

United Front Against War & Racism

STRATEGY FOR RESISTANCE

By the Editorial Board
of LINE OF MARCH

Once again the drums of war are sounding.

Once again the mad cry of an earlier time—"The Russians Are Coming! The Russians Are Coming!"—is somberly proclaimed in order to justify and make palatable massive reductions in social welfare and huge increases in military expenditures.

Once again the Ku Klux Klan has donned its racist nightshirts, its promotion of racist violence only the most visible expression of a more generalized racist attack on minority peoples.

The election of 1980 has brought a rightwing demagogue into the White House. He, in turn, has given a green light to the axe-wielders of monopoly capital, whose zeal in slashing funds is matched only by their enthusiasm for the welfare of corporate profits. Not at all accidentally, the program of social austerity unfolded by the new administration will most severely impact minority communities.

And as if all this were not cause enough for alarm, an organized rightwing tendency bearing within itself the seeds of fascism has emerged as a new and powerful force in U.S. political life.

Under these circumstances, a broad range of left and progressive forces has called for a unified response and resistance. The call for political unity against felt oppression is not a new one; but clearly it assumes a particular urgency today as the true dimensions of a broad imperialist offensive internationally and at home have emerged with sobering clarity.

And yet, unity among the forces calling for it seems to remain as elusive as ever. What is the reason for this impasse?

Is it, as some argue, principally a problem of sectarianism—of a doctrinaire leftism that refuses to unite on any but its own narrow terms? There are such tendencies, of course, but we do not believe that this is the principal difficulty. For even when honestly intentioned efforts at unity have been advanced in the past, more often than not they have been frustrated.

The key to this process is understanding that unity is fundamentally a political, not an ideological question; that is, it is not primarily a matter of willingness or unwillingness to unite, but of finding the proper basis for unity. The reason for this is etched in historical experience. Unity which is not based on a firm political foundation is inherently unstable.

What constitutes a firm political foundation for unity? All too often this question is answered by compiling a list of the various political issues around which left and progressive groups are organized, and then determining on which of those issues there is political agreement. Such a seemingly "sensible" approach, however, has never succeeded in forging the



kind of political unity required to blunt or defeat the concerted effort of a powerful political foe.

For it is not the subjective wishes of the various political forces which provide a basis for unity. *What is required is a common assessment of the objective conditions being addressed, including the strategy being advanced by the common enemy, the U.S. imperialist system.*

Unity is fundamentally a political, not an ideological question. It is not primarily a matter of willingness or unwillingness to unite, but of finding the proper basis for unity.

An essential aspect of such an assessment is to identify those questions which constitute the cutting edge of the confrontation between the opposing forces. Needless to say, we do not think that organization of a popular resistance must wait upon full resolution of this question. We need action; and we need also a strategic assessment of our task. Indeed, the very process of struggle will undoubtedly clarify many of the theoretical questions at issue.

On the other hand, if the struggle for unity is confined to forging fragile and momentary coalitions around one or another demonstration or isolated individual issue, a genuine opposition will never be built. Not only will the unity be unreliable; the movement surrounding it will be characterized by political intrigue and vague moralism.

We also have to guard against a counter-productive impatience in trying to forge unity. For hastily

organized coalitions all too often are built on political quicksand. A frank understanding of ideological differences and serious attempt to arrive at a common political assessment will not be achieved overnight. On a spontaneous level, a considerable measure of unity in action may well be achieved in response to immediate questions. Such unity is, to be sure, desirable; but it really should be only the beginning, not the end, of our efforts.

The key to forging a stable political unity, in our view, is to unite those forces who already understand that the *causes* of the felt injustices, the plans for aggression, the danger of fascism, stem from the very nature of the capitalist system itself. Even among such forces there will still exist a wide array of ideological differences. But if a core of anti-capitalist tendencies and groupings can arrive at a common understanding of the urgencies of the present period, their common efforts can establish a unity stable enough and firm enough to lead the rising spontaneous resistance and make it a powerful force of opposition to the plans of monopoly capital.

To those who can and must constitute the core of the people's resistance we offer a concrete political analysis of the present period and a strategic concept for uniting left and progressive forces to build an unified mass response.

Political Assessment

To begin, let us lay out in a fairly concentrated manner the main points of our political assessment.

The present period is characterized principally by the fact that U.S. imperialism, after a period of retreat and vacillation, has gone over the offensive. This offensive is international. It is the concrete political expression of the fundamental contradiction of our epoch between imperialism and the world's people—including the people of the U.S.

The driving force behind the imperialist offensive is U.S. finance capital, which has assumed the burden of

defending the entire world imperialist system both militarily and economically. To this end, it is attempting to unite the political representatives of all the other imperialist countries while developing alliances and arrangements with all others who may be intimidated or bought to cooperate in its enterprise.

The target of this offensive is the international working class. That class appears at this stage of history in three main forms: holding state power in socialist countries; in the revolutionary struggles of oppressed peoples and nations; and in the workers of the advanced capitalist countries. Thus we see imperialism menacing the socialist countries militarily and politically, building up preparations for military intervention on behalf of counter-revolution and repressive regimes in Africa and Latin America, and now launching a program of social austerity against the working class in all of the developed capitalist countries.



In the U.S., this offensive takes the form of a sharp turn toward policies of militarism and war, and a program of racially defined social austerity, the whole orchestrated by a massive anticommunist ideological campaign reminiscent of the hysteria of the fifties.

The political response of the people of the U.S. must address this imperialist offensive—which is directed at them as much as at the other peoples of the world—with a full understanding of the stakes. Clearly it is the international aspect of the imperialist offensive—aimed at reversing the tide of anti-imperialist revolutionary upheaval in the world—which has fueled the present crisis for the U.S. ruling class. At the same time, the immediate focus of that offensive is being felt just as keenly in the streets of our cities, in the homes of the workers, in the work places and schools and hospitals which provide the social environment for working people.

The cutting edge of the overall imperialist offensive is to be found in preparations for war and the program of a racially-defined social austerity. On such a basis, we believe that it is necessary and possible to build a broad united front against war and racism as the concentrated political expression of a massive resistance by the people of the U.S. to the imperialist offensive.

The Imperialist Offensive

How Did We Get Here?

U.S. imperialism is not today *more* reactionary than it has been for the past thirty years. Its history of genocidal war from Korea to Vietnam, its position as chief exploiter of peoples and nations throughout the world, its self-designated role as international guardian of dictatorial and repressive regimes, has not been qualitatively altered in recent years. U.S. imperialism plays this role regardless of whether an "enlightened" liberal or a conservative Republican is in the White House.

The change—and obviously there is one—has been in the adoption of a more aggressive policy than has been the case for more than a decade, or ever since the U.S. military defeat in Vietnam became unmistakable.

From 1968, when the U.S. government decided that the Vietnam war could not be won, to 1976, when the U.S. proved unable to intervene effectively in Angola, U.S. imperialism has been in retreat. That retreat was imposed in the first place by the liberation war of the Vietnamese people, and secondarily by the mass popular resistance at home.

The military setback in Vietnam was accompanied by (indeed led to) that unprecedented political disaster known as Watergate. As a result of this scandal, the authority of the U.S. state apparatus sank to one of the lowest points in its history. Under such circumstances,

it was extremely difficult for U.S. imperialism to act decisively in defense of its own interests.

Nowhere was this more graphically demonstrated than when, in 1975, Angola—aided by Cuba and backed by the Soviet Union—defeated the South Africans and U.S.-backed counter-revolutionaries who were attempting a neo-colonial solution to Angola's national liberation struggle. At this point, the leading strategists for U.S. imperialism began to sound the alarm.

The issue, of course, was not just Angola. From the imperialist point of view, there was a revolutionary contagion loose in the world. In Southeast Asia it had rendered a humiliating defeat on the world's foremost military power. In Southern Africa it was mobilizing tens of millions to throw off the yoke of oppression and wrench themselves out of the imperialist system. In the Caribbean and Central America, inspired by the success and achievements of the Cuban revolution, it

was defying the imperialist behemoth "in its own backyard." In the Middle East, revolution erupted with dramatic force in the oil fields of Iran and the streets of Teheran. Today, at every turn, the imperialist system confronts an angry and determined world.

The cry has gone up: Put Vietnam and Watergate behind us! To U.S. imperialism, healing the wounds of war and corruption means paving the way for renewed intervention elsewhere in the world.

Objectively aligned with this anti-imperialist tide are the majority of the world's socialist countries. Military and political support from the Soviet Union, Cuba, Vietnam and the countries of Eastern Europe have been of crucial importance to the successes of the anti-imperialist struggle. As a result, Ronald Reagan would have us believe that the struggle against imperialism is nothing but a Moscow-hatched conspiracy, an international cabal of terrorism directed and orchestrated by the Kremlin and operating directly out of Havana and Hanoi.

Such are the convenient myths of the imperialists who would like us to believe that the oppressed peoples of the world, from El Salvador to Namibia to Palestine and the Philippines, would have no reason for revolution were it not for the manipulations of Moscow. But these revolutionary struggles are rooted in the very conditions which imperialism itself has brought into being through its international system of exploitation and oppression.

Of course, the Soviet Union and other socialist countries have an objective stake in the success of these revolutionary struggles. Indeed, the triumph of the Bolshevik Revolution more than 60 years ago was itself the first major defeat for imperialism, a defeat whose significance grows with each passing year. Where once the Soviet Union stood alone in the world as an outpost of a new social order on the rise, today the revolutionary impulse is a material force all over the world; and even though the Soviet Union itself is not consistently in the vanguard of that revolutionary struggle, it remains nevertheless an objective and substantial part of the broad international anti-imperialist front, as a result of which it has become a particular target of the imperialist offensive.

Faced with this sobering alignment of forces on a world scale and paralyzed by its own disasters, imperialism is today faced with a crisis of unprecedented proportions.

And so the cry has gone up: Put Vietnam and Watergate behind us! To U.S. imperialism, healing the wounds of war and corruption means paving the way for renewed intervention elsewhere in the world.

Thus began the next period, 1976-1980, the period of U.S. imperialism's transition from retreat to counter-attack. Jimmy Carter presided over this period, launching it with a massive ideological campaign based on resurrecting the traditional myths of anticommunism. The purpose of this campaign was to create a new atmosphere in the country—one which would be more supportive of U.S. military activity in the world.

Carter paved the way for the turn to an offensive by a series of deliberate steps. These included: the phony "human rights" campaign; scrapping his campaign pledge to reduce military spending and instead increasing it; the political rapprochement with China, whose anti-Sovietism has led it increasingly into alliance with imperialism; the Camp David agreement, which successfully split Egypt off from the rest of the Arab world and reinforced Zionism in the Middle East; the ideological crusades against Vietnam and Cuba; and much, much, more. Meanwhile, events in Iran, Nicaragua and Zimbabwe served to underscore the urgency with which the transition was being effected.

Finally, early in 1980, Soviet intervention in Afghanistan provided Carter the pretext actually to launch the imperialist counter-attack. A whole series of measures—reinstatement of draft registration, repeal of restrictions on the CIA, further military expenditures, scuttling the SALT II treaty, the Olympics boycott, the grain embargo—were designed to create an atmosphere of crisis and hysteria. At the same time, Carter was already signalling that the turn toward war would entail substantial sacrifice by the people of the U.S. Social programs were systematically cut and undermined. Carter even orchestrated a mild recession in order to curtail inflation, the principal consequence of which was to erode the purchasing power of the workers while leaving the price spiral untouched.

By the time of the 1980 elections, it was clear that Carter had accomplished about as much as U.S. monopoly capital could reasonably expect of him. As phony and hypocritical a bourgeois politician as there ever was, Carter had managed the transition from retreat to counter-attack on behalf of U.S. imperialism. Moses-like, he had charted a path for imperialism across the treacherous sands of its transition; but the "promised land" was not to be his. To Ronald Reagan fell the honor of becoming imperialism's Joshua, who would restore this moribund system to its former proud days of glory and power.

Reagan Takes Over

Reagan proceeded to launch the imperialist offensive with a vigor that has won him the unreserved plaudits of finance capital. Gearing up the U.S. imperialist system for war, he has sent out a message that the U.S. has drawn the line and will once again take all military measures it deems necessary to prevent the overthrow of puppet and loyalist regimes throughout the world, even if such activity brings it into dangerous military confrontation with the Soviet Union.

Secretary of State Alexander Haig, doing his part, declares that there are worse eventualities than nuclear war. At the same time, a key administration figure proclaims that such a war on a global scale is inevitable unless the Soviet Union abandons its social system. It would be well for the people of the U.S., who ultimately will pay the price for such provocations, to recall what happened to the last such attempt to bring the Soviet Union down. That adventure ended in a Berlin bunker, and left an indelible imprint on the world's memory.

Today the testing ground is El Salvador. Tomorrow it may be Nicaragua or Iran or southern Africa—or wherever an oppressed people rises up to reclaim its country and its destiny from the domination of imperialism.

Nevertheless, Reagan speaks openly of offering arms to counter-revolutionaries in Afghanistan while simultaneously signalling that the fascist regime in South Africa is a bulwark of anticommunism and pivotal in defense of the "free world." Concerning Poland, Cuba, Angola, and elsewhere, there is a renewed spirit of confrontation and militarism in the Washington air. The mailed fist designed to back up these threats is seen in Reagan's plan to escalate the already swollen military budget from a total of \$171 billion for 1981 to \$368 billion by 1986.

In this respect, it appears that it has fallen to El Salvador to be the signal U.S. imperialism wants to

communicate to the world. Military "advisors" already have been dispatched to support the unpopular and oppressive regime in that country, while the U.S. prepares the way to switch over to the even more overtly reactionary rightwing terrorists. The pretext? The revolution in El Salvador is part of a Soviet-Cuban plot for world domination.

Today the testing ground is El Salvador. Tomorrow it may be Nicaragua or Iran or Southern Africa—or wherever an oppressed people rises up to reclaim its country and its destiny from the domination of imperialism. In effect, the escalating U.S. military intervention in El Salvador and the threats to Nicaragua, Cuba and the Soviet Union are designed to notify the world that the number one counter-revolutionary force is back in action—no longer with one hand tied behind its back.

But the world of the 1980s is different from that of the 1950s. Cuba, Vietnam, and Angola all have demonstrated the vulnerability of imperialism. Today the Soviet Union has a rough military parity with the U.S. And the people of the U.S. itself are already beginning to demonstrate that the memories of Vietnam will not so easily be put aside.

Social Austerity at Home

The U.S. capitalist class cannot take the offensive internationally without tightening things up at home. Gone are the days when Lyndon Johnson could try to make an unpopular war palatable by pursuing a guns and butter policy, expanding social services at the same time that military expenditures were increased. The inflation haunting the U.S. economy for the past decade offers a grim reminder of the consequences of that policy.

Today the program of militarism and saber-rattling, central to which is a massive increase in military expenditures, requires a sweeping program of social austerity. Social spending must be cut so that the missiles, bombs and other technology can be paid for. Government workers must be laid off so that the payroll of the armed forces can be made larger. That is the real meaning of Reagan's economic policies. They are not designed to combat inflation or straighten out the economy. They are designed for one simple purpose: to transfer funds from social expenditures (education, health, welfare, etc.) to the military.

Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger was forthright in making the point. "The prospects of our having to employ military force directly or indirectly to safeguard our interests cannot be dismissed," he told a Senate committee. This means that expenditures for military purposes are "the highest priority of the nation. We have to recognize that it will mean a slowdown in growth or a reduction in many programs."

And Reagan has not hesitated to follow through with the most massive assault on public services in half a century. Funds for education, health, people's welfare, unemployment insurance and other programs which have served to cushion the shock of capitalism's contradictions for large numbers of working people have been slashed mercilessly—and the end is not in sight.

This has been accompanied by a major attempt to restore and increase U.S. capitalism's rate of profit at the expense of the working class. Such a program requires an attempt to weaken the trade unions and the labor movement generally. Monopoly capital's rash of plant closings, runaway shops, take-away labor contracts and attempts to eliminate the minimum wage law provide vivid illustrations of this strategy.

At the same time, there has been an aggravated assault on women's rights. While funds for abortions have been reduced and eliminated, the right to abortion itself is under siege from the right. Cutting back on funds for day care and medicaid clearly has a major impact on poor and working women, especially on those families where the mother is the only wage earner.

But this general program of social austerity has a particular character, stemming from the fact that in the U.S. the working class is a majority class. As a result, an across-the-board attack on the entire class would have extremely negative political consequences for monopoly capital, a fact of which capitalist strategists are all too keenly aware. Therefore this program of social austerity takes into account the stratification of the working class.

For the working class certainly is not a simple undifferentiated class. It includes both employed and unemployed, skilled and unskilled, union and non-union workers. But most of all it is stratified along the color line, making minority workers the least protected sector of the working class. It is this sector which is the principal target of Reagan's program of social austerity.

The Reagan budget demonstrates the point. What is being cut? Food stamp programs, the AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) program, CETA (Comprehensive Employment Training Act), Medicaid, unemployment insurance, etc. Even the most casual examination of the racial composition of food stamp and AFDC recipients, CETA workers,

Medicaid beneficiaries and the unemployment lines will show at a glance the racist impact of Reagan's economic policies.

A recent University of Chicago study shows that as a result of the Reagan plan, the net disposable income of families most dependent on welfare benefits will drop dramatically in the next few months, at a time when inflation goes on unchecked. Does it take a great deal of imagination to deduce the racial composition of that sector of the population which will be principally affected by these cuts?

U.S. capitalism is attempting to forge a "white" ideological consensus in support of its policies of militarism and social austerity. Its strategy is a wide-ranging attack on the working class, the brunt of which is directed at its minority sectors.

What is the reason for this racist game-plan? As it has done historically, U.S. capitalism is once again attempting to forge a "white" ideological consensus—a not-so-silent majority—in support of its own political program; in this case on behalf of its policies of militarism and social austerity. Its strategy for achieving this consensus is through a wide-ranging economic, political and social attack on the working class, *the brunt of which is directed at its minority sectors*. The aim is to isolate and mask the condition of minority peoples while simultaneously cushioning the shock of the generalized assault on the working class (in varying degrees) for the "white" workers. As a result we have witnessed a resurgence of racism which emanates in the first place from capital's need for an unevenly divided social austerity among the masses. We hold that on one level such a strategy is consciously designed since the political agents of capital in the political system cannot be unaware of the consequences of their program. On the other hand, racism as a defining social relation of U.S. society is so deeply embedded in the social fabric that every assault made by capital on the working class inevitably comes down along the color line.

A racist offensive to set the climate for forging this consensus has been under way for the past four years, ever since the assault on affirmative action crystallized in the Bakke case. By upholding Bakke's claim of "reverse discrimination," the Supreme Court legitimized both legally and ideologically the racist concept of "white rights." During this period, all efforts at ending racial segregation have ground to a halt. The few governmental agencies nominally designed to defend minority rights have effectively been sabotaged through budget-cutting and rendered ineffective by political pressures.

That there is a racist offensive underway is clearly shown by the upsurge in racist violence, the marked increase in police brutality, re-emergence of the Ku Klux Klan and a rising tide of racist ideology, much of it spawned and advanced by organized rightwing forces. This offensive has been encouraged and protected by finance capital, which has written off the possibility or necessity of winning any significant support for its policies among minorities, while concluding that a "white" patriotic consensus on behalf of imperialism is indeed possible. It would be tragically short-sighted for left and progressive forces not to recognize that in light of the history of racism in the U.S. and the daily reproduction of oppressive racial relations in U.S. society, such a consensus may well be forged.

Never mind that for white workers, this scheme adds up to a "fool's paradise," at most, perhaps, a short-term reprieve from some of the consequences of the new social austerity. For imperialism's attempt to forge a "white" consensus is only the opening assault in a heightened class war. But the system's capacity to cushion materially the shocks of this assault for large sectors of white workers (the disproportionate rates of unemployment between white and minority workers being merely the most visible reflection of this capacity) lays the foundation for such a "white" consensus actually to be forged. Furthermore, as the contradictions of capitalism sharpen, so too will the situation of the working class become more and more precarious. History shows that the instability and mounting anxieties of the workers can be used to fuel the rise of reactionary, chauvinist ideas in the working class. One need look no further than the rise of antisemitism in Nazi Germany to demonstrate the danger.

All too often, left and progressive forces have been unable to face this dilemma squarely. Despite frequent expressions of militancy in defense of immediate economic interests, the U.S. working class, taken as a whole, is an ideologically backward class. Central to

this backwardness is a racist system which daily reproduces the inequality and class stratification which provide the material underpinnings for racist economic, political, and social relations and for the prevalence of racist ideology.

Without a sober understanding of this reality, left and progressive forces in the U.S. will be unable to assess properly the prevailing conditions in the working class and what is required to transform the outlook of workers toward taking up the political challenge of the present period. This is not an easy task. But neither is it insurmountable. There can be no future for this working class so long as it remains divided against itself. Neither in terms of its capacity to aspire to power nor in the immediate struggle to obtain the best possible terms for the sale of its labor power can the U.S. working class serve its own best interests so long as it permits capital to mount an unchallenged assault against its most oppressed sector.

For all these reasons, then, we can see that the struggle against racism is central to the struggle against imperialism. This link between racism and imperialism is not an invention of the communists. It is the inexorable "invention" of capitalism-itself. It is an *objective* link. And indeed, when this link is made in life by popular leaders, the imperialists rightly view such a political act as extremely dangerous. It is not at all too much to say that the murders of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King offer grim testimony to the anxieties of U.S. capital when popular mass figures from the Black community themselves make that link in life.

The conclusion is inescapable. War and racism: these are the twin pillars on which the present imperialist offensive is built.

The Rise of the Right

A key element in imperialism's new offensive has been the emergence of an organized rightwing political force in U.S. life, operating today at a new level of influence and organization. While such political tendencies have been on the scene for more than half a century, the present phenomenon is more than an extension of the past. Some 85 percent of the present-day conservative organizations who make up the backbone of what frequently is called the "new right" are less than six years old. Taken as a whole, this political force is the ideological fount for jingoism, national chauvinism, anticommunism, legitimization of racism, attacks on women's rights and the women's movement, and an attack on the rights of gay people.

The function of this revived rightwing tendency has been to prepare the ideological climate for the imperialist offensive and to develop a political base in support of it. On both counts it registered significant successes, so much so that the chieftains of finance capital eventually accepted its principal popular ideologue as their own political representative in the White House.

This resurgent rightwing tendency bears within it the germs of a full-blown fascist movement in the U.S. While not yet focused in a single political party or

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of this political statement have been printed and distributed to left and progressive forces throughout the U.S. All are being distributed without charge.

The Editorial Board of *Line of March* has advanced the funds for printing this statement because of the importance we attach to it. In addition, we hope to print many more thousands of copies for further distribution. If you believe that the circulation of this proposal on such a scale is a useful contribution to helping forge a unified resistance to the imperialist offensive—whether you agree with all of these ideas or not—you can do two things:

1. Help us to cover the cost of this undertaking. Any amount, \$20, \$10, \$5—even one dollar—will help make further printings of this and other documents possible.
2. Order additional copies of this statement for distribution to friends, associates and fellow workers. (Please enclose a contribution to cover printing and mailing costs.)

In addition, the Editorial Board of *Line of March* is willing to help organize discussions on this article. In cities where we have representatives, we will be happy to arrange to have someone lead such a discussion. For others, we can supply study materials.

I would like to contribute \$ _____ to help pay for the brochure on War and Racism.

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organization, the resurgent right already is performing the classic fascist function of attempting to intercept the disappointed masses who, frustrated at the decomposition of the social order, might otherwise turn their anger against the power of monopoly capital. This appeal is directed especially at the petit bourgeoisie and the most protected sectors of the working class, who themselves feel the impact of the ripening contradictions of the imperialist system. The New Right encourages them to cling to the illusion that the source of their problems is not with capital but with "godless communism," "terrorist" national liberation movements, "welfare cheats," "coddled minorities," "upstart women," and "degenerate homosexuals."



THE RISE OF THE RIGHT

The marked political successes of the New Right must be cause for great concern. Aside from the immediate support provided for the imperialist offensive, the growth of the right means that fascism in the U.S. is in the process of developing and expanding a mass social base which, at the appropriate juncture, can become a political force ready to assume power on behalf of the imperialist system itself. Already the intersection between this developing fascist tendency and the policy turns by finance capital signify a ripening of this potential. The closer alliance between the dominant sectors of finance capital (sometimes called the "Eastern Establishment") and the New Right is an important new feature of the present period.

In 1964, finance capital "vetoed" the political representative of the right, Barry Goldwater. That was the significance of Nelson Rockefeller's boycott and sabotage of the Goldwater candidacy. As late as 1976, finance capital made it clear that it still preferred the "moderate" Gerald Ford to the rightwing ideologue Ronald Reagan. But in 1980, as the *Wall Street Journal* so aptly put it, finance capital was "learning to love Ronnie." By the time Reagan unfolded the imperialist offensive, finance capital was absolutely ecstatic over him.

While the principal aspect of this late-blossoming romance is clearly Reagan's accommodation to finance capital, it also signifies that a naked alliance between finance capital as a whole and movements representing the ideological advance guard of fascism is closer to realization than was previously the case.

What does all this add up to?

1. *U.S. imperialism has turned to a more aggressive policy of war and counter-revolution.* The principal aim of this policy is defense of monopoly capital's strategic global interests and investments and, where possible, reclaiming "lost" areas.

The ideological war against Cuba, Vietnam and the Soviet Union over the past two years has been designed to create a climate for resuming the policy of direct military intervention against national liberation struggles. The immediate focus of this policy is the gradually escalating scheme for military intervention in El Salvador. Present propaganda is aimed at convincing the people of the U.S. of the necessity for such counter-revolutionary activities, largely on the strength of the by-now classical "Soviet threat."

2. *The necessary domestic counterpart to this policy is a program of racially-defined and racially-organized social austerity.* Unable to maintain the "guns and butter" economic policy which played a key role in bringing about the present inflationary crisis, U.S. imperialism cannot refuel its war machine without draconian economic measures that will cut back on social spending and directly attack the living standards of the working class.

But this program will not affect the working class evenly. It is designed to attack the working class in its most vulnerable sector, utilizing oppressive racial relations to isolate the most oppressed sector of the class from the rest.

3. *Monopoly capital is attempting to forge a "white," "patriotic" consensus on behalf of its im-*

perialist policies of war and social austerity. With the brunt of the general assault on the working class directed particularly at minorities, white workers are being conditioned—both ideologically and materially—to think "color" rather than "class," thus forging a cross-class "white" consensus on behalf of capital rather than a cross-color (multi-racial, multi-national) working class consensus against it. Reagan's election, which could not have been achieved without sizeable portions of the working class voting for him, indicates that this strategy is no idle pipe dream.

4. *A definite, identifiable fascist tendency has emerged in U.S. political life.* This tendency is not yet fully matured not is it yet fully conscious of its long-run political goals. But it has begun to operate as a conscious political force and has been able to demonstrate its clout. Its ideological assumptions are a material force in the country's political and intellectual life. It has provided organizational forms through which it can influence millions and operates with an advanced degree of cohesion.

The overall imperialist offensive is quite clearly a consciously calculated one that has been developed over the course of nearly a decade. It will not be easily deterred, especially because it is a counter-attack born of desperation.

In this sense, we have introduced the question of fascism not simply as a cry of warning but as a sober assessment of the fact that finance capital's principal strategists already are preparing the ground for a political shift to open, terrorist dictatorship as mass resistance to its offensive grows.

There is a danger that this development will not be recognized because the left has an unfortunate legacy of crying "wolf"—or "fascism"—every time monopoly capitalism reveals the repressive side of its nature. We are not arguing that fascism is here or even just around the corner. But the strength of a definite fascist political tendency clearly has been enhanced over the past few years. The intensifying and unavoidable crisis of the imperialist system is bound to further fuel imperialism's desperation.

The cutting edge of that process in the U.S. today—what links the development of a fascist political tendency with the imperialist offensive—is the program of war and racially organized social austerity. These are the twin pillars on which U.S. imperialism hopes to recoup its political fortunes.

For A United Front Against War and Racism

What is needed in the present circumstances, then, is not merely the call for unity, but a strategic concept that will pinpoint the political character of the imperialist offensive. Only if our unity is thoroughly rooted in such a political concept will we be able to mount the kind of resistance to the imperialist offensive which can have any hope for being effective.

In our view, that strategic concept is a *United Front Against War and Racism*.

By targetting war and racism as the focal point of attack, we bring out the political essence of the imperialist offensive, the axis around which all of the progressive struggles of this period inevitably must revolve. War and racism represent the link between the actions of capital and the politics of the New Right; in this sense they express the political particularization of fascism's programmatic direction in the present period. For these reasons, any people's movement which is not anchored in the commitment to fight war and racism will be inherently unstable.

In fact, in a largely spontaneous fashion, the already developing movement of resistance has focused precisely on the drive toward war and the upsurge in racism. The demonstrations opposing plans for U.S. military intervention in El Salvador, together with the new political forms and consciousness appearing in the

Black community offer explicit verification that the nature of the imperialist offensive is clearly seen on the phenomenal level. The task of the moment is to translate this objective development into a fully conscious and united force. The call for a united front against war and racism is not simply an abstract invention of the left, but a more conscious and strategic articulation of a process which already exists in life.

This strategic concept provides the thread that links a mass, united popular resistance embracing all of the sectors affected by the imperialist offensive. In this sense, defense of the living standards of the working class, and indeed of the trade union movement itself, must be based on a united opposition to the source of the attacks—the imperialist strategy of war and racism. Similarly, the struggle to repel the attacks on the women's movement and in defense of women's rights must locate the source of those attacks in the imperialist offensive based on war and racism. In fact, the struggles in these and all other areas inevitably will be compromised beyond repair if they are not located in the context of the struggle against war and racism.

Let us emphasize that this strategic concept of a united front against war and racism is not primarily an organizational proposal. Rather, our aim is to lay the political foundation for a united resistance which can infuse the struggles of all those who objectively stand in opposition to the imperialist offensive. Unity will not be accomplished by hastily forming yet one more coalition or simply by resolving to unite. It must be built politically, step by step. It is from this perspective that we advance this proposal at the present time for discussion and debate among all left and progressive forces.

Those of us advancing this strategic concept, the editors of *Line of March*, do so as communists. We make no secret of our orientation. But the inevitable ideological differences between us and others who also view themselves in a Marxist-Leninist framework, and all of the divergent tendencies which exist among left and progressive forces, do not preclude the possibility of achieving political unity around the tasks of the present period. In our view, such ideological differences are not an insuperable impediment to political unity. In fact, the inevitable contradictions which will arise from these ideological differences can be handled correctly only to the extent that our political unity has a firm foundation. The concept of a united front against war and racism—around which we believe all left and progressive forces can unite—provides precisely such a foundation.

But let us add that the significance of this strategic concept is not limited to the present circumstances. Today the times require the mounting of a militant resistance to a new imperialist offensive which threatens the world with nuclear war and has built into it the threat of fascism in our own country. In the long run, however, the U.S. working class—alleged with and supported by workers and oppressed peoples around the world—will have to challenge the rule of capital itself. But the U.S. working class will never develop the political capacity for that historic task until and unless it transforms itself into a revolutionary class. Indispensable to such a transformation is the ability of the working class to break with the ideology of pseudo-patriotism and national chauvinism which is used to enlist the masses of people on behalf of imperialism's interests. Likewise indispensable to this transformation is the ability of the working class to overcome the racial divisions within it, a goal which can be reached only as it actively takes up the struggle against racism and the defense of the class as a whole.

In this sense, the United Front Against War and Racism is not only a strategy of resistance for the current period. It is the necessary preparation for the revolutionary transformation of the U.S. working class so that it can advance on the path of its own emancipation and thereby sound the death knell for the imperialist system itself.

LINE OF MARCH is a Marxist-Leninist journal which has been publishing regularly on a bi-monthly basis since May 1980. The present essay calling for a United Front Against War and Racism is a condensed version of a much longer article which appears in the March/April 1981 issue of *Line of March* (Vol. 1, No. 5).

In addition to publishing a journal, the editorial board of *Line of March* functions as a political center whose aim is to help develop a political line that can unite U.S. Marxist-Leninists in order to re-establish a genuine revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party. To this end, a number of institutions and organizations for educating activists in the basics of Marxism-Leninism and organizing activity in the labor, anti-imperialist, anti-racist and women's movements are associated with *Line of March*.

Members of the editorial board of *Line of March* are: Bruce Oceaña and Irwin Silber (co-editors); Dale Borgeson, Max Elbaum, Linda Burnham, Melinda Paras, Bob Wing.

Individual copies of *Line of March*, including the issue containing the complete text of the article on which the present statement is based, are available for \$2.50 each. A one-year subscription to *Line of March* (6 issues) may be obtained for \$12.50. *Line of March* publishes also a number of other books and pamphlets which take up in greater depth many of the theoretical and political questions advanced in the present article.

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