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# APPALACHIA

SUBMITTED BY THE COMMUNIST LEAGUE  
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## INTRODUCTION

This paper is submitted in an effort to establish a factual basis for dealing with the Appalachian question. There is an overwhelming amount of reading material on this subject, as the bourgeoisie has of late taken great interest in it.

There can be no question that Appalachia is a region where the rapacious extraction for profit of basic raw materials by external forces, to the extreme detriment of the indigenous population, is an obvious and blatant as anywhere that can be found. And to this point, the analysis and the "solving" of the Appalachian "problem" have been entirely in the hands of the bourgeoisie. Thus developed the programs of the great imperialists, the Kennedy's, to rid Appalachia of poverty - programs really intended to buy off the people's anger while leaving things essentially the same. There have been and still are numerous bourgeois commissions which deal in one way or another with Appalachia. The proletariat must wrest the initiative on Appalachia away from the bourgeoisie. It must clear away the fog and cobwebs of bourgeois history, bring the true story of Appalachia to light, and demand an end to the yoke of imperialist oppression in Appalachia. The Appalachian workers and farmers have waged a long and historical struggle against those who have tried to rob them of all that is theirs. Under the banner of proletarian internationalism these workers must unite with all those oppressed by the USNA State and, under the leadership of a multi-national communist party, rid their land and all other lands of the scourge of imperialism.

The first problem which arises in studying Appalachia is figuring out what geographical area is encompassed in it. Numerous definitions have been given by various writers on the subject. The Appalachian mountain range extends from Alabama to Vermont. But the significance of Appalachia involves much more than the fact that mountains run through it. What we are looking for is that territory which is historically and economically coherent, which represents a distinct region with a particular culture, and which has been subject to a special oppression at the hand of USNA imperialism. The current and historical data which follows seems to point to the area represented by the map in Figure 1 as best indicating the Appalachian region. This has often been referred to as the Southern Appalachians or Southern Highlands. Its borders have been variously drawn, often including a few counties in Maryland to the north, in South Carolina to the east, and a few more counties in Alabama and the piedmont country of North Carolina and Virginia.

A county by county breakdown is not what is important at this point. But a general definition is important, especially in light of the insistence by the USNA government that the Appalachian "problem area" is much bigger. The Appalachian Regional Commission, the main body established by the imperialists to "take care of poverty" in this "depressed region", defines the area as that shown in Figure 2. This definition clearly seems incorrect, as it disregards all questions of history and culture. It was imposed on the basis of bourgeois ideas about "the poor in America" and the convenient admi-

nistration of welfare. To be sure Appalachia does not extend hundreds of miles south and west of the mountains into Mississippi and western Alabama. The USNA state has included a big chunk of the Negro Nation in its definition of Appalachia. The ARC also goes too far to the north. Southern New York and Western Pennsylvania are part of the Midwest-Northeast industrial belt, an area whose history greatly differs from that of Appalachia, despite the fact that the Appalachian coal field extends into Pennsylvania. Pittsburgh is hardly an Appalachian city. So, for the purposes of this working paper, Appalachia is the territory depicted in Figure 1.

## CHAPTER 1

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE SETTLEMENT OF APPALACHIA

As of the year 1600, few Europeans had laid eyes on the Appalachian region. Except for a handful of nomad-like fur traders who only wandered through the area, Appalachia in 1600 was populated by the Indian tribes which had been there for generations - Catawbas, Creeks, and primarily the Cherokees. The Spanish had recently built a settlement in St. Augustine, Florida, but except for that, the European colonialists had for the most part left North America alone. European conquest of the Americas, prior to 1600, had been concentrated on the plunder of the Indians south of where the USNA now lies because that was where the greatest wealth was to be found. Only toward the end of April, 1607, did a small group of Englishmen reach North America and attempt to establish a permanent settlement - at Jamestown, Virginia. But by then the rapacious colonialists were ready to go after North America, and in the course of ensuing struggles between them, England became the supreme ruler of the North American continent as far west as the Mississippi River.

It is in the context of this struggle for supremacy in North America and in the context of the condition of the working class in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that the settlement of Appalachia must be analyzed. Prior to 1600, the Spanish colonialist robbers utilized the New World merely as a place from which to steal gold. The soldiers plundered and pillaged and then for the most part left, taking the gold back to Spain with them. It was much the same idea with France's fur trade in Canada. For many years England was content to rob the Spanish ships on their way home. But slowly the idea of establishing permanent colonies came to the fore. Sir Walter Raleigh at first proposed to establish a colony as a military base to limit Spain's movement northward and also to serve as a base to further raid Spanish ships. Raleigh was allowed to try at what is now Roanoke Island, North Carolina, and his experiment resulted in the disastrous lost colony. But the rising bourgeoisie learned something from Raleigh's fiasco. The profit to be gained from North America lay in permanent, civilian settlements, which would create their own wealth - rather than the old military fort-trading post which served only to steal goods which had already



been made by the Indians. This decision signified the increasing dominance of the rising bourgeois class over the old feudalistic ruling classes which knew only how to steal in the old, direct way. Thus, in the vast area between the French to the north and the Spanish to the south, England set out to conquer the continent.

The British bourgeoisie recognized, of course, that it not only had to divide up the area to be settled among the various "land companies" but also had to find people to work the land and create profits. The time could hardly have been more ripe to find such people. For at that time - the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries - Europe was in the throes of revolution - the revolution of the bourgeoisie. These wars were shattering the political power and privileges of the feudal landlords, and the old economic system based on serfdom was disintegrating. As Marx wrote in the Communist Manifesto:

The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal ties that bound man to his "natural superiors", and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous "cash payment". It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value, and in place of the numberless indefensible chartered freedoms, has set up that single, unconscionable freedom - Free Trade. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation.<sup>1</sup>

Serfs and peasants were thrust off the land, compelled into the rising cities where they were "free" to try to find a job. Nowhere near all of them could get work. Those that did fared little better, slaving inhumanly long hours for practically nothing. Thousands of "free" men and women starved to death in England and all over Europe. Forced to flee their homes to escape the famine and wars, many had nowhere to go - perfect bait for the colonizers.

The colonizers were the same commercial adventurers, capitalists, exploiters, wealth seekers, privileged masters of Europe. The government gave them great tracts of land in America and said in effect: "Take these wretches of the cities and villages, transport them to America, and exploit them to your hearts' content."<sup>2</sup>

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Marx and Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party (Peking, Foreign Languages Press, 1970), pp. 33-34.

2. Anthony Birba, History of the American Working Class, (International Publishers, 1937).

CHAPTER 2

APPALACHIA: THE WESTERN FRONTIER

Once European settlements had been established along the Atlantic coast, it was only a matter of time before some of the settlers would begin venturing westward. Appalachia became the western frontier of the original coastal colonies - the Old West. As always, the hunters, trappers, and traders came first, often establishing a reasonably peaceful relationship with the Indians who had long held the land. But from roughly 1650 to 1838, when the last of the Cherokees left Appalachia, a war for the control of the Appalachian territory was waged between the Indians and the European newcomers. Slowly but surely the Indians were pushed westward. Many Indians sided with the French during the French and Indian War, 1754-1763, hoping to stem the English expansionist tide. But the English won the war and set out even more forcefully to clear out the Indians. By the time the USNA had won its independence from England, any Indians east of the Mississippi were in jeopardy. The white man used "treaties" and other legal tricks as well as the gun to take the land.

Appalachia was primarily Cherokee territory. The Cherokees were not a nomadic people and had carved out a stable existence in the highlands long before Europeans arrived. Thus they greatly resisted the colonialists greedy expansion. There were skirmishes with the first settlers, to be sure, but the Cherokees did co-exist with these pioneering Europeans for over a hundred years. But once the USNA state decided to systematically remove them, the Cherokees faced impossible odds. With the election of the blood-thirsty Indian oppressor, Andrew Jackson, as President of the United States, the final blow was struck against the Cherokees. Jackson soon saw that the Indian Removal Act was passed in 1830, authorizing the President to remove all Indians east of the Mississippi River. The Cherokees tried at first to deal reasonably with the government. They filed petitions and sent representatives to Washington, D.C. in 1835. The USNA government responded by seizing their leader, John Ross, and throwing him in jail without a charge. Their national paper, The Cherokee Phoenix, was seized and destroyed. The Cherokee people took up arms, but they were hopelessly outnumbered. The USNA army was sent to forcefully remove them. In May, 1838, General Winfield Scott took charge of the evacuation, and he forced-marched 13,000 captive Cherokees to Oklahoma. Suffering inhuman conditions throughout this terrible journey, 4,000 Cherokees died. It has since been called the "Trail of Tears".

However, one hardy band of Cherokees refused to be driven out. Determined to fight to the death, this brave group climbed to the highest reaches of the mountains of North Carolina and Tennessee. The Army was never able to drive them out of this difficult terrain. In 1889, the USNA state finally gave up and established a Cherokee reservation in the Great Smoky Mountains in the heart of Appalachia. The descendents of those courageous Cherokees still live in the Smokies, a Tribute to the great, historical struggle waged by all Indian peoples against the USNA state.

We must now turn to look in greater detail at those Europeans who settled in Appalachia throughout this whole period of Indian removal and who became the ancestors of today's Appalachian majority. Trappers, explorers, and missionary-types had made their way into the mountains in the latter half of the seventeenth century, establishing a few outposts, but it was during the first half of the eighteenth century that permanent European settlers in substantial numbers began to populate the Appalachian region. The influx of settlers continued for a century, while Appalachia remained the western frontier, an important barrier in the westward expansion of Anglo-Americans across the continent. By 1838, by the time the last of the Cherokees had been forced out, Appalachia was no longer the West. Settlers had made it beyond the mountains into the bluegrass areas of Tennessee and Kentucky. The main westward roads began to bypass Appalachia, and, as we shall see later, the flow of population into the region essentially stopped. Thus, we can date the period of the European settlement of Appalachia from the early 1700's until 1838.

Some bourgeois historians have argued the pure "Anglo-Saxon" or "Scotch-Irish" heritage of the first mountaineers. The truth is that many different kinds of settlers came to Appalachia for many different reasons. There were English, Welsh, Scotch, Irish, Scotch-Irish, French Huguenot, and German settlers, among others. Some of these early highlanders came directly from Europe, others from various ports of the coastal colonies. What they did have in common was a European heritage and a desire to escape their present situation and start out fresh in the wilderness. Almost all of the settlers came to Appalachia in an effort to escape oppression in one form or another. Scotch-Irish is the general name given to a large group of Scots, Englishmen, and southern Irishmen who, early in the seventeenth century, were placed in northern Ireland by the British government to take the land away from the fierce and independent Irish tribesmen who populated this area. These Scotch-Irish were in turn greatly oppressed by the government and by the wealthy landowners. Hence, throughout the eighteenth century, hundreds of thousands fled to North America. Another major European immigrant group which settled Appalachia was the Palatine Germans, from the Rhine valley. They sought to escape years of plunder and destruction at the hands of the various armies which marched through their land during the Thirty Years War and the War of Spanish Seccession. The French Hugenots came to the New World to escape vicious religious persecution in France.

In the case of these and all the other majority groups from Europe, most of the immigrants first stopped in the coastal cities. But by the late 1700's, these were already becoming too crowded. The wretched working conditions of the English factory system had already been established in North America, and the good agricultural land was already taken. Jobs could not be found, and there also was religious oppression in many of the original thirteen colonies. So thousands moved on, over the wilderness roads, into the mountains. From as far away as Boston and New York, dissatisfied colonialists made their way through Pennsylvania into the southern highlands.

However, the settlement of Appalachia was by no means accomplished only by movement through the more northerly colonies. Wilmington, N.C., and Charleston, S.C., were two of the major ports of immigrant arrivals. Many of these Europeans took southern routes



directly into the mountains. But more important numerically were those thousands of poor working people and small farmers who ran away from the oppressive coastal plantation system and made their way to freedom in the Appalachians.

Because of the climate of the southern colonies, there was a very different kind of bondage for the working masses of the South than the wage slavery of the northern colonies. For the most part, the ruling class in England handed out much more gigantic parcels of property to the southern land speculators. In 1629, Charles I granted all of the present state of Maryland and most of Delaware to Lord Baltimore. Many of the "founders" of the USNA were land speculators and plantation owners. They lived a life of such opulence that it was even envied by aristocrats in Europe. George Washington, said to be the USNA's first millionaire, was one of the leaders of the Ohio Company. This company was originally granted 500,000 acres by King George and by 1792 had amassed another 6,000,000 acres - much of it taken for free, all for under ten cents an acre. Tobacco was the first big cash crop but there were also many other profitable crops harvested on the plantations in Maryland, Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia. What little land was left for the honest, small farmer who came to "America" to try to make a better life was generally worthless or already planted out. They could not compete with the giant plantations. Many went westward to try again. These small, independent farmers were another basic element of the early population of the southern highlands.

The small farmers at least had the legal choice to move westward. The thousands of indentured servants or "white slaves" did not. Slavery in America did not only involve the terrible oppression and exploitation of the Negro people. We have already discussed the pitiful conditions in Europe for working people and ex-serfs during the era of bourgeois ascendancy and how these conditions produced a ready-made pool of exploitable labor for the big colonizers. What the southern land speculators and plantation owners needed, of course, were no independent minded colonists but slave laborers.

Even as Negro slaves were being brought from Africa, so were slaves and indentured servants from England and all over Europe. In the early stages of plantation settlement, European slaves and indentured servants far outnumbered Africans. In 1672, the average price of a European indentured servant, indentured for five years, was ten pounds, while a Negro slave brought twenty to twenty-five pounds. The handful of landowners and their lackeys used every trick in the book to place people in servitude. They emptied the prisons and the orphanages. Press gangs picked people off the street and put them on ships bound for the southern coast of America. Kidnapping became a word during this period to describe the "nabbing" of children by gangs of thugs hired by the landowners. Healthy child slaves were highly valued. The story could go on and on - of the countless deaths on ships crossing the ocean; of the lies that the bourgeoisie spread about the "paradise" in America to entice poor Europeans into indentured servitude; of the brutal conditions European indentured servants faced once they arrived in the "New World". Moreover, European servitude did not end with the American Revolution. To the contrary, the importation of indentured servants, as with Negro slaves, increased well into the 1800's. It is a terrible and all too little known chapter in the history of the USNA state.

The importance of the European slave and indentured servant situation for Appalachia is that many thousands of these suffering workers risked sure death to escape westward to the mountains. And these were often followed by indentured servants lucky enough to survive their period of bondage.

The movement into Appalachia continued into the early 1800's. But by the end of the first quarter of that century it had slowed to a trickle and, as mentioned earlier, can be said to have stopped by 1838. What happened was that the ceaseless movement westward had reached beyond the Appalachians into the bluegrass areas of Tennessee and Kentucky, the fertile Ohio River Valley, and the area which is today's midwest - Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan. Daniel Boone was exploring the Bluegrass as early as the 1750's. During the latter half of the eighteenth century many settlers were passing through the mountains along Boone's Wilderness Trail. But as better roads developed, especially the old National Road in 1818 (linking Baltimore to the West, running just north of Appalachia), the main routes of transportation westward began to bypass Appalachia. Most settlers naturally took these roads farther west, since there was better land to be had than in Appalachia and more of it. Appalachia's growth in population became entirely internal. After 1838, the rugged Southern Highlands became a very isolated area for a long period of time, allowing for the development of a very distinct culture and way of life.

### CHAPTER 3

#### GEOGRAPHY AND THE EARLY APPALACHIAN WAY OF LIFE

##### 1. Geography

The primary physiographic feature of Appalachia is, of course, its mountains. These mountains are not high, as mountains go - Mt. Mitchell in North Carolina, the highest, rises about 6,700 feet - but they are steep and rugged and continue range after range. (See Figure 3). The main range runs from the northeast to the southwest, but there are many cross-ranges, running at right angles to the main range, adding to the overall ruggedness of the terrain. Actually, the main range is a chain of numerous smaller mountain groups. The geological formation of these mountain groups took place at different times, but all of the Appalachians are very old. Most of them were formed 500 million years ago, the product of a great upheaval in the earth. The ancient Appalachian chain lay in an unbroken line from Newfoundland to Alabama and then westward, perhaps as far as Oklahoma. At that time they may have been as big as today's Rocky Mountains. The Appalachians that remain today are the result of millions of years of erosion.

Within the territory of Appalachia itself, the physiographic formations can be divided into three basic categories - mountains, valleys, and plateaus. The eastern ridge of Appalachia is formed



by the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains, which rise out of the broad piedmont of Virginia and North Carolina. The highest peaks in Appalachia are found in the Great Smokies and the Black Mountains, part of the Blue Ridge. The middle section is the Great Valley of the Appalachians, which is really four valleys - the Central, Southern, East Tennessee, and Southwest Virginia Valleys. The beautiful Shenandoah Valley, for example, is part of the Great Valley. The floor of the valley is well above sea level; i.e., the whole of Appalachia is an upland region, with a great central depression, and not merely two separate mountain areas with a dividing valley. To the west of the Great Valley is the formidable Cumberland Plateau, containing the famous Cumberland Gap - the earliest passageway west through the mountains. Overall, topographers report that 90% of Appalachia is occupied by mountain slopes and 85% of the land has a steeper slope than one foot in five.<sup>1</sup>

The variety of the terrain influenced the early settlers' choice of homesites. The Great Valley was by far the most fertile territory and was accordingly settled first. Last to be claimed were the most mountainous regions, especially in the Blue Ridge in Tennessee and North Carolina. But by the 1830's, when Appalachia's period of isolation began, essentially all of the usable land had been taken.

## 2. Farming the Land

Throughout the period of settlement and after, until around the time of the Civil War, the basic situation for all Appalachians was the same: trying to establish a suitable life by working the land. Some of the first settlers tried to live by hunting and trapping alone, but soon learned the need for farming. The trouble was, those who knew anything about farming or anything about any trade were in the minority. For most of those who had come to Appalachia came to escape a background of poverty and unskilled labor. And slaving for cash crops on coastal plantations did not teach anyone much about farming for themselves. Thus, from the beginning, subsistence in Appalachia was not easy.

Yet the Appalachian people did survive, and in many cases, thrived. The internal rate of population increase was prodigious in these early years.

The land was cleared of its virgin timber, log cabins were constructed, the fertile land was broken up and made productive. Game, berries, herbs, nuts, fruit, and lumber were in great abundance, and the local Indians were a source of information about living in such terrain. As on any frontier, life was hard and labor-saving devices were few; yet, in many ways, the people who settled here were rugged and ingenious. While they were not rich in goods, and had brought with them no outstanding skills in farming or hunting, life in the mountains was nevertheless satisfactory and there was little outside interference.<sup>2</sup>

The development of a very distinct mountain way of life had begun.

### 3. Fighting for Freedom

One element of this way of life was a fierce drive for independence and a willingness to fight for it, born out of years of struggle against harsh conditions. One of the first struggles for freedom in the mountains took place in North Carolina, before the American Revolution. The territorial border lines of North Carolina in the mid-1700's included the mountain and piedmont regions as well as the coastal tidewater. The mountaineers, generally poor, small farmers, were naturally at odds with the big eastern plantation owners. The planters viewed the mountaineers as savages, with no rights and no legitimate claim to land. The planters, of course, dominated the colonial legislatures and passed measures which aggrandized their already huge estates at the expense of the small farmers. The aristocrats had also begun to look covetously at the good land in the piedmont and in the mountain valleys. Using tricks with land taxes, they were able to steal land from many Appalachian settlers. In 1768, a number of mountaineers formed a group for the purpose of "regulating Public grievances and abuses of Power" - the Regulators. At first the Regulators tried to air their grievances in a legal manner. But the Governor of North Carolina, William Tryon, sent an army after them and various battles ensued for two years. The overwhelming force of the Governor's regular army finally broke the courageous Regulator movement, and almost all its leaders were killed in battle or executed. But this struggle anticipated many more to follow between the Appalachian people and those trying to steal their land and resources.

Although Appalachia played a fairly minor roll overall in the American Revolution - for this was a struggle by the national bourgeoisie, i.e., the eastern planters and merchants, to free themselves from control by England - when the mountaineers did participate, they exhibited their courage and fierceness in battle. The best example is the Battle of King's Mountain, North Carolina, in 1780. Arrogantly entering battle against what he called a bunch of "barbarians", the British commander, Major Patrick Ferguson, soon found his troops running from the outnumbered mountaineers. Ferguson and 167 other British were killed, and the rest of the 1100-man force was taken prisoner.<sup>3</sup> Twenty-eight highlanders were killed. The British never went any further into the mountains.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Weller, Jack, Yesterday's People (Lexington, University of Kentucky Press, 1966), p. 9.
2. Ibid., pp. 11-12.
3. Caudill, Harry M., Night Comes to the Cumberlands (Boston, Little Brown and Company, 1962), p. 12.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE CIVIL WAR AND THE SPLIT OVER SLAVERY

Appalachia remained well isolated through the 1850's, farming its land in much the same manner as before, unlike the rest of the South which was caught up in the monoculture around cotton. Appalachians produced a variety of crops - tobacco, some cotton, fruit, poultry and eggs, among others - mostly for small, local markets and for personal use. Their struggle against the eastern planters intensified as the latter became richer, increased their slave-holdings, and continued to dominate the state legislatures. The state boundaries had, of course, been drawn randomly at the behest of the seaboard aristocracy, who subjected all people falling within these boundaries to their greedy control. Also, as the Civil War approached, a few plantations and large farms developed in Appalachia itself, mainly in the fertile Great Valley. Some were owned by eastern planters, others by home-grown Appalachians who had managed to prosper and expand at the expense of their neighbors. Already the process of concentration and centralization was taking place. The less successful farmers and the later arrivals were forced to take the less fertile land, mainly in the uplands. People tried to farm some incredibly poor land. The so-called "perpendicular farms", built right on steep mountain slopes, rarely lasted more than a couple years because contour farming techniques were little-known in Appalachia. Some of the valleys high up were so narrow that fields for planting were only ten feet wide. The mass of poor, struggling farmers resented the wealth and political control possessed by the wealthy farmers.

A few of the mountain aristocrats took on slaves (although the total number of slaves in Appalachia was very small), further polarizing themselves from the mass of Appalachians. Thus, there was a clear economic basis for the bitter split which took place in Appalachia when the slave oligarchy tried to secede from the USNA. The Appalachian slave-owners and a minority of smaller farmers took the side of the planters. The Confederate military went through the mountains spreading the same white supremacist lies they used everywhere to recruit peasant and working class Appalachians. And there was the Confederate draft, which sought to force the rifle-skilled mountaineers to fight for the South. Some men were dragged away from their farms and put on the front lines.

But the vast majority of Appalachians fought against slavery and the slave oligarchy. Many joined the Union Army, others merely ambushed the Southern troops which passed their way - thus becoming known as "bushwackers". There was organized and armed resistance against the Confederate draft. West Virginia, the only state wholly within Appalachia, split from the eastern planter-dominated state of Virginia in 1861, abolishing slavery within its borders. The Underground Railroad ran through the mountains, mainly from Chattanooga, Tennessee, on up into Pennsylvania and beyond. Numerous mountain



towns and individual mountain families helped slaves make their way to freedom. And there was a strong abolitionist movement in Appalachia, led by such men as Dr. Samuel Doak, Elihu Embree, and John Rankin. John Brown used the Underground Railroad route in West Virginia on his way to Harper's Ferry, where he made his courageous stand. His close friend and trusted lieutenant was John Kagi, a mountaineer from Virginia.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, some of the Negroes who had been slaves in Appalachia remained there after the war, becoming the first permanent Negro national minority inhabitants in the mountains.

Appalachia, while the scene of few major battles, was nonetheless ravaged by the war. Bands of soldiers on both sides swept through, leaving destruction in their path. By the end of the war there was a severe shortage of food. Hostilities grew up among people struggling to survive. Based generally on old economic conflicts before the war and exacerbated by the choosing of different sides during the war, the famous period of family feuding commenced in the mountains. One of the essential features of early mountain life was the manner in which extended families stayed together. This was necessary to survival in the wilderness. And the rough terrain restricted travel beyond the local area. The general situation was for each group of kin to settle in a small valley and farm it for all. Such were the circumstances out of which the feuds arose, clan against clan, valley against valley. It was a bitter and bloody period in Appalachian history, signifying the great disorder brought about by the Civil War.

The feuds lingered on for a long time, some even into the twentieth century. But, ultimately, their existence began to be broken down by the same force which eventually ended forever the traditional frontier way of life in Appalachia - the capitalist expansion and the search for natural riches in the mountains. Appalachia remained a comparatively isolated region throughout the nineteenth century - it was not mapped, charted, and exploited all at once. But by the 1870's the handwriting was clearly on the wall. Appalachia possessed tremendous natural resources and the big USNA capitalists were going to get at it.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. West, Don, "Peoples Cultural Heritage in Appalachia" (Huntington, West Virginia, Appalachian Movement Press, 1973), p. 4.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE COMING OF THE CAPITALISTS

#### 1. Clearing Out the Hardwood

The original stands of forest which covered Appalachia were as thick and beautiful as anywhere in the world. There were both hardwoods (broad-leaved deciduous) and softwoods (conifer), but

the former were of more value commercially and more vigorously cut down. One writer described the virgin Appalachian forest in Kentucky thusly:

The great poplars and whiteoaks grew, for the most part, near the base of the hills and in the coves, while the lesser oaks and chestnuts predominated on the sharper points and near the hill tops. Countless walnuts dotted the forest, thousands of them without blemish and a yard or more in diameter. The Goliaths were the superb, pencil-straight poplars, some of them towering one hundred and seventy-five feet and achieving a diameter of seven or eight feet. Next to these in value, if not in size, were the white oaks, which sometimes reached a thickness in excess of five feet. There were also the sturdy red, black and chestnut oaks and whole armies of tremendous hickories, huge but lovely beeches, "sugar trees" and maples, basswoods, an occasional ash, persimmon or black-gum, and, lining the creek banks, the poetically graceful sycamores, birches and willows. And everywhere among the others were the mysterious, moody evergreens - the huge cedars, pines and hemlocks.

As of 1870, some of the highlanders had been supplementing their incomes by cutting down a few trees, logging them downriver, where they were sold at a pittance to lumber companies. But overall, at this time, most of the virgin Appalachian forest was intact. However, it was also around 1870 that financial and industrial circles in places like Cincinnati, New York, and Philadelphia were beginning to talk of the great wealth of raw materials reported to be in the mountains, especially the vast beds of bituminous coal discovered by exploring geologists. Soon, agents of these large capitalist interests were themselves exploring the highlands, their eyes no doubt popping at the obvious wealth in lumber located there.

Some companies were quickly organized to exploit Appalachian lumber. Older, well-established lumber companies also got in on the bonanza. And the big coal companies did not want to miss out either. They bought up huge stretches of land, cleared and sold the trees first and then went on to mine the coal. Fordson Coal Company, a subsidiary of Ford Motor Company, acquired between 1915 and 1924 most of Leslie County, Kentucky. The one thing that all the big companies which bought timber land in Appalachia had in common was that they were from outside the Appalachian territory - and that they were going to take the wealth out.

To get the land, of course, these Northern and Eastern capitalists had to get it away from its rightful Appalachian owners. They used every trick in the books. Slick lawyers and smooth-talking agents were sent in, declaring how worthless all this land was and how magnanimous the big companies were to take it off the mountaineers' hands. Unaccustomed to cash wealth, many highlanders sold huge tracts of land worth thousands for a few hundred dollars cash. When this money was gone, the ex-owners were naturally poorer than before because they had lost the land, their primary source of subsistence. When certain mountaineers became stubborn, pressure was put on them by local law-enforcers, bribed by the absentee

capitalists. And, as elsewhere, the companies used legal tricks around the question of land titles to steal much of the land. By 1909, which was the peak of the logging boom in Appalachia, most of the best trees were owned by absentee corporations.

This great logging boom lasted into the 1920's. Great sawmills were built at convenient locations along the main logging rivers. The capitalists brought in many teams of loggers and also hired some of the Appalachian farmers who had formerly owned the land being cleared. By the thirties, most of the best trees were gone and the big sawmills were closing down. The land was covered by miles and miles of stumps. What used to be vast forests was now only cull and second-growth timber for the most part. Some forestry continued and still does, but it utilizes smaller, more mobile mills because usable trees are fewer and farther apart. The greedy and rapacious exploitation of the virgin Appalachian forest by outside sources left both the people and the land of Appalachia much poorer. Not only were the trees ruthlessly cut down, but no care was taken to see that the newly-cleared land would be fertile. And the run-off from these lands greatly "aggravated flooding conditions endemic in a predominantly unglaciated region of unusually high rainfall and steep slopes."<sup>2</sup> The lumber boom was the first step in what can be called the rape of the Appalachians. The robbery of so much of the land from the Appalachian people and the great outflow of profits to absentee corporations which characterized this period played an important role in establishing Appalachia's economic servitude to the USNA.

## 2. Coal

After the exploitation of the Appalachian hardwood forests began in earnest in the 1870's, the race for coal was soon to follow. It was the final, crushing blow against the isolated, subsistence farming way of life in Appalachia. Promoting the growth of cities, the coal boom greatly furthered exchange between town and country. It vastly increased communication and transportation throughout the region, primarily through the construction of railroads. Huge chunks of Appalachian territory were bought up by absentee companies, furthering the process begun by the lumber industry. And to a much greater degree than with lumber, dispossessed Appalachians poured into the mines to try to make a better living - thereby establishing in far greater numbers than ever before an Appalachian proletariat. Appalachia became more and more dependent on the USNA capitalists, who rapidly solidified their control. Yet, as always, following capitalist oppression was the development of a resistance movement - in the case of Appalachia, rooted in the miners' struggles. Thus, as we shall trace now in greater detail, coal has played a pivotal role in the historical development of the Appalachian region.

The vast Appalachian coal field is one of the largest and most important continuous deposits of bituminous coal in the world. "It is distributed in a broad wedge, the western edge of which follows the west boundary of the Southern Appalachians at Preston County, West Virginia, cuts the western point of Virginia, enters Tennessee



at Claiborne County, and from there runs to Marion County on the south and on into Alabama."<sup>3</sup> (See Figure 4) This Appalachian coal had been discovered originally in the 1700's and by 1836 geological explorers were being sent in by the USNA government to discover the extent of the field. Yet, throughout the period before the Civil War, little of this coal was mined. A few mountaineers dug a little coal for themselves or for sale locally but that was all.

But, then, the period of gigantic industrial growth in the USNA set in full force. Coal took the throne as the primary energy source for this industrial boom. Factories, trains, ships, and newly-built electric power plants were driven by coal and millions of people warmed by its sooty flame. Steel and coal production became the yardstick by which the overlords of capital measured their gains. These big capitalists in the East and Midwest necessarily looked greedily upon the huge coal reserves buried in the Appalachian hills. Their agents fairly descended on the heretofore isolated highlands determined to gain control over its mineral wealth.

The process of land takeover was similar to what happened in the quest for lumber, only multiplied many times. The absentee capitalist organized land companies to buy up the land. "Representatives" were sent into the coal areas with instructions to use any means necessary. The most essential thing, in these robbers' eyes, was to take over the land before its rightful owners knew how much it was worth. Generally, broad-form deeds were sought, which gave the company total possession of everything on, under, or above the land covered by the deed. Since most of the mountaineers still lived in the same manner as a hundred years before and knew nothing of the value of their land, the measly cash offers made by the buyers appeared attractive. Most Appalachians had some extra land and so they sold it. But the capitalists wanted all the land which might produce coal. Those highlanders who wanted to keep some or all of their land had to be forced or tricked off. A favorite method of the land companies was to merely claim title to the land. Few mountaineers had written deeds or knew anything about bourgeois property laws. The courts were rigged to settle in favor of the companies. Or, the capitalist would pretend to be very magnanimous and offer to continue to allow the rightful owner to live on the land so long as he did not dispute the company's claim in court - this is called a quitclaim. When a mountaineer became really stubborn, he often would be arrested or placed on a bond too high to afford - but he was told he could offer his land as bond.

The robber-barons generally paid 25 to 50 cents an acre for this land.<sup>4</sup> The wealth it produced is staggering. Coal seams were so thick and numerous and close to the surface that relatively little needed to be spent to extract it in many places. "Under ordinary mining methods prevailing throughout the region during the years after 1913, the operating coal companies were able to recover from one thousand to fifteen hundred tons of coal per acre foot....Where more than one seam was mined, a single acre sometimes yielded fifteen or twenty thousand tons."<sup>5</sup> Just one seam, five feet thick, would produce over 5,000 tons an acre. At today's prices this would be worth about \$25,000 an acre. Most Appalachians

got half a buck, if anything at all. Moreover, this land is now producing additional fortunes in oil and gas. Can there be any doubt that the appropriation of Appalachian coal land by Northern capitalists was nothing less than outright robbery?

So immense was the Appalachian coalfield that the process of appropriation took the imperialists considerable time. Commencing about 1875, the task was nearly complete by about 1910. By this date, perhaps three-fourths of the salable timber and at least eighty-five percent of the minerals were in the hands of absentee owners. Thus, by that date, the stage was set for the onslaught into the highlands of all the forces of capital necessary to extract its buried treasure. The Appalachian people had been promised, of course, that the extraction of coal would not affect the beauty of their land and would bring them great wealth. As we shall see, it actually left them impoverished and helpless - trespassers on the soil beneath their feet, a once beautiful land now covered with tree stumps and strip mines.

After the absentee capitalists had taken control of the land, they had to establish means of getting to the coal and getting it out. Thus the stage was set for the period of railroad building in Appalachian history. In a region where there had been only a very few traversable roads, suddenly there sprung up miles of track. Appalachia's isolation was ended forever. Constructing the railroads was a precursor to working the mines. Labor was supplied from three basic sources - Appalachians themselves, who had lost their land altogether or were trying to supplement a meager farm income; foreign immigrants, often forced or tricked into coming to Appalachia to do this backbreaking labor; and Negroes from the Negro Nation. Working under brutal conditions, these men died by the hundreds of overwork. Many more were shot by the vicious roadgang foremen. Mass trackside graves were common.

As the railroads were finished - the task was essentially complete by 1910 - the stage was set for the removal of the coal. The mining began in earnest in the last years of the 19th century, but the real boom years, when the coal industry almost totally dominated life in much of Appalachia, were from 1912 to 1927.<sup>6</sup> The capitalists entered Appalachia like conquerors, bringing along hordes of personnel and equipment to exploit the coal resources. New population centers had to be established near the mine sites, where the companies could watch and keep control over the workers. Thus, a plethora of mining company towns sprung up. A few nice homes were built, away from the mining camp, for the corporation supervisors, executives, engineers, accountants, lawyers and doctors there to serve the company men. Then there were the thousands of hastily and shabbily constructed, workers' "houses" - to which the miners and their families were assigned. Row after monotonous row of plain shacks, once white but soon covered with soot, was the visage presented by these mining towns.

During the boom period, the expansion of the coal industry in Appalachia was stupendous. Whereas in 1880, Appalachia produced only five or six million tons per year, by the late 1920's, the

figure was about 175 million tons per year, or a little over a third of the whole nation's output.<sup>7</sup> A huge number of workers were required to provide the labor for such production. It was the movement of these workers into the mines and mining towns that established one of the earliest and most important bases of the Appalachian proletariat. Mountaineers from all over Appalachia - who had lost their land, or could not produce a living on it anymore - sought a new way of living in the coal towns. The coal barons, of course, promised untold wealth for all who would sell their labor in the mines. Negroes and poor white workers from the Negro Nation came northward seeking a way out of poverty. Many of the Negroes who had worked to build the railroads stayed on. These Negroes, along with the handful of escaped slaves who had taken refuge in the mountains and remained, established the first permanent Negro population in Appalachia. The mighty John Henry was one of the Negroes who helped build the Appalachian railroads, and his legend still echoes through the hills. But even these sources could not provide enough labor for the booming mines. Especially during World War I, when the mines were going full force, the coal operators were crying for more workers. Just as the Southern plantation owners had done two centuries before, the mine owners turned to Europe. USNA labor agents were at that time combing Europe, especially southern Europe, for cheap labor. The coal companies jumped in, again spreading lies about high wages and good housing. Bewildered immigrants were put directly on trains at the eastern ports of entry and shipped directly to the Appalachian coal fields. This influx of Negroes and Europeans into the coal mines helped break up the isolation of the area. But to keep things in perspective, at least 90% of those who filled up the mining towns were native Appalachians.

The working and living conditions in the mines in these early days, as is well known, were miserable. Poverty-stricken farmers who thought things were going to improve when they left their farms to work in the mines were soon disillusioned. The shabby homes soon began to disintegrate, and as time passed more and more miners and their families were crammed into less and less space. The facilities for heating and sanitation were pitiful, often non-existent. Coal burns very slowly, and a single coal stove does not heat even one room adequately in cold weather. Health care was practically absent. What few doctors came to the mining towns generally served the supervisors. The few inclined to try and help the miners had nowhere near enough time or supplies. Education was likewise virtually ignored. All the capitalists tried to teach was loyalty to them and white chauvinism. The schools and living quarters were rigidly segregated between the Appalachians, Negroes, and Europeans. The bosses pushed white chauvinism to keep the workers apart.

Moreover, the coal companies tried to establish an overall atmosphere of paternalism and iron-fisted control. Workers and their families were generally forced to live in the mining camp, further serving to pull the Appalachian people away from the land. Despite this, many mountain people did stay in their hillside homes and came down everyday to work in the mines. At many camps there were gates and armed guards - a pass was needed to get in



and out. The nefarious scrip system was installed as a method of payment, forcing the mine workers to buy all supplies from the overpriced mining camp commissaries. Combing the scrip system with high rent and low pay, often only \$1.50 for a ten-hour day, the coal barons were able to keep the miners in a state of total dependence and debt. Even those miners who wanted to get out often could not. And there was another built-in blockade to attempts by miners to get away from the mines and back to the land - there was no land left to go back to. Thus, even in the best of times, when coal was booming, the miners got none of the benefits. Their labor power brought them a subsistence wage, nothing more. And when the boom ended, as we shall see, things rapidly got much worse.

One more aspect of the Appalachian miner's life should be mentioned - the constant danger involved. Accidents occurred at an incredible rate. Explosions and cave-ins accounted for most of the deaths. But there were also the manglings andcripplings by runaway coal cars and the slow death of blacklung. Benefits or insurance for accidental death or injury were a pittance, if anything at all. "Since the families of the dead and disabled miners were expelled from the camps to make way for able-bodied new arrivals, the hollows in the outlying rural areas and the marginal 'rat rows' of the independent towns filled rapidly with widows, orphans, and cripples."<sup>8</sup> The likelihood of accidents and injuries were increased by the herculean hours often put in by the miners. Piece-work rates were established to induce the workers to do their backbreaking labor as much as twelve hours a day, six or seven days a week. Even if not injured in an accident, men working at this pace did not last too long.

At the same time that the Appalachian proletariat was suffering the hardships of working in the mines and living at a bare subsistence level, the mine owners were realizing gigantic profits. Especially during World War I, mines proliferated as all sorts of capitalists, big and small, tried to get in on the take. Token pay raises were offered to the miners, but these were eaten up in price hikes at the commissaries.

But this unlimited boom for the capitalists could not go on unchecked forever. With the end of World War I, the pattern for the future was beginning to become evident.

With the exception of occasional peaks due to European shortages of coal, the United States witnessed a steady decline in coal production during the late 1920's. This was due to the overexpanded output of a war-time economy, new technological efficiencies in coal extraction and utilization and the beginning of fuel substitutes. At the same time the continual opening of new mines heightened competition mercilessly. Consequently, during this period chronic unemployment began to develop and the average miner's yearly wage dropped. In 1928 alone, 10,000 coal miners lost their jobs because of the decline in the coal industry. And from 1923 to 1927 the average purchasing power in constant 1913 dollars of mining workers' annual income is estimated to have dropped 14%.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, the inevitable logic of capitalist production caught up with the Appalachian coal industry - overproduction crisis, anarchy of production, and a drop in the long-term rate of profit. Then, with the onset of the Great Depression, the industry collapsed, bringing on even greater hardships for the Appalachian working class.

We will trace the effect of the Great Depression as well as the response of the Appalachian proletariat to its exploitation by Northern capital later. First, we need to back up and discuss the development of agriculture and the birth of manufacturing in Appalachia prior to the Great Depression.

### 3. Agriculture

What happened to agriculture in Appalachia after the Civil War has already been discussed in relation to coal - thousands of Appalachian peasants were expropriated and forced to go to work in the mining towns. Yet greater numbers remained behind, trying as always to eke out a living from the rapidly-depleting Appalachian soil. The overall trend was, as elsewhere in the USNA, toward concentration and centralization in agriculture. A few farmers in Appalachia and some wealthy landowners from outside the region who bought fertile land in the Great Appalachian Valley prospered. They were able to keep up with the Industrial Revolution and stay abreast of the flatland farmers elsewhere in the USNA by buying the newly-invented labor-saving machinery. But the overwhelming majority of Appalachian farmers became increasingly impoverished. Those that didn't sell land to coal or timber companies often ended up having no choice but to sell out to the wealthier farmers. This resulted in the rapid rise, throughout the late 1800's and early 1900's, of a large sharecropping and tenant-farming population.

Yet, through it all, many Appalachians clung to their parcels of land and continued to own it. As Figure 5 shows, by 1930 there was still a huge concentration of farms in the Appalachian region. Still, most of these farms were at best marginal enterprises and the degree of poverty among the majority of poor Appalachian farmers was increasingly great. And the pressure to sell out and leave the area or go to work in industry was also increasingly great. And the pressure to sell out and leave the area or go to work in industry was also increasingly great, as many mountain-farm families were starving. The 1930 census of agriculture showed that the Appalachian region contained the highest percentage of low-income farms in the nation. Some mountain farms returned less than \$600 per year value of gross products, while the density of farm population was some fifty percent higher than in the best farm areas of the Midwest, where yields were higher and the land better suited for farming. The farmers of the Cumberland Plateau were found to be the lowest income group in United States agriculture.<sup>10</sup>

For this majority of Appalachians who persisted in this primitive agricultural way of life, things could only get worse. For the land, generally not very fertile from the start, was being rapidly depleted. As mentioned before, the best farming land was

arms to all enemies of exploitation and oppression.

Moreover, the blight of the Depression struck beyond the coal camps in an ever-widening circle. The development of the coal towns with its cash economy had led many rural Appalachians to give up their subsistence-type agriculture of the past. They no longer kept a variety of animals and crops to feed their family but tried to specialize in one or two to exchange on the coal-town market for other needed goods. With the mining collapse, these farmers suddenly could not get the goods they needed, and no longer had the means to grow or raise their own. In the areas inundated by the 1927 floods, all of the farmers were still struggling to get much of anything to grow. Sharecroppers and tenant farmers suffered especially during these lean years. The burden on the rural lands was increased by the return of many unemployed miners and their families to the fields. Kinfolk that still had some land now struggled to make their worn hillsides produce for a greater number of people, which in most cases was impossible. And, of course, throughout this period, the handful of wealthy farmers and agribusiness concerns, raced forward in their process of taking over the land of farmers who could no longer make a go of it. In sum, the Depression in Appalachia, as throughout the USNA, served to enhance the position of big capital at the expense of the oppressed masses, whose suffering increased greatly.

The Great Depression also ushered into Appalachia the era of welfare - a plethora of government programs ostensibly to "aid the poor" but actually designed to further enslave them. The New Deal, of course, played this roll throughout the whole USNA, but for Appalachia it served as the beginning of a long chain of programs, unbroken still today, through which the USNA state has attempted to strictly control Appalachia's destiny for the benefit of the bourgeoisie.

The phoney populism of the Roosevelt era sought to play on the Appalachian peasant and working class hatred of Herbert Hoover\* and the mine owners in order to cover up the class struggle with vagueness and confusion and hence keep the working class under the leadership of bourgeois politicians and other demagogues. The way was being paved for fascism.

The characteristic feature of fascism is that, as a consequence of the shock suffered by the capitalist economic system and of special objective and subjective conditions, the bourgeoisie -

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\*Found over a freshly-filled honey hole, carved on a slab of wood in a coal camp during the Depression:

Here lies Hoover,  
Damn his soul,  
Buried in a honey-hole.  
Let him lay there till the end  
Poor man's enemy,  
Rich man's friend.

in order to hinder the development of the revolution - utilizes the discontent of the petty and middle, urban and rural bourgeoisie and even certain sections of the declassed proletariat, for the purpose of creating a reactionary mass movement.<sup>2</sup>

The mountains were inundated by program administrators and relief agents. Appalachian workers were recruited into the Works Progress Administration, Civilian Conservation Corps, etc. But the USNA State's biggest New Deal deal in Appalachia was the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). As we will discuss further on, TVA from the beginning has been a vehicle to promote the interests of USNA imperialism in Appalachia. Working hand-in-hand with such oppressors of Appalachia as Peabody Coal Company, TVA is a perfect example of the link between populism and fascism.

FOOTNOTES

1. Caudill, pp. 170-71.
2. R. Palme Dutt, Fascism and Social Revolution (International Publishers, New York 1935), p. 109.

CHAPTER 7

APPALACHIA SINCE THE DEPRESSION: TODAY'S APPALACHIA

1. Population and Basic Characteristics

Until the last two decades, Appalachia has been characterized by a steadily increasing population. (See Figure 6.) Throughout the 1800's, with the exception of the Civil War period, the rate of growth for each decade was above twenty percent. The last half of the nineteenth century brought about almost a three-fold increase in the population from 1,092,948 in 1850 to 2,965,500 in 1900 (based on areas as delineated in Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> Population increase continued through the first half of the twentieth century, but at a reduced rate. (See Figure 7.) The number of inhabitants almost doubled between 1900 and 1950, reaching 5,833,263 at the latter date. But from then on, population has declined, the result primarily of decline in employment in the coal industry and increasing poverty on the farms and the consequent migration of many people out of Appalachia. It is indicative of the overall poverty and miserable conditions within Appalachia today that the population continues to decline so rapidly. The figures for 1960 and 1970 for the Appalachian counties in Kentucky, Virginia, and West Virginia are:

	1960	1970	Percent Change
Kentucky	922,152	858,038	-7.0
Virginia	500,334	457,295	-8.6
West Virginia	1,860,421	1,697,711	-8.7



The only areas within Appalachia today where population is increasing is in the few large cities and particularly within the narrow strip of the Great Appalachian Valley, where most of the development of cities and of manufacturing is taking place. Manufacturing had a late start in Appalachia, not beginning to develop extensively until after the Depression. Similarly, the urbanization process in Appalachia has lagged well behind the rest of the USNA. (See Figure 8.) Not until 1840 was there any Appalachian town large enough to be classified as urban. By 1860 there were only four urban centers. However, since 1900 the urban population of Appalachia has grown much more rapidly than has the total population of the area, and this rate of growth was accelerated during the decade of the forties. During the years 1950-1960, the urban population of the region increased 9.4 percent while the total population decreased 3.4 percent.

This recent trend toward urbanization is significant in understanding the economic development in Appalachia. It coincides with the large-scale development of manufacturing in the area since the Depression. Prior to that time, Appalachia had remained overwhelmingly rural. The coal towns, while serving to take many mountaineers off their farms, did not really amount to a significant urban trend. It was not until the powers of capital determined that manufacturing could prove profitable in Appalachia and the means of transportation and communication were developed accordingly that the urbanization process really commenced.

The first cities began to develop along the railroad lines that had been built during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Since 1920, with the expansion of highways through Appalachia and the increasing importance of motor transportation, the growth of cities in the region has been greatly enhanced. The most definite trend toward urbanization is within the Great Appalachian Valley, where the major part of the development of manufacturing is taking place in Appalachia. This can be seen in Figure 9, which shows the cities and metropolitan areas in the Southeast. The USNA's National System of Interstate and Defense Highways, nearly complete now, contributes to the growth of Appalachia's six major metropolitan areas - Huntington and Charleston, West Virginia; Knoxville and Chattanooga, Tennessee; Asheville, North Carolina; and Roanoke, Virginia. (See Figure 10.) The USNA imperialists definitely seem to be stressing the development of the urban areas of Appalachia, as having the best potential for profit through manufacturing. This fact is evident in much of the bourgeois literature on Appalachia - urging that the cities be developed, factories be brought in, etc., and for the most part to hell with the starving masses in the rural areas and coal ghost towns. It is stressed that the poverty-stricken peasantry and unemployed coal miners proved a good source of cheap labor for the new factories. This whole trend toward urbanization and manufacturing is, of course, a familiar one under capitalism and can be expected to continue.

Closely related to the growth of cities in Appalachia has been the recent decline in farm population. Between 1930 and 1950, the farm population in Appalachia dropped from over 41 percent to about

30 percent, and it has continued to decline since.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, in comparison to the rest of the USNA, Appalachia remains a very rural area. The greatest losses of population have been from the rural farm population, but the rural nonfarm population has grown. In 1960, two out of three people in Appalachia were classed as rural. (See Figure 11.) And, as can be seen from Figure 12, there is a substantial rural population in every county in Appalachia. Moreover, the peasantry itself, despite the declining trend, remains strong in number. In 1950, of a total population of 5,833,000, 1,777,000 were farm residents. Of the remainder, 2,495,000 were rural nonfarm and only 1,561,000 were residents of metropolitan areas.

As mentioned before, the overall population in Appalachia has been declining in recent years due primarily to migration out of the area. There is no question that it is from the poorest and most oppressed sections that most of the migration has taken place, i.e., from the rural areas where the land is no longer suitable for farming and from the coal mining areas. Family income throughout Appalachia is very low. According to the 1950 census, 36 percent of the families in Appalachia had yearly incomes below \$1,500, only 10 percent had incomes above \$5,000, and the region was only \$1,880. Fully 36 percent of the area's families had income below the pitifully low federally-designated poverty level. We can see from the current figures on West Virginia that the per capita income in Appalachia is lower today, relative to the rest of the USNA, than it was at the end of World War II. Whereas in 1948, the per capita income of West Virginia stood at 78.2 percent of the national average, in 1969 per capita income in the USNA was \$3,687 and in West Virginia it was \$2,603, or 70.6 percent of the national average.

The importance of the economic factor in population change can be seen by comparing Figure 13, which shows the median family income by county in 1950, with Figure 14 on population change between 1950 and 1960. Another way of stating the population trends in Appalachia is as follows: During the period 1950-1960, where manufacturing was the chief industry the population increased slightly (8 percent); where agriculture was the chief industry the population decreased slightly (7 percent); where mining was the chief industry the population decreased greatly (19 percent).<sup>4</sup> The long-range historical development of the Appalachian population engaged in agriculture, mining, and manufacturing is presented in Figure 15.

The nature of employment of the Appalachian people also reflects the above trends. Whereas before 1900, almost every Appalachian was involved in one way or another with farming, such is, of course, no longer the case. Today the number of people working on farms continues to decrease while those working in factories continues to increase. (See Figure 16.) As elsewhere, more and more Appalachian women are moving into the work force, especially in manufacturing in the urban areas. And, as we will discuss further on, there remains a huge army of unemployed workers in Appalachia, poverty-stricken families generally the victims of declining employment in mining unable to find jobs in town or country.

The large-scale migrations from Appalachia have resulted in a new chapter in the oppression of the Appalachian people. Between the years 1950 and 1960, more than one million people in all left Appalachia, generally moving to large midwestern and mid-Atlantic cities such as Cincinnati, Columbus, Cleveland, Chicago, Detroit, and Baltimore. Having been mainly agricultural workers or mine-workers, these migrants come to the cities as unskilled workers and often find their lot worse than it was in Appalachia. (See Figure 17.) They have extreme difficulty finding jobs and face a new form of oppression that affects all aspects of their lives - discrimination against them as Appalachians, or "hillbillies" in the derogatory language of the bourgeoisie. This special oppression of the Appalachian migrants is yet another attempt by the bourgeoisie to split the ranks of the working class.

With regard to minorities within Appalachia itself, the situation today is essentially the same as it has been throughout most of the region's history - there is a small but stable Negro population. The 1950 census showed six percent to be "non-white", 99 percent of these being Negro. The vast majority of Negro national minority workers in Appalachia are located in the cities, especially Chattanooga, Tennessee. A few remain in the smaller mining towns. As before, there are almost no Negroes involved in agriculture in Appalachia. The Negro population has remained essentially in the same proportion to the white population since the 1920's.

## 2. Economic Exploitation: The Ongoing Rape of Appalachia

A. Coal. Despite a century of intense and wasteful exploitation of its natural resources, Appalachia remains a region rich in natural wealth. Appalachia delivers more than 70 percent of the coal consumed in the USNA and provides 15 percent of the whole country's energy.<sup>5</sup> In March, 1972, the President's Council on Environmental Quality reported that Appalachian coal is generally "of a high quality and in demand for steam electric plants, coke and gas plants, exports". The report goes on to declare that at current rates of production, there are enough reserves to last for several hundred years. Yet, as before, the Appalachian masses realize none of the value of this great wealth of theirs, but rather are increasingly impoverished at the hands of absentee coal-company owners.

Updating the development of the coal industry itself, it was World War II that brought Appalachian coal production out of the depression doldrums. Early in World War II, the region's production rose to over 200 million tons and continued at that level until 1953. The recession year 1954 saw production drop to 169 million tons, a post-war low, and since then production has fluctuated sharply year to year. But, as a generalization, it can be said that coal output has not kept pace with overall industrial production since the early 1950's. The fundamental reason for this situation is that coal has lost much of its domination of the energy market to other fuel sources. Natural gas began to be pumped into the East from as far away as Texas. It was convenient to use, easily adaptable to automatic controls, and cheaper to

transport than the bulky coal. Oil replaced coal for industrial heating, train locomotives, and other uses. By comparison, in 1900, bituminous coal and lignite accounted for 70 percent of the production of all energy fuels and anthracite coal for more than half of the rest. By 1940, coal's share was less than half, and in 1957 it was only 30.9 percent.<sup>6</sup> In recent years coal has made somewhat of a comeback as the result of its usage in the mushrooming electric power industry, and this is the brightest spot in coal's picture for the future. As mentioned before, there remains plenty of coal in reserve, and even if its percentage of all energy use continues to decrease, coal mining will remain a major factor in Appalachia for the foreseeable future.

While the coal industry takes great pains to publicize its ongoing usefulness, it fails to report what its development has meant to the people of Appalachia as a whole and to the coal miners in particular. We discussed in connection with the Depression how so many mine workers and their families were left to starve when the mines closed down. These jobs have never really been replaced, and others continue to disappear, even as the quantity of coal produced out of Appalachia increases. As coal production fluctuates so does the job situation, but the fundamental long-range trend in coal employment is downward. There continues to be real coal slumps, where thousands of jobs are lost in a day. For example, in Bell County, Kentucky, surrounding the coal town of Middlesborough, there were 1,230 coal mining jobs in 1952. By 1958, there were only 282. But the biggest overall losses of jobs have come as the result of automation which has greatly changed the nature of coal mining since the Depression.

Huge continuous-mining machines have been introduced to replace the old, crude hand methods. Such machines cut the necessary workers in a given mine by more than half and produce much more coal. The employment situation is also aggravated by the great increase in strip mining over the past two decades. Strip mining is almost entirely mechanized and employs relatively few workers. The increase in strip mining has resulted in the closing of numerous deep mines, causing a further loss of jobs. More on stripping later. In 1948 there were 131,700 men working in West Virginia coal mines, but by 1968 there were only 45,000 employed there. The inescapable conclusion is that regardless of the demand for coal or the amount of coal production in Appalachia, the already huge army of unemployed in Appalachian coal areas will grow. "No matter what the market for coal, there can be only one basic trend in mining employment; that is downward. There are vitually no new jobs in the mines... Most of the displaced men never will be re-employed in the mines."<sup>7</sup>

The process of the coal lay-offs has been cruel and abrupt, in accordance with the nature of working conditions in the whole industry. One writer describes it thusly:

Often without a day's warning, men were cut off from their jobs. At one mine, which had worked steadily for forty years, the men returned from their annual vaction to find the place closed and their jobs gone. No warning had been given them before they left to spend their precious savings on recreation. At another



mine, the men came to the lamp house the day before Thanksgiving to get their lamps for work underground and read on the bulletin board that, as of the last shift of the day, the mine would work no more. Hundreds of thousands of men found themselves with no jobs, no skills, little education, little or no experience living outside the mountains, and no desire to leave the only home they had ever known.<sup>8</sup>

The disaster to the Appalachian coal miners and their families which these layoffs caused stems mainly from the historically paternalistic nature of the industry. Having moved from farms to the isolated coal towns, put in company houses, paid in company scrip, etc., etc. - when the mine and the whole town closed, these families had nowhere to go and the suffering increased.

A contributing factor to the worsening employment situation in coal is the increasingly monopolistic character of the industry. The bigger companies, of course, have introduced the bigger machines and increased the organic composition of capital. Ever since the early boom days, there have been thousands of small, individually owned mines. For years, spokesmen for the larger operations claimed the coal industry's biggest problem was that there were too many small mines and ownership and control of them was too dispersed. Over the course of time, through the various ups and downs of the capitalist economy, the big capitalists have done a good job of correcting their problem. Mine after mine has been wiped out. Today, the smaller operations are unable to buy expensive modern machinery or to keep up with the modern sales techniques of the big companies. Many of these struggling smaller mines are locally owned, and their owners represent an indigenous petty bourgeoisie who have a concrete basis for resisting the encroachment of the externally-owned coal giants.

Some figures on the degree of concentration in the coal industry: In 1954, there were 3,255 working mines in Appalachia. Seven had a production of over two million tons, whereas hundreds of mines produced less than ten thousand tons and some under one thousand.<sup>9</sup> Data from West Virginia, where the greatest amount of mining takes place, shows that in 1956, 1,382 operating coal companies accounted for 1,541 mining operations and a total production of just over 150 million tons. Twenty-seven companies each produced over a million tons, and one produced about fifteen million. The three largest companies produced roughly 20 percent of the State's total, the largest sixteen about half. At the other extreme, 528 operations each employed fewer than five men, and averaged about 2,000 tons. These more than 500 mines together produced less than half as much coal as the largest single mine in the State.<sup>10</sup>

We have stated throughout this paper that the Appalachian coal industry is dominated by a few large absentee-owners - companies from outside the region that come in and take the wealth out. Appalachia is not a poor region. Only its people are. For example: In the five major coal-producing counties of northeast Tennessee, mine corporations, all but one controlled from the outside, own

34 percent of the land surface and approximately 85 percent of the coal wealth. In eleven major coal-producing counties of east Kentucky, thirty-one individuals and corporations control 80 percent of the coal wealth. In fourteen major coal-producing counties of West Virginia, containing over half of the State's coal reserves, twenty five landowners control 49 percent of the land area. Ten companies control 31 percent of the land.<sup>11</sup>

During the big boom days of coal in the early part of this century, many of the big robber barons were involved in coal. Morgan had interests in International Harvester and U.S. Steel, both of which had coal mines in Appalachia. Morgan's railroad lines also served to bring the coal out. The Mellons owned Pittsburg Coal Company and the Koppers Company, major coal diggers in Kentucky. Henry Ford owned mines in Harlan, Pike, and Leslie Counties. And last but not least the Rockefellers had their grubby hands in the cookie jar, controlling both mines and railroads in Appalachia. Then, during the late 1950's and early 1960's, the coal industry began to fall more and more under the control in international oil companies and other energy-related corporations. Consolidation Coal, Appalachia's largest producer, is owned by Continental Oil Company; Island Creek Coal Company, which is second in output, is owned by the California-based Occidental Petroleum Corporation; and the third largest producer in the region, Eastern Associated, is a wholly-owned subsidiary of a Boston holding company called Eastern Gas and Fuel Associates. About 10 percent of Appalachian coal output comes from so-called captive mines owned by U.S. Steel, Bethlehem Steel, and other national steel firms.<sup>12</sup>

Looking more closely at some individual coal-mining counties in Virginia we find the typical pattern of absentee relationships established.

In Dickinson County, for example, the vast majority of the wealth is controlled by the Clinchfield Coal Company and Appalachian Power Company....

Clinchfield Coal Company, the nation's third largest producer of bituminous coal, is owned by the Pittsburgh-based Pittston Company. Pittston President Carlos Routh and Charles T. Hill, a Pittston director, are both board members of the Allegheny Corporation, a mammoth holding company which wheels and deals in the stocks of other corporations.

F. M. Kirby II of New York is president and chairman of Allegheny. He also sits on the board of Pittston. He and another Allegheny director, Daniel Taylor, are directors of Penn-Central Railroad, of which Stuart Saunders is president.

Stuart Saunders is a board member of the Penn-Virginia Corporation, a vast land-holding corporation which regularly turns over a net profit in excess of 60 percent....

The profits of Penn-Virginia are swollen by a rich coal depletion allowance and another blessing, a little-known loophole in the tax laws that gives capital gains treatment to royalties earned from coal lands.

Penn-Virginia leases alot of coal lands and it is this preferred tax rate that jacks its corporate earnings to the highest level in the United States.

In addition to its land leasing, Penn-Virginia owns 38.7 percent of Westmoreland Corporation, which last year acquired the huge holdings of Boston-based C.H. Sprague and Son Coal Sales Division to become the nation's fourth largest coal producer.

In Wise County, which borders Dickinson County, Westmoreland operates the Wentz Mine, producer of the world's highest-grade bituminous coal. The company estimates that the mine has a 20-year life expectancy at the rate of one million tons of premium coal per year - for its upper seam. Below that is another with an estimated 73 million to 74 million tons of recoverable reserves.

Selling that coal is no problem either. The Wentz Mine has a ten-year contract to supply to United States Steel Corporation.

Stuart Saunders, board member of Westmoreland's parent corporation, is a director of U.S. Steel. He also sits on the board of Georgia-Pacific Corporation, a huge lumber- and land-holding company which owns 4.5 million acres, much of which is in the coal-producing region of Appalachia, containing 234 million tons of known recoverable coal reserves.

The ubiquitous Stuart Saunders and W.F. Brinley, Sr. (another Philadelphian who is senior vice president of both Westmoreland Coal and its parent, Penn-Virginia Corporation) are both directors of Dominion Bank Shares. That is the umbrella corporation which controls major banks in virtually every major city and town in the Virginia Appalachians.

The board room of Dominion Bank Shares brings together the General Assembly, the largest newspaper holding company in the state, and the commonwealth's lone land-grant university, Virginia Polytechnic Institute. VPI operates all the state's extension services and a mining engineering department which cooperates heavily with the larger coal companies.<sup>13</sup>

In discussing the coal industry in Appalachia we cannot fail to mention strip mining, that great blight which USNA imperialism has brought down upon Appalachia. Strip mining recovers coal by removing the overburden, the earth and rock covering the coal. It is economical only where the coal reserves are near the surface. Strip mining began in earnest in Appalachia in the early 1960's, although it had been used sporadically since World War II. Although the large majority of total coal production is still from traditional deep mines, stripping is growing fast and increasing its percentage. Before 1960, stripping was generally done by small operators trying to make a quick buck by filling in when a larger company couldn't meet a contractual commitment. They had to get the coal out fast. But the big companies soon learned that strip mining is very efficient in their terms - fewer workers and less time needed to get the coal out. Huge profits can be reaped quickly. Once this was discovered the hungry wolves lost no time in physically tearing much of Appalachia to pieces. As Dun's Review of Business stated in 1965: "These coal royalists hold what may well be one of the most lucrative investments in all of America."



The process involved in strip mining goes something like this:

A coal operator comes in with a couple of bulldozers, an immense power shovel, and a few pneumatic drills. He peels away the fertile topsoil, bulldozes out the trees and other vegetation, pushes aside the sterile subsoil, stone, and slate. A seam of coal thus bared, the strip miner gouges it out, loads it on trucks, and carries it away.

The tremendous waste, which once was a lush green hillside, is haphazardly dumped back in the gorge or is left uncovered. Sulfur is usually found with coal. Now exposed, it mixes with the water to form toxic sulfuric acid. It bleeds into the streams and creeks, destroying all forms of life and polluting the drinking supply.

The solid rubble is washed down the hillside, eroding everything in its path, including fertile farmland. Silt fills the streams, causing them to back up and overflow their banks.<sup>14</sup>

The great damage caused by strip mining is multiplied when practiced in the hills as opposed to flatlands. Nowadays, the strippers will often just come in and blow off a hilltop with dynamite, take out the coal, and then run off leaving their mass behind. If the coal is too deep, the companies use augers, huge drills sometimes seven feet in diameter, to drill as much as 200 feet into the coal seam and spiral the coal out. Strip mining operations often destroy whole towns, as the refuse from scarred and mangled hills rolls and slides down onto people's houses. One coal company engineer described his stripping operation frankly: "When I came to this coalfield most of the hills were covered with fine timber and all were full of topgrade coal. Since then we have gutted these old mountains and shaved 'em off clean. Now we are skinning 'em and cutting their heads off."<sup>15</sup> It has been estimated that stripping in Appalachia has produced enough damaged land to make a mile-wide strip reaching from New York to San Francisco.

There are some laws in various Appalachian counties and states which supposedly control strip mining, but the fact is the coal companies control the law-makers and law-enforcers. Big strippers like Peabody Coal Company, owned by the Kennecott Copper Corporation of New York City, have long since learned who must be paid off so that the coal companies can have a free hand at stealing Appalachia's riches. A good example was in the city of Morehead, Kentucky, in Muhlenberg County. Kentucky law prohibits strip mining within 100 feet of a public road. So Peabody merely got the judge to declare all the roads in Morehead of no use to the county. Then Peabody proceeded to buy out all of Morehead's residents for pennies. Those that hesitated were treated to dynamite explosions all around them and eventually sold out as well.<sup>16</sup>

B. Agriculture. Much of the situation with regard to agriculture in Appalachia has already been discussed. There is a large peasantry, but it is very poor. There is not really enough good land to support the large farm population. Moreover, most of the good land is concentrated in the hands of a few giant



agribusiness corporations. Farm population has been declining and continues to decline. Most of the poor, small farmers own their plot of land, so there is a high percentage of owner-occupied farms in Appalachia (2/3). There is also still a sizeable number of tenant farmers, working for the bigger owners. The tenant farms are run by managers, on behalf of agribusiness corporations located outside of Appalachia. The best farmland is in the Great Appalachian Valley and this is where the large corporate farms are located.

In terms of numbers, there are only a very few farms containing more than 1,000 acres. In 1954, less than two percent of all farms were 500 acres or more in size, but over one-half of all farms were less than 50 acres in size. (See Figure 18.) Many Appalachian farmers are forced to work off the farm to supplement their income. The percentage of farm operators working off-farm increased from 48.7 to 53.6 between 1950 and 1954. Figure 19 shows the large number of farms bringing in an essentially poverty income. It is safe to say that in 1954 at least one-third (or about 44,000) operators of Appalachian farms had a total income of less than \$500 each. It is also safe to say that things are not getting better.

The trend toward concentration and centralization in farming will continue. Yet the Appalachian peasantry, though shrinking, is strong in number compared to the rest of the USNA and is strongly rooted in the Appalachian hillsides. These struggling farmers represent a sturdy anchor in the Appalachian territory, and a crucial element in the region's historical continuity.

C. Manufacturing. Again, we have already said much of what needs to be said here. Manufacturing came to Appalachia relatively late, but it has expanded rapidly. Today more Appalachians are employed in manufacturing than in agriculture and mining - although Appalachia still has a high percentage of farmers and miners compared to other parts of the USNA. Expanding manufacturing is linked to urbanization and the spreading highway system. It favors the cities at the expense of the rural areas. The main cities and most of the manufacturing fall within the Great Appalachian Valley.

There are a number of different manufacturing industries, but the main ones tend to be low paying. As in the Negro Nation, we see evidence of Northern capital moving plants out of the North into Appalachia because of the traditional low-wage structure. Textiles and apparel, industries which traditionally feature low-wage, non-union, sweatshop conditions, ranked first and fourth in Appalachia in 1954. Lumber ranked second, food third, and stone, clay and glass fifth. These industries are primarily raw-materials oriented and traditionally pay low wages.<sup>18</sup>

As with mining, we can see absentee-ownership at work in Appalachian manufacturing. In West Virginia, for example, there are 48 production facilities employing 500 or more workers; 35 of these plants are owned by firms with home offices out of state. The extensive chemical industry in West Virginia is

controlled by such corporations as Union Carbide, DuPont, and Monsanto. And a report prepared for the Appalachian Regional Commission states that almost twice as much capital flowed out of Appalachia as into it in 1967 and "entered the financial markets centered around New York".<sup>19</sup> Thus, even with the growth of manufacturing, the central factor of Appalachian economics remains the same - Appalachia is cruelly exploited as a region at the hands of absentee capitalists who take its great natural wealth out of the region, directly or in the form of profits, leaving unemployment, poverty, and misery in their wake.

### 3. The Role of the USNA State

The role of the USNA state in Appalachia has naturally been one of total and unchecked support of the crimes and machinations of Northern capital against the Appalachian proletariat and peasantry. This is evidenced in various ways, not the least of which is the plethora of welfare programs which the USNA has foisted upon Appalachia. It started during the Depression and has continued unabated ever since. All the major welfare agencies are there, offering a few crumbs off the table to keep the suffering Appalachian masses in line. For the imperialists know that the huge army of the unemployed in the mountains is a powerful potential force for revolution. The Appalachian people have had no choice but to sign up in great numbers and suffer the degradation of imperialist welfare in order not to starve.

But there has been more than traditional welfare programs. The number of government commissions, studies, special agencies, and other bourgeois paraphernalia that the imperialists have instituted to deal with Appalachia is astounding. Programs for state aid and area redevelopment, bills for this and committees for that, have been much more plentiful than good cropland or decent wages. In 1963, Kennedy established the biggest and most comprehensive of these agencies, the Appalachian Regional Commission, which is still active. Of course, nothing of real value for the working class and peasantry has been accomplished, but that was never the imperialists' intent in establishing the programs. Rather, their intent was to co-opt the burgeoning resistance movement of the Appalachian proletariat and peasantry, especially the labor movement headed by the mineworkers, by giving false promises and creating false hopes. The bourgeoisie knows it must keep the leadership of any spontaneous struggle within its own ranks and prevent the working class from establishing an independent position. This is not to imply that the imperialists have any hesitancy about using brute force to subjugate Appalachia, about bringing in the army to put down the people's resistance, because they have done it time and again - as we will see in the final chapter of this paper.

Throughout the history of Appalachia's exploitation by the ravenous extractive industries, the capitalists have been protected by the USNA government in other ways as well. Tax loopholes is one of the constant and common methods. The USNA state has also naturally favored the big capitalists over the small. Lately, the government has decided to enforce certain safety laws that the big companies can afford to comply with and the small companies

cannot. For years no laws of this kind were ever in existence and today's are minimal. But they are enough to help wipe out hundreds of small mines.

But there is no more clear-cut example of government support for the exploiters than the one that comes under the guise of one of the greatest liberal programs ever devised - the Tennessee Valley Authority. The TVA is the perfect example of the phony populism of the Roosevelt era. A writer for the imperialist Appalachian Regional Commission speaks of the TVA thusly: "Perhaps the most impressive achievement of the Roosevelt Administration was the Tennessee Valley Authority, established in 1933. Due to the great administrative and planning innovations the TVA embodied, it has become the very symbol of the imagination and boldness of the New Deal era."<sup>20</sup> And in the words of the TVA's first director: "The grass roots policy of drawing in private organizations and individuals - such as those of farmers, workers and businessmen... has in like manner been applied by TVA, a federal organization, so that the government agencies of local communities and of the states of the Tennessee Valley have become TVA's active and responsible partners."<sup>21</sup> Let us examine how the TVA has "served the people" of Appalachia.

The TVA is billed by the Appalachia Regional Commission as the "world's first multipurpose river control system...created by the nation's first multistate regional planning agency with implementation powers." A river control system indeed! By 1953, the TVA was substantially more involved in the electric power business than river control. The hydro-electric power its dams generated could not supply enough power for all the various rapidly expanding industries in the Tennessee Valley. TVA spokesmen have always emphasized that as a public corporation, the TVA can provide cheap services for "all people" - stressing its low rates for home electricity. But its primary customers from the beginning were heavy industries, especially in metallurgy, who were attracted to the area because of TVA's cheap power. So when there was not enough hydro-electric power, TVA went in big for coal-fed electric power plants.

Thus developed the TVA's long-standing symbiotic relationship with the strip miners. Recognizing strip mining as a source of cheap coal, the TVA quickly established contracts with already-existing strippers and encouraged others to get into the business. Actually, in many ways, the TVA was responsible for getting strip mining off the ground and turning it into a booming operation. Commercial power companies, like Duke Power and Georgia Power, saw a chance for some quick profits in strip-mined coal and soon joined TVA in buying from the strippers. Today, TVA is the world's largest consumer of strip-mined coal. In 1972 alone, the agency purchased 38,000,000 tons of coal, 22,000,000 of which was gouged from the earth by strip miners.

This great servant of the people, this pinnacle achievement of the New Deal, this environmental protection agency, as Roosevelt called it, is nothing more than a Robin Hood in reverse - robbing from the poor and giving to the rich. It is the industries

of the Tennessee Valley (not all of these are even in Appalachia) that gain from TVA's cheap power. TVA purchases about 20 percent of all coal stripped in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and Alabama. Eighty-nine percent of the strip coal purchased by the agency comes from these four states. An overwhelming 72 percent of the total purchases come from the coal fields of Kentucky. Most of the rest is from Virginia. Yet not one kilowatt of TVA power goes to the areas of Kentucky and Virginia where the cheap coal was stripped.<sup>22</sup> While the profits of the strip miners who supply TVA are generally whopping, the agency itself hasn't done badly over the last decade - \$638,000,000 in profits turned over to the U.S. Treasury.

The TVA's directors, appointed by the President, have in recent years been out and out reactionaries who back strip mining to the hilt. Nixon recently appointed Bill Jenkins, Tennessee's director of strip mine regulation, a total lackey of the strippers. These directors sit in their plush offices in Knoxville, Tennessee, "planning more dams, flooding more land, suing farmers who refuse to move from their land, and defending TVA's purchase of stripped coal."<sup>23</sup> TVA spends thousands of dollars weekly painting a halo around strip mining. Upwards of 18,000 acres directly and 60,000 acres indirectly have been desecrated in the mountains since 1965 to supply TVA with coal. Yet TVA said in a report in 1972: "There are virtually no significant long-term adverse effects from surface mining conducted in accordance with TVA's reclamation policies, excepting...some possible visual effects."<sup>24</sup> TVA's reclamation policies are, of course, a sham, even more pitifully inadequate than the state laws for controlling stripping. And, lastly, it should be mentioned that TVA is very helpful to the strippers in gaining broad form deeds - which allow coal companies to rip up personal property to get at the coal, with no compensation to the property owners.

One last thing should be mentioned - TVA and Peabody Coal (Kennecott Copper of New York) are very close friends. Peabody by itself wields tremendous power. Most of its operations are in Kentucky where it owns 202,705 acres. Peabody uses any number of devices to manipulate small landowners, politicians, state reclamation inspectors, and the legal profession. When these devices fail (only rarely do they), Peabody merely violates the law openly. TVA has numerous long-term contracts with Peabody. They make a formidable pair in bourgeois circles. The "conservatives" love Peabody and the "liberals" idolize TVA. An example of their partnership in thievery, one of many, took place in 1971. TVA used its power of eminent domain as a federal agency to force twelve landowners in Union County, Kentucky, to allow it to build a 12-1/2 mile overland conveyor belt - the world's largest - to connect Peabody's Camp No. I and Camp No. II coal mines to a river outlet. The two mines are actually owned by TVA but operated by Peabody. The landowners went to court to prevent this conveyor and its huge concrete supports from being placed on their land. They lost. The conveyor now runs 30,000 tons of coal a day.<sup>25</sup>



#### 4. Poverty Amidst Plenty

We have shown how the plunder of Appalachia's great natural wealth by absentee capitalists, accompanied by robbery of the land from its rightful owners and the creation of a huge army of the unemployed, has wrecked havoc on the lives of the Appalachian masses. We have discussed the poverty of the Appalachian people in terms of income. There are other indicators of their suffering as well.

One is education. As in most oppressed areas, the quality of education is ridiculously low. Resources and teachers are low in quantity and quality. Illiteracy is high. In 1950, less than 40 percent of the adult population had finished high school. Over 10 percent had less than five years of schooling. Appalachia's youth drop out of school at a rapid rate, no doubt rejecting the rotten facilities and the sterile bourgeois values which have nothing to do with their lives. The exploiting absentee corporations pay next to nothing in taxes in Appalachia, contributing to the paucity of funds for education. Figure 20 indicates how much less money is spent for education in Appalachia compared to the rest of the USNA.

Another indicator of exploitation and oppression is the lack of decent medical care. The health care situation in Appalachia is tragic. The bourgeois Appalachian Regional Commission itself admits that "the supply of physicians in private practice, dentists, public health nurses, and sanitarians falls completely below national averages, often many times lower."<sup>27</sup> In 1962, Appalachian Kentucky and Georgia had less than sixty doctors for every 100,000 persons, compared to the national average of 140. Appalachian doctors are also old (two-thirds are over 55) and not generally well-informed in modern techniques. The ratio of population to physicians in the USNA as a whole in 1958 was 803 people per physician. Figure 21 shows the ratio for Appalachia. Most of even the best counties were below the national average.

Appalachia's children suffer the most. Infant mortality rates are extremely high and going up in some areas. Anemia and malnutrition are likewise way above the national average. Malnutrition is so bad in some places that it causes mental retardation in many children, often very severe. And large numbers of Appalachian children have worms. No one knows the overall percentage, but some areas which have been studied - mainly in the impoverished coal mining areas of Eastern Kentucky - show that 70 and even 80 percent of the children have worms, some of them two or three different kinds. And this miserable list could go on and on - not enough hospital beds, clinics, prenatal care, care for the mentally ill, etc., etc. Much more could be said. But does any more need to be said?

Another indicator is housing conditions. The pitiful living conditions in the mining towns has already been discussed. But housing is bad everywhere for the vast majority of Appalachians. Some houses don't even have four sides, much less adequate roofs or floors. Figure 22 speaks for itself on the matter of housing.

Before leaving the area of health, we should not forget to mention that miners are still dying by the hundreds deep under the hills of Appalachia. The death of 78 coal miners in Farmington, West Virginia in 1968 caused enough public furor to force the imperialists to pass some stronger safety legislation. But once the furor died down, these rules were conveniently forgotten - except, as mentioned before, when used to wipe out small mines. Since the Farmington disaster 300 miners have been killed in the mines and more than 10,000 have been crippled or injured.<sup>28</sup> Over the past seventy years there have been 101,000 mine deaths, a larger number than the total of miners now working in Appalachia and double the number of Vietnam deaths.<sup>29</sup> And none of this even begins to include the thousands of miners already dead or slowly dying, helplessly, at the hands of the vicious killer, "black lung". Most of the claims under a 1969 act for compensation are turned down. The coal companies still claim the disease does not exist.

We cannot complete this chapter on the bitter legacy of imperialism's aftermath in Appalachia without mentioning the plight of the Negro national minority there. Though a small percentage of the population overall, Negroes comprise all the population in many small, isolated hollows and ghost coal towns abandoned by the coal companies. These Negroes have not only suffered all of the exploitation and oppression of other Appalachians but also a special oppression as Negro national minorities. Segregated in the old coal towns as well as in today's cities, Appalachia's Negroes have often not received even the few welfare crumbs handed down by USNA imperialism. The imperialists always try to split the ranks of the working class, and even though the Negro national minority in Appalachia is small, the bourgeoisie has not failed to spread its poisonous ideology of white chauvinism.

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## CHAPTER 8

### MOUNTAIN CULTURE

There is neither time nor space here to discuss in detail the distinct cultural heritage which throughout Appalachia's history has been a kind of cement which has held the mountain folk in the various parts of Appalachia together. While the bourgeoisie is derogatory of this mountain culture (presenting it as laughable, as in "L'il Abner", "The Beverly Hillbillies", etc.), it is, in fact, a source of pride for today's Appalachians. Rooted in the early days of isolation in the mountains, in the Civil War days of fighting slavery, in the feuds, in the boom days of coal, in the Depression, in today's strip mining atrocities, and particularly in the long years of struggle against the region's exploiters and oppressors - rooted in all of this, Appalachia's cultural heritage is a unique and beautiful and inalienable possession of the Appalachian people.

This culture is richly represented by its handicrafts - quilting, stitchery, silk screen printing, woodworking, toymaking, pottery and ceramics, basketry (especially among the Cherokee Indian national minority), leatherwork, glassblowing, and others. All of these crafts evidence their debt to the past, born out of the days when home-made pottery, quilts, hand-carved furniture, and leather-made clothes and harnesses were essential to the mountaineers' lives. An Appalachian specialty is the fashioning of exquisite musical instruments, especially the mountain dulcimer. Another important aspect of Appalachia's culture is embodied in the folk dancing still practised, folk games still enjoyed, folk songs still sung, and folk music still played. Many of these go back to the first days of Appalachia's settlement, rooted in the successes and failures of mountain pioneers. There are still a number of folk festivals held in the mountains each year exhibiting traditional Appalachian songs and instruments.

But perhaps the most pervasive and moving elements of Appalachia's cultural heritage is its literature, along with its legends and stories passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth. Some of these stories deal with the beauty and tranquility of the hills, of close-knit families, of mountain romances and feuds. Others deal with the poverty and misery of life in the fields, in the factories, and in the mines. But most stirring are the poems, songs, and stories of the struggle, of union drives and farmers' revolts, of the resistance of the Appalachian peasantry and proletariat to the gigantic oppression they have suffered at the hands of the USNA imperialists. The legend of John Henry is one of the most famous. The famous anthem of labor struggle, "Which Side Are You On", was written by Florence Reese of the National Miners Union during the struggles in Harlan County, Kentucky, in the 1930's. There are hundreds of other examples of the literature of working class fightback in Appalachia. They are a tribute to the courage and determination of the Appalachian people in their resistance against their exploiters and oppressors and an exhortation to struggle on to victory.



## CHAPTER 9

### THE STRUGGLES OF THE APPALACHIAN WORKERS AND FARMERS

The major battlefront in Appalachia has been the coal mines. Since the coal mines first opened, the miners have been engaged in a fierce and bitter conflict with the coal companies, their political lackies, their gun thugs, and sometimes the USNA military. There have been numerous deadly battles, and many outstanding working class heroes, like Mother Jones and Harry Simms, have arisen. The Appalachian proletariat, as its history shows, has always been ready to take up the gun to protect what belongs to it, and this militancy continues today. The struggle is being carried on as forcefully as ever, as evidenced by the conflict at the Brookside mines in Harlan County, Kentucky, reported in the People's Tribune. The battle is also being carried on today in the form of resistance to the strip miners and their land-grab tactics, especially the broad form deed. Elderly Appalachians have risked their lives lying down in front of bulldozers to keep the strippers off their land. These struggles around coal mining would necessarily be the core of any study of the Appalachian resistance movement.

But besides discussing the particular battles Appalachians have waged against the coal companies, we will also need to analyze the leadership of these struggles. We should see what lessons can be drawn from the history of the early union drives, the ascendancy of John L. Lewis and the United Mine Workers, and the work of communists in Appalachia. We should analyze the power and effect of unions in Appalachia today.

In this light, we will also need to examine the petty-bourgeois movement in Appalachia. There are quite a number of organizations and individuals - lawyers, students, writers, and others - who recognize the ongoing exploitation of their region and have various political programs to deal with them. There are medical groups working around the black lung issue. Some of these groups and individuals declare Appalachia to be a colony and demand that the exploiters be driven out.

Lastly, we should not fail to discuss the other major arena in which the Appalachian working class has frequently engaged the capitalists. That is in the textile mills, located predominantly in the eastern part of Appalachia - in the Blue Ridge Mountains and throughout the piedmont region of North and South Carolina. In the 'twenties and 'thirties there were large-scale and violent strikes, notably the Gastonia, North Carolina, strike of 1929. And the battle continues today for the long-suffering workers in this low-wage, sweatshop industry.

In conclusion, growing from and around these struggle of the Appalachian workers and farmers are several theories and programs which purport to solve the "Appalachian" question. These range from the Kennedy programs to the programs of the churches which are

calling Appalachia a colony. However, a sober look at the question of Appalachia reveals definite and concrete points. First, the vast majority of the people of Appalachia are Anglo-Americans. Their culture has a somewhat distinct quality, but by and large is the culture of rural Anglo-America. Secondly, the distinct nature of the Appalachian people is a result of nearly 100 years of isolation from the rest of the Anglo-American people and not a result of evolving as a "community of people". Thirdly, the interests of the Appalachians are directly connected to the interests of the Anglo-American proletariat as a whole. The backwardness, isolation and destruction of Appalachia at the hands of the imperialists can only be fundamentally attacked by attacking the capitalist system. The Communist League encourages all honest and progressive workers to join in the formation of a multi-national Communist Party which is the first step in the organized destruction of capitalism.



Figure 2. The Appalachian Region as defined by the Appalachian Regional Commission

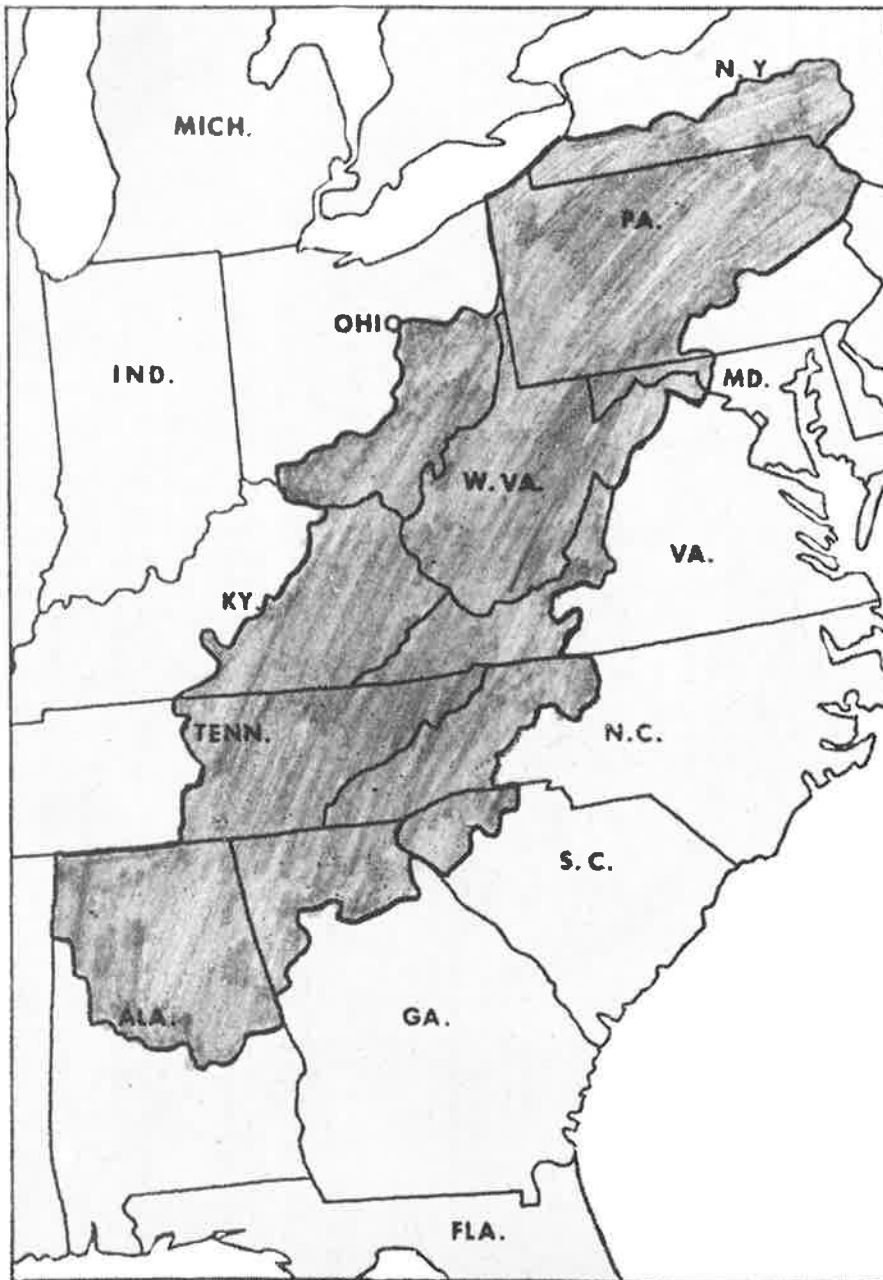




Figure 3. Physical Features of Appalachia

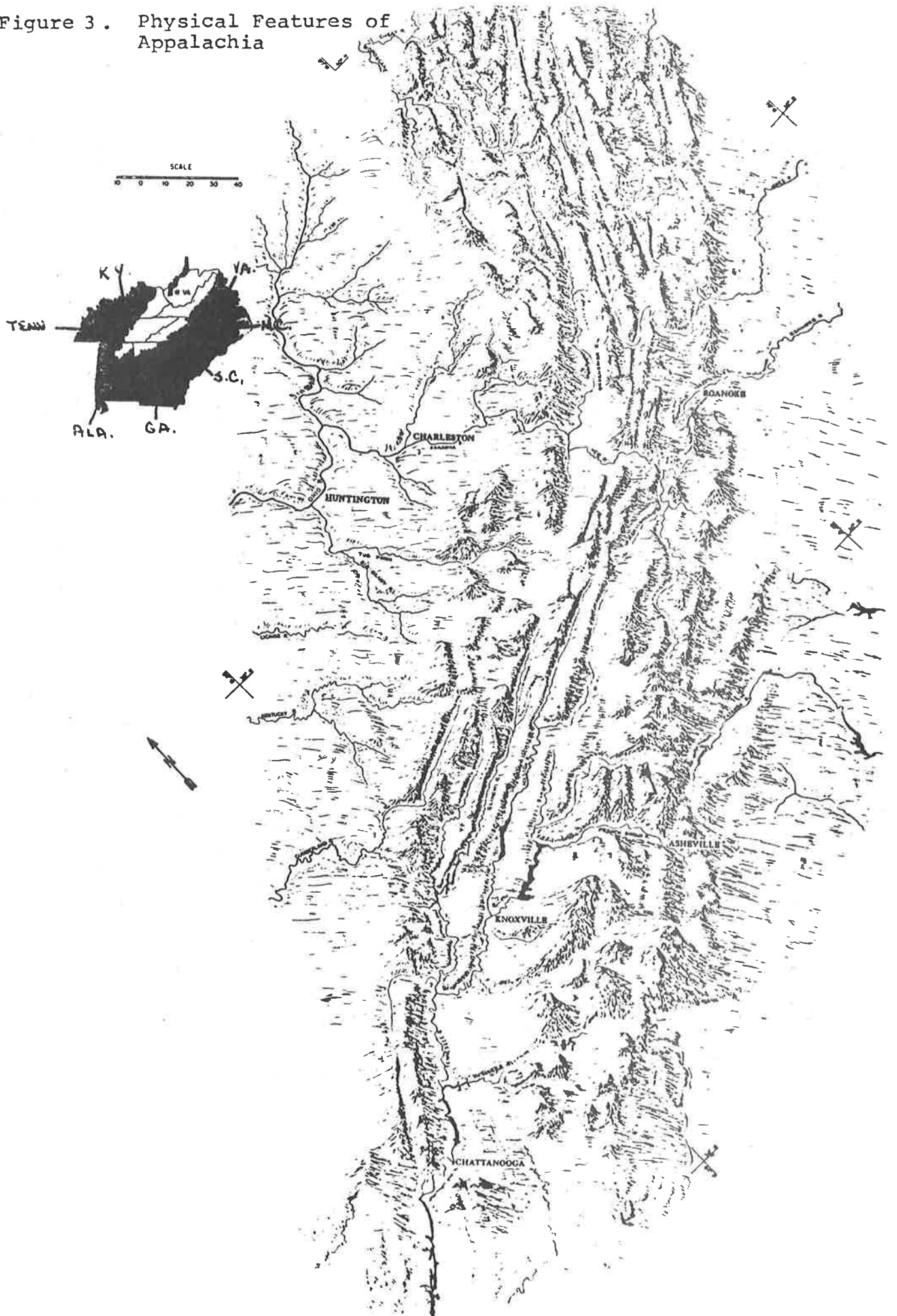




Figure 5. USNA farms, 1930

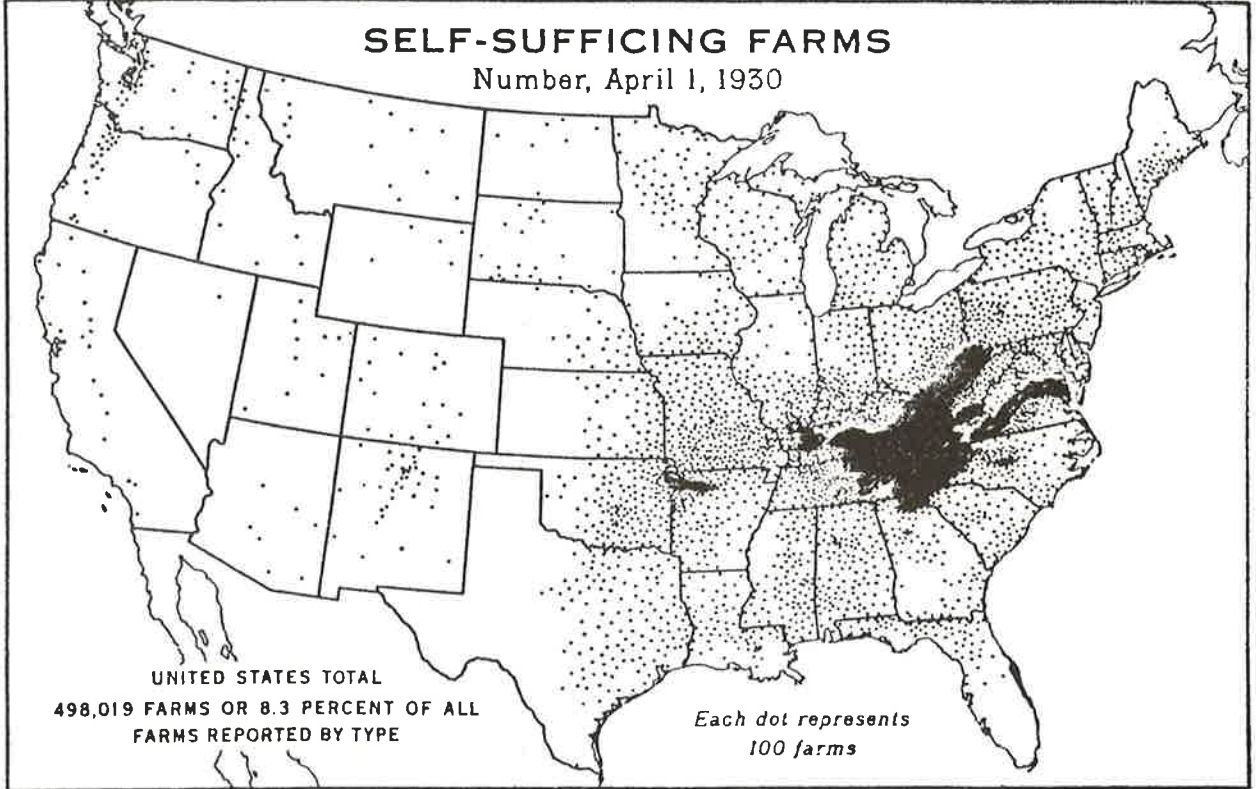
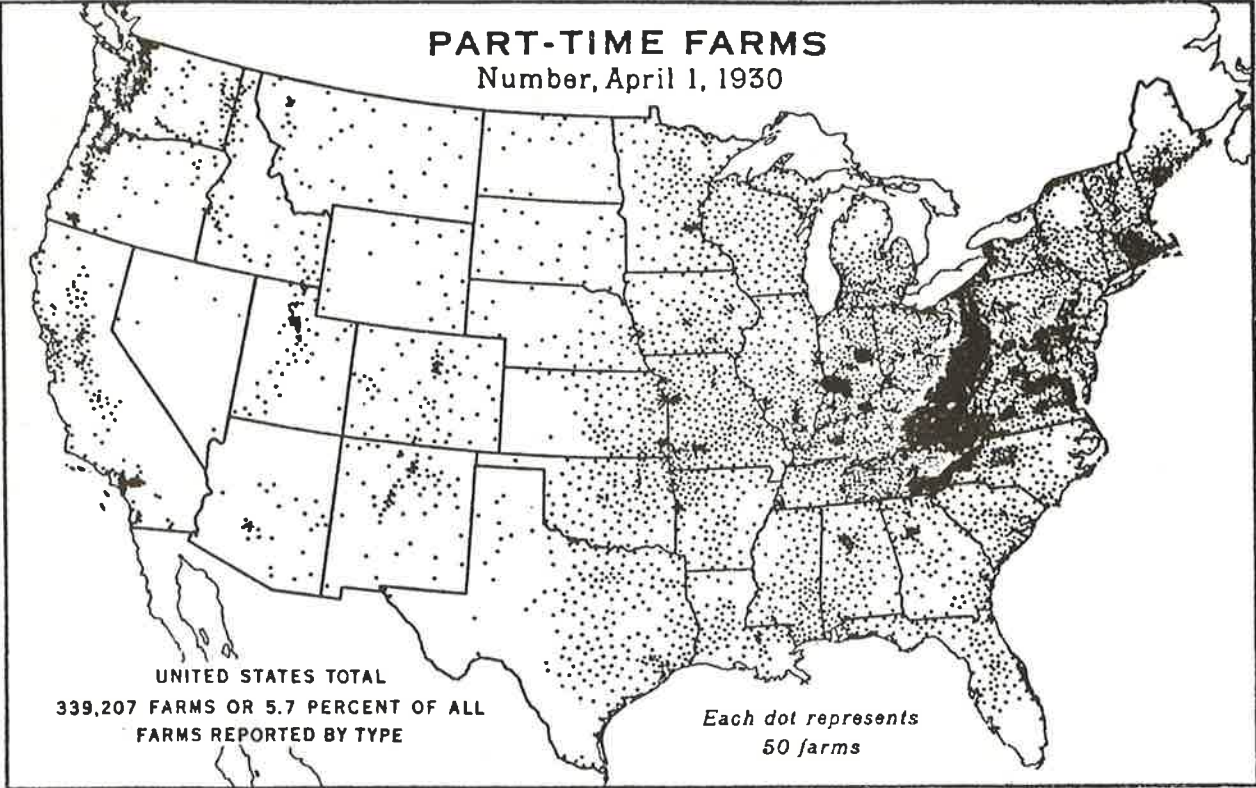
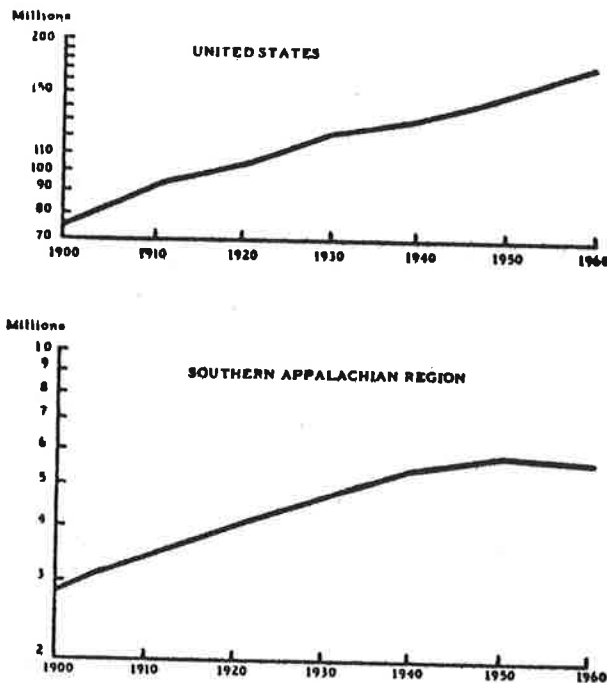


Figure 6. Population of Appalachia, 1790-1960

Year	Total, the Region	Alabama	Georgia	Kentucky	North Carolina	Tennessee	Virginia	West Virginia
1960	5,672,178	197,137	378,012	666,572	583,775	1,406,462	956,488	1,483,732
1950	5,833,263	207,157	353,525	795,016	572,776	1,320,679	934,336	1,649,774
1940	5,408,886	204,105	318,432	820,115	533,155	1,131,120	855,631	1,546,328
1930	4,771,813	185,858	275,471	711,613	460,161	984,402	671,175	1,393,133
1920	4,063,761	161,531	248,273	588,116	383,032	837,487	678,662	1,166,660
1910	3,513,222	139,509	240,146	477,838	339,880	751,111	624,336	940,402
1900	2,965,500	118,323	230,015	400,410	306,205	657,323	547,626	705,598
1890	2,452,988	103,433	207,311	308,545	253,904	552,751	472,042	555,002
1880	1,965,006	74,098	180,087	241,801	199,319	437,208	396,178	436,315
1870	1,463,771	46,352	140,923	170,635	144,023	343,265	307,722	310,851
1860	1,334,791	51,325	134,608	136,866	125,279	311,784	294,590	380,339
1850	1,092,948	38,546	100,498	99,429	95,162	270,298	262,600	226,415
1840	828,691	34,767	51,132	66,625	70,289	227,809	208,318	169,751
1830	680,211	16,933	12,847	49,614	63,035	199,049	201,501	137,232
1820	497,669	11,166	3,669	32,353	42,328	135,312	164,888	107,953
1810	385,533	-----	-----	18,566	35,812	101,367	143,364	86,424
1800	293,584	-----	-----	1,587	25,771	73,419	124,878	67,929
1790	175,189	-----	-----	-----	16,261	28,649	87,798	42,490

Source: U. S. Census of Population

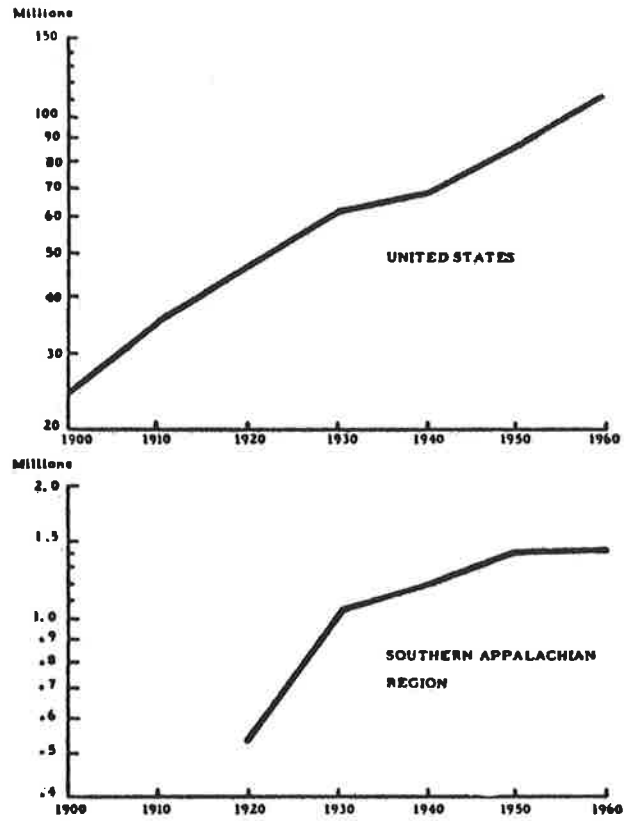
Figure 7. Growth of population in Appalachia compared with that of USNA, 1900-1960



Source: U. S. Census of Population, 1900-1960

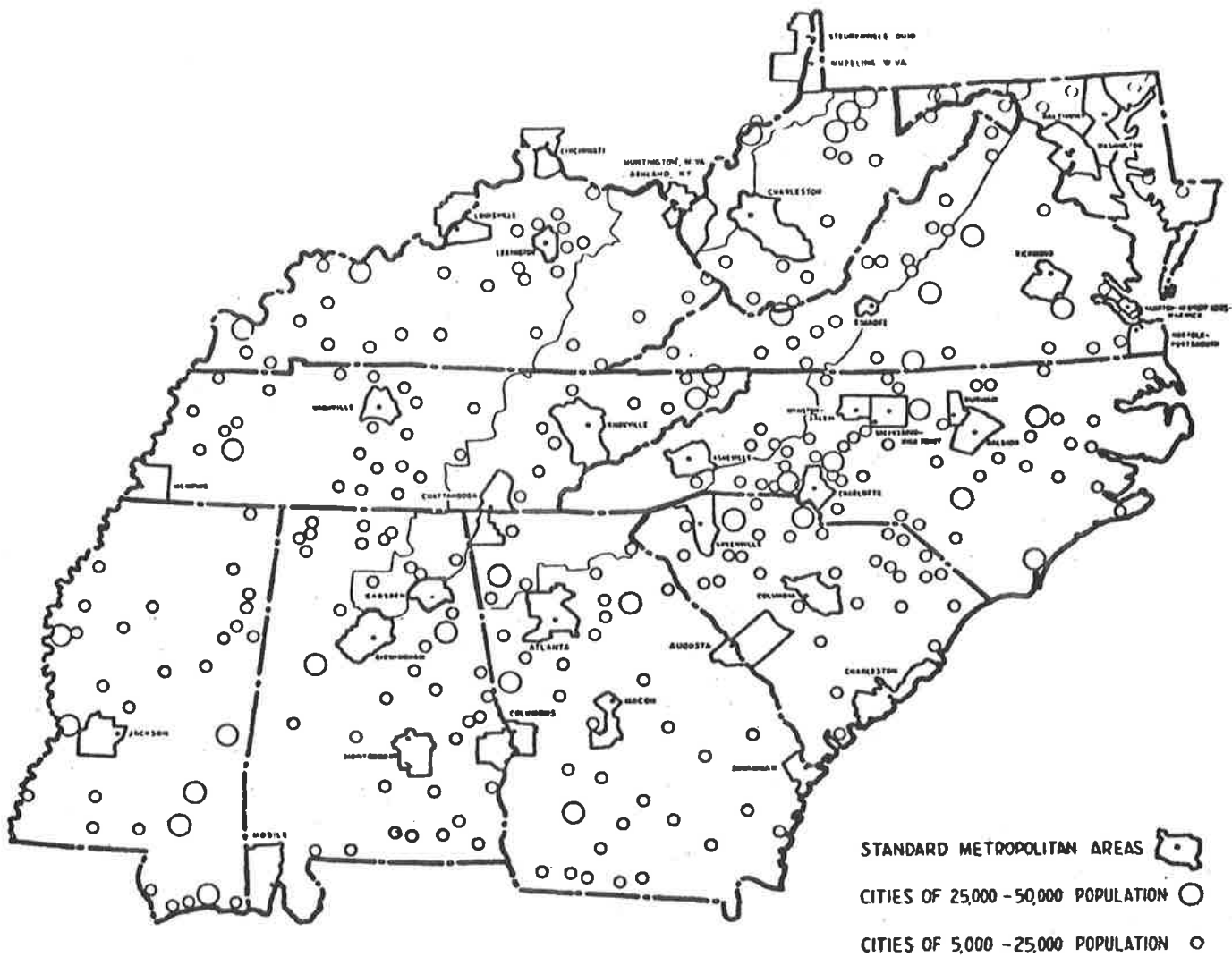


Figure 8. Growth of population in metropolitan areas of Appalachia compared with those of USNA, 1900-1960



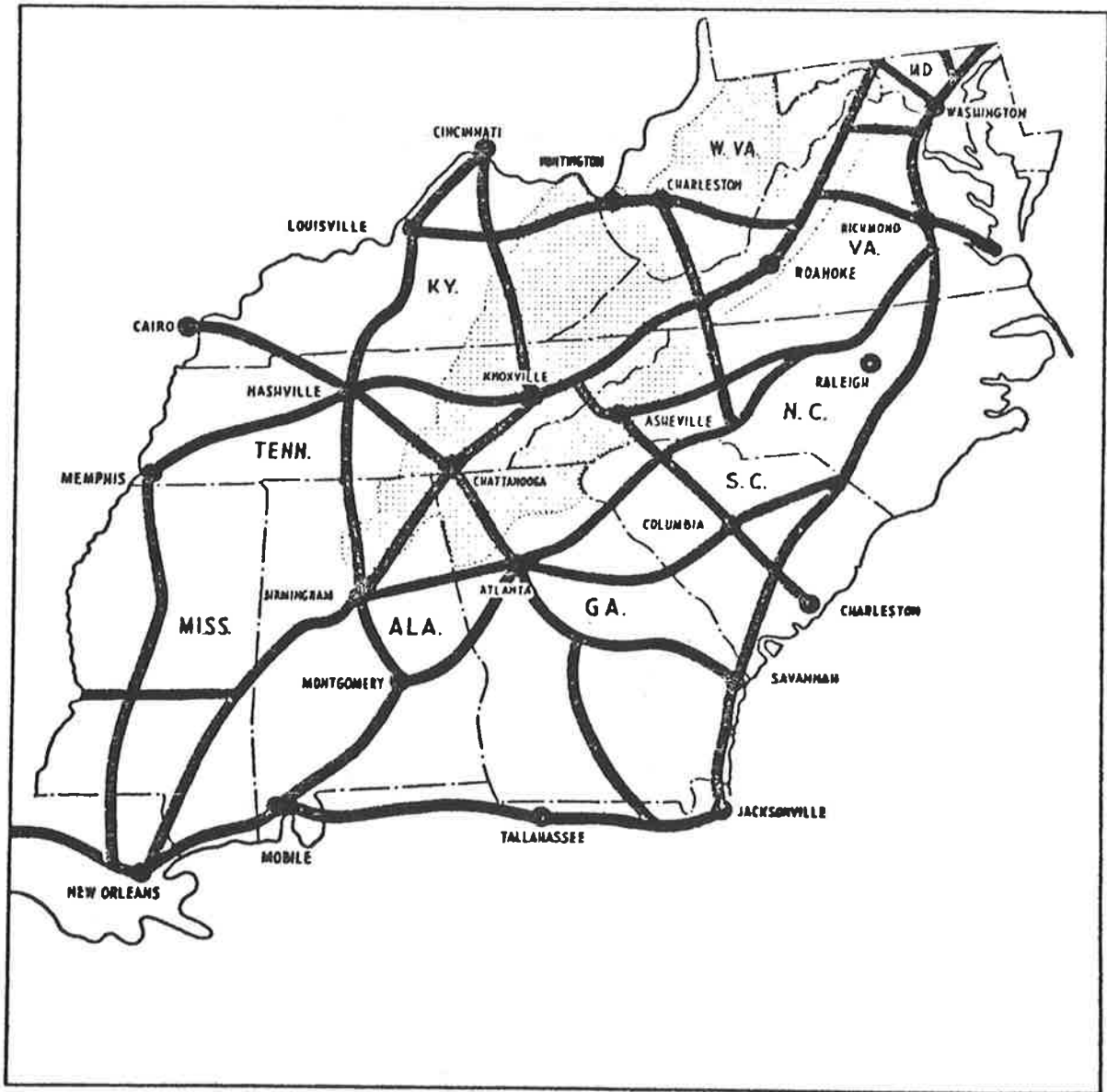
Source: U. S. Census of Population, 1900-1960

Figure 9. Urban areas, Appalachia and surrounding area, 1950



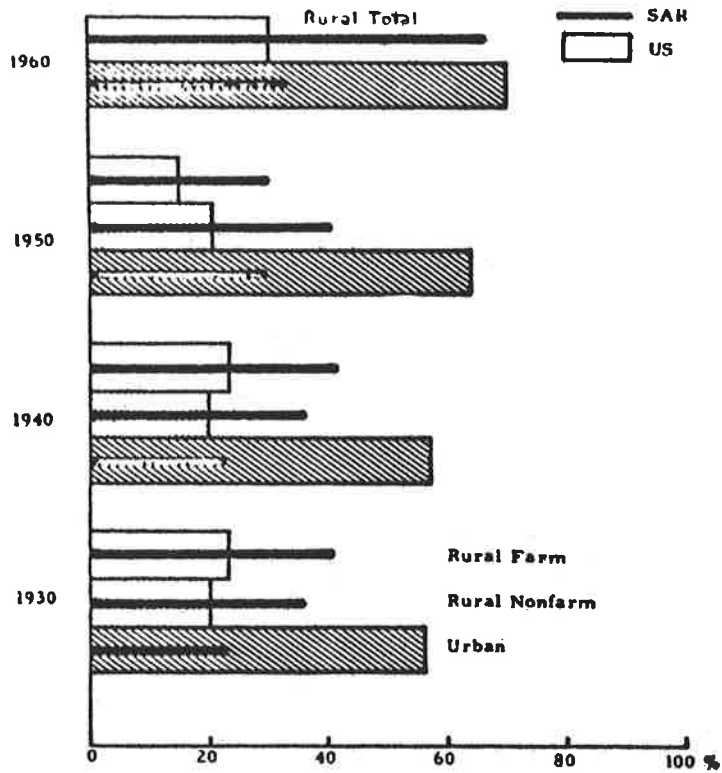
Source: U. S. Census of Population, 1950

Figure 10. National system of Interstate and Defense Highways, Appalachia and surrounding area, 1960



Source: Tennessee Valley Authority

Figure 11. Rural-urban distribution of population in Appalachia and the USNA, 1930-1960



Source: U. S. Census of Population, 1930-1960  
 \*Farm-nonfarm distribution unavailable for 1960.



Figure 12. Distribution of population, 1960

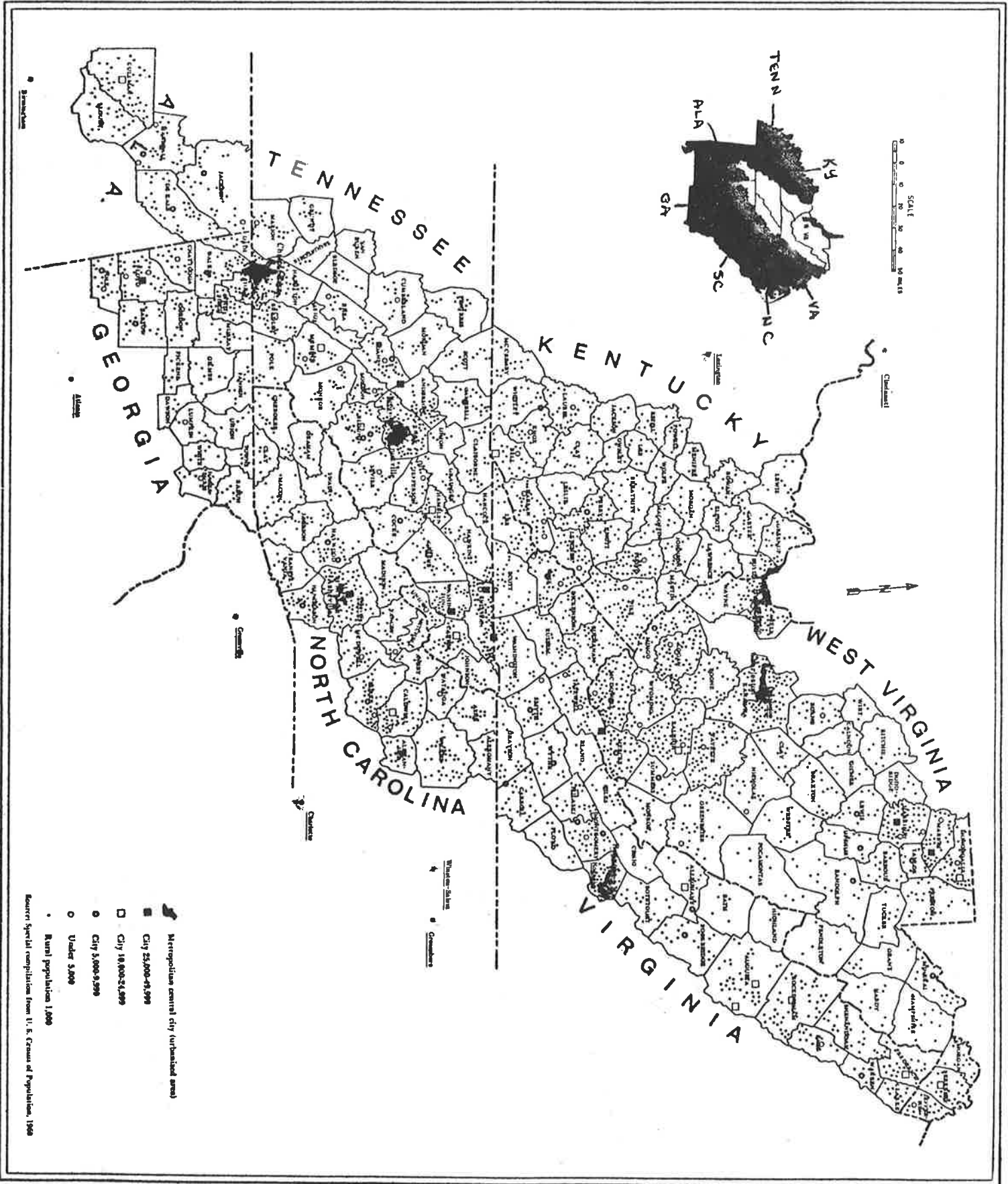


Figure 13. Median annual income for families and unrelated individuals by county 1950

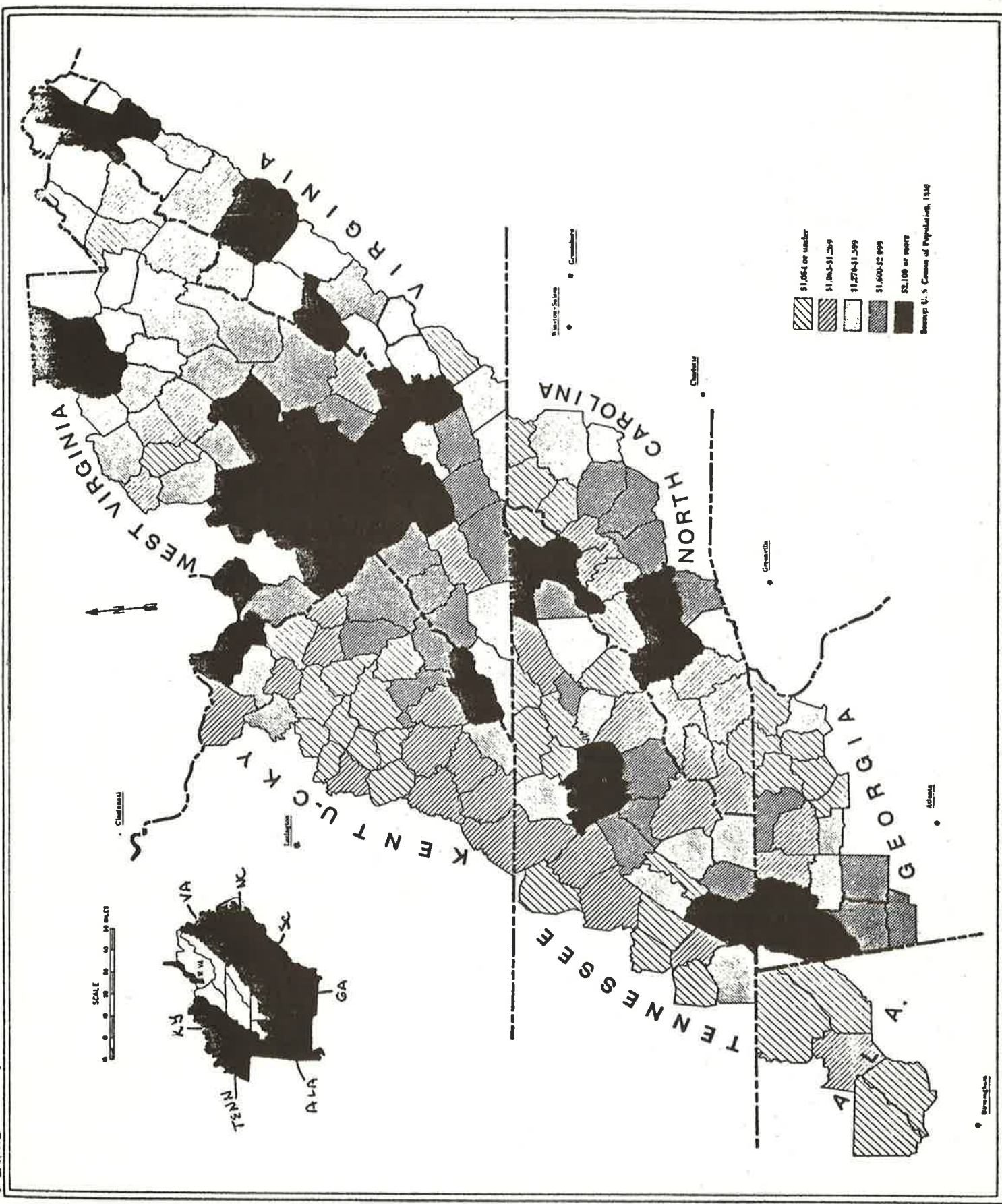


Figure 14. Population change, by county, 1950-1960

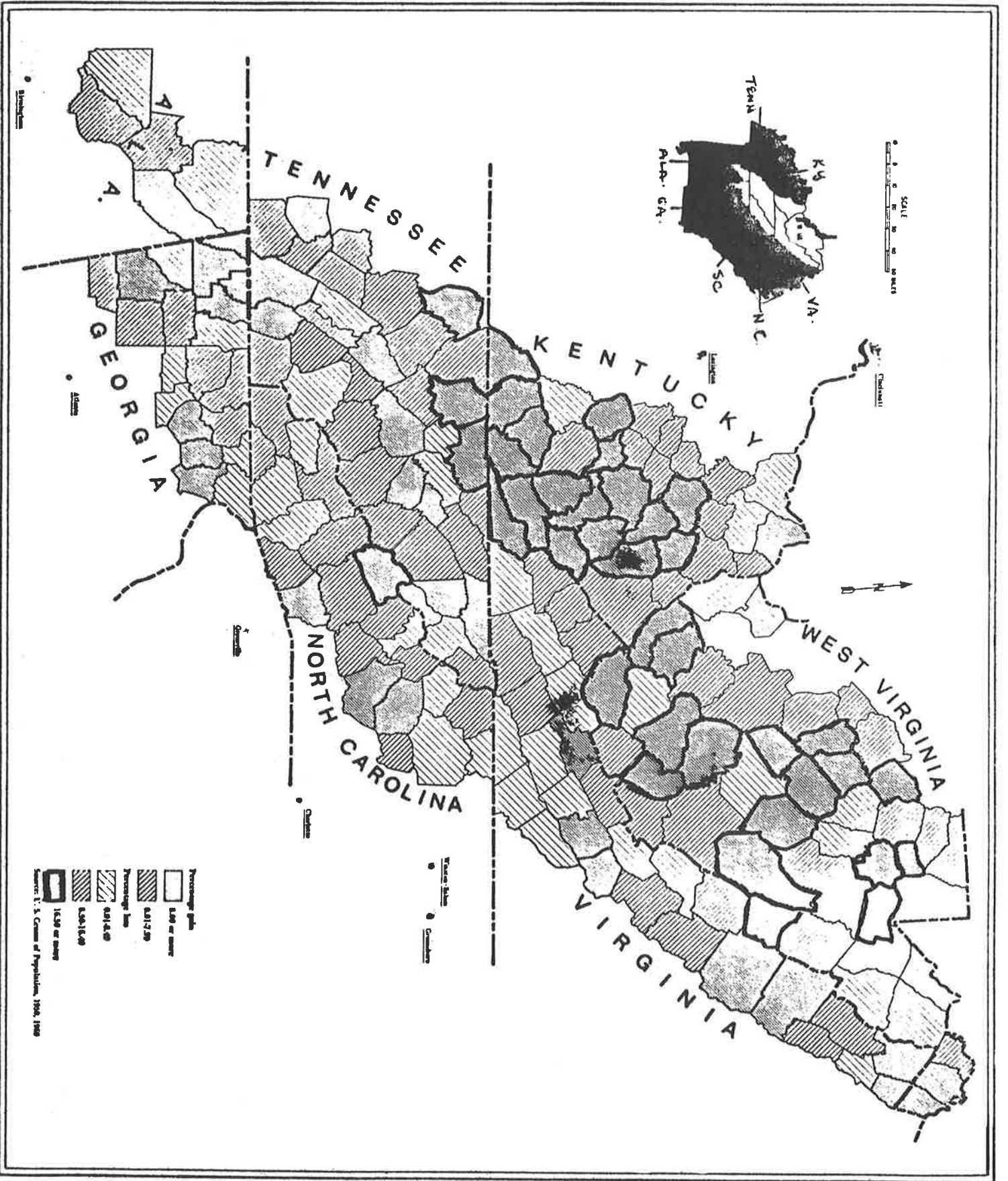




Figure 15. Rates of population change in Appalachia by industrial classification, 1900-1960

Industrial classification <sup>a</sup>	1900-10	1910-20	1920-30	1930-40	1940-50	1950-60
1. Agriculture	12.1	7.5	6.0	12.5	- 5.9	- 6.5
2. Agriculture with manufacturing	6.0	6.0	6.8	13.5	2.0	- 2.5
3. Agriculture with mining and manufacturing	14.6	3.8	2.0	10.0	- 2.1	-11.1
4. Mining	45.6	43.1	32.4	17.5	6.2	-18.6
5. Mining with manufacturing and commerce	33.0	30.7	15.1	4.1	3.8	-11.2
6. Manufacturing	13.9	5.1	16.7	18.0	13.5	8.3
7. Varied (agriculture, manufacturing, and commerce)	7.6	5.0	9.1	11.2	10.4	5.4

Source: U. S. Census of Population, 1900-1960.

Figure 16. Percentage distribution by occupation of employed persons, Appalachia, 1940 and 1950

Major occupation group	1950			1940		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Professional, semiprofessional, technical, & kindred	4.7	14.1	6.8	3.7	14.7	5.8
Farmers & farm managers	15.1	1.0	12.0	21.1	2.6	17.6
Managers, officials & proprietors, except farm	7.4	4.3	6.7	6.4	3.6	5.9
Clerical & kindred workers & sales workers	8.4	28.4	12.8	7.3	18.7	9.5
Craftsmen, foremen & kindred workers	15.6	1.2	12.5	11.3	.6	9.3
Operatives & kindred workers	29.0	22.9	27.7	26.2	22.9	25.6
Private household workers	.2	9.7	2.3	.3	22.5	4.5
Service workers except private household workers	3.6	12.4	5.5	3.5	9.5	4.6
Farm laborers, unpaid family workers	3.2	2.3	3.0	5.1	.3	5.5
Farm laborers except unpaid & farm foremen	3.8	.5	3.1	6.2	2.3	4.2
Laborers except farm & mines	7.6	.7	6.1	8.1	.9	6.7
Occupation not reported	1.4	2.5	1.5	.8	1.4	.8

Source: U. S. Census of Population, 1940 and 1950.

Figure 17. Comparisons of Appalachian migrants and other residents in sampled areas of Cincinnati

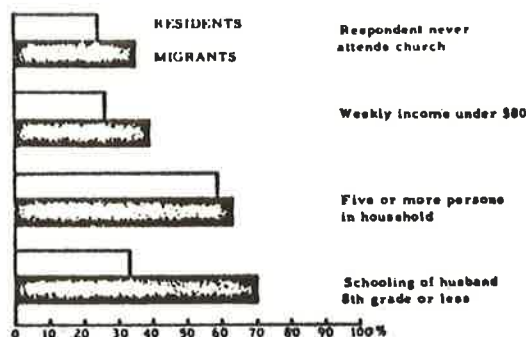




Figure 18. Average size of farms, by county, 1954

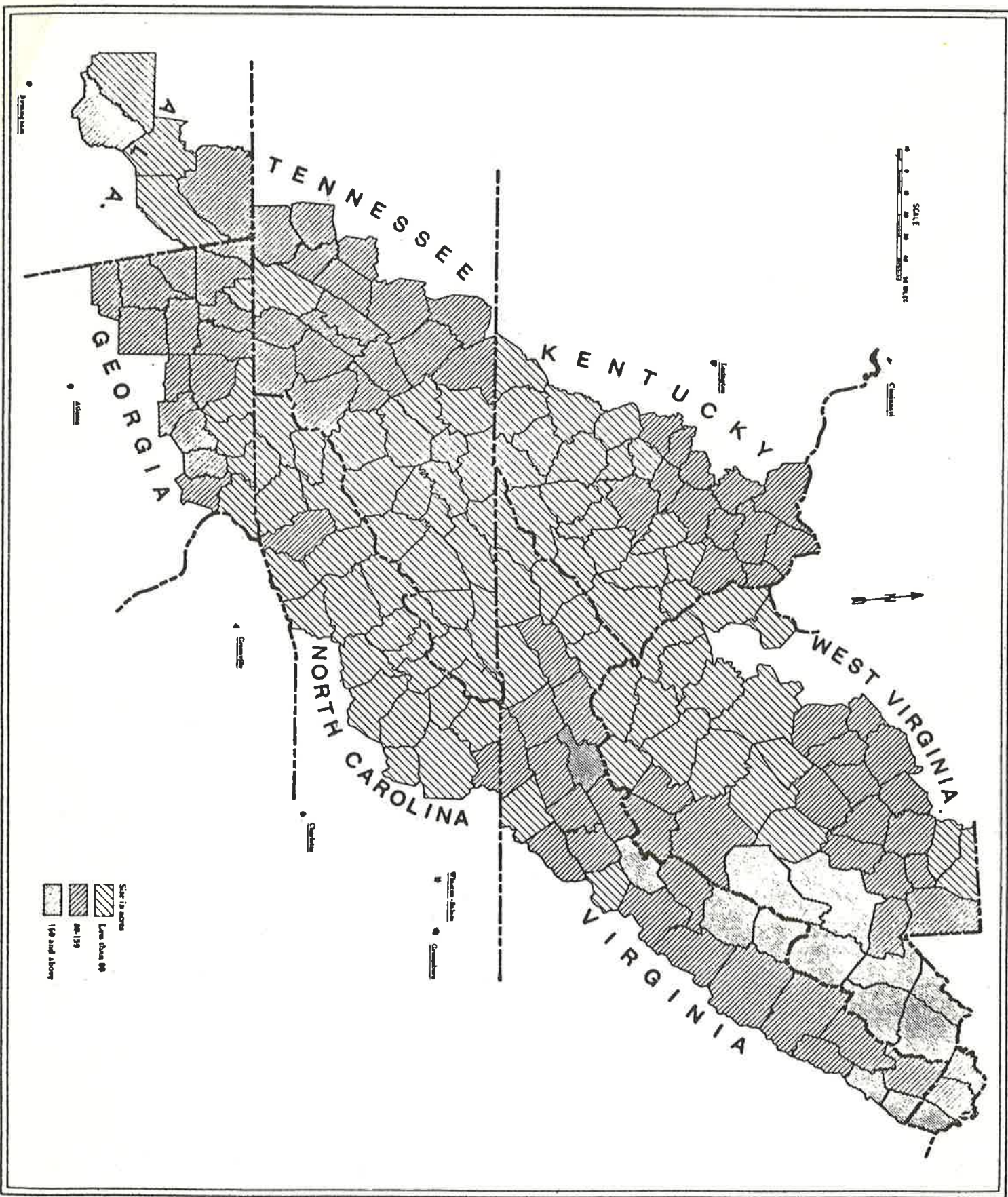
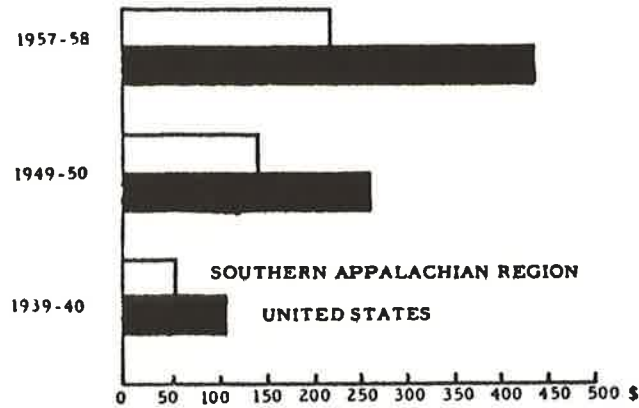


Figure 19. Percentage of farms grossing less than \$1200 annually, by county, 1954



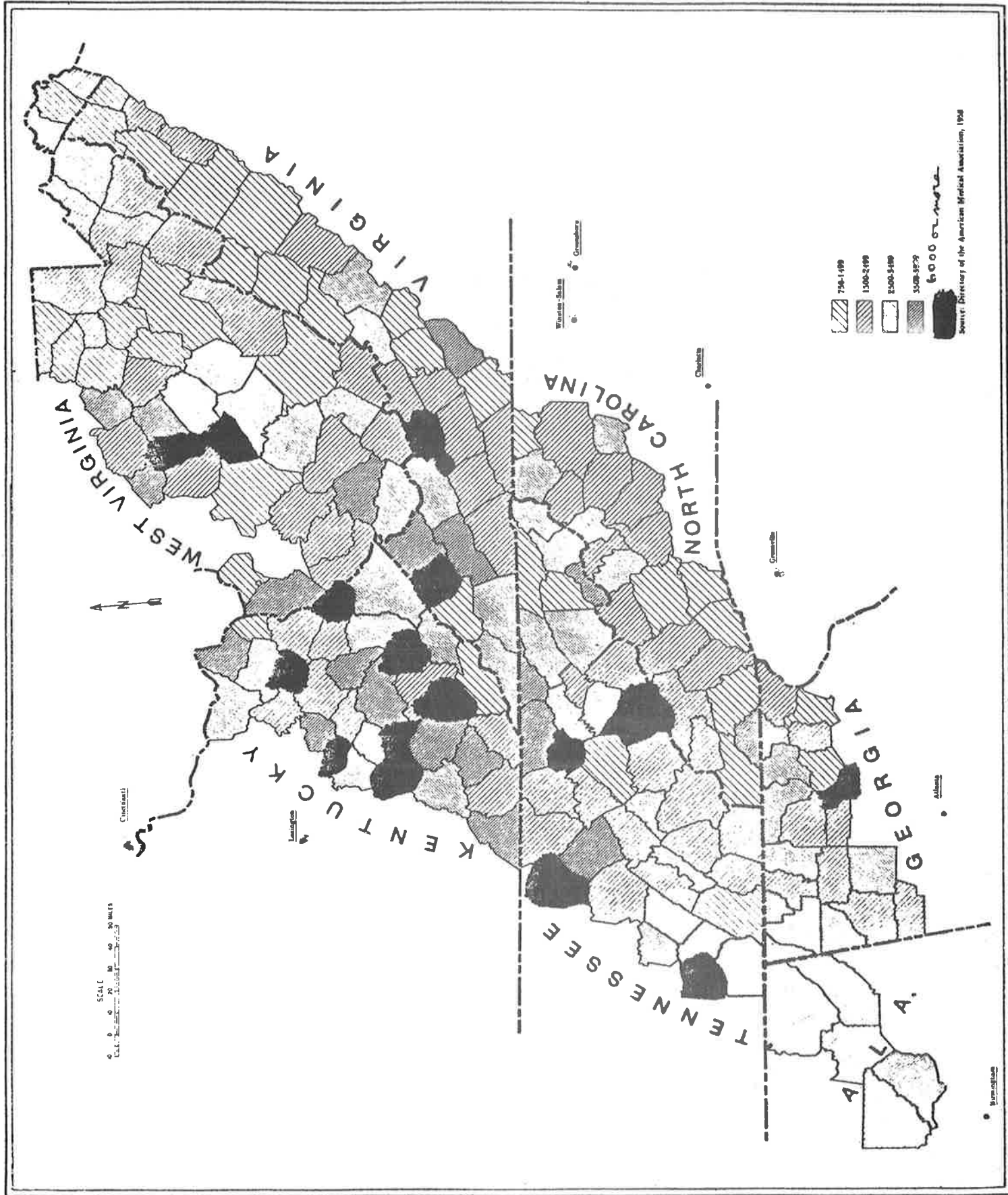
Figure 20. Per pupil expenditures for public education, Southern Appalachian Region and United States, 1939-40, 1949-50, and 1957-58



Source: U. S. Bureau of Census, Historical Statistics of the United States; National Education Association, Research Division, Estimates of School Statistics, 1960-61



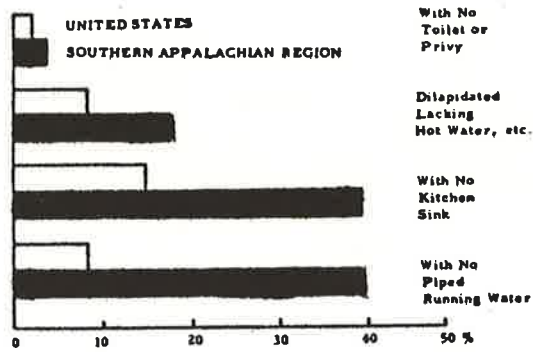
Figure 21. Population per physician, by county, 1957



Source: Directory of the American Medical Association, 1958



Figure 22. Percentage of homes lacking specified facilities, Southern Appalachian Region and the United States, 1950



Source: U. S. Census of Population, 1950

