



**Communist Party USA**  
**29th National Convention**  
**May 21-23, 2010**  
**New York City**

*Convention Discussion Document*

## ***The Party Program in a Period of Transition***

*The Road to Socialism USA* is the basic program of the Communist Party and was adopted at the 28<sup>th</sup> National Convention in 2005. This document, which gives strategic guidance to the party, remains essentially sound but several momentous changes have happened in the economic and electoral arenas of the country and require adjustment to elements of the program.

As with previous party programs adopted by our party over the years (and by other communist parties going back to Lenin) the main intent of *The Road to Socialism USA* is to outline the path from the present to socialism in our country. It outlines three major stages of struggle necessary to go from here to there:

The objective of the first stage is to defeat the ultra-right political trend that is dominated by a sector of the transnational monopolies. This trend has dominated the government, political and economic life from the late 1970s until the 2008 elections. To defeat the ultra-right requires a broad alliance — an “all-people’s front” — led by the working class, the racially and nationally oppressed, women and youth (the core forces) and other social strata, political tendencies and social movements along with the temporary alliance with the more moderate sector of monopoly capitalism.

In the second stage, the aim is to radically curb the power of monopoly as a whole, by building an “anti-monopoly coalition” on an even broader scale than the all-people’s front and this time with the working class and all core forces playing an even bigger role, and without the participation of any section of the monopolies.

In the third stage, the aim is to win political power for the same constellation of class and social forces, led by the working class but on a still wider scale of participation. The aim of this stage is for the coalition led by the working class to take power and construct socialism.

The program also contains extensive discussion about the level of development of the economy and the resulting social problems, the nature and role of the working class, the class

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struggle and the democratic struggle, the character of “special oppression” and the resulting role of the other core forces and their alliance with labor and the whole working class, the character of each of the stages of struggle, including a substantial section on US socialism and the nature and role of the Communist Party.

Change takes place rapidly in our country. A few months after any document is adopted some details at least will have changed and be dated. The reports given at each National Committee of the Communist Party (NC) take into account major changes during the previous period. The basic document and report for a National Convention takes into account major changes since the previous convention, including projecting developments, struggles and policies for at least a couple years heading toward another convention but taking into account that the NC will be meeting regularly and updating developments along the way.

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But the role and purpose of a basic party program is not to update events from convention to convention, neither is it to cover some other fixed time period. It attempts to present all the major qualitative stages of development and struggle including the struggle for socialism. It is therefore not helpful to attempt either to revise or line-by-line edit and update the program at each convention, unless we were to conclude we were wrong in our strategic analysis and policy or with respect to one of its stages, or an unexpected stage of struggle had intervened.

When the country clearly passes from one strategic stage of struggle to the next one — with different qualities — then it is useful to reexamine the Program and make major changes. A new strategic stage implies qualitative changes in most social, political and economic aspects of society that we can only dimly foresee before we are fully into that new stage. Therefore it can be important to take a new look when we are in a position to know all those new developments and assess what they mean and what adjustments and fine-tuning in strategic and tactical policy are needed.

We believe we have not yet moved from one stage to the next. Yet there are two very big unforeseen developments affecting the program.

The first development was the plunging of the US and world capitalism into the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. This situation has strongly impacted the lives of all working people and especially those of the most oppressed sectors of the working class and working people: the racially and nationally oppressed, youth and women. It has impacted all aspects of the economic, political, social and ideological life of our country and the entire capitalist world. How and why it took place and why it is so profound and all-encompassing is connected with the development of state monopoly capitalism in its globalization phase into a further phase of development that we have termed “financialization”, in which the financial sector has become in a new way the dominant sector of capitalism at the expense of the other sectors. Deregulation of the financial sector and its introduction of extremely risky derivatives, is also characteristic.

The second development, of course, is the major defeat suffered by the ultra-right in the election of the first African American President, Barack Obama, and in the election of a Democratic Congress. This victory demonstrated that masses of white working people could be won to vote their own self-interest and reject racism. The Obama Administration with the support of all the core forces and especially the organized labor movement, and many other allies has made some progress on almost every front to push back the wreckage of the years of domination by the ultra-right and begun to move forward in a progressive direction, but not as much as many had hoped.

This represents the beginning of the transition from the strategic stage of defeating the ultra-right (which remains far from fully defeated) into the stage of radically curbing the power of the monopolies as a whole, which has only begun. When the country decisively defeats the ultra right and fully enters the anti-monopoly struggle, the movements will have a new main opponent in the struggle and need for an even stronger, wider, more active strategic alliance starting with the working class and labor and the other core forces.

Being in a transitional period means there are new potentialities for advance and new risks and difficulties requiring holding fast to our strategic policy and taking into account the nature of such a transition, its requirements and tactics. Many of the struggles, demands and tactics of the transitional period will continue to be characterized by the anti-right stage even as new struggles, demands and even victories will emerge that are of a more anti-monopoly character. Our basic document for the convention and especially the report to the convention undoubtedly seek to address these questions.

During a transitional period there is always a danger of falling back into a previous stage of struggle because of setbacks or a slipping of the balance of forces away from the working class and people. We face that danger today. We should be careful not to too hastily drop the need for unity against the ultra-right as our main guiding strategy even as opportunities for anti-monopoly struggles arise. Our main goal is to help maintain the unity and strength of the all-people's coalition against the ultra-right, as the movements mature, develop and grow, laying the basis for more advanced demands and eventually for fully challenging monopoly as a whole. A more precise statement of the primary opponents during the transition period is needed.

It would be useful to include an supplement to *The Road to Socialism USA* that would deal with these two major developments — the economic crisis and the transition from the ultra-right stage to the anti-monopoly stage through the Obama Administration and the strategic forces discussed.

If the Convention Program Committee and the Convention agree to the above approach, we propose that the incoming NC establish a committee to write such an supplement for its addition to the Program.

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This is one of four official discussion documents issued by the National Committee of the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) to engage party members, allies, friends and the public in a discussion of the issues of the day leading up to its 29th National Convention, May 21-23, 2010.

CPUSA members, bodies and collectives are encouraged to submit responses, essays, papers and other contributions to the discussion in order to help determine party policy going forward from the Convention. Submissions may be emailed to [discussion2010@cpusa.org](mailto:discussion2010@cpusa.org) or mailed to

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**January 21, 2010**