely omits any genuine national democratic demands, the question of political power, and the necessity to win liberation through revolutionary struggle. The CPUSA poses a danger to the Chicano movement because their views will leave the Chicano people defenseless in the face of national oppression, and will lead the Chicano people into reliance on this or that "liberal" politician. The program of the CPUSA offers only a dead end to the Chicano struggle, because it leaves untouched the control over society by the monopoly capitalists. The CPUSA is doubly dangerous because it tries to hide behind the mask of Marxism-Leninism and revolution; and because it seeks to tie the Chicano national movement into an alliance with the social-imperialist Soviet Union. It tries to do this by using Cuba.

The Cuban Revolution of 1959 against Batista and U.S. imperialism naturally has much prestige among the Spanish-speaking and other people in the western hemisphere. But the CPUSA attempts to manipulate this prestige to win support for their own line, for the present-day aggression of Cuba in Africa, and into support for the Soviet Union.

Genuine communists and revolutionaries in the Chicano national movement have the responsibility of exposing and defeating the poisonous activities of the CPUSA.

On nationalism: How should communists view nationalism? Communists are internationalists; they recognize that the just struggles of all oppressed peoples support one another and the eventual goal is world communism with an end to all national boundaries and divisions. But this does not mean in any way that communists do not recognize and support nationalism in the cause of progress, and make a distinction between reactionary and revolutionary nationalism.

The nationalism of imperialism is reactionary as it is a nationalism aimed at perpetuating exploitation and oppression. It is aimed at keeping the masses of the oppressor nation chained to support the criminal bourgeoisie. The U.S. "Buy America" campaign and "America: Love It or Leave It" are examples of reactionary nationalism in the U.S. today.

But there are national sentiments which are progressive and revolutionary. These are the sentiments of the oppressed peoples

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who oppose imperialism. The Chicano people have suffered national oppression and this has generated national resistance, national sentiments and national rebellion at times. Directed against their oppressors, such sentiments are revolutionary. Communists support these sentiments.

Communists of oppressor nationalities have a particular responsibility to combat the nationalism of "their" reactionary bourgeoisie. Communists from the oppressed nationalities on the other hand are first and foremost communists, but they should also be the most determined fighters against the oppression of their people. Communism in the U.S. must stand for the emancipation of the working class *and* the liberation of the oppressed nationalities.

Within the national movements, communists will have to combat narrow nationalism, among other deviations, which hurts the cause of proletarian revolution. The narrow nationalists attempt to manipulate the progressive national sentiments of the oppressed peoples and direct them away from the source of their oppression. Narrow nationalists in the Chicano movement, for instance, target all Anglos as the source of Chicano oppression. In practice the narrow nationalists are splitters who actually work hand in glove with the big Anglo bourgeoisie against the workers and masses of Chicano people. The narrow nationalists attack Marxism and communism as "white" things and attack revolutionary nationalists, who see the common interests of all the oppressed, as *vendidos* (sellouts). The narrow nationalists however, are only a small handful and they offer only the dead end alternatives of "Chicano capitalism," or "community control" without a revolutionary struggle for political power.

Communists must unite with the progressive national sentiments of the masses and expose the narrow nationalists as splitters and betrayers of the interests of the masses of oppressed peoples.

On the relation between Chicanos and Mexicans: The Chicano people in the U.S. are the people whose ancestors were the Spanish-speaking people of northern Mexico (before annexation), and include the many generations of migrants from Mexico who traveled across the border after 1848. The vast majority of these migrants have remained in the areas of the former Mexican territories.

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The culture of the Chicano people was first a blend of Spanish, Mexican and Indian inheritances. Since annexation though, the culture of the Chicano people has developed under the conditions of national oppression by Anglo capital. An identity evolved which was neither Mexican nor Anglo-American. The migrations from Mexico reinforced the Mexican aspects of the Chicano culture, but likewise over a period of time the immigrants from Mexico begin to adopt Chicano culture. It is important to understand the experience which binds Chicanos and Mexicans in the U.S. together.

The migrations from Mexico have been due in large part to imperialist domination of that country which has kept it impoverished, and caused large numbers of Mexicans to come to the U.S. When Mexicans arrive in the U.S. they are immediately superexploited in such jobs as the garment sweatshops, the foundries, the restaurants or in the fields. They are subjected to the constant terror of *la migra*. They face severe discrimination because they speak only Spanish. The monopoly capitalists, as well as unscrupulous loan sharks, insurance companies and landlords prey on the Mexican immigrants like vultures as soon as they set foot in the U.S.

For generation after generation this pattern has continued. These are the conditions which face the first generation of Mexican immigrants. But succeeding generations do not escape from oppression. Even if they acquire U.S. citizenship, or their children are born in the U.S., they are never allowed to achieve equal status with Anglo-Americans, no matter how long they live in the U.S. The vast majority of both immigrant and American-born are kept as a superexploited and unorganized part of the work force. Even when some Mexicans are able to get into a professional occupation or small business, their overall status remains much lower than that of their Anglo counterparts.

This is what binds together the Mexican and Chicano experience — a common experience of oppression. Over a generation or two, for all practical purposes the distinctions between the two disappear.

Regional autonomy: Regional autonomy is a policy of granting regional administrative flexibility in governing an area within a state because of its particular national characteristics. It is a policy which was used in the socialist Soviet Union, and is used today in

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China to help solve the national question.

In the U.S. after socialism is won, this policy may be utilized to help solve the national question too. In areas of minority concentrations, this policy would help enable minorities to take part in government, taking into account the particularities of the nationality.

Regional autonomy also may be desired by the oppressed nations in the U.S. This may be how the right of self-determination will be exercised, within the boundaries of the socialist U.S. state. The Chicano nation may decide to become an autonomous region rather than secede, or become a federated republic. Regional autonomy may also be the solution for the administration of areas of Chicano concentration outside the Southwest.

Regional autonomy may be an expression of an oppressed nation's right of self-determination, but it is not the same thing as the right itself. The recognition of the existence of a nation demands that that nation have the right to have full sovereignty over its destiny, which may or may not include regional autonomy.

Relation to Mexico: There are many ties between Mexico and the Southwest. The area once belonged to Mexico — many of the people in the Southwest have their origins in Mexico and continue to have family ties to Mexico. Economically both sides of the border are linked by trade, investments — the economy is similar along the border with agriculture, mining and manufacturing. Even the geography and climate are alike.

Undoubtedly whatever happens on one side of the border will affect the other side. This is a further reason to uphold the right of self-determination in addition to the other historical and contemporary arguments.

* * *

An upsurge of the Chicano people demanding self-determination in the Southwest is bound to have an electrifying effect on the entire U.S. It will be a great encouragement to the other oppressed nationalities, especially to the Afro-American nation in the South. And if communists do their work correctly, it will also be a tremendous inspiration to the workers of all nationalities for they will correctly see the upsurge as a powerful blow against the monopoly bourgeoisie. A massive struggle in the Southwest will

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irrevocably alter the economic and political life of the country.

It is therefore imperative to develop the solution to the Chicano national question not in some academic way, not just by reading some books and declaring what everyone already knows, i.e., that the Chicano people are oppressed — but in a way that takes revolution against the monopolists as the starting point. A *revolutionary* program for Chicano liberation — there is no other way to solve the Chicano national question. □



Villagers from Chilili, New Mexico, at press conference in 1977.



Program for Chicano liberation

In formulating our program we have developed a number of revolutionary demands to advance the liberation of the Chicano people and the cause of socialism. We deliberately avoided drawing up a long "laundry list" of partial demands. Such lists tend to confuse partial reforms with the more fundamental revolutionary demands, such as the right to self-determination. Communists must take up all the day-to-day struggles of the Chicano people against national oppression. Most of these struggles are for partial demands, such as for affirmative action programs, an end to drugs in the barrios, improved medical care, etc. These struggles and demands can be a good starting point for the development of broader mass struggles. In the course of these struggles, communists can educate and organize the Chicano masses for the struggle against the source of their oppression and for their basic national rights.

* * *

The daily struggles of the Chicano people against their national oppression are a part of their revolutionary struggle against imperialism. Communists must unite with the Chicano people's struggles against police repression, poor living conditions, against the growing drug traffic in the barrios, for improved housing, medical care and better education. These struggles and demands are an

integral part of developing the overall struggle of the Chicano masses against the monopoly capitalist class. These struggles are a component part of the fight for Chicano self-determination and for socialism. In addition to these various partial demands we put forward the following basic political demands for the liberation of the Chicano people:

1. We demand the right of self-determination for the Chicano nation. This is our basic demand in the Chicano nation which we raise in order to realize the full revolutionary potential of the Chicano national movement. This demand is also made to help forge the unity of the multinational proletariat on the basis of national equality.

The right of self-determination means the right of Chicano people, in their areas of concentration in the Southwest — their historic homeland which was annexed by the United States — to determine their own political future, up to and including the right to secede. This demand means that the Chicano people should have the right to exercise full political control over their territory.

2. We demand local or administrative autonomy for Chicanos outside of the Chicano nation, in those areas where they form large concentrations. Chicanos in those areas suffer oppression similar to their brothers and sisters in the Southwest. They are forced to live in overcrowded and poverty-stricken barrios, have no political or language rights, and are victims of constant police repression and attacks by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. We demand equal status — political, social and economic equality for all Chicanos.

3. We demand that the lands guaranteed protection under the terms of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo be returned to the Chicano people. We also demand that all federal and state lands within the Chicano nation (except those to which the American Indian peoples are entitled) be transferred to the Chicano people.

4. We demand full equality for the Spanish language. We oppose the U.S. bourgeoisie's imposition of English as an official language. We demand that all levels of schools in the Chicano nation be taught in the Spanish language. All legislative, judicial and other governmental organs in the Chicano nation must be able to serve the Chicano people in their own language, including all health, social and welfare institutions. Chicanos must be allowed

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to speak their own language on the job and to use Spanish without any restrictions in daily life.

All other nationalities in the Chicano nation must have the right to use the language of their nationality.

5. We demand an end to all discrimination against Chicanos in hiring, on the job, in the schools and in their communities. This includes an end to the forcible segregation of the Chicano people. At the same time, we demand that the Chicano communities be protected from destruction and dispersal.

6. We demand an end to all forcible repatriations (deportations) of Chicanos and Mexicans. We demand equal status for the Mexican national minority within the Chicano nation and outside of it. We demand the abolition of all laws infringing on the democratic rights of Mexican immigrants and that they must be given the same rights as U.S. citizens. All Mexican immigrants in the U.S. must have the right to voluntarily obtain U.S. citizenship, or to retain their own citizenship without any restriction of their full democratic rights.

7. We demand an end to the imposition of U.S. imperialist culture on the Chicano people. We stand for the complete development of all the progressive and revolutionary aspects of the Chicano national culture. The rich cultural traditions of the Chicano people face the threat of extinction by the U.S. bourgeoisie. We uphold the right of the Chicano people to the full development of their cultural traditions.

8. We demand that all treaties between the U.S. government and the American Indian peoples in the Southwest be upheld. All land, water, timber, grazing and fishing rights of the Indian peoples must be respected. The American Indian peoples of the Southwest must have the right to exercise full political power in their areas of concentration in the Southwest. □

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RAZA UNIDA

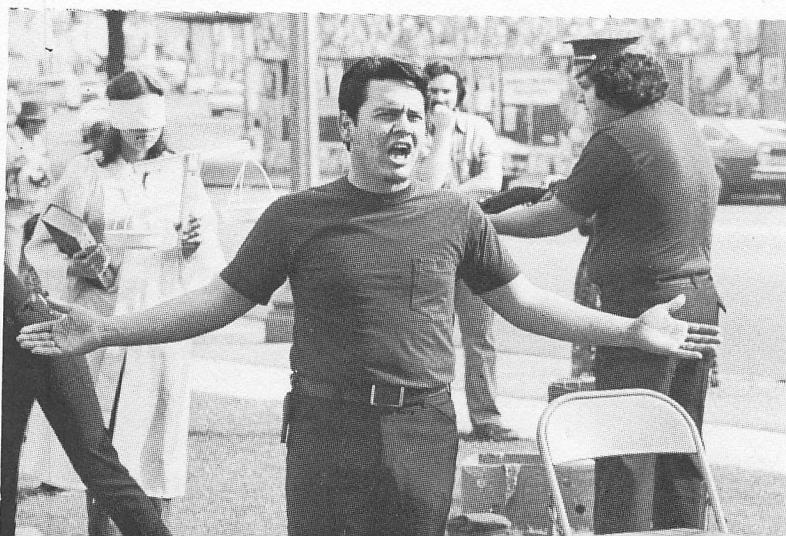
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**Chicano art,
theater,
and struggles,
in photos**



Teatro Campesino performing an acto on farm workers struggle in 1971. In this scene the boss is trying to impress a strikebreaker.

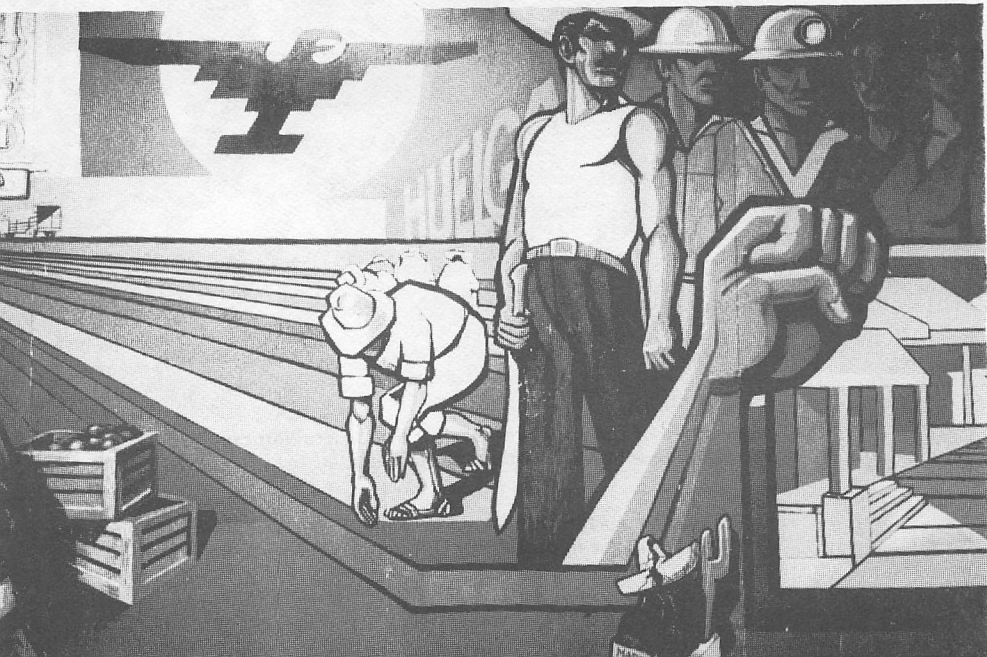


Teatro Mariposa of Los Angeles, California, performing an acto on police repression. (UNITY photo)



Mural in Oakland, California.

Mural in East Los Angeles, California.

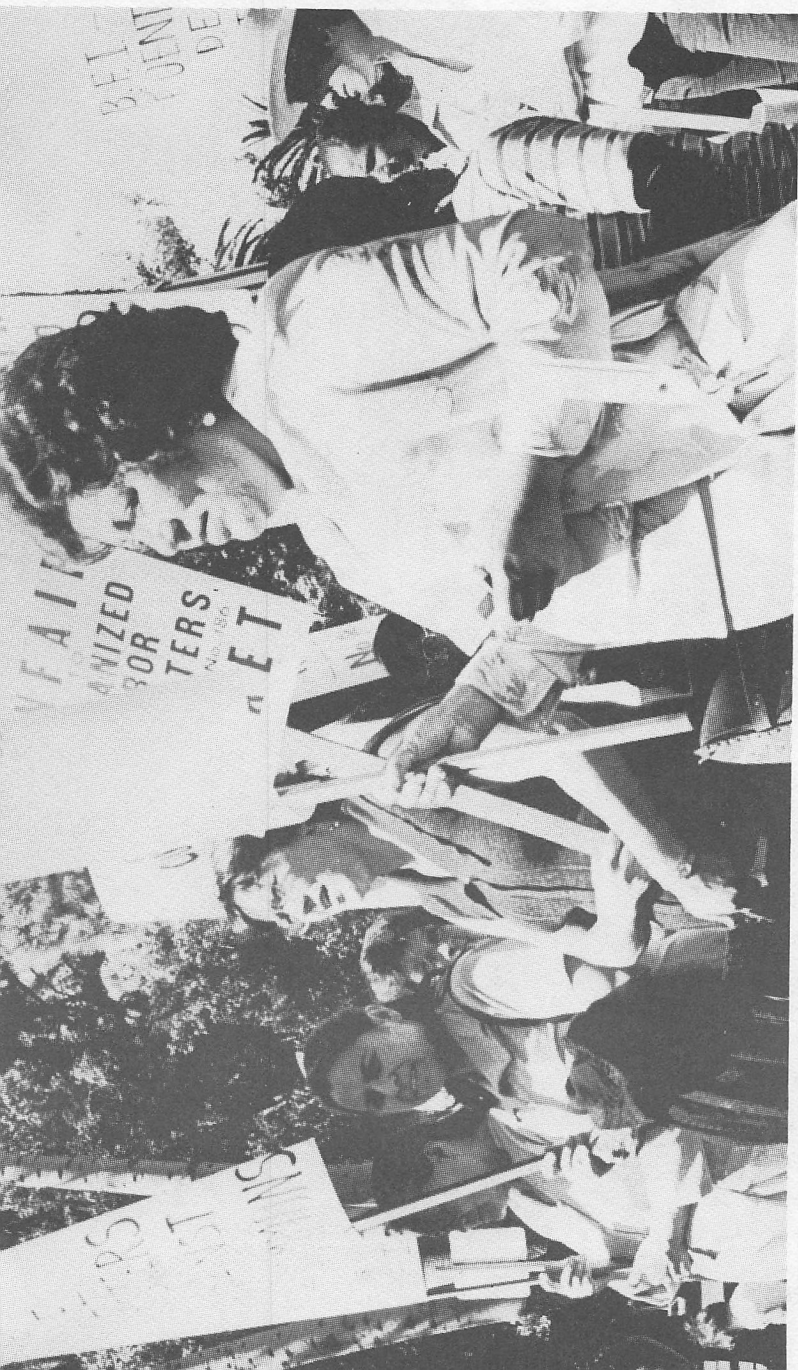




Through the struggle of the farm workers for better working conditions the short handled hoe was outlawed in many areas.

Chicanos sorting tomatoes in a packing shed. Chicano labor has produced billions in profits for U.S. agribusiness. (UNITY photo)





Chicanas have played a crucial role in the Chicano liberation struggle. This photo shows women at a 1976 rally for the mostly Chicano and Mexican strikers of the Browning-Ferris Industries in Santa Barbara, California. (UNITY photo)

Below: The United Farm Workers has been a great inspiration to the Chicano movement. On March 4, 1979, more than 3,000 farm workers and supporters staged a militant march through Salinas, California. (UNITY photo)





Above: Brown Berets march against police repression in El Paso, Texas.

The Farm Labor Organizing Committee is waging a militant battle to organize Chicano and Latino farm workers in the Midwest. (UNITY photo)



SOCORRO 9600

Barrio youth from San Jose, California, sign peace treaty at barrio unity conference in June, 1979. (UNITY photo)



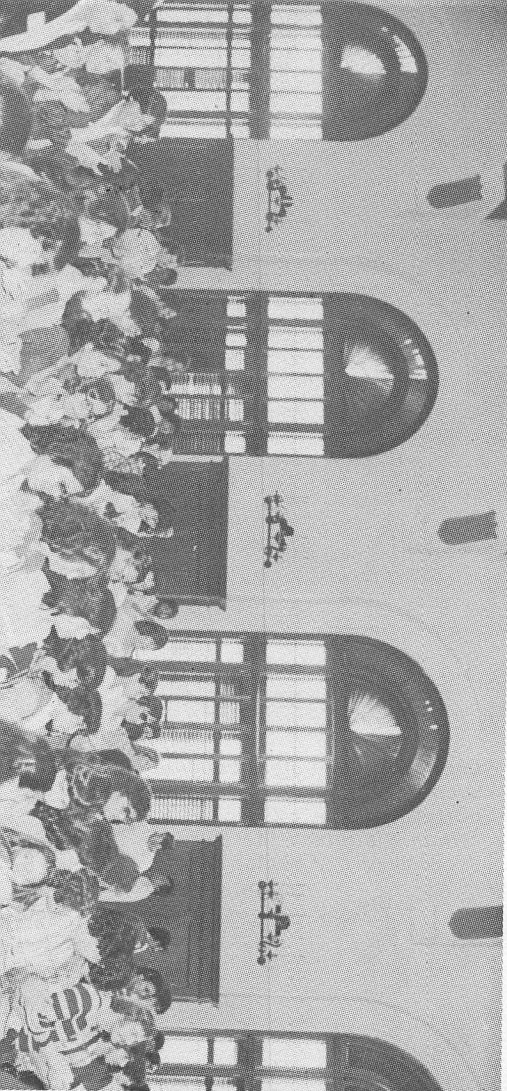
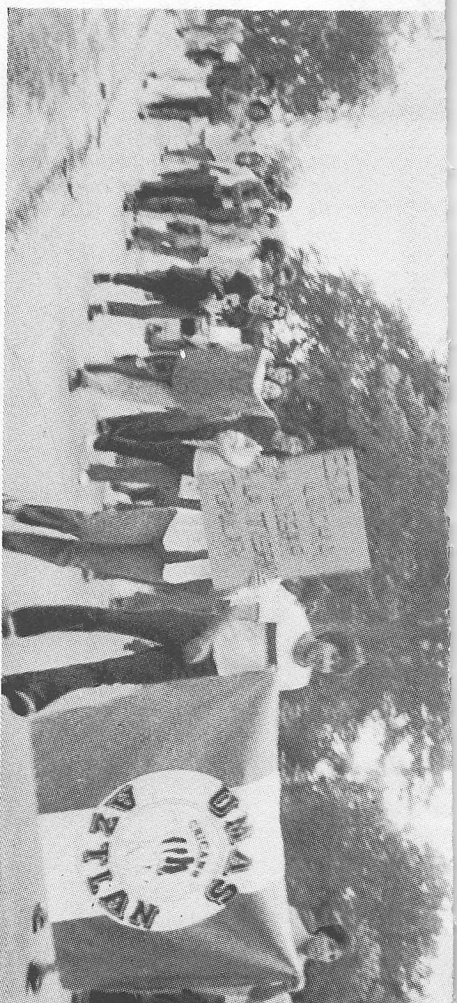


Chicanos marching in El Paso, Texas, in 1978 against the growing wave of police repression in the Chicano nation. (UNITY photo)

Chicano student organizations such as MEChA played an important role in building the struggle against the Bakke decision. (UNITY photo)

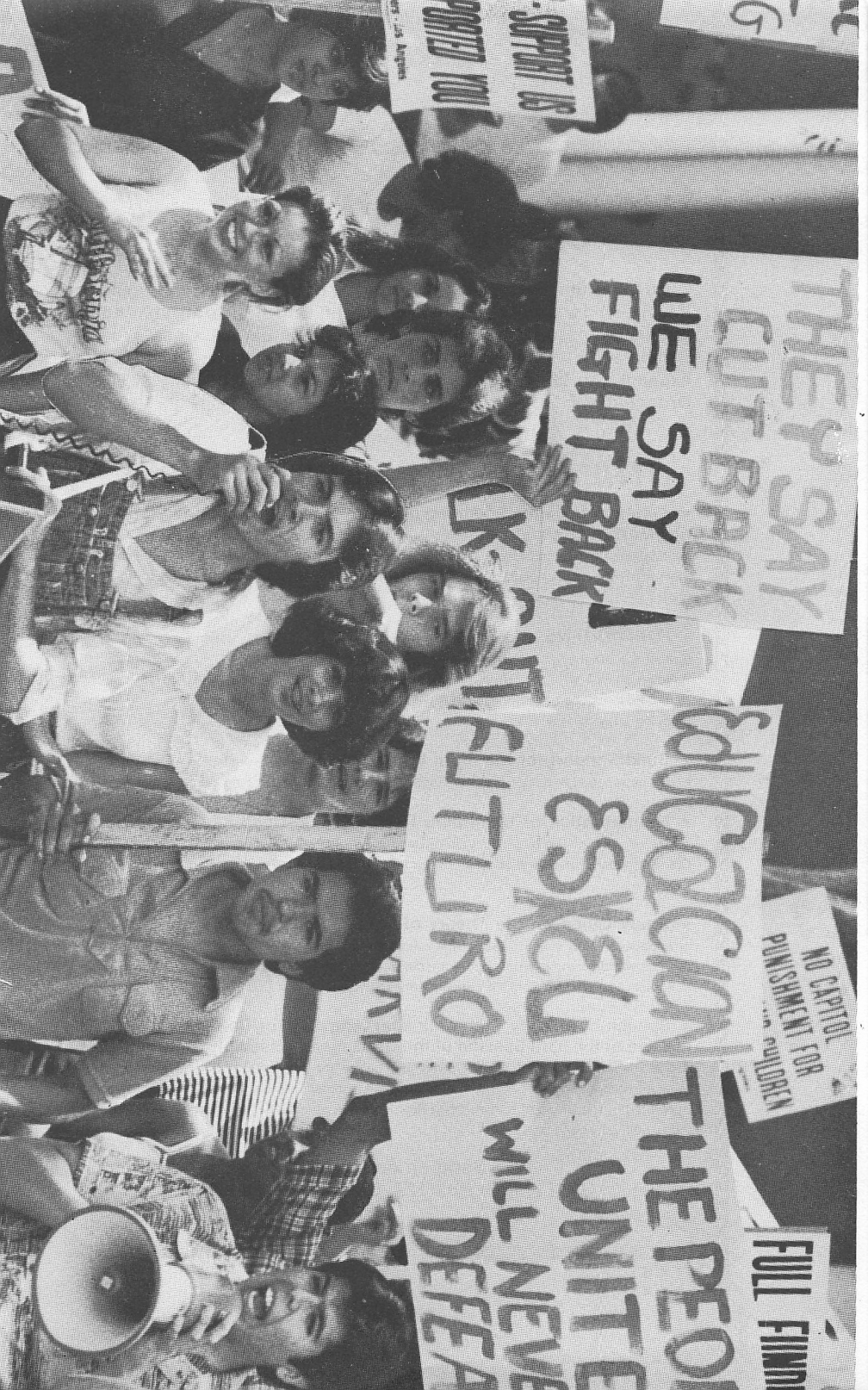


Since 1969 UMAS has played a leading role in the Chicano student movement in Colorado.



Chicano students from throughout Texas attended a statewide conference in Austin, Texas, in March 1979. (UNITY photo)

Below: Chicano youth walked out of several high schools in East Los Angeles in 1978 in protest against educational cutbacks. (UNITY photo)



THEY SAY
CUT BACK -
WE SAY
FIGHT BACK

EDUCATION IS
THE SKILL FOR
THE FUTURE

NO CAPITAL
PUNISHMENT FOR
CHILDREN

THE PEOPLE
WILL NEVER
BE DEFEATED

FULL EMPLOYMENT

SUPPORT US
- SUPPORT YOU

LOS ANGELES



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