

Chicago Workers' Voice

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- * **MEXICO: Economic and Political Crisis, the Left, *El Machete*, the Zapatistas**
- * **Controversy with Detroit MLSG: Articles by Joseph, Tim, Julie and Jake**
- * **Dealing with Trotsky: Idiocy or Treachery?**

Contents

Editorial Guide.....	p.2
Crisis in Mexico, by Oleg,(Chicago).....	p. 4
<i>El Machete</i> and the Mexican Left, by Julie, (Chicago).....	p. 14
NC (L.A.) on <i>El Machete</i>	p. 22
Cardenas and the EZLN (translate article from <i>El Machete</i>).....	p. 23
Editorial, <i>El Machete</i> , March 23, 1995,.....	p. 24
Mexican Bus Drivers' Union Under Attack,	p. 25
On <i>El Machete</i> , by Joseph Green (Detroit)	p. 27
Announcing a New Theoretical Journal, <i>The Communist Voice</i> , by Detroit MLSG.....	p. 31
Trends andSectarianism, by Joseph Green (Detroit)	p. 33
On Complacency, Part 2 (Excerpts), by Joseph Green (Detroit)	p. 35
Anatomy of a Split, Part I, by Jake (Chicago)	p. 36
On Trotsky, introduction, by Julie (Chicago)	p. 41
Comments on a <i>Che Fare</i> Pamphlet, by Julie (Chicago)	p. 41
Notes on Cliffism #1, by NC (L.A.)	p. 42
Notes on Cliffism #2, by NC (L.A.)	p. 43
Dealing with Trotsky; Idiocy or Treachery, by Barb (Chicago)	p. 44
Book Reveiw, editorial comment by Julie (Chicago)	p. 55
Review of Kim Moody's article, "U.S. Working Class", by Pete (Detroit)	p. 55
Correspondence, 3 leaflets from the KPRP (Philippines)	p. 59
Correspondence, letter from Ben (Seattle)	p. 63
Labor and Community Struggles, L.A. Workers' Voice on the "Contract on America".....	p. 63

Editorial Guide to Issue #7 of the CWV Theoretical Journal

As promised, this issue of the CWVTJ features more coverage on the political and economic crisis in Mexico and the struggle of the Mexican workers and peasants. The struggle of the working class and peasantry in Mexico is of great importance to the American working class. The fate of the class struggle there means a lot to the development of the class struggle here. Therefore, we should pay close attention to supporting the class struggle in Mexico and taking a class stand towards the political movement in Mexico.

Included are:

1. An article by Oleg "Crisis in Mexico." This article shows the roots of the present economic and political crisis and gives explanations of such questions as, that imperialism is still a valid concept, that the crisis in Mexico is not just a structural problem - capitalism is at fault, that a return to the program of Lazaro Cardenas is not a valid solution to the Mexican crisis, an evaluation of Zapatista strategy and the need for an independent class movement in Mexico.

2. An article by Julie "El Machete and the Mexican left". *El Machete* is an important left-wing political trend in Mexico. CWVTJ #5 carried an announcement that this publication is available by writing to CWV. Julie assesses some of the politics and stands of this newspaper in the class struggle in Mexico.

3. A letter from NC of Los Angeles discussing his views about a letter printed in *El Machete* from Guillermo (MLN).

4. and 5. Two articles translated from *El Machete*.

6. An explanation of the struggle of the Ruta 100 workers in Mexico City. This struggle clearly reflects the

crisis of the PRI government and the development of the class struggle in Mexico.

This issue of the *CWVTJ* carries materials related to the decision of the **Detroit Marxist-Leninist Study Group** to publish its own journal the *Communist Voice*. Until this time the **DMLSG** was working actively with the *CWVTJ*. The *CWVTJ* has published several articles by members of this group. Despite their decision we hope to be able to continue some collaboration with them.

The immediate issue which led to their decision was the decision by comrades publishing the *CWVTJ* not to join a new national organization as outlined by some comrades in the **DMLSG** and the decision by the *CWVTJ* to publish materials related to the controversy on *El Machete* in this issue of the *CWVTJ* instead of *CWVTJ* #6.

We have printed these materials in this issue. These include the already mentioned article by Julie "El Machete and the Mexican left."

7. A letter from Joseph Green December 21, 1994, "Against endorsing *El Machete*, and some views on Zapatista strategy"

8. The statement of the **DMLSG** introducing their journal "Announcing a new theoretical journal, the *Communist Voice*."

9. A letter from Joseph, Mar. 2, 1995, entitled "Trends and Sectarian-

ism", which also includes earlier letters from Oleg and Tim.

10. Excerpts from a long article by Joseph entitled, "On Complacency, Part 2", which deal with the *El Machete* controversy.

11. Jake (Chicago) outlines what he considers to be the major issues between Chicago and Detroit and replies to some of Joseph's attacks.

There is also an ad for the Special Issue of the *CWVTJ* March 7, 1995 which printed the e-mail debate from November 25, 1994 to February 28, 1995 on these matters.

Some comrades who work on the *CWVTJ* are carrying out study of the political trend of Trotskyism. This study began while the **Marxist-Leninist Party** was still in existence. The **MLP** historically developed as a trend and organization opposed to revisionism and Trotskyism. It did a lot of useful work exposing the harmful political concepts of Trotskyism and opposing its disruptive influence in the political movement.

In our opinion Trotskyism is the twin brother of revisionism. This, in part, arises out of the Trotsky-Stalin debate, a debate which represented two sides of the same coin. The way this debate developed and the subsequent posing of Trotskyism as an alternative to Soviet revisionism has harmed the revolutionary political movement for the last 70 years.

We hope that in the next pe-

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riod we can shed some light on this issue.

13. Julie has a short comment on an article from the Italian journal *Che Fare*

14. and 15. NC from Los Angeles reviews two books written by Tony Cliff. This author is associated with the Socialist Workers' Party of Great Britain. This is part of the international Trotskyist trend that includes the International Socialist Organization of the U.S.

This is an international trend which has an analysis of state capitalism in the former Soviet Union. However, this analysis does not help communist revolutionaries address and prevent the type of problems which undermined the October revolution

of the Russian working class and led to the development of Soviet state capitalism. Furthermore, while giving this analysis, this trend sees no need to break with reformism and build an independent political movement.

16. Barb has written an extensive preliminary article "DEALING WITH TROTSKY: Idiocy or Treachery?" She gives her views on the major Trotskyist doctrines.

We continue our coverage on the nature of the working class

17. There is a review by Pete Brown of an article by Kim Moody. Kim Moody is associated with the organization Solidarity and with Labor Notes. Pete explains how "Moody's independent politics turns

out to be nothing more than the old liberal-labor politics of the trade union bureaucracy." This article was also carried in *Communist Voice* Vol. 1, No. 1.

We are also carrying three short articles sent to us by the Organization of Communist Revolutionaries of the Phillipines on struggles by the working class in the Phillipines.

We continue our section Workplace and Community Struggles with a reprint of a leaflet from the *LAWV* against the Contract On America.

There is some correspondence to the *CWVTJ*, including a letter from Ben regarding the "divorce" between the *CWVTJ* and the *DMLSG*.

Marxist-Leninist Bookstore Closed Mail Order Service Still Available

Because of difficulties in staffing the bookstore we have closed our store front location. All of the books and periodicals which were available at the bookstore are still available through the mail. This includes--

*The Chicago Workers' Voice, La Voz Obrera de Chicago, and The Chicago Workers' Voice Theoretical Journal

*Our recently published book, From Baba to Tovarishch, The Bolshevik Revolution and Soviet Women's Struggle for Liberation

*Struggle magazine, (see ad elsewhere in this issue for information on how to obtain this direct from the publisher)

*A wide variety of the classic works of Marx, Engels and Lenin in English and Spanish. We don't have a complete and up-to-date listing of all the works we have, but basically we have or can get you the text of any work you want by these founders of the science of Marxism-Leninism.

*Various left wing publications that we receive from foreign countries, such as,

Politica Operaria (from Portugal, in Portuguese), *El Machete* (from Mexico, in Spanish), *Che Fare* (from Italy, in Italian), *Proletarian Emancipation* (from India, in English), *Workers' Voice* (from New Zealand, in English), *People's Star* (from Japan, in English), and *Rote Fahne* (from Germany, in German)

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CRISIS IN MEXICO

Oleg, Chicago

The explosive events in Mexico over the last year and a half have attracted the attention of progressive and revolutionary-minded people all over the world. To those of us in the U.S. who are trying to develop revolutionary Marxist-Leninist politics, the events in Mexico provide food for thought on a number of questions that we have been debating. One of these questions is the Leninist theory of imperialism. There are some "Marxists" who think Lenin's views on political domination by imperialist powers are outdated. However, the Mexican financial crisis provides a particularly sharp demonstration of the political power that U.S. imperialism has in Mexico. Another question is the analysis of the struggle of the Mexican peasants, workers and poor from the point of view of Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries. What are their prospects? What politics guide them? How should Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries relate to these struggles? Certainly, a proletarian revolutionary should stick to the viewpoint that socialist revolution is needed in Mexico. Returning to the politics of Lazaro Cardenas is not a solution. Achieving the Zapatista goals of liberty, justice and democracy would be an important step forward, but would leave the economic system of capitalism in place. The system which causes the problems has to be destroyed if exploitation and oppression are truly going to be eliminated.

I am going to take a stab at some of these questions based on what I know about Mexico and the struggles of the Mexican masses. I encourage those who share my goal of proletarian revolution, but who think

I have got some of this analysis wrong to communicate their views.

First, I will highlight some of the main features of the current crisis in Mexico. Then I will discuss relations between the rulers of Mexico and U.S. imperialism, the program of returning to the politics of Lazaro Cardenas, the importance of class solidarity between the U.S. working class and the Mexican working class, the general need for a working-class revolutionary movement and socialism in relation to Mexico, and some questions of how to relate to the Zapatista political strategy.

Recent Developments of the Crisis

Economic, political and social crisis is shaking the old regime in Mexico. The PRI itself has been cracking under all the stress of the last year and a half. Internal fights in the PRI led to the murders of (PRI Presidential candidate) Colosio and (PRI General Secretary) Ruiz Massieu last year. Now Zedillo is desperately trying to gain credibility for himself by pursuing certain high and mighty figures of his own party who organized these assassinations. As the crisis unfolds, it is hard to predict how far the disintegration of the PRI will proceed. For sure, the old style of PRI rule will have to be modified. Maybe the PRI will splinter so badly that it can't be rescued. Zedillo is certainly trying hard to preserve as much of the old system as he can.

A severe financial crisis burst out in December. The peso has dropped from about 3.5 pesos per dollar when (Mexican President) Zedillo took office Dec. 1 to less than 6 pesos per dollar. The Mexican economy has gone into recession, and

inflation and unemployment are skyrocketing. The U.S. government has organized \$50 billion in loans to try to make sure that the Mexican government can pay off short-term bonds during this year. In March, Zedillo announced another, even more severe, round of austerity measures beyond what he announced in January.

Since the mid-1980s, the PRI leadership has been promising that the road to economic progress is paved with free trade, privatization of government economic enterprises, free market economic policies, NAFTA. Indeed, 24 Mexican businessmen have made it to the Forbes list of billionaires. However, the financial crisis has blown up the PRI promise that everyone in Mexico would benefit from neoliberal economics. All but the very richest Mexicans are being hit hard by this financial disaster — the poor are being pushed to the brink of starvation while the middle class is losing ground fast.

At the very bottom of society rebellion has broken out. The PRI has not yet been able to stamp out the rebellion of the peasants of Chiapas which began Jan. 1, 1994. The rulers of Mexico have alternatively tried military force, sweet talk, and lots of threats. The military attack of February 9, 1995, did not wipe out the Zapatistas. The Zapatistas had to retreat, but the Mexican government did not get the quick and decisive victory it was looking for. Support for the EZLN continues to be strong among the ordinary workers, peasants and poor of Mexico. Now Zedillo is combining sweet words about peace with threats, and he is attacking independent and oppositional organizations all across the country. The PRI has further alienated itself from the masses of the workers, peasants and

poor. Rebellions of the poor continue to break out all over Mexico.

The Collapse of the Mexican Economic "Miracle"

During the six years of the presidency of Carlos Salinas de Gortari (Dec. 1, 1988 through Dec. 1, 1994), mainstream U.S. politicians, including Presidents Bush and Clinton, and the U.S. news media were very enthusiastic about Mexico's economic "progress". From the standpoint of the bourgeoisie, Mexico seemed to be doing real well. A lot of money, mainly from U.S. investors, was flowing into Mexico. New manufacturing facilities were being built in Mexico, particularly on the border as maquiladoras, which have special exemptions from customs duties and other Mexican laws. The privatization of several big Mexican state enterprises (e.g., the airlines and the telephones) provided big opportunities for a select group of the very rich to get even richer. Windfalls from privatization had a lot to do with the spectacular increase in the number of Mexican billionaires.

NAFTA was developed by the main sections of the monopoly capitalists in the U.S. and by the Mexican capitalists of the PRI as a means to guarantee the permanence of this politics of make the poor pay, privatization, free trade, and less and less restrictions on foreign investment. Most of the policies of NAFTA were being implemented by Salinas de Gortari before the pact became a reality. But the biggest sections of the U.S. monopoly capitalists wanted NAFTA in order to guarantee that future Mexican governments would not back off from these policies.

As I am sure everyone remembers, there was a big political fight in the U.S. over getting NAFTA approved by the Congress. Certain

specific provisions hurt some sectors of the U.S. capitalists, and they raised a big fuss. Also, trade union bureaucrats who have dedicated their lives to squashing and selling out American workers raised a big fuss about how NAFTA was going to cost American jobs. These bureaucrats played on the very real fear that workers have of seeing their plants close and their jobs go abroad. These pompous fatcats don't want American workers to fight American corporations who are directly attacking workers; however, they are all for American workers fighting Mexicans over jobs. Another of the absurdities in this controversy over NAFTA was the spectacle of the multi-billionaire Ross Perot crying crocodile tears over the American jobs that supposedly were going to be lost while his own companies are notorious for the obnoxious working conditions they impose on the American workers.

My point here is that until NAFTA was securely in place, the Mexican government had to be very careful not to do anything to embarrass Bush or Clinton who were pushing NAFTA. Part of Salinas' strategy to make things look good in Mexico appears to have been to hold up the value of the peso at an artificially high level against the dollar. The Mexican government was offering short-term bonds, Tesobonos, with high interest rates and payable in dollars. This attracted a lot of speculative investment dollars from the U.S., particularly from mutual funds. With dollars "cheap" a lot more goods were imported into Mexico than were exported, particularly in the last couple of years. This balance of trade deficit was covered by the large amounts of speculative capital coming into Mexico buying Tesobonos and Mexican stocks and bonds.

Salinas was able to make things look so good that last year

Mexico was admitted to the club of industrialized nations.

Since the debt crisis of the early to mid-1980s, there has been a general shift in the pattern of imperialist investment in Latin America, Asia and Africa. The big imperialist banks have been afraid to put their money directly into these countries. A large part of the money coming into these countries is now from mutual funds and is invested on a very short-term basis. These mutual funds (also controlled by big banks and investment houses) are even more parasitic than the previous methods. The sole goal is investments which offer high rates of profit but which can be sold off at any time. Thus, even less money than before the debt crisis is going into building productive facilities anywhere. Most of it goes into the stock markets, treasury bonds, etc. (See the article from Green Left, "The Third World Noose.")

Thus in Mexico, the combination of continuing deficit in the balance of trade and heavy inflows of highly liquid mutual fund investments produced a very unstable situation. Things looked good on the surface to the foreign financial capitalists, and they were making lots of money. Then, with accelerating speed, the Mexican economy started to unravel last year, and the unraveling is still going on. The dependence of the Mexican economy on short-term, very liquid, investments from foreign financiers, mainly U.S., means that, if enough of these investors pull their money out, there is nothing the Mexican government and central bank can do. It won't have enough dollars to pay off the bonds which are coming due. The peso is going to crash. (Remember a couple of years ago when the international currency traders decided the British pound was overvalued? The British government was unable to withstand the run on the pound. The

Mexican government has no chance against the big boys of international finance capital.) This is currently one of the main mechanisms for imperialist control and exploitation of Mexico. I would guess that Mexico is far from unique in this situation.

Starting in January 1994, a series of shocks undermined "investor confidence" in the Mexican economy. The most spectacular was the New Year's Day uprising of the Indian peasants of Chiapas. The PRI government was shocked, and indeed, most of the world outside of Chiapas was taken by surprise. The poor, the peasants, the workers all across Mexico and in the U.S. and around the world rallied to support the struggle of the Chiapas peasants. The rich were horrified. However, there was not an immediate huge flight of capital from Mexico. International monopoly capital was hopeful the PRI could smother this rebellion.

For the foreign investors, a bigger shock was the March, 1994, assassination of the PRI's presidential candidate. Everybody, except the official PRI coverup people, took this assassination to be the product of some power struggle inside the PRI. The Mexican stock market dropped sharply and the U.S. lords of finance started to put less money into Mexican investments. Another action that started drying up foreign capital for Mexico was that interest rates in the U.S. were pushed up by the U.S. Federal Reserve trying to "cool off" the U.S. economy.

A protracted stalemate developed between the Mexican government and the EZLN. The mass base of the EZLN rejected the pretty-sounding words that the PRI was offering them. All through 1994 the EZLN persisted in presenting a very visible armed challenge to the PRI. The EZLN made effective use of the mass media to stay in the public con-

sciousness. As the months went by, investors became more nervous about the real strength of the PRI to keep the lid on the discontent of the masses.

In August the PRI, with some backhanded help from the PRD and the PAN, was able to pull off an election show which left the PRI in control. The biggest wrinkle was in Chiapas where the EZLN refused to agree that the PRI had won. Open fraud and intimidation of voters were more obvious in Chiapas than in some other sections of the country. The EZLN recognized a "government in rebellion" led by the PRD candidate for governor, Amado Avendano. However, foreign investors still didn't get too worried.

Then in September there was another spectacular assassination of a top PRI official. This victim was the number two man in the PRI party structure, Jose Francisco Ruiz Massieu. This time, even the PRI had to admit that Ruiz Massieu was a victim of enemies inside the PRI. (Just how high up the conspiracy against Ruiz Massieu went was covered up until recently.) More foreign money started to flow out of Mexico.

By December foreign money was flown rapidly out of Mexico. The Mexican central bank was using up its foreign reserves fast to cover the deficit in the "current account". Zedillo was installed as the new president, and he insisted on installing the PRI man as governor of Chiapas. The EZLN reacted creatively and spectacularly by taking over 38 towns and villages outside of their encirclement by the Mexican army and then retreating quickly before they suffered many casualties. This was the straw that collapsed what little "investor confidence" remained in the Mexican economy. Huge amounts of capital flowed out of Mexico so rapidly that Zedillo was forced to stop trying to prop up the value of the peso against

the dollar. The peso sank fast and so did the Mexican stock market. The downward trend continued through March.

In the financial panic of late December, early January, some foreign investors had large losses, at least on paper. Wall Street was furious. Zedillo had to send top cabinet officials to New York several times to explain themselves to the lords of finance. One Secretary of the Treasury had to be fired and another one appointed. The Clinton administration rushed forward to offer loans to try to restabilize the Mexican financial system. The purpose of this, of course, was to try to stop the Wall Street losses and let them get a chance to recover their money.

Clinton's first rescue plan didn't fly; the Republicans saw a golden opportunity to make political points against Clinton and they poured on the rhetoric. (Nobody should let this rhetoric fool them for a minute. The Republicans are just as eager as the Democrats to do whatever it takes to protect the rich in the U.S. They just couldn't pass up a chance to try to make Clinton look bad.) For two months Clinton and the Republicans postured back and forth until Clinton came up with a different plan to do the same thing.

During those two months, the Mexican economy sank farther into a hole. Early in January, Zedillo announced an austerity plan that he said would get the Mexican economy back on track. This plan appears to be part of what he promised the Wall Street financiers. It included more privatizations, cuts in the government budget, and agreements by the official trade union leaders to hold down wage increases to under the rate of inflation. There were other promises made as well. (See the Chase Manhattan memo.)

On February 9th, Zedillo an-

nounced a sudden reversal of his public policy of trying to find a peaceful solution to the Zapatista rebellion. He ordered the army to attack the EZLN-controlled villages and try to capture the main leaders of the EZLN. That this is what Wall Street wanted him to do was confirmed by the publication of an internal memo of Chase Manhattan Bank which insisted that the Mexican government should eliminate the Zapatistas.

However, the Zapatistas refused to stand still and be eliminated. After five days of the offensive, Zedillo announced another change in tactics. He said the army was suspending offensive operations and that he wanted to start new negotiations with the Zapatistas. However, for the next month and a half, the Mexican army advanced into the Lacondon jungle after the Zapatistas. Negotiations with the EZLN have now started again, but it seems unlikely that Zedillo will be willing to do more than pay lip service to the just demands of the Zapatistas.

In March Zedillo announced a much more severe austerity plan than the one announced in January. The plan includes increasing the value-added tax from a rate of 10% to 15%, in other words, a 50% increase for this tax. Zedillo also announced that gasoline (sold only by the government-owned PEMEX) would go up 35%, electricity and natural gas would increase 20%, and the government budget would be cut 10% this year. Zedillo forecast inflation for this year at 42%, but many other economists expect 60% inflation. (*La Opinion*, 3-19-95) In the face of these figures, Zedillo proposes to raise the minimum wage 10%, that is, to cut it, in reality, by 30% or more. Everyone expects a recession in Mexico this year. Indeed, it has already started, 250,000 jobs have been lost since the beginning of the year (*New York Times*,

3-12-95). In the next six or seven months, another 500,000 jobs will be lost, according to the (PRI) Secretary of Labor. He predicts that 55% of the economically active population will be unemployed or underemployed.

This austerity plan was so severe that Zedillo gave up the previous practice of trying to negotiate a "social pact" with the official representatives of business and labor. Even Fidel Velasquez (the 95 year old head of the official CTM), a hardened traitor to the working class, couldn't publicly support such extreme measures against the working class. Representatives of the Mexican businessmen are not at all happy about this plan either. The sky-high interest rates, the huge increase in prices for imported materials, the massive loss of purchasing power by Mexican consumers means huge profit losses and many bankruptcies for small to medium-sized Mexican companies.

But international capital, and particularly Wall Street, demands that the Mexican economy has to be made safe for foreign investment. So as soon as the actual deal was worked out for the first U.S. loans to the Mexican government, the Mexican central bank announced that interbank interest rates were increased from 40% to 54%. Consumer credit has jumped to 80% and higher. When finance capital puts its foot down, everybody has to jump; never mind that the result of the sky-high interest rates and the austerity program will be recession in Mexico.

In sum, it doesn't take much of a crystal ball to see that the ordinary masses of the Mexican people, from the middle class down to the poor peasants in the countryside, are paying and are going to continue to pay a very heavy price for the financial crisis provoked by the PRI economic policies. The middle classes will not be able to afford the cars and appli-

ances they want to buy, and they are going to have to scrimp even on their food purchases. Those workers who keep their jobs are going to lose a lot in real wages, and many workers are going to lose their jobs. The urban poor who are trying to survive in the "informal economy" are going to be pushed to the brink of starvation or maybe over the brink. Peasants who need bank loans to plant their crops may be bankrupted. The rural laborers are also going to see their pitiful wages reduced further in real terms and many are probably going to lose their jobs. The few subsistence farmers left in various corners of Mexico probably will be able to eat after a fashion, if they can find some way to get seed, but whatever little cash they have will be worth even less.

Causes of the Crisis

So who is to blame for this mess? Is it the fault of Salinas de Gotari that the Mexican masses are facing such hardships? He certainly deserves plenty of blame. For one thing, in his last couple of years in office, he clearly tried to bottle up the pending economic crisis, so that he would be out of office before it broke out. He also made big money in all the stock trading because of his interest in the Mexican Bolsa de Valores. But the problem goes much deeper than that. In the broadest terms, it is the economic and political system of monopoly capitalism which is to blame. Mexico is run by a class of rich capitalists who are allied with and junior partners to the monopoly capitalist class of the U.S., with some influence of the monopoly capitalist classes of Europe and Japan thrown in.

The current financial crisis has revealed to all just how dependent the Mexican economy is on U.S. imperialism and particularly on the moguls of Wall Street. It has also pro-

vided sharp examples of the power of the U.S. government and the U.S. finance capitalists to dictate political and economic policy in Mexico. In the case of Mexico, I don't see how anyone (including our former comrades) could argue that Lenin's concepts of imperialism are out of date. Clearly, Mexico is part of the U.S. imperialist sphere of influence.

For over 60 years, the rich in Mexico have ruled through the single-party system of the PRI. In the 1930s the regime of Lazaro Cardenas established the basic mechanisms that served the PRI until recently. This topic deserves an article by itself. Here I just want to mention that it was under Cardenas that the PRI established its control over the main trade unions in the country and also over peasant organizations. Also under Cardenas, the Mexican government nationalized the oil industry. The Mexican capitalist class ruled through the PRI. Meanwhile the top PRI officials became "state" capitalists, accumulating fortunes through corruption and favorable business deals. U.S. imperialism maintained its massive interests in Mexico, although in a slightly different form.

In 1982 a severe economic and financial crisis shook up this system. The Mexican government faced a mountain of debt that it couldn't pay off. That crisis marked a turning point in Mexican politics. As the price for the IMF to support the restructuring of the Mexican debt, the Mexican government imposed severe austerity measures on the Mexican people. Inflation raged, the peso dropped fast, and many workers lost their jobs.

As a supposed solution to this crisis, Presidents Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado and then Carlos Salinas de Gortari pursued the neoliberal program: reduce trade barriers to foreign-manufactured goods, allow foreign capitalists to invest more

openly in Mexico, reduce government spending on social programs, sell off government-owned businesses. This is the international equivalent, in a rough sense, to Reaganism. Its effects in Mexico were at least as devastating to the Mexican workers as Reaganism was to workers in the U.S. Real wages of Mexican workers have been declining ever since. Unemployment and impoverishment have increased. Peasants have been forced off the land and into the cities. As I mentioned above, Zedillo proposes more of the same as the solution to the current financial crisis.

Every political tendency in Mexico has a different prescription for solving Mexico's economic woes. On the right and the center, neither the mainstream of the PRI nor the PAN are questioning the basic policy of neoliberalism. They may blame Salinas de Gortari for mistakes in applying it or possibility for corruption (both of which charges are probably justified). However, whether it is done well or poorly, neoliberalism means more suffering for the Mexican masses: the workers and peasants, the urban poor trying to survive in the informal economy, etc. Maybe the Mexican capitalists could have been spared some shocks with a slicker neoliberal policy, but neoliberalism means all opportunities to the rich to exploit the poor even more harshly. I'm not going to spend a lot of time arguing this point; I expect that most of the readers of this journal have already rejected openly pro-capitalist politics.

From the PRD out to many sections of the Mexican left, one finds a theme that Mexico should return to the basic policies of Lazaro Cardenas or some improved variation of them, and this would make things a whole lot better. Cardenas senior is praised for nationalizing the oil industry, for carrying out land reform, for protect-

ing the Mexican workers, for social measures generally in protection of the poor and for protecting Mexico against the rapaciousness of U.S. imperialism. If the Mexican government would just take up these policies again, the argument goes, things would be much better for the Mexican masses. I think this view is wrong from two angles: 1) it romanticizes and prettifies Cardenas and 2) it wouldn't work anyway.

As far as I understand it, Lazaro Cardenas saved capitalism in Mexico much the same way Roosevelt did in the U.S. in the same time period. His policies were, by no means, for the workers and peasants. He mixed demagogic public relations steps and some reforms which appeared to be for the workers and peasants, with repression and attacks against workers and peasant organizations. I really don't know much more about this than is in the book by Cockcroft, so I refer the reader to this source for more information (James D. Cockcroft, *Mexico, Class Formation, Capital Accumulation and the State*, Monthly Review Press, New York, NY, 1990). (I am not vouching for Cockcroft's politics, but the facts he presents about Cardenas clearly show Cardenas as a clever manipulator of workers' and peasants' movements.)

Among the former PRI policies that neoliberalism eliminated were high tariffs against imported manufactured goods and restrictions against 100% foreign ownership of businesses in Mexico. These former policies were against the overwhelming economic might of the U.S. imperialists right next door. In fact, U.S. imperialism had always found all sorts of ways of getting around those restrictions. For example, "prestanombre" has been a famous category of Mexican businessman, a frontman for foreign (usually, U.S.)

investment. In regard to nationalized industry, PEMEX is owned by the Mexican government, but it's hard to see how this benefits the poor of Mexico. Corrupt PRI bureaucrats rake off lots of money, the PRI doesn't give anything to the masses, except maybe oil pipeline leaks on their lands and gas explosions like the one in Guadalajara a few years ago. Most of the oil is still sold to the U.S. So, the first point is that the previous stand of the PRI (pre-neoliberal) that it was defending Mexican sovereignty against the Yankees was hot air. It certainly didn't defend the Mexican masses, maybe a few Mexican capitalists.

The next question is whether or not a policy that really does defend Mexican capitalism from U.S. imperialism is possible or is something for which the Mexican workers and poor should fight. Roughly speaking, I think this is the kind of policy that Eduardo Galeano, for example, advocates for all of Latin America in his book, *The Open Veins of Latin America*. However, I don't think such a program is possible, nor do I think that the workers or poor should fight for such a thing. (This is a very broad topic on which there are many shades of opinion, and I admit that I cannot deal with all aspects of the question in one article. I do think that struggle against U.S. imperialism is an important part of the Mexican revolution. What I am saying is that the Mexican masses should not take as key goals of this struggle the rights for the Mexican capitalists against foreign capital.)

One general point that I would like to stress, and this is a point that the Marxist-Leninist Party always stressed, is that it is wrong for the working class to take, as its main program, the demands of any section of the capitalists, in the hope that helping one section of the rich against

another section will trickle down some benefits to the workers. The working class must come out straightforward for its own interests. Even if it were possible to strengthen the Mexican capitalists distinct from and in opposition to the U.S. imperialists and all other foreign imperialists, this would not benefit the Mexican working class, nor the broad masses of Mexican poor. Whatever their nationality, the rich have no mercy on the poor.

Big corporations, small corporations, native-born owners or foreign owners, the issue is that workers have to develop the strength to stand up for themselves or they will be crushed in all cases. As long as capitalism exists in the world, the law of the jungle is going to apply. Those corporations that make the most profits are going to drive out those who make less. The bottom line is the bottom line for Mexican capitalists just as much as it is for the Yankee imperialists. I am not aware of any evidence that Mexican capitalists are "fairer" to their workers than Yankee capitalists.

Furthermore, on the practical side, I don't believe it is possible to separate out the interests of the Mexican capitalists in order to protect them in opposition to the U.S. imperialists. There is clearly a Mexican monopoly capitalist class; the Forbes list of 24 Mexican billionaires does mean something. However, I think they have intertwined their interests so closely with U.S. imperialism that the interests of these two classes are very similar. After all, the vast majority of Mexican capitalists were all for the neoliberal politics, NAFTA, etc. They may have complained about the corruption of the PRI, or its bureaucracy and inefficiency, but they were mainly urging faster movement down the same path PRI has been going. Right now, many Mexican capitalists are somewhat upset at the high interest

rates imposed by the Mexican government at the request of international capitals. In spite of this, they are trying to make deals with the PRI, rather than trying to bring down the PRI. Just wait, the PRI will find some way to help the big Mexican capitalists get through this tough period. Carlos Slim (one of the biggest Mexican billionaires) was quoted in the paper in January saying that even though he had lost billions in net worth (on paper), by the fall in the value of Telmex stock, he would find a way to make it back. He cited the opportunity presented by the sky-high interest rates, which would let him make big money by loaning it to banks.

I admit that I don't have the detailed economic information about the Mexican economy that would absolutely prove the above point. I certainly would welcome anyone who has done this type of research to state what he or she thinks it proves. However, I think the evidence from the political stand of the Mexican capitalists is pretty strong. They have no desire to bar U.S. imperialism from investing in or trading with Mexico. They have firmly hitched their wagon to U.S. imperialism.

The plight of the Mexican peasants, and particularly the indigenous communities, is extreme. Anyone who didn't know this before January, 1994, found it out from the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas. Roger Burbank and Peter Rosset have written a very interesting study on this called "Chiapas and the Crisis of Mexican Agriculture" (Dec., 1994, Food First Institute for Food and Development Policy, Oakland, CA). They show how the capitalist development of Mexican agriculture has produced a relatively small number of large, modern, profitable, capitalist agricultural enterprises alongside of a large number of increasingly impoverished peasants.

They conclude, "Ultimately, the key to a new agriculture is the empowerment of the peasantry. The ejidos and agrarian communities have to be given the resources they need and empowered to find their own solutions." I take this to mean that they believe that the problems of the Mexican peasants can be solved under the current economic and political system of capitalism. Solved -- definitely not, alleviated -- perhaps, somewhat. Government action could definitely soften the blows of the capitalist marketplace on the Mexican poor peasants. But the economic tendency will still be to wipe out small-scale production in favor of large-scale mechanized production. Furthermore, the pressure from the U.S. and the IMF is to insist that the Mexican government cut even more its spending on social welfare programs.

The crucial factor is the mass struggle of the peasants. The Zapatistas have given a powerful voice to the demands of the peasants. Even Salinas de Gortari and Zedillo have admitted the justice of the peasant demands. But the PRI's whole program is going to further impoverish and suppress the peasants. Just to get some small measures of relief for the peasantry requires an enormous struggle. As long as the current economic and political system of monopoly capitalism continues, poor peasants are going to continue to catch hell.

What Stand Should the American Working Class Take?

American workers have a natural sympathy for the struggles of their class brothers and sisters in Mexico. The slogan, "An injury to one is an injury to all," extends across borders. This is the general point. Anytime the workers and poor of Mexico are forced into more desper-

ate conditions, it harms the interests of all workers. If the monopoly capitalists of the U.S. and the Mexican capitalist are able to get away with making the Mexican masses pay for the economic crisis, that just makes the rich class stronger and working class weaker. Any victory of the Mexican workers and poor is a victory for workers in the U.S. also. International solidarity is a vital necessity for workers, especially in times such as these.

Let's look at one political example, the \$20 billion loan of U.S. government money that Clinton has arranged as part of the \$50 billion aid package. Some of the liberal politicians in the U.S., such as Jesse Jackson, are criticizing this deal, questioning why U.S. taxpayer money should go to guarantee investments in Mexico by Wall Street bankers and mutual fund managers. One of the strange things is that some right-wing conservative politicians are making similar noises.

I think there are several points here. In the first place, American workers should never align themselves with politicians giving chauvinist arguments such as, "To hell with Mexico and the Mexicans, let the country rot and the people starve. America First!" This is pure poison for the cause of the workers. And this is what right-wing demagogues are saying although they may use code words instead of saying it outright.

Politicians such as Jesse Jackson point out correctly that the bailout money is designed to protect Wall Street interests, and then they start complaining about how many needs exist inside the U.S. I think this type of talk feeds into a prejudice setting up a false opposition between the needs of the poor in the U.S. and those of the poor in Mexico. Too many politicians are telling workers in the U.S., forget about the workers and

poor in other countries; they are trying to steal your job anyway.

The capitalists have their solidarity. Bill Clinton and all the Democrats and Republicans have made sure that the interests of Wall Street are protected. The working class needs its solidarity. Workers in the U.S. need to give moral and practical support to the struggles of workers, peasants and the poor in Mexico. Particularly important is to spread news of the struggles of the working people in Mexico and to encourage workers in the U.S. to see these struggles as part of their own struggle.

Socialism is the Goal

In previous sections, I showed how all the proposed solutions to the economic and political crisis in Mexico which leave the present economic and political system of capitalism untouched were no good for the workers and poor. Monopoly capitalism rules Mexico. The wealth created by the labor of the Mexican workers and peasants supports a rich class of Mexicans who rule through the PRI, and a large part of this wealth goes into the profits of U.S. monopoly capitalists who exert a massive control of Mexican politics directly (as in the meetings between the Mexican Finance Ministers and Wall Street bigwigs) and indirectly (through the dictates of the U.S. government and international agencies such as the IMF). The system of monopoly capitalism is the cause of suffering and oppression in Mexico and in the U.S.

This system needs to be destroyed and a new system, a true socialist system, needs to be built in Mexico and in the U.S. (and all over the world). In other articles and leaflets, the *Chicago Workers' Voice* has explained the general points of the necessity of socialist revolution and what we mean by socialism. See, for

example, the article we put out for May First last year, or the article on the struggle against the contract on America this year. I would just like to emphasize, in case some of our readers are not clear about this, that by socialism I mean genuine working class control of the society, not bureaucratic state capitalism.

What About the Zapatistas' Program?

The main slogans of the Zapatistas are for "Democracy, Liberty, and Justice". First and foremost, they want to end the one-party rule of the PRI. They have called for the current PRI government of Mexico to be replaced with a transitional government as a step towards establishing a democratic government in Mexico. The EZLN has voiced the demands of the indigenous people and the poor peasants in Chiapas and all across Mexico for land, for a right to a livelihood, for an end to abuses by the rich, for respect for indigenous culture.

The Zapatista struggle has achieved more in shaking up bourgeois rule in Mexico than the years of maneuvering by reformist parties. For their heroism, for their sacrifice, for their boldness, for their achievements, all those whose goal is revolution must respect the Zapatistas and defend them against attacks by the Mexican government and by international finance capital. The Zapatistas sudden appearance on the international political scene in January of last year gave hope to all those who struggle for liberty and justice for the oppressed.

This doesn't mean, however, that revolutionaries should give up forming their own assessment of the strategy and tactics of the Zapatistas. In the first place, the Zapatista program is only one step in the direction

of complete emancipation of the oppressed in Mexico. As long as capitalism and imperialism rule Mexico, the workers and the poor are going to be oppressed. The achievement of the Zapatistas' demands would open up wider possibilities for the workers and poor of Mexico to struggle for the elimination of the exploiting system. This would be an important victory and no one should downplay the significance of it, but it certainly is not the final end goal.

Another point is that the key to social revolution in Mexico is the working class. This is the class which has no stake in the current system and the class whose conditions of life and work impel it in the direction of socialism. The fear which the Mexican capitalists have of the working class is shown by their harsh repression of the Ruta-100 workers. (See the article on struggle of the Ruta-100 workers in this issue.)

The Zapatistas are based in the peasants, and particularly the indigenous peasantry. This class has a long history of fierce and revolutionary struggle in Mexico. The peasant revolution is an important component of the social revolution in Mexico. However, the peasant revolution cannot by itself wipe out all systems of exploitation in Mexico. For this, you need the working class together with the peasants and all of the poor and oppressed.

It is a huge problem for the revolution in Mexico that the working class is not organized in a large militant movement independent of the capitalist parties, of the pro-capitalist trade union bureaucrats, of the reformist politicians, and so on. Most of the working class in Mexico is unorganized or is organized under the leadership of the PRI. There is no quick way around this problem. (Just as there is no quick way around the similar problem in the U.S.) The Zapatista struggle has impelled sec-

tions of the working class to launch struggles, but the Zapatista program specifically articulates the demands of the peasantry. The issues of democracy and justice for the peasants are important to the workers in Mexico, but this is only part of their struggle. I don't have a formula for how to organize the Mexican working class as an independent force, but organizing them to support the Zapatista struggle is clearly just one component of this.

[I am leaving out of this discussion the whole question of the need for a revolutionary working class Communist Party in Mexico. but I would like to point out that such a revolutionary party is necessary for the revolution in Mexico. We have just had so much trouble organizing such a party in the U.S. that I don't feel like giving much advice to Mexican activists on this question.]

A third issue relates to the Zapatista strategy. A big aspect of the Zapatista political work in Mexico as a whole has been to ally with reformist bourgeois political parties, particularly with the PRD. This has created a lot of upset and confusion in the independent left in Mexico. (See the article, "Cardenas and the EZLN," from *El Machete*, for example.) The PRD and Cuauhtemoc Cardenas are clearly not in any way revolutionary. In fact, they have a long and dirty history of undermining popular struggles in Mexico, just as similar forces in the U.S. have done. *El Machete* interprets the EZLN alliance with Cardenas as a tactic to radicalize the base of the PRD when Cardenas exposes himself as not willing to carry on the struggle. I doubt that. It looks more like the Zapatistas hope to use a split in the bourgeois political forces in Mexico to achieve some of their demands.

This is a risky strategy for the Zapatistas. It is not clear that the

bourgeois reformists have the political will to fight even for their own program. After all, Cauauhtemoc stopped the mass struggle in 1988 after he was cheated out of an election victory he had won. If the liberals chicken out of organizing a serious fight for themselves, one has to wonder whether they are willing to organize a serious fight to defend the Zapatistas. In general, the Mexican liberals, just like the U.S. liberals, are more afraid of arousing the masses to fight than they are of losing to the conservatives.

One would have to guess that one factor influencing the Zapatistas in their choice of allies is the weakness of the independent left in Mexico. The PRD and similar forces look a lot bigger and it might seem more reasonable to put your hopes for practical support on them. It is also the case that the demands that the Zapatistas have focused on do coincide to a considerable degree with the issues these reformists have been talking about for years.

So, I think the point is that those who see the need to organize for socialist revolution cannot limit themselves to support for the Zapatistas. Anyone who doesn't defend the Zapatistas against the attacks of the Mexican government and the reactionaries certainly disqualifies him/herself from the ranks of the proletarian revolution. However, the tactics and strategy of the EZLN are not sufficient to complete the emancipation of the oppressed in Mexico.

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[For your reference, two articles: 1) Green Left article on mutual funds, and 2) excerpts from Chase Manhattan memo.]

Below is an article which I received from the internet mailing list,

PNEWS. I found the facts it presented on the importance of mutual fund investment in Latin and America, and especially Mexico, very interesting. Oleg

Tightening the Noose on the Third World

(Date: Sun, 21 Aug 1994)

Written by greenleft@peg.UUCP
in igc:greenleft.news

The patterns of western capitalist investment in the third world have been changing rapidly. The result is an even greater dependence of underdeveloped countries' governments, writes Chow Wei Cheng.

Mutual funds have taken over much of the financing role of big banks and quasi-governmental institutions such as the International Monetary Fund. But unlike banks, whose role has diminished in developing nations since the Third World debt crisis of the 1980s, fund managers have no commitments. They want nearly instant returns on their investments and are willing to use their clout to achieve those goals.

Mutual funds are now one of the biggest suppliers of badly needed capital to the emerging economies of eastern Europe, Latin America and Africa. In last year's fourth quarter, mutual funds and other private investors worldwide bought nearly US\$20 billion in new bond issues from developing countries. For all of 1993, the total was US\$57.7 billion, more than double the previous year and nearly eight times that in 1990, according to the World Bank.

In Latin America, 40% of all new foreign investment between 1989 and 1992 came from mutual funds and other stock and bond investors, as well as those making direct investments in companies, according to data

from Mexico's Finance Ministry. That was up from 15% between 1977 and 1981. Commercial banks, by comparison, accounted for only 14% of new foreign investment in Latin America in the 1989-92 period, down from 67% in 1977-1981. (The remainder came from export and import credits and official loans and grants.)

The fund's ability and propensity to withdraw their money at any time, selling equity or bonds, is a different approach from bank to bank loans which tie in the bank for a longer term. In Latin America, big foreign banks, stung by the 1980's debt crisis, have been reluctant to lend. The funds have filled the gap and are less "tied in"; this gives them tremendous clout, perhaps greater than that of the banks or the IMF. If fund managers get any hint that a country may adopt policies viewed as inflationary or favouring a weak currency, they will reconsider their investment. Such policies obviously include wage increases and welfare expenditure.

Developing nations that receive money from investment managers are "held to higher standards of policy-making precisely because the money is more fluid.... There is more immediate reaction to bad policies," according to one analyst from the World Bank.

In Mexico, opposition parties have pointed out that the finance ministry has lately kept interest rates high, which generally pleases the funds but makes it painful for Mexican business to borrow.

The most dramatic example of the funds' clout came in April, when Mexico's peso was tumbling after the Colosio assassination. John Liegey, president of Weston Group, a New York investment bank that brokered some US\$5 billion peso securities trades for US mutual funds last year, quietly assembled an invest-

tor group called the Weston Forum.

According to a Weston document, its members include Fidelity; Trust Co of the west; Scudder, Stevens & Clark; Oppenheimer; Putnam Funds Management, a unit of Marsh & McLennan Cos; Soros Fund Management; Salomon Brothers Inc.; Numura Securities International Inc.; and Liegey's firm.

He arranged for two meetings between the Forum and Mexican officials. The first, on April 8 in Washington, was attended by Guillermo Ortiz, Mexico's undersecretary of finance, and two central bank officials, Agustin Carstens and Ariel Buira Seira. Afterwards, Liegey put together a document announcing the formation of the Weston Forum, which included a list of six "policy suggestions."

The suggestions were aggressive. Mexico was asked to curb the speed of the peso's devaluation. Secondly, Mexico's government was asked to insure against currency-exchange losses on \$5 billion of peso-denominated securities if the peso dropped below a prescribed range. It also demanded that Mexican banks be allowed to increase their foreign-currency liabilities to 25% of total assets, from 20%. This could boost the bank's peso buying but leave them at greater risk if the peso fell.

The investor group also suggested the government issue long-term tesobonos, government bonds with built-in devaluation insurance. And it should back all these measures with central-bank peso purchases to push the currency up to between 3.15 and 3.21 pesos per US dollar, from a low of 3.36 pesos on April 21. The central bank would have to spend huge amounts of reserves in the process.

If the measures were enacted, the Weston document says, Mexico would receive as much as US\$10 bil-

lion in new investment from these and other fund managers within eight weeks and another US\$7 billion in the second half of 1994.

The day before Liegey and several members of the Weston Forum appeared in Ortiz's Mexico City office to argue for their proposal, Forum members refused to buy short-term Mexican treasury certificates in sufficient quantity to replace existing ones. Short-term rates soared to 18%, and stock prices plunged 5.2%. This action, which amounted to an investment strike, was a strong reminder of what the fund managers could do.

Soon after the Weston Forum meeting, Mexican officials launched a peso rescue plan, issuing tesobonos and arranging a trilateral currency support program among Mexico, the US and Canada.

Since then, investors have pumped US\$2.5 billion back into Mexican tesobonos alone. The peso is still trading at about 3.38 to the US dollar, and Weston forum managers are pressing Mexico to implement more of their suggestions. According to the Asian Wall Street Journal, Liegey stated, "We would have liked something faster and more aggressive," in reference to Mexico's efforts, "but we've gotten a good portion of what we asked for."



[Below are excerpts from the Chase Manhattan internal report which I also received on an Internet mailing list. Oleg]

MEXICO-POLITICAL UPDATE January 13, 1995

CHASE MANHATTAN'S EMERGING MARKETS GROUP MEMO

Riordan Roett

SUMMARY

The greatest threat to political stability in Mexico today, we believe, is the current monetary crisis. Until the administration of President Ernesto Zedillo identifies the appropriate policies to stabilize the peso and avoid uncontrolled inflation, it will be almost impossible to address issues such as Chiapas and judicial and electoral reform. Moreover, a prolongation of the crisis, with its negative impact on living standards, raises the issue of labor unrest, specifically, and societal discontent, in general.

...

In our opinion, until the [Zedillo] government is successful in stabilizing the peso, avoiding a sharp increase in inflation, and regaining investor confidence, it will be difficult for Zedillo to address the agenda of reforms identified on December 1. There are three areas in which the current monetary crisis can undermine political stability in Mexico. The first is Chiapas; the second is the upcoming state elections; and the third is the role of the labor unions, their relationship to the government and the governing PRI.

...

While Chiapas, in our opinion, does not pose a fundamental threat to Mexican political stability, it is perceived to be so by many in the investment community. The government will need to eliminate the Zapatistas to demonstrate their effective control of the national territory and of security policy.

...

The Zedillo administration will need to consider carefully whether or not to allow opposition victories if fairly won at the ballot box. To deny legitimate electoral victories by the opposition will be a serious setback in the President's electoral strategy. But

El Machete and the Mexican Left

Julie, Chicago

The editorial guide for CWVTJ no. 6 noted that the "next issue of CWVTJ will continue our coverage of Mexico including some topics of controversy within the ranks of our own supporters. In CWVTJ #5 we carried an announcement that *El Machete*, a left-wing Mexican newspaper, was available through CWV. This ad was not meant as an endorsement of *El Machete* as a Marxist-Leninist organization."

"We note that several supporters of the CWVTJ strongly oppose any endorsement of *El Machete* and disagree with Oleg's announcement in the last issue. Joseph Green has written his concerns on this, and Oleg has replied." Joseph has written that he was shocked by the article (ad) for *El Machete* and that this was wrong. In a number of letters he stated that he considers *El Machete* to represent a "hostile" trend. If one reads his December 21 letter to CWVTJ and the other materials printed in *Communist Voice* vol. 1, no. 1, it seems that he has done all this while only taking a cursory look at this paper.

I will attempt to give my views on it. And, unlike Joseph, my views are based on actually having read *El Machete* and some study of the Mexi-

can political situation.

On *El Machete*

El Machete is an interesting paper. It gives some idea of what is going on in the Mexican left, what it is concerned about, what the controversies are. The group or collective which puts it out has definite connections to the mass movement and ideas on how to move it forward. Their views and actions put them in the more radical wing of the Mexican political scene. They campaign against the PRI and the PRI government. This is of obvious importance, as the PRI is the ruling party of the capitalist government in Mexico. As well, the PRI came to power as a result of the Mexican revolution. It has used populist and nationalist appeals to justify its policies. It dominates the official trade unions, peasant and student organizations.

El Machete also campaigns against the PRD which is of vital significance in building a revolutionary movement in Mexico. It is a bourgeois party. But, after all, it is led by Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, the son of Lazaro. And the name Lazaro Cardenas is closely connected with a series of measures such as land reform and nationalization of oil that

were done after the Mexican revolution. Cuauhtemoc Cardenas has talked about going back to the original aims of the PRI. Further, this party is closely connected with some big left political parties. The PSUM (which came in part from the Mexican CP) became a part of this party, as did a section of the major Trotskyist party, the PRT. Furthermore, at the base of the party are militant peasants and workers. So while this party is a bourgeois party it has a lot of left credentials. Thus, exposing the bourgeois nature of the PRD is an important part of building up any revolutionary movement.

The Crisis in Mexico Deepens

The political crisis in Mexico is deepening. Who would have believed a few months ago that the brother of the ex-president would be arrested for plotting the assassination of another top PRI official. And then to top it off, the brother of the assassinated official was arrested for covering it up and having huge amounts of money in American and Swiss bank accounts. There was an article in the NYT which quoted Carlos Fuentes. Fuentes said he talked to Gabriel Garcia Marquez and that Marquez told him that they should throw all their books into the sea as real life has

Crisis, cont. from p. 13

a failure to retain PRI control runs the risk of splitting the governing party. We believe that the ability of the Zedillo administration to resolve the inherent conflicts in the 1995 electoral agenda will be instrumental in determining whether or not the government will be able to fulfill its pledge to liberalize Mexican politics.

....

The labor movement has been

the backbone of the PRI for decades. The willingness of labor leadership to take its cues from the PRI has been a fundamental part of the stability in Mexico since the 1930s. The current monetary crisis threatens to undermine that support because of the negative impact on living standards and wages. The fall in value of the peso severely undercuts the capacity of the average Mexican worker to purchase the bare necessities of life each day.

...

If the crisis continues, the Zedillo administration may be faced with the options of either rejecting worker demands for higher wages and facing the possibility of demonstrations or yielding to worker demands which will further aggravate the economic situation.



surpassed them.

It's possible that the 65 year rule of the PRI will break up. The big bourgeoisie openly talks about the possibility that this break-up will descend into "anarchy." They hope that the break-up will be contained and that the PRI will reform itself into a more ordinary--style bourgeois party and regime.

The political crisis of the PRI coincides with a major economic crisis. There is an article on this elsewhere in this issue. This crisis is affecting almost everyone except the super-rich, but especially the workers, peasants and the poor. It is itself provoking a major political crisis. The bourgeoisie also openly worries that the austerity measures undertaken by the government will provoke "unrest."

What is the back-drop of this crisis? Over the past 40-50 years there have been dramatic changes in the Mexican economy. Mexico has a fairly modern and extensive industry. While the working class played an important role in the 1910 revolution, it is much more developed today. Large numbers of workers are employed in the maquiladora industries, the oil industry, auto, food processing and others.

The small peasantry is being driven off the land in large numbers. Mexico City is now the largest city in the world in population. Its population swells every day as more pauperized peasants move in. This process has been going on for a while, probably to be intensified by the changes codified in NAFTA. For instance, in preparation for NAFTA, the Mexican Congress changed the Constitution to allow the sale of ejido land. (see accompanying article for some info on the growing integration of American agribusiness with Mexican agriculture. While the article doesn't draw this direct conclusion, the changes are sure to mean even more peasantry

being driven off their land.)

The changes also mean the growth of an urban middle class and the growth of the Mexican big bourgeoisie.

In my opinion, these economic changes provide the backdrop for various factors in current Mexican politics.

The growth of the Mexican bourgeoisie as a larger, more diversified class and the growth of the middle class, I think, form the basis for the calls from these sectors for "democratization" - that is, what the bourgeoisie considers to be "democratization" - the privatization of state owned enterprises, the separation of the PRI party from the state, the breaking of the PRI from the official mass organizations, the establishment of a real multi-party system, etc. Such a more formally "democratic" system would be more suitable for the bourgeoisie at this stage of development.

Zedillo himself has embarked on a few truncated reforms of this sort. For example, the PAN has been allowed more of a role in the government. Jose Francisco Ruiz-Massieu (who was assassinated) was an advocate of this type of "reform" and advocated distancing the PRI from the state structure. Both Zedillo and Salinas de Gortari before him were educated in the U.S. at Ivy League colleges. Both advocated a more streamlined, technically advanced, and privatized industry. But these reforms are not enough to satisfy the diverse forces in the Mexican bourgeoisie.

And then there are the desires of the Mexican masses. The increasing pauperization of the peasantry, along with the discrimination and repression against the indigenous communities, led to a peasant revolt in Chiapas which gets wide sympathy from the population. This revolt could not help but get sympathy from the peasantry in other regions and the large sections

of urban poor, who are frequently newly dispossessed peasantry. It could not help but get the support of the working class, which is getting poorer, and the indigenous communities. The working class has been under the reins of the PRI union federation, the CTM, since the 30's. Over the last 10-15 years the working class in Mexico has suffered from the same type of rationalization we have seen elsewhere. This means factories closing, layoffs, etc. Since the debt crisis of 1982, the Mexican workers have suffered big losses in real wages as well as high levels of unemployment. However, along with this the working class movement has been at a low level. Yet, as indicated by the struggle of the Ruta-100 workers, there are increasing signs that the proletariat is restive.

The current economic crisis is intensifying all this. The situation would seem to call for a vigorous working class struggle linked up with the poor peasant revolt, for a series of democratic and socialist measures such as a general rise in wages, including agricultural wages, a planning of large-scale agriculture in such a way that the peasantry is not pauperized, assistance to what is left of the cooperative forms of agriculture such as some of the communal forms in the indigenous areas and assistance to the ejidos in such a way that the peasantry working there can make the transition to large-scale agriculture without being driven off the land, abrogation of the foreign debt — as well as a whole series of other issues such as restricting the influence of the Church, women's rights, rights to the indigenous cultures and languages, improved education and health care, and protection of the environment.

The current political crisis may provide an opening for such a struggle to break out. Even some limited breaking of the PRI stranglehold over the government and the official mass or-

ganizations may provide some opening to the working class struggle. But, it seems the current political crisis may provide an opening for a much more mass struggle to break out. It may provide an opening for the working class and poor peasantry to build up their strength and launch a general revolt against capitalist rule in Mexico.

The bourgeoisie, especially those sections connected to the PRD, want to use the peasant revolt as one of its rams to get concessions for itself. And they want to do this without provoking a working class and peasant movement whose demands would shake up the capitalist system. The National Commission for Democracy in Mexico (which is a U.S. organization) is currently holding a series of political meetings in the U.S. I think the aim of these meetings is to organize the U.S. political movement behind the schemes of the PRD sections of the Mexican bourgeoisie.

Some Comments on the EZLN

So how do various forces play out in this?

The EZLN led the peasant revolt in Chiapas. This revolt shook up Mexican politics. It deepened the crisis within the Mexican bourgeoisie and inspired other sections of the masses into action. This revolt radically changed the political atmosphere in Mexico. For instance, in the current economic crisis, the PRI is not presenting its immediate austerity measures as a "social contract" as it has done previously. (However, Zedillo is still trying to get a long term "social pact" negotiated with the Mexican capitalists and the CTM.)

The peasantry in Chiapas would certainly like to get some of their demands satisfied. Also the Zapatistas have entered into the more general stage of Mexican politics. Last spring they called for the organization of the

CND which included most of the Mexican left from the more radical to the PRD, PT, etc. The Zapatistas seem both to bank on the discontent within the Mexican bourgeoisie and its desires for a more standard bourgeois democratic political system and to bank on the radical left. The Zapatistas also seem quite adept at various political tactics, seeming to fairly artfully maneuver between threats of another revolt, negotiations, refusing various negotiated solutions and using the electoral arena.

They also seem to give some sympathy and assistance to the formation of other peasant organizations, etc. But in no way have they committed themselves to society splitting up into two hostile camps -- the proletariat and poor peasantry on one side and the bourgeoisie and its various hangers-on on the other. This seems to come partly from their class basis - the EZLN is clearly based in the poor peasantry - and the general situation in which there hasn't been much working class movement.

In that sense, the Zapatistas probably have not broken out of the mold of the FMLN revolt. While they do not seem to have tailored their demands and program to the interests of the bourgeoisie (as the FMLN did in its later years), they seem to have a definite reliance on the very real splits in the bourgeois parties. Thus, also the call for a transitional government to be led by Cardenas. And, it seems that in the current campaign of the PRD against the radical left, they may be standing at the side of the PRD.

***El Machete* is Skeptical of the Democratization Schemes of the Bourgeoisie**

How does *El Machete* stand up in this?

They are skeptical of the democratization schemes of the bourgeoisie.

In an article entitled, "Our America" Nov. 1994, they discuss some of the electoral schemes;

"In the midst of these circumstances described above, 1994 saw the promotion of different proposed schemes for an alternative society and also of sharp attacks by neoliberalism, which presents itself as the antithesis of a socialist society, arguing its validity in light of the fall of the east.

"In most cases, hopes are summed up in the immediate possibilities of electoral triumphs in Mexico with the PRD; Brazil with the PT; Venezuela with the Radical Cause; Colombia with the M-19; El Salvador with the FMLN. These were the proposals which were heard being proposed with a loud voice in the Latin American meetings.

"The speeches of the presidential candidates were vacillating. On the one hand, they tried to gather popular and democratic demands, and equally, they tried to guarantee conditions to Capital. The acceptability to the entrepreneurs and economic sectors, which would be adverse to any kind of democratization proposal, was a central preoccupation which expressed the vacillations of the proposals to such a point that measures of the monetary fund cut were not seriously controlled.

"The alternative electoral politics perceived democracy in the same sense in which the oligarchies advertised it." (No. 4, Nov. 20, 1994)

I see it as very important that *El Machete* is skeptical of the democratization schemes of the bourgeoisie, even the most radical of them. For example, they raise that they are skeptical of the electoral ambitions of the FMLN. This is at a time when many in the left see electoral victories for the FMLN to be a big victory for the popular movement.

What significance does the participation of the FMLN in the elec-

tions actually have?

In El Salvador both the oligarchy and the popular organizations were exhausted by the war. And the FMLN had for some time tailored its demands to the interests of the bourgeoisie. In this situation the agreement to allow the FMLN leaders to participate in the elections meant not so much giving an opening to the interests of the workers and peasants. It has not meant much in the way of the workers and peasants being able to use the electoral arena as a means to present their demands and a way to help them get organized.

El Machete Against the PRI

El Machete has also indicated that:

"The objective in the present period of the class struggle is to put in crisis and to achieve the rupture of the popular forces with the form of governing of the system of the party is the state (PRI). Its action is equal to all the neoliberal governments which make us suffer: delivery to the empire of our natural resources and our sovereignty; insufficiency of housing, land, health, work, food and education as well as the restriction of the right to information, cultural development, justice, liberty, democracy etc. To fight for the demands (contained in the Zapatistas declaration of the Lacondan Forest presented the 1st of January) would generalize the popular struggle in each of its forms."

In Mexico the PRI is closely entwined with the official trade unions, peasant organizations, student organizations. Certainly a key question facing the Mexican political movement is to break the working class and peasantry from the political domination of the PRI and to build an independent political movement. *El Machete* seems to recognize the importance of this question. To my

mind, building an independent political movement requires the break of the working class and peasantry from the political domination of the PRI and also from the PRD which has arisen in recent years.

It is clear that *El Machete* does consistently campaign against the PRD and seem to desire a poor peasant and workers' movement not hooked up with the PRD. There are numerous articles in their press which reflect this.

Critique of the EZLN Relationship to the PRD

As well, they are somewhat critical of the Zapatistas for their relations with the PRD. In an editorial entitled "Define and Retrench Ourselves" (No. 54, Nov 23, 1994), they write concerning the imminent repression of the movement by the government and warn about the possibility that the EZLN will follow reformism.

"Up to the end of 1993 the organizations of the independent left were implementing tactics of resistance. Starting from the Zapatista uprising we understood that we had to take up the offensive and now we believe that we have to retrench ourselves.

"In the coming days important events will happen which it will be necessary to analyze in order to have correct tactics.

"The rich and their government will exaggerate and after the first days of December they are going to have to make clear where they are going to travel to give continuity to their neoliberal politics. Anything could happen, up to sensationalist actions like those which Salinas made when he took power, but now it is not exactly against La Quina [leader of the oil workers union who was arrested when Salinas took power, ed. note].

"Faced with imminent repres-

sion all of us are going to have to put forward our stands and define ourselves.

"The people of the political parties will have to decide: will they continue playing at bourgeois legality being a chorus of the oppressors or will they define a really independent position. As well, the Zapatistas will have to define if they will continue giving play to reformism or to really value the independent positions (from which they have distanced themselves). Because it is not possible to follow shouting "Long Live the EZLN" and taking land and carrying out actions of civil insurgency, with the risk that at any moment Zapatismo will disqualify (disavow?) those who have already shown their heads." (No. 54, Nov. 23, 1994)

In another article discussing problems with the CND, *El Machete* states: "In light of the failure of the CND, the EZLN has called for the formation of a Broad Opposition Front and recently for the National Liberation Movement. In order for these initiatives to bear fruit it is necessary to analyze the errors committed in the CND or otherwise it will stumble on the same rocks.

"We think that the two fundamental limitations which didn't allow the CND to develop were the sole and exclusive leadership role taken by the reformists and the lack of unity among the independent forces." (Jan 18, 1995)

In reading their literature, it is clear to me that *El Machete* is critical of the EZLN's conciliation to the PRD. And that to me is good. Nevertheless, in many cases I think that they are too hesitant to sum this up and to adequately outline the potential consequences of this policy.

For example, *El Machete* quotes somewhat admiringly that Marcos said the EZLN is not an arm of the PRD. The article then goes on to discuss a

series of dirty tricks of the PRD in the CND. Then it goes on to say in a section entitled "Why don't the ultras respond to these maneuvers." "The revolutionary has the same ethics which the Zapatistas showed with respect to some measures with which they have differences. The Zapatistas cannot respond to the maneuvers with dirty tricks. Simply they wait the precise moment in order to give their political positions." (Oct 23, 1994)

In another article they also give analysis why the EZLN proposal for a National Liberation Movement with Cardenas as the head might be correct.

"There is much discussion about why the EZLN insists on proposing Cuauhtemoc Cardenas to head the diverse initiatives for forming fronts which would bind together the struggles of the worker, peasant and popular sectors at the national level.

"There are various interpretations with respect to this. Some assert that the Zapatistas are responding to the plans of the reformists; others [say] that there is poor information and as a result of their isolation they have let themselves take as 'advisors' those who deceive them into believing that Cuauhtemoc represents the force of the 6 million who voted for him. "

"Nevertheless, it is possible to have other explanations. It is sufficient to analyze the political action of the Zapatistas in order to confirm that they are applying their political method, where far from disqualifying a force, they use it in order to make it commit itself and to define itself in its actions."

"Independent of the differences which we have with Cuauhtemocism, it is true that it represents an important force at the current moment. Because of this, the Zapatistas are forcing it to define itself. "

"This is not to say that the

Zapatistas are anxiously waiting for Cuauhtemoc as an individual to support them, they are simply taking steps so that in case this support is given, an alliance would be established, and, in case of the opposite, they could invite the Cardenista base to act in spite of the influence of the caudillo."

The same article then goes on to say,

"Nevertheless it appears to us that the Zapatistas have not been clear with respect to the role which the social independent organizations and in general the left movement which is not in the reformist trenches should play. Instead of making clear pronouncements about the role it believes these forces are obliged to play, it has played the politics of the riddle, where one day they encourage the participation of these forces and the next they restrain them. This is creating a lot of confusion which needs to be clarified before it is too late, as is well known by the companeros of the EZLN who work in the military terrain, **order and counterorder** (with neither explanation nor self-criticism) **is equal to disorder.**" (Jan 18, 1995, "Cardenas and the EZLN")

This article I think is an example of *El Machete's* hesitancy. It first says that the EZLN might be correct in proposing Cuauhtemoc Cardenas for the leader of a Movement of National Liberation. They raise that this might be a means of winning over the base of the PRD. I see no evidence that this is behind the EZLN's proposal. The article goes on to criticize the EZLN for its lack of "clear pronouncements" regarding the left. This is a valid criticism — but taken with the endorsement of the EZLN policy re: Cardenas seems to be hesitant and halfway. It seems to me that the EZLN calls for Cardenas to be the head and fails to make clear pronouncements about the left because it is indeed banking on sections

of the bourgeoisie to achieve some of its aims.

The Campaign of the PRD Against the Radical Left and *El Machete's* Campaign to Unite the Radical Left

In a series of articles *El Machete* refers to a number of actions of the PRD against themselves and other of the radical left in Mexico.

Their tactic towards this seems to have undergone some transition as the situation develops. Late last year they were talking about rescuing the CND: "It was not easy but the serious organizations continued to mobilize themselves, to organize and to defend the CND although they did it as outsiders, waiting the moment to rescue it."

"In this action many independent organizations will participate of which they are in the COCIP, UR, CNOSI, many [organizations] which did not participate in any coalition and, for a long time, the organizations which were demarcated from the parties such as the UCOPI of Guanajuato and many others who will rebel against the political party leaderships who have made agreements." (Oct. 23, 1994)

Coinciding with what seems to be the consolidation of the hold of the PRD over the CND, *El Machete* now calls for a united front of the radical left. For instance, in an article entitled "National Front of the masses" (Jan. 18, 1995) they say :

"Various independent social organizations have agreed on the urgent necessity of building a National Front of the masses pushing forward the political movement of the independent organizations in the short run along the crucial axes of struggle against neoliberalism, against the repression and imperialism. For the strengthening of the class organiza-

tions, for a new revolution and for the building and defense of popular power.”

They also seem to also think that *El Machete* can become an organ for the radical left in general. *El Machete* now prints statements and letters from a variety of radical left organizations in Mexico. I presume that this is part of their idea to become an organ for the radical left.

Obviously it would be difficult from here to judge the possibilities of this tactic. It does seem that there is an increasing split between the radical and independent left in Mexico and the PRD. For example, there were two demonstrations against the PRI held in Mexico City on April 10, 1995, the anniversary of Zapata's death. The PRD held a demonstration of 2-3,000. Another demonstration called by various radical left and independent trade union organizations was about 50,000. This demonstration supported the Zapatista revolt, denounced the suppression of the government of the Ruta-100 workers and opposed the current austerity measures. There have also been other demonstrations, some strike votes and other actions in the past year that reflect this split. Considering this development, the present economic and political crisis, and the situation in which the government is cracking down on the radical left and that the PRD is campaigning against the “ultras,” it is possible that the more independent and radical left may desire to become more united and consolidated.

Nevertheless, there are certainly a lot of inherent difficulties in building an independent political movement out of the more independent and radical left in Mexico. Many of these organizations have thousands of worker and peasant members — so that would seem to be in favor of the possibility of building a mass-based independent movement. But these

organizations themselves have a series of divergent views. There seem to be inherent difficulties in developing revolutionary bearings while carrying out this tactic. As well, few of these organizations have entered onto the field of national politics. Many represent the poor in a particular city or colonia, the peasants in a definite state, or the workers in a particular factory or industry. So there are difficulties in uniting this as a national political force. As well, many if not most, of these organizations are mainly based in the peasantry. So there are inherent difficulties in developing a revolutionary working class perspective. And some of the radical left make up the far left wing of the PRD. Thus, there is the danger of independent organizations eventually falling back into the PRD.

Thus, I can not judge if this tactic will work or how well it will work. But if a national political movement can be built up that is against the PRI, and against the PRD as well and which supports the development of the poor peasant struggle and is for building up the working class struggle, then this would be an advance for the Mexican revolutionary movement.

Limitations in *El Machete's* Perspective

I think *El Machete's* critique of the PRD is limited - mainly over the electoral politics and its lack of calling the masses out to defend the EZLN against repression.

As well, when it comes to building an independent political movement they seem to see the main path as splitting with the PRD and expanding the EZLN struggle.

When *El Machete* talks of expanding the EZLN struggle, it seems they may have three ideas in mind. They may think that the EZLN struggle itself can be spread all over Mexico, thus sparking a general revolutionary

struggle. However, I doubt that this is their view. Secondly, they certainly would like to see the spirit of class struggle manifested in the Chiapas revolt to spread all over the country. And thirdly, they may think that defense of the Chiapas movement against the attacks of the government will spark a general revolt.

I think the editorial in the issue of Oct. 23, 1994, manifests all three ideas;

“In Chiapas the formation of the Provisional Government has already been initiated. Thousands of indigenous people have formed autonomous and independent zones, with their own forms of organization and government. They no longer pay taxes to the Priista government nor permit the entrance of its functionaries. There the popular will is respected and the leaders have to do what the people mandate or they are removed.”

“This is what should be done in all the country, in the indigenous communities, in the unions, in the towns. In all places we have to replace the charro unionism with independent unionism, spurious leaders with leaders of the people.”

“It is very important that we, the organizations which are farthest from the fraud of the ‘bourgeois legality’, should work arduously in order to regain the National Democratic Convention and to demand its banner from those who have only usurped it in order to demobilize. For this it is necessary to regain the State Conventions, participating actively in the discussion, arousing the consciousness of, and organization of the people.”

“Because it is not just a matter of trying to change the leadership of the convention. It doesn't accomplish anything to throw out the reformists and put in the radicals, if they haven't done work at the base which makes possible the real participation of the

people. For this it is necessary to have the struggle within the Convention, but above all else it is necessary to do the work among the people in order that they understand, support and defend this Provisional Government. If not, all will fall at the first blows of the state."

There are limitations to this perspective. I would hope that the spirit of class struggle of the Chiapas revolt would spread. And it seems to have indeed changed the political atmosphere and encouraged the class struggle to break out. Yet, I don't think the Chiapas revolt can just be spread. For one, in Chiapas the poor peasantry that is being wiped out also suffers extreme discrimination and oppression as indigenous communities. Thus, the revolt there has particular features. As well, a peasant revolt alone can not break capitalist rule in Mexico. After all, Mexico is now a mainly urban country.

As well, the issue of supporting the Chiapas revolt against the repression of the government is of great importance. There have already been a series of demonstrations in Mexico City and other places. I understand that there have also been efforts to get supplies into the Lacondan forest and to block the government troops. This is an important fight that a movement must take up if it is to be revolutionary. And the stand towards this teaches many valuable lessons as to where various classes and parties stand.

I don't think a general revolutionary movement will break out or be built around the issue of supporting the Chiapas revolt. Yet I think this fight has to be seen as an important issue but also as one of a number of issues that must be taken up in order to build a revolutionary movement in Mexico. I don't think that this issue alone will spark a general revolutionary movement.

El Machete and the Working Class Movement

El Machete does not speak heavily of the working class movement. There has not been a vigorous working class movement for several years in Mexico. (The Ruta 100 struggle may reflect that this situation is changing.) However, such a movement is obviously important. Mexico is no longer a majority peasant country. Furthermore, as evidenced by the peasant revolts 1910-1921, the peasantry can not expect the bourgeoisie to fulfill its demands. There needs to be a working class revolt and a close unity of the working class and poor peasantry. One of the severe weaknesses of the present movement is that the working class is not active.

There may be more than one reason why *El Machete* does not talk a lot about the working class movement. It may be in part because they are focused heavily on the current movement and how to develop it. And at present the working class movement is at a low level. As well, they may have some perspective that a poor peasant revolt under revolutionary leadership could alone defeat the rule of capital in Mexico.

When it does talk about the working class struggle, it talks about the needed split with the PRD and the need for independent worker's organizations and unions.

For instance this is how they discuss two demonstrations in Mexico City, "In the Federal District Mexico City) two important marches were held in October: on October 2 in remembrance of the events of '68, and a popular and worker demonstration on October 14, convened by the Co-ordination Nacional de Organizaciones Sociales Independientes (CNOSI)". ... "The demonstration of Oct 2 was convened

by the CEU and the presidency of the CND. The second by the CNPI, UCEZ, MPI, PPFV, CLETA, y CONATIMSS.

"In the first the central point was the defense of the vote and the support of Cuauhtemoc Cardenas; in the second the demands were those most heartfelt to the workers (against the pact and the salary cap. For the taking of land and against the latifundistas) and support to the EZLN." (Oct 23, 1994 "Two Different Marches")

Radical Democracy and Socialism

Furthermore, I see a series of weaknesses in their descriptions of what they are fighting for. They do sometimes talk about establishing socialism and defeating capital. But where I have seen it described, it seems to be radical democracy. In the article "Our America" they describe somewhat what they are fighting for:

"The electoral political alternatives perceive democracy in the same sense as that published by the oligarchies. The impulse for direct and daily democracy expresses itself in a new form of governing in the spaces of the social organizations, the territorial confines and in stimulating the participation of the population in the affairs which concern them is missing. This permits us to assert that the alternatives not only need to be proposed, they must be built in a permanent manner. "

"In this sense one thing is the democracy of the leading elite and another very different of the social bases, which nearly doesn't participate in definitions. " (November 20, 1994, "Our America")

There is also a signed article by Enrique Gonzalez Ruiz (he writes frequently with signed articles and I do not know whether he is directly part of

El Machete). After denouncing the 1917 Constitution, he says: "For this, it is necessary to rescue the idea of popular sovereignty, which includes representation but doesn't exhaust itself in that. The vote is not a blank check which the person voted for fills in however he feels like, but a mandate subject to the precise conditions and above all, revocable.

"1. The popular action in order to denounce whatever corrupt official.

"This implies to take the monopoly of penal action from the Public Ministry, which entrusts to the government's hands the prosecution of crimes and ends frequently in complicity and ruptures."

The article then goes on to discuss a series of other democratic measures of this sort. (Jan. 18, 1995, "About the New Constitution")

The discussion of what I consider to be radical democratic measures in their press, to me coincides with their weak conception of what socialism and communism is.

For instance, they carry an ad in the Nov 20, 1994 issue that the defense of Cuba should be linked to the defense of socialism. "It doesn't serve anything to have generic solidarity which only deflects attention from the main task of the workers: **destroy capitalism and construct a society without classes.**" They seem to hold that Cuba is not socialist but is standing on the road towards socialism.

I think Cuba should be defended against the maneuvers of U.S. imperialism. But I think it is far from the road of socialism. In an earlier period Cuba linked its economy closely with that of the Soviet Union. Cuba really had no choice - since it seemed that the U.S.-Soviet rivalry gave the opening to remain independent of the U.S. for a period. The Cuban regime carried out a series of

reforms vs. the Batista regime. And because of this it has a lot of popular support. But this is a state capitalist economy. Today, the dollar has been legalized. Western investment is there. Furthermore, a look at their foreign policy over the years revealed that they did not stand with the most radical section of the left but with the reformists.

We have a lot of experience with this in the U.S. Those forces which are the most forceful in promoting Cuban "socialism" are also frequently the most forceful in working to maintain the political movement under the domination of the left-wing of the Democratic Party, the trade union bureaucracy and other such forces. I think that not being clear about Cuban "socialist" politics tends to stand against *El Machete's* desires to build an independent revolutionary movement.

And the fact that *El Machete* considers this regime to be on the road to socialism, to me, manifests a very weak idea of what socialism is.

There are further issues with their conceptions of socialism and communism.

The Dec. 16, 1994, issue starts reprinting the Communist Manifesto. But in their explanation of why they are printing the Communist Manifesto they say:

"It is said that we live in a democratic country; nevertheless for many communities of the country it is enough for someone to accuse you of being Zapatista or communist in order to justify repression."

"What is it to be Zapatista? Why does Salinas call it Zapatista? Is it bad to follow the ideals of Zapata? To be communist signifies following the ideas of communism. There are peasants that say they fight against communism but they practice it in their communities since they work the land in common, they defend the com-

munal property against the privatizations, the Salinists, etc. There are some indications here that they equate communism with communal forms which exist among the peasantry in Mexico. I think there is discussion among them that part of socialism may be built out of the peasant "non-capitalist" communal forms and/or some of the historical indigenous forms. While Marx himself did talk of socialism utilizing some type of this form, I think that this doesn't apply today. Or, if it does, it would be on a very small scale. The indigenous communal forms probably only still exist in some parts of central and Southern Mexico. Straight-up, large-scale capitalist agriculture is throwing the peasantry off the land. The ejidos (which are often farmed as individual plots) and communal forms are very marginal compared to large scale agriculture.

So, while it seems to me that *El Machete* talks about socialism, it doesn't make a clear distinction between socialism and radical peasant democracy. It seems to me that this is a key weakness that they have.

Obviously, one key question facing the Mexican left is to oppose the suppression of the radical left and to oppose that the left become a part of the "democratization" schemes of the bourgeoisie. On this question, *El Machete* has some consciousness. I also think that another key question facing the Mexican revolutionary movement is the development of the working class struggle and grasping the distinction between radical peasant politics and socialism. On this *El Machete* doesn't seem to be so conscious.

I think Oleg's article in CWV No. 5 was more glowing than was warranted. The Editorial Guide of CWVTJ No. 6 stated: "This ad was not meant as an endorsement of *El Machete* as a Marxist-Leninist orga-

nization.” If the original ad gave that impression, that was wrong. I don’t think that *El Machete* should be promoted as more than what it is. However, in the American left one usually only hears of the PRD dominated left in Mexico, and occasionally about Trotskyist schemes. The political aims promoted are usually some form of going back to previous policies of the PRI – possibly with the addition of more rights for the indigenous. I think the left needs to know that this is not the only politics in Mexico. Thus it should know that *El Machete* exists and what it represents. As part of supporting the struggle in Mexico, I think it is important to grasp the strengths and weaknesses of this trend.

I find it encouraging that the class struggle in Mexico is developing. I find it encouraging that there seems to be a split developing in the political movement both against the PRI domination of the official mass organizations and also against the politics of the PRD.

I hope that *El Machete*’s close involvement in the mass movement along with their opposition to the PRD, their critique of EZLN, their awareness of having to come to terms with the legacy of previous movements, etc., will lead them to a deeper analysis of how to move forward in the current political situation in Mexico.

I hope that this article will assist us to better understand issues that are facing the development of a revolutionary movement in Mexico



More on El Machete

CWV Editorial Note:

The November 12, 1994 issue of *El Machete* printed a letter from Guillermo of L.A. about Proposition

187. This same letter appeared in the journal *Turning the Tide* as an article titled “Genocide Against Mexicans” under the name of the MLN (Movimiento de Liberacion Nacional Mexicano).

The MLN is an organization which does not advocate a proletarian perspective, but rather a nationalist one. Among other things, it advocates against building a united proletarian organization to develop and lead the class struggle in the United States. Rather, they advocate splitting the proletariat up into a series of nationality organizations, an African-American organization, Mexican nationality organization, Puerto Rican nationality organization, etc.

Furthermore, they advocate the idea that the struggle facing the Mexican nationality workers is a national liberation struggle in and for the section of the country that was stolen from Mexico in the war of 1846-48 and other annexations.

We think this standpoint is wrong, has no basis in the struggles that are being waged by the masses, and substitutes a nationalist appeal for organizing the class struggle. We think it is greatly mistaken and leads nowhere.

Julie noted in her article that “*El Machete* calls for a united front of the radical left” and that it seems to have the tactic “that *El Machete* can become an organ for the radical left in general.” Probably related to this plan, *El Machete* prints articles and letters from a number of organizations in Mexico and some in the U.S.

El Machete has not criticized this letter of Guillermo’s (MLN). As well, they have published other materials from the MLN. Considering that *El Machete* prints from a number of different organizations, it is hard to know if *El Machete* agrees with the perspective of the MLN, is reprinting from an organization that they con-

sider to be part of the radical or independent left, or what.

At best, this is an illustration of what Julie pointed out in her article in regards to *El Machete*’s tactic of uniting the independent left. The article states: “There are certainly a lot of inherent difficulties in building an independent political movement out of the more independent and radical left in Mexico. Many of these organizations have thousands of worker and peasant members – so that would seem to be in favor of the possibility of building a mass-based independent movement. But these organizations themselves have a series of divergent views. There seem to be inherent difficulties in developing revolutionary bearings while carrying out this tactic.”

We are reprinting NC’s comments on Guillermo’s letter. He makes a number of well-taken points .



Con El Machete tenemos muchas problemas!

by NC, L.A.

I am studying the *El Machete* (EM) of 11/12 and we see that these “Marxists” have some big problems.

Usually, nationalists have a smattering of knowledge about the geographic areas they wish to create nations out of. I am not sure the EM group really understands much about the class and social development of the US southwest, at least since the Mexican War of 1846-48 and probably even before that date as well.

To try to deal with the struggle against racist and national oppression in the southwest areas without any comprehension of the change and developments in the combined

Cárdenas and the EZLN

[article translated from *El Machete*, Jan. 15, 1995]

There is much discussion about the reason the EZLN insists in proposing Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas to head the diverse initiatives for forming fronts which would glue together the struggle of the worker, peasant and popular sectors at the national level.

There are various interpretations with respect to this. Some assert that the Zapatistas are responding to the proposals of the reformists; others [say] that there is poor information and that due to their isolation they

have let themselves take as "advisors" those that deceive them into believing that Cuauhtemoc represents the force of the six million Mexicans who voted for him.

However, it is possible to have other explanations. It is sufficient to analyze the political action of the Zapatistas in order to confirm that they are applying their political method, where, far from disqualifying a political force, they use it to try to make it commit itself and that in its actions it defines itself.

Independent of the differences which we have with Cuauhtemocism, it is true that it rep-

resents an important force at the current moment. Because of this the Zapatistas are forcing it to define itself.

This is not to say that the Zapatistas are anxiously waiting for Cuauhtemoc as an individual to support them; they are simply taking steps so that in case this support is given, an alliance would be established, and in the opposite case, they could invite the Cardenista base to act in spite of the influence of their chief.

The Zapatistas have already done this with political parties of the "left" which participated in the electoral farce. Instead of using the sim-

NC on El Machete, cont. from p.22 social/economic environment is like trying to maneuver the Atlantic Ocean in a tug-boat without knowledge of the stars or a compass!

The major (EM) problem is there is not much understanding of the industrial development and divisions into social class of most all ethnic groupings here. To talk about "Mexicanos" being all one "nation" or "peoples" here is to camouflage the exploitation of the vast majority of these people by the capitalist class. Now the most dominant and mighty segment of this group is "American-Anglo", dare I say "gringo" to be sure. But a growing segment of the bigger exploiters (still a minority) are Latino, Black and Asian as well. Also, a very sizeable petty-bourgeois stratum -- both in class basis and political outlook has arisen here in California in the last 40 years or so from oppressed nationality groups.

The EM article on fighting #187 racism was not dealing honestly even with the reality of the formal vote on #187 (albeit much hysteria stirred up by a huge corporate-led mass media offensive of vicious chau-

vinism for two years or so at least). Caucasians voted 63-37 for, Blacks were 52-48 against, Latinos were 75-25 against, and Asians about 50-50 even split. I don't have a class breakdown yet, but will try to get one. But also, it should be remembered that LESS than 50% of those eligible to vote even voted -- and of these, the vast majority were workers of ALL nationalities.

The class interests and consciousness (or lack of it) is not even taken into account by the so-called Marxists of *El Machete*. Their analysis of the tactics border (no pun) on the suicidal, not much different than the lumpenloving-line one gets from MIM Notes or kindred groups. The Mexicanos and Chicanos here definitely have major class stratifications along the line and history of capitalist industrial development here in the last century and a half. EM writers should visit areas like Azusa, Cerritos, Arcadia, Costa Mesa, Altadena, Whittier, etc. They will find a quite numerous petty-bourgeois and even bourgeois sectors of native Latinos who have been and are most loyal, as "loyal" as many a "gringo" politically

and ideologically to US capitalism and the flag it stands for! To imply the same interest and struggle to the Latinos in these areas, say compared to Bell, Huntington Park, East LA, Pico Union, etc., which have a near majority *de facto* impoverished and super-exploited workers is a cruel joke.

Finally, I am trying to study more on this history and struggle. I am finding out already that when the US capitalists stole the Mexican territory here via warfare in 1846-48, they were even before this and during, cutting deals with the "hacendados" and "latifundistas," the Latino elite here, to pave the way for the eventual US takeover, and further accelerated plunder of the workers and poor with racist super-exploitation an added component, with some "privileges" thrown down to the "loyal" landowners and businesspeople. Of course, Native Americans, Indians, were considered here "fair game".

I will have discussions with LAWV comrades tomorrow -- more on this soon from these comrades.

Editorial *El Machete* #58, March 23, 1995

The economic crises, the process of reaccommodation of the bourgeois forces (including the contradictions inside the PRI and the changing of the guard for which the PAN is preparing), the generalized discontent among the masses and the almost imminent explosion of the war, obliges us to be clearer in our analysis. Only in this way can we propose the implementation of actions which really can contribute to the radical transformation of the society.

In this context, it is important to make clear who are our allies, and who are our enemies, because, when

the bourgeoisie sees that part of its apparatus for control no longer works, it simply changes it, while maintaining the structure which allows it to continue exploiting the workers.

For this reason, the organizations of industrialists, chambers of commerce, etc., in which the big bourgeoisie is organized, are criticizing Ernesto Zedillo's plans and some are proclaiming the need for change. But, what kind of changes? It is clear that they are only fighting about changing some people, or perhaps they might allow the organisms most identified by the masses as their executioners to

fall, but they sharply oppose any radical change in the rules of the system itself.

We toilers must be clear that in order to put an end to exploitation and oppression, it is not enough to change masters. Getting rid of Zedillo, to put Castillo Peraza of the PAN or Cuahutemoc Cardenas of the PRD in place, isn't worth anything. This would not resolve the roots of the problem. It's necessary to understand that these leaders belong to a system (capitalist) whose sustenance comes from the exploitation of the labor force for the
continued, p. 25

EZLN and Cardenas, cont. from p. 23
plest form of dismissing the elections as a tactical method of struggle and its participants as part of this farce, they called for the people themselves to come to understand for themselves what this meant. In the particular case of Chiapas they went beyond that to utilize the bourgeois electoral circus in order to form a government in rebellion and to accumulate forces to link the armed movement with the action of the social organizations of that entity.

This Zapatista action forced various forces within the electoral parties to define themselves. Where did this leave Talamontes and his petulant declarations of the past year which went from criticizing the EZLN to naming himself the presidential candidate of Zapatismo? And what is there to say about the ridiculous positions of the leaders of the PPS who asserted that the upsurge of the EZLN was part of an imperialist trick? The top leadership of the PT has preferred to remain quiet in the face of questioning by their base who are finding the "marriage" that they (the leaders) have with Priismo. But the most interesting thing has occurred in the PRD: although its leaders are trying to

hide it, two positions are coming into profile — one headed by Porfirio Muñoz Ledo who proposes making agreement as the method not to be left out of the distribution of political posts and the other headed by Cuahutemoc Cárdenas.

However, Cuahutemoc persists in taking a middle position and the Zapatistas have forced him to make clear to the people which side he wants to be with: either with a radical position like that which is going to be necessary in the medium run, or moving himself in the beam of light trying to remain on good terms with God and with the devil.

Above all this Cuahutemoc has already begun to show his bad side, since, far from committing himself, he has already distanced himself from the EZLN in asserting that no one is going to say what he has to do (this in reference to the call that the EZLN is making to him to lead the Movement of National Liberation). Previously neither did he define his position positively about heading the Broad Oppositional Front and limited himself to giving evasions and to suggest that the best thing would be to call for the formation of a Broad Front for Peace.

From this perspective the Zapatistas are not so mistaken, except that they are accumulating forces so that at the moment in which the contradictions intensify (probably when the war breaks out) they would have the authority to call for the radicalization of the bases of the reformist parties and of the sectors where Cuahutemoc Cárdenas has influence.

However, it appears to us that the Zapatistas have not been clear in respect to the role which the independent social organizations and in general the left movement which is not in the reformist trenches should play. Instead of making clear statements on the role that they believe that these forces should play, they have played the politics of "riddle" where one day they encourage the participation of these forces and the next they hold it back. This is creating a lot of confusion which must be cleared up before it becomes too late; as is well understood by the "compas" of the EZLN who work in military terrain: **order and counterorder (without either explanation or self-criticism) are equal to disorder.**

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Drivers' Union in Mexico under Attack

By *El Machete* Newspaper - Chicago
fax 312-542-0032
Messages: 312-490-6429

We received the following letter via fax. We translated it and are disseminating it with the hope of assisting the companeros of SUTAU-100. SUTAU-100 is the trade union representing the workers of the Route 100 bus company. It has more than 12,000 members and is one of the most militant and progressive of the independent unions in Mexico. Its membership has long been active in the mass movement in Mexico, and is well known for providing transportation for shanty town residents and campesinos coming in from the outskirts of the capital city.

The Ruta-100 Bus Company

mainly served the poor shanty towns and colonias of the outskirts of Mexico City. It has heavily subsidized by the Mexican Government and technically cannot be declared bankrupt. The PRI government shut down the company in order to attack the union organization and as part of the increasing repression against progressive and independent organizations.

As has happened with other recent political arrests of members of organizations fighting for social justice, the government has accused the union of providing material support to the EZLN. The total bail for the SUTAU-100 members and advisor was set at TEN million dollars (60 million new pesos)! Obviously, the government is out to destroy this union and to terrorize the rest of the

independent unions and organizations.

The Mexican government is running scared as the Mexican workers, peasants, students and even sections of middle-class professionals are becoming more and more angry over the broken promises and corruption of the PRI. Part of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) included promises from the PRI to raise the wages of the Mexican workers. Instead, the workers see their purchasing power cut by 30-50%, and their living conditions worsening daily. The independent (non-government) unions are at the forefront of the fight to defend the workers from this attack.

With the April 20th deadline for a peace agreement in Chiapas com-

continued next page

Editorial, cont. from p. 24

benefit of the owners of the money, and the means of production (machines, lands, property, etc.). We agree with the tactical actions of the Zapatistas when they propose to struggle against the state party. Of course, this is a point of unity for many Mexicans; *El Machete* has maintained this line for various years. We have even been criticized by companeros with a vision (from our point of view) orthodox, who catalogue us as populists because we dedicate a large part of our articles to the denunciation of Salinismo and in general, of Priismo. We think that by doing this, we contributed to changing, for many workers, the false image that the PRI was a party which benefited the country. Only those who carry out their politics far from the people, can negate that just a few years ago, millions of toilers really did believe in Priismo.

However, this ant's work, to which many social fighters have

contributed, has diluted this image and shown the PRI to be what it is, the State Party, enemy of the people. But, this is not enough. The new political conditions oblige us to look further ahead, and although it is correct to take as point of unity the tactic of fighting against Priismo, this signifies that we can fall into the error of taking the mass struggle only as far as a change of masters.

We believe that the new political conditions oblige us to focus our weapons against those who maneuver the politicians, against the true creators of the crises, against the vertebrae of the capitalist neoliberal system, against the national and international bourgeoisie.

CHARRO, GOBIERNO y PATRON/SON EL MISMO..LADRON. (Trade Union Bureaucrat, government and Boss are the same....robbers).. is a slogan that sectors of the masses shout at marches, together with this slogan, LUCHA LUCHA LUCHA/ NO DEJES DE LUCAR/ POR UN

GOBIERNO (INDIO) /OBRERO, CAMPESINO y POPULAR {Struggle Struggle Struggle, Don't Stop Struggling for an (Indian) Worker, Peasant and Popular Government}. These slogans need to be recaptured in all their magnitude, and even though we agreed that it's indispensable to shove Priismo aside, it is necessary that, through their actions, the people start creating popular power which would impede the bourgeoisie from riding on the backs of the workers in order to only change their apparatus.

For these reasons, beginning with this issue (with which we celebrate our fifth anniversary), *El Machete* will have this central orientation: to make a contribution, so that the toilers identify those who are their friends and also those who are disguised as lambs, but whose capitalist fangs are very well sharpened.

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Mexico City, A march lead by SUTAUR-100.

ing up, the situation in Mexico is tense. On April 10 (the 75th anniversary of the assassination of Emiliano Zapata), there was a demonstration of at least 50,000 people supporting the rebellion in Chiapas and the SUTAUR-100 workers. On April 11th, there was another mass demonstration of thousands of people. Our brothers and sisters in Mexico, from Chiapas to Mexico City, are looking towards all of us for solidarity and support. Please pass this information on and do what you can to support the SUTAUR-100 workers. It is likely that the SUTAUR-100 offices have been closed by now. However, messages can be sent to them through the offices of CLETA in Mexico City (voice and fax 5-92-09-19). You can also contact us at the numbers listed above for more information.

Thank you.

FROM SUTAUR-100

To our fraternal unions and organizations in the United States: I, Venancio Unico de Trabajadores de Autotransportes Urbanos de Pasajeros Ruta-100 (Union of Urban Passenger Transportation R-100), am directing this letter to you in order to inform you of the following:

On Saturday, April 8, at 2 A.M., we workers were very surprised when we presented ourselves for work as usual and found ourselves blocked (from entering) by authorities, including repressive forces of several police organizations (*granaderos y policia preventativos*) who argued that the Empresa R-100 bus company was declared to be bankrupt, thus breaking the management-labor relationship and the collective bargaining contract.

We denounce this situation;

the company is a decentralized business, government subsidized because of its social benefit. Furthermore, the legal process was not followed for a bankruptcy declaration in that the union representation was never notified. Immediately (after this), a witch hunt began and three members of our Executive Committee and two rank and file members were detained. Added to this, our bank accounts, property of the union, were arbitrarily frozen, with the aim of making any movement of the union organization impossible.

On April 9, our union legal advisor, Ricardo Barco Lopez, was detained in a show of violence and power. The authorities have set bail at an exaggerated and unconstitutional amount.

For this reason, we fraternally ask for your physical, moral and especially economic solidarity, in the form of loans until our economic situ-

On EL MACHETE

By Joseph Green, Detroit
12-21-94

Dear comrades,

Issue #5 of the CWV Theoretical Journal has recently appeared. Each issue of the CWV TJ has taken on something of a distinct character. This time it is notable that with topical issues such as Haiti and Palestine. Here in Detroit we are excited to distribute the journal.

Since the CWV TJ reflects real ongoing life, it's natural that it would reflect different conceptions of things as well. In this case, I want to point to the announcement on the back page concerning distribution of the Mexican journal *El Machete*. This is in effect the first international endorsement by our trend, and it also

is relevant to an ongoing mass struggle—the ongoing revolt in Chiapas, which is again flaring up. It is worthwhile to pay some attention to this endorsement. Who we endorse, and why, and on what basis, is important.

The announcement endorsing it was signed by Oleg, and speaks on behalf of the CWV group. So it represents not just another opinion, but a view of the CWV group. While I am skeptical about the endorsement of *El Machete*, I support the right of the CWV group to make and express its own endorsements. But this is also a matter of interest to the minority as a whole, and the journal is being supported widely because it aims to speak for the minority. So it also is right for all comrades to discuss the issues raised by such an endorsement, and

whether it is helpful or premature or a political mistake.

The first thing that strikes the eye is how little the announcement says about *El Machete*. It talks about the graphic on the masthead, and the slogan, and that *El Machete* is fighting against Cardenas' reformist PRD inside the Democratic National Convention (Convencion Nacional Democratica) created at the call of the Zapatistas (EZLN). I do not know whether this means that *El Machete* wants to expel the PRD, or to work with it on a "united front" basis, or to win it to armed struggle, or simply to oppose individual stands of the PRD (such as its desire to gag or expel the "ultras"). The article doesn't say. As well, it says that *El Machete* carries news of the struggle and of various
continued, p. 28

Ruta-100, cont. from p. 26

ation is normalized, in the amount which you consider to be in agreement with your situation.

Hoping for a favorable, fraternal resolution (to this request).
"FOR THE ORGANIZATION AND INDEPENDENCE OF THE WORKERS!"

Venancio Felipe Gil Sanchez
General Secretary, SUTAU-100

DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE ABOVE

1. The government is using policemen as scabs to drive buses. The fare is free, but they don't have enough buses. Besides using some police as drivers, police cars are escorting the buses.

2. An event that may or may not

have anything to do with this overall attack, the Secretary of Transport and Roads of the Federal District died of two gunshots to the chest two days after ordering the closure of Ruta-100. The police claim to have proved that this death was a suicide.

3. (April 21, 1995) There was a confrontation at two of the bus garages between some 400 drivers and their supporters who were trying to stop the scab buses and anti-riot police. Twenty protestors were arrested and 22 were injured (including two newspaper photographers).

4. The government put out a leaflet saying that the Ruta-200 workers made up to 4,500 new pesos. The union put out a leaflet pointing out the government lies. Many workers made between 600 and 1,200 new pesos a month. The union also charged that the closing of Ruta-100 benefits a group of politically-connected entrepreneurs, the group Altacomulco.

5. On April 22, a Mexican news-

paper announced that a magistrate of the Federal District had resigned his post. He said he received death threats because he had refused to issue order of apprehension against leaders of Ruta-100. He felt there was insufficient evidence. He said he was resigning because of pressures from the president of the Supreme Court of Justice.

6. On April 24, at least 10,000 Ruta-100 workers and their supporters marched on the Zocalo.

7. On May 1, a large militant May Day march took place in Mexico City. The PRI cancelled the "official" May Day parade because of fears that the workers might get out of hand. The "unofficial" march was thus the only one this year. The Ruta-100 workers were a big and militant part of this march. Marchers clashed with police, threw all sorts of "objects" at the Presidential Palace, and painted up the doors with slogans. ◊

organizations in Mexico. The article concludes that "The CWV is distributing *El Machete* because it gives a more left-wing revolutionary perspective than any other paper we have seen from Mexico."

It seems to me that this article actually doesn't say what trend *El Machete* is. It is to the left of the PRD and it flies the hammer and sickle and it's part of the left-wing popular movement, that's all.

From what I have been told, it seems this announcement springs from the fact that Rene demanded an endorsement of *El Machete* in this issue of the CWV TJ. He was told that he could write an article giving his views on this and related issues, but he wouldn't do it. And he was offended that his assessment of *El Machete*—a verbal one at that—should not just be accepted on his word. So Oleg instead of Rene wrote this article. Meanwhile, the last I heard, Rene separated himself from the journal because it failed to carry the type endorsement he wanted of *El Machete*.

It seems to me that Rene's insistence on *El Machete* being endorsed, and endorsed without having a clear idea of its trend, and his withdrawal from the journal directly follow from what he said at the recent minority meeting. He was skeptical of anti-revisionism. He held that our work of critical analysis was religious, and implied how could we, such a small number, have the arrogance to criticize big struggles and mass movements. He stated that the struggle inside the National Democratic Convention was an anti-revisionist struggle, and a far greater one than what we regarded as anti-revisionism. And he refused the invitation to provide material on this struggle. We are to take it on his word. In effect, why should we have to know the content?

Now *El Machete* has been

endorsed. I don't think that giving in to the ultimatums of Rene is helpful to his learning communist methods of organization, nor to the political integrity of the minority. Moreover, although some Chicago comrades have examined some issues of *El Machete*, we apparently don't yet know what *El Machete* is, so this endorsement is a stab in the dark. It seems to me that this manner of endorsing *El Machete* goes against having articles with analysis on Mexico, the Zapatistas, and the issues in the Mexican movement. It implies that we are just to follow in the wake of the mass struggles. It would be excellent to have articles on Mexico and the Chiapas revolt and the stands of the Zapatistas and the left in the CWV TJ, if there are comrades who have done the research and can prepare useful material. But it goes against this when first there is an endorsement, which says in effect that this analysis is not needed to make a judgement about Mexico. It relegates this analysis to a mere frill, as if to say: "let those who wish waste time on political analysis, but the real issue is associating oneself with the struggle as it is."

I have not been doing the research about Mexico. I assumed that others—excited and doing agitation about Chiapas—were doing it, and I had confidence that they would present material on it. I now have some doubt that this research is being done. And it looks doubtful whether it will be done unless questions are raised which show that analysis is needed, and that it is not sufficient to just say that something just sort of looks revolutionary. So I am going to stick my neck out, despite my lack of detailed work on Mexico, and suggest one possibility about what the situation with the Zapatistas and the Democratic National Convention might be. This possibility would suggest that there are serious reasons why not to

endorse an organization without knowing its trend. Our proletarian internationalist duty to the Mexico workers and toilers is not the same as that of an ordinary solidarity group or a left columnist in some journal. It requires our supporting proletarian reorganization: in Mexico as well as elsewhere. Indeed, if anti-revisionist communism is not desirable or needed in Mexico for the revolution, if left-wing EZLNism is really what is needed, then anti-revisionism is not needed elsewhere either.

To begin with, the attitude to and analysis of the Zapatistas seems to me to be central to the endorsement of *El Machete*. *El Machete* is endorsed as sort of a revolutionary left wing of the Zapatistas. It works in the national convention, they called for, but opposes in some way the reformist PRD of Cardenas. So I will start by looking at the EZLN (Zapatistas). I will not be concerned here with the particular words of the EZLN and various left groups, but with the general plan which their actions seems to indicate. Due to my lack of much knowledge, I may be wrong on one individual assessment after another. But I hope I at least point to some sore points and inspire others to further analysis of what's going on in Mexico and what is the path for the Mexican proletariat.

But what happens if we can't endorse many parts of the strategy and views of the EZLN leaders? Does facing this openly mean undermining this heroic struggle? The Chiapas revolt was and is inspiring to progressive people around the world. It justly has the support of Mexican activists. But in my view such support doesn't preclude a realistic assessment of the forces in this revolt, their strategy and views, and of their class basis. In fact, in my view, real support for the

Chiapas toilers requires such a critical standpoint. They don't need honeyed words—they need class allies who have an independent idea of what is needed in their own struggle.

Well, the movement in the Mexican state of Chiapas goes back a number of years, as was made clear on the video shown at the May Day meeting in Chicago earlier this year. The peasants and indigenous peoples in Chiapas suffered from incredible oppression, even more so than the toilers as a whole in Mexico. They were not going to let themselves be stamped into the ground, but have formed a powerful movement.

They realized that they themselves could not overthrow the Mexican establishment, and this establishment was not likely to even give them reforms. Therefore they are intensely interested in whether there are other forces in Mexico to ally with or form a movement with.

They do not look to the Mexican proletariat. By this I do not mean that they don't talk about the workers in the way other leftists do. But they don't see the Mexican proletariat rising up in strong independent organizations. While the left looks much bigger in Mexico than its presently cadaverous pallor in the U.S., in fact the situation is similar in many ways. The proletariat has not broken through PRI (the ruling party's) unionism and does not rally en masse around a party of its own. If it had, the EZLN, which probably has many rural and village handicraftspeople and workers, might gravitate around it. But the class nature of the EZLN is such that it won't fight for such a reorganization of the proletariat by itself. It is a toilers' movement, not a proletarian movement. And its leaders come from the general left and reflect certain trends in it.

I doubt that they see the Mexican radical left (referring here to the

organizations to the left of PRI and outside Cardenas' reformist PRD) as able to overthrow the establishment either. And in fact, this left has been unable to arouse the proletariat and itself faces a severe crisis, just as the left elsewhere does.

But they did see that the PRI was tottering. The timing of their rebellion may well have been connected with expectations about a collapse of PRI-rule. In fact, a political crisis is deepening in Mexico, even if the PRI survived the election. The fact that PRI survived doesn't mean that the EZLN's expectations were absurd. And the Chiapas revolt helps deepen the political crisis.

But the EZLN's expectations say something about their strategy. If they were counting on a break-up of PRI, but don't see the proletariat or the radical left as the decisive forces, it has some implications. First of all, it helps explain their emphasis on democratization as their goal. And secondly, it means they were looking towards the Cardenas' PRD or other PRI splits. This was not just a side point of an otherwise revolutionary strategy, but a central feature of their views.

The tyranny of PRI rule has clamped down on politics and has to be overcome. But democratization of Mexico will not usher in a utopia. The reformist left will gain more power, probably allied with some PRI factions, but so likely will the right-wing PAN also with some allied PRI splinters. The most likely outcome — if both sides maintain support—is some sort of coalition or accommodation of both major bourgeois fractions. In the absence of the proletariat having an independent voice (the traditional left opposition to PRI having failed this test), there is hardly any other possibility. The proletariat will have to go through an intense period of development during this democratization to

become a real power.

But moreover, this strategy means that the EZLN will be continually looking towards Cardenas' PRD or other PRI split-offs. It won't merge with them, because it would be destroyed if it agreed to PRD prescriptions. The PRI government is currently not giving the EZLN even the most elementary concessions and is presenting it with the choice of capitulate or fight. The EZLN cannot respond to this according to PRD methods. But it is not an accident that they called a convention that includes pro-PRD forces, and it is not a minor blemish. It's an illustration of their class position.

Meanwhile the radical left which is critical of the PRD is not strong enough to offer the EZLN an alternative for transforming Mexico. Rather, most of them probably want to gain strength from the EZLN. In effect, they want to ride EZLN rather than offering EZLN a horse. (Moreover, I suspect that the reality is a bit different from the sounds of the revolutionary rhetoric in the radical left. The Mexican left was put in crisis by the issue of how to deal with PRD. And the trotskyist framework is such that groups can denounce reformism in the most militant phrases in one breath and unite in the next, if only it's not a "popular front" but a "united front" or some variant of their idea of "military but not political support".) It's hard not to believe that thoughtful EZLN leaders aren't well aware of the general position of the radical left. They also need support for their armed struggle and militant tactics, and the pro-PRD forces aren't going to give it to them. So the present dual nature of the Democratic National Convention.

The idea that this simply represents the narrowness of EZLN, that one has to play down its various stands because what does one expect from a force with that class basis, etc., is

profoundly mistaken. Support for a just struggle doesn't mean glossing over the class nature of the forces involved, but instead bringing to the fore this class nature. Ultimately real support for the Chiapas toilers demands requires reorganizing the proletarian movement in Mexico. This requires clarity, clarity, clarity about the different forces, and not sentimental phrases about extending the EZLN struggle but purged of its narrowness. The idea that the Zapatista armed struggle can simply be extended all over Mexico—if only local narrowness is overcome—is phrasemongering. And the same idea expressed more vaguely, leaving out the tactics, but throwing in lots of words about revolution, is not any better. Some variant of this idea of simply overcoming the EZLN's narrowness seems to be associated with Rafael's approach to the matter and some CWV agitation. Yet the Zapatistas have their class nature which has to be taken seriously, and not just used as an excuse for the EZLN's stands. They are a toilers movement, which the working class should seek to build as many links with as possible, but they are not going to solve the issue of proletarian reorganization.

The article on *El Machete* concentrates on the Democratic National Convention. Naturally this convention is important for seeing what the EZLN is and what the left is. But the task of revolutionary communists is not to get submerged in EZLN maneuvers. If one's viewpoint centers on the convention and its *internal fights*, it leads nowhere. The proletarian revolutionary stand in Mexico, a stand which doesn't rely on phrasemongering about revolution but actually prepares the way for revolution, requires finding the ways of bringing the proletariat to political life. This means, in part, being willing to go against traditional phrasemongering

and looking honestly and openly at what various forces in Mexico represent. It means taking inspiration from the Chiapas revolt—not in imitation of EZLN maneuvers, but to stand up for rebuilding a proletarian movement. Without that, solidarity ends up meaning little. I was at a meeting in Detroit on Nov. 18, when Alexander Cockburn spoke on "From Chiapas to Haiti: a hemisphere in crisis". I warrant everyone from Cockburn to the audience thought highly of the EZLN. But the audience and Cockburn was bogged down in the most incredible pessimism, and talking about this pessimism, and apologizing for talking about what's going on, because it sounded so pessimistic. It sounded like a rally of our own moribund "majority", if such could be conceived. They couldn't simply imitate Chiapas, and so it ultimately didn't inspire them. One has to be inspired to the tasks of proletarian reorganization to convert the desire for solidarity into action. One has to see something growing at the present—not in phrases, but in reality.

Well, what about *El Machete*? What did it put forward? Did it simply repeat traditional left phrases or is it fighting for proletarian reorganization? Is it bogged down in EZLN maneuvers, or does it have a broader perspective? I don't know. But the account in the announcement in CWV TJ #5 and Rene's account at the minority meeting are centered on the convention. If *El Machete* in fact put forward a revolutionary orientation, why doesn't the announcement describe it? And to simply say that *El Machete* is more revolutionary than others is no description. If the revolutionary stand simply amounted to opposing PRD's pacifism and give-up-the-struggle-ism, well, fine, but this is not sufficient to be endorsed as the proletarian alternative. And if *El Machete* put forward more, it appar-

ently was not understood.

Whatever *El Machete's* standpoint, Rene's discussion at the minority meeting and the announcement in the current CWV TJ didn't get beyond purified EZLNism. And a revolutionary stand can't mean simply redefining the Zapatista struggle as objectively more revolutionary than they themselves say and correcting their statements. Instead one must be able to face the fact that the proletariat will have a difficult road in the coming years, partially because it is not organized in face of increasing destitution and the growing political crisis. The proletariat should be inspired by the Chiapas revolt, but it can't get carried away with the particular forms of struggle—which doesn't generalize across Mexico—and it isn't revolutionary to predict great things unrelated to what the next steps of proletarian organizational actually are. The issue isn't how grandiose and revolutionary one sounds, but whether one prepares the proletariat for the next steps of class organization.

From this standpoint, I think the endorsement in the CWV TJ of *El Machete*, without a sufficient examination of its stand, was a mistake. I also think it is a mistake to substitute promotion of *El Machete* for providing materials on the struggle in Chiapas and on the political movement in Mexico.

The endorsement of *El Machete* is only a small part of CWV TJ #5. I am raising this question in this letter neither as an evaluation of the CWV TJ nor as denigration of the hard work of the CWV group that goes into producing this journal, but to discuss an issue that is important in itself. There is the issue of what it means to learn from and support the mass struggle in Chiapas. And there is the issue of our stand towards anti-

Announcing a new theoretical journal, *The Communist Voice*

Detroit Marxist-Leninist Study Group

1. The Detroit Marxist-Leninist Study Group will soon be publishing, with the cooperation and support of other comrades, a new journal. Below we outline the reasons behind our decision.

2. The Detroit Marxist-Leninist Study Group wanted to see the "minority" define itself as an organization. We called for a loose network, the only organizational form suitable for the present low level of ideological agreement. We wanted to see the "minority" define itself as a political trend not a fragment of the past, adopt a statement of purpose, and reorient its flagship publication to take up the present tasks.

But the Chicago Workers Voice group is unwilling to join. It has declared that its differences with the DMLSG—concerning anti-revisionism, the attitude to different political trends, MLP history, the historical role of various individuals, etc.—pre-

clude unity at present. Comrades in LA and Seattle have also pointed out that the existence of these differences among the "minority" preclude a general "minority" organization at this time. The differences include such basic questions as what is anti-revisionism, the attitude to the struggle against opportunism, and the role of theoretical work. There doesn't appear to be any possibility at present of a national organization embracing the former "minority".

3. There is also little chance that the CWV's journal, the **Chicago Workers Voice Theoretical Journal**, can continue to function as an informal central voice of the "minority" grouping. The CWV doesn't even see that at present we have reached a critical juncture. It is complacent before the pressing theoretical tasks, which are crucial for maintaining an anti-revisionist trend, analyzing today's world, and developing Marxism-Leninism as a live revolutionary theory. It is intolerant of dif-

ferences—for example, it failed to put forward the range of minority views on its endorsement of the journal *El Machete* in a timely way. And it is too self-absorbed, its imagination too constrained by the narrow concerns of a small circle, to deal with the needs of the rest of the "minority".

The CWV has embarked on the path of using CWVTJ as its exclusive voice, rather than as the chorus of the "minority". It is trying to create a rationale for this position by presenting CWV (as the successor of the former Chicago Branch of the MLP) as the hero of the last years of the late Marxist-Leninist Party, whose allegedly correct position was ignored by others. It upholds its mistaken criticism from several years back of basically correct *Workers Advocate* articles as the real fight against liquidationism, and this too helps blind it to the theoretical questions that face us today. At the same time it has a sectarian attitude to other comrades who were opposed to the develop-

Joseph on EM, cont. from p. 30
revisionism.

I doubt most CWV members considered the announcement in this way. I think they regarded it more as a practical issue, and that, by using a signed announcement, they could avoid the implications of an endorsement.

But Rene posed the issue of our overall orientation at the last minority meeting. And I think this question deserves to be taken seriously, and answered directly. Rene believed that the struggle in the Democratic National Convention was the big anti-revisionist struggle, and presumably we could learn what was needed about anti-revisionism by following *El Machete*. Such views are connected to Rene's attitude towards the CWV TJ, his demand for a

no-questions-asked endorsement of *El Machete*, and his withdrawal of support from the CWV TJ. I think this issue of the relation of anti-revisionism to the support of the Chiapas revolt has to be answered consciously and not evaded. And the implications of endorsing *El Machete* as the clearest revolutionary voice in Mexico also have to be considered. Rene's way of handling these issues seems to me to raise some big questions:

If we are going to restrict our appeal concerning Mexico to mainly the maneuvering of various groups around the EZLN, then what happened to the anti-revisionist tasks we are taking up? What happened to our determination that the proletariat should once again build up its class parties? Is anti-revisionism just a phrase which can be used to cover

over any movement or political trend that happens to grow big and militant? Are we to be carried away by the first mass force or mass rebellion which appears, and drop our insistence on critical analysis and independent proletarian action, and simply say—"oh, my, how revolutionary! And so many people are involved!"?

I hope not.

But if the endorsement of *El Machete* in the CWV TJ #5 results in a thoughtful discussion of these issues, then it will end up having served a useful purpose, whatever *El Machete* turns out to be.

Communist regards and season's greetings to everyone in the minority, Joseph



ment of liquidationism in the MLP.

4. Indeed, the CWV also refuses unity based on its grievances against various other comrades of the “minority”. Rather than seriously looking into the history of the MLP, it looks at outsiders with a

jaundiced eye no matter what the weight of evidence shows. Its view of history is that itself bears little responsibility for the past, but was just put upon by others. Instead of seriously examining the pluses and minuses of the MLP, as well as its own role in the final years of the MLP, it seeks to find mainly organizational reasons to explain why other comrades didn’t accept its views. And yet it bears the heritage of the Chicago branch, one of the powerful organizations of the MLP, which took full part in the conferences, congresses, and regional meetings of the MLP; and whose views were circulated in a timely fashion in the *Informational Bulletin* of the MLP, through the MLP sending Chicago branch members around the country to talk to other comrades, and through party conferences. And with respect to organizational questions, both at present and in the study of MLP history, the CWV is showing an inclination to anarchist phrasemongering.

5. These stands of the CWV signify the fragmentation of the “minority”. The former unity around the CWVTJ as chief “minority” journal was based on enthusiastic agreement about the need for the debate with the “majority”; the view that CWVTJ should be an open forum for all comrades; and the expectation that CWV, although formally free to do as it pleases, would informally show the same tact and consideration towards others that the elected editorial board of a national organization is supposed to show towards the organization’s members. None of these conditions are satisfied today.

The “minority”—which came together at the fifth and last Congress of the Marxist-Leninist Party—succeeded in continuing the debate which the leaders of the “majority” sought to silence. It brought news of the struggle to other activists here and abroad. It succeeded in bringing together a number of comrades, thus overcoming for a time the impulse to fragmentation given by the collapse of the MLP. It provided a platform for comrades to put forward political views and encouraged continued theoretical and political work.

But the “minority” never even succeeded in defining what it was—to the very end, it relied on the makeshift term “minority”. It never was able to overcome ideological fragmentation. And it never succeeded in developing any encompassing organization at all, relying solely on informal arrangements which it is not even possible to completely ascertain.

6. Under these conditions, the “minority” as a cohesive political grouping doesn’t exist any more.

The DMLSG will seek further clarification of the different stands of the different circles of the former “minority” grouping. And we will seek to maintain cooperation with all of the circles and individuals of the former “minority”, both those who agree with the DMLSG on various issues and those who are critical of us. But we will not subordinate our work to decisions taken without our consultation and consent. We would be happy if further discussion restores unity, and would at that time advocate journals responsible to a united organization as a whole. But we will not suspend our work while waiting for the outcome of future discussions.

7. In this situation, the DLMSG will publish its own theoretical journal, tentatively to be called the *Communist Voice*, to encourage theoretical and political work and to facilitate

closer relations with those who see the tasks of the movement as we do. The aim of this journal is to further the anti-revisionist trend which we seek to build. It will also publish materials and correspondence from comrades with other views, but lack of resources prevents us from making it into an open forum that would automatically accept all interesting contributions of whatever standpoint. The existence of other journals such as the CWVTJ will allow materials which we cannot publish to appear elsewhere.

8. The DMLSG will also adopt a new statement of purpose. We will start with one similar to that we proposed for the “minority” organization. But we will gradually work to sharpen it further. We will seek to unite with all those who agree with us on the main issues, while maintaining dialogue with other comrades.

9. The *Communist Voice* will come out frequently, perhaps monthly or every month and a half. It will aim to satisfy a number of different needs. It will carry theoretical articles and polemics. It will carry some controversies and different views—especially (but not exclusively) those from within the former “minority” circles. It will also welcome political articles, and reports on demonstrations, world developments, etc., brief materials as well as detailed ones. And it will carry additional parts of the “unpublished” research materials of the MLP.

It will also seek to encourage comrades to write in with views concerning the theoretical materials it carries. We are also considering having a section, possibly in different typeface to mark it as distinct, which carries rough materials: possibly some study group reports, informal discussions between comrades, and other materials presently carried only in e-mail. Its heart will be the theoretical materials, but it will carry a variety of materials.

Trends and sectarianism

To: Minority
From: Joseph Green
March 2, 1995

Oleg has just written a reply to Tim's letter to the CWVTJ editors of Feb. 17. He deals with only one point, the issue of trend.

Let's recall the issue. Tim was shocked at the biased description of the controversy over the endorsement of *El Machete* which was in the editorial guide of CWVTJ #6. The CWVTJ #6 had stated that "the disagreements include the relative merits or demerits of printing an announcement for a newspaper WHICH COMES OUT OF a different trend AND EXPERIENCE than ours..." (emphasis added)

Defending this formulation, Oleg triumphantly cites that some comrades think that *El Machete* is a different trend from ours, that it supports Cuban revisionism, and that it is a hostile trend, a trend that is "against our trend". Why, Oleg implies, doesn't this mean it is a different trend? "Got you!", Oleg thinks. Why, you actually oppose endorsing a particular different trend! You must oppose dealing with any activist from a different background or who disagrees with us on anything! You must oppose anything which comes out of a different trend

or background!!!

But the Detroit comrades quoted by Oleg clearly believe that our present state of knowledge about *El Machete* suggests that it is CURRENTLY a hostile trend. They would prefer to see more information about *El Machete* in order to judge it better. But on the basis of what is currently known, they hold that there are real questions about its political stands. As Tim said, they believe the important thing is its current politics. As Tim wrote, underlining the words, "The issue is not the question of emergence from another trend at all... The issue is the politics."

The announcement in CWVTJ#6 talks of something which COMES OUT OF a different trend, not something WHICH IS currently a hostile trend. To pound this distinction home, CWVTJ#6 talks of something that comes out of a different EXPERIENCE. All the different contingents of the world proletarian movement come out of different EXPERIENCES. Even the different contingents of the proletariat who unite in a single country come from different experiences. Perhaps Oleg would care to show us in which study group report anyone suggests that we should boycott activists or groups from different experiences than ours or where they denounce *El Machete* for com-

ing from a different experience?

Now CWVTJ#6 wouldn't allow the reader to see what I and others objected to in our own words, and instead said it was postponing material on the controversy. Yet it insisted on characterizing the dispute. Very well. Suppose the CWVTJ characterization had been in line with the Detroit study group reports, as Oleg implies it was. If CWVTJ#6 had said the disagreements include the relative merits or demerits of endorsing what might be a hostile trend that, among other things, supports Cuban revisionism and opposes proletarian internationalist unity between the American and Mexican workers, I doubt that Tim would have objected.

Moreover, despite what CWVTJ #6 implies, Oleg's article in CWVTJ #5 didn't say that *El Machete* was a different political trend from CWV, and it wasn't simply a modest announcement. If Oleg's article had simply discussed a different political trend, the reaction would have been quite different. Instead Oleg's article was an endorsement, and identified *El Machete* as of the trend of the hammer-and-sickle (i.e. communism) and as the most left-wing revolutionary paper currently coming out in Mexico that CWV has seen. It was silent about any drawbacks in *El*

Announcing, cont. from p. 32

10. The **Communist Voice** will not only carry our own materials, but those of others. This includes contributions from those who don't agree with us but who have prepared materials of theoretical or political or historical interest. At the same time, the **Communist Voice** will seek to show activists the need to break with traditional but bankrupt leftist phrases and instead take up anti-revisionist communism. In regard to activist work, it will aim to orient it towards strength-

ening the independent links of anti-revisionism with the masses, and not to mere floating in the left or the mere repetition of popular phrases which no longer have a cutting edge.

11. The **Communist Voice** will be produced as simply as possible, and laid out simply, so as to minimize the technical work and avoid unnecessarily diverting comrades from other work. It will be produced in modest quantities. But there will be attention paid, in producing it, to ensure that it can be xeroxed easily by those who

need extra copies of a particular issue.

12. The Detroit Marxist-Leninist Study Group endorses other circles from the former "minority" making use of our articles and work for their journals, and looks forward to these circles showing us the reciprocal courtesy.

13. You can get in touch with the DMLSG at the following address:

P.O. Box 13261, Harper Station, Detroit, MI, 48213-0261.



Machete's stands or any differences from the trend of CWV. If CWVTJ #6 had said that the disagreement include the relative merits or demerits of slurring over the differences between proletarian communism and other trends, I doubt that Tim would have objected.

The literary magazine "Struggle" is put out in Detroit. It has contributions from writers from different trends and experiences. How does one decide whether an article or poem contributes to Struggle's purpose? How does one judge various trends? Does Tim or I or any Detroit comrade really rule out everyone from a different trend or experience? "Struggle" has had to deal with this for a long time, as did IHPWU, etc.

And how did CWVTJ handle this problem? By endorsing El Machete, it abandoned the work of communist clarification. It left aside the specific work we could do that would be of real importance for activists in and around El Machete and it confused the issue of what trend CWVTJ stands for.

I include Oleg's remarks below for reference, as well as Tim's.

To: Minority
From: Oleg
3-1-95

The following are quotes from the email message from Mark to the minority dated 1-27-95, labeled "Report on the DMLSG meeting of January 15, 1995".

"One comrade, commenting on Oleg's defense of the "El Machete" ad in the CWVTJ, thought Oleg was treating "El Machete" just as a news source and not dealing with the fact that it represented a different political trend. The trend is against our trend."

"Another comrade commented on Oleg's reply that while he basically

argues it's just a source of information, he admits it promotes "People's Tribune", has a bad line on Prop 187, etc. The comrade noted "El Machete" evidently considers Cuba socialist. While recognizing certain bad things, Oleg doesn't correlate that this means it is a different political trend."

Tim complains about how the editorial guide characterizes the debate over El Machete, and Joseph seconds that complaint. I wonder how they would characterize the above comments? <>

To: Minority
From: Tim
2-17-95

LETTER TO THE EDITORS OF
CHICAGO WORKERS' VOICE
THEORETICAL JOURNAL

Dear Comrades,

I wish to vehemently oppose the characterization of the El Machete controversy in the editorial guide for the sixth issue of CWVTJ, which, unfortunately, has already gone to press. The commentary implies that there is a section of the minority that considers the fact that EM "comes out of a different trend and experience than ours" equally as important as an assessment of EM's politics in judging this group. This paints the objections of Joseph, Mark, and other comrades to the endorsement of EM by CWVTJ in a sectarian light and is highly unfair. The objections of these comrades were never made on the grounds of EM coming from a different trend; this is absurd. It is entirely possible for a group to emerge from another trend and develop politics with which we could agree. Or one could emerge with politics which cause

us to have reservations while still recognizing the group as an oppositional trend. And it is also possible, obviously, for one to emerge with politics which we completely oppose. The issue is not the question of emergence from another trend at all; at best, this may be an explanation for the group's politics. The issue is the politics. Unfortunately, many other readers on the left, to which the CWVTJ editors are so attuned, will be quick to read the editorial guide's words as a veritable signboard saying: BEWARE OF THOSE JOSEPH-PEOPLE SECTARIANS! THEY LISTEN TO NO ONE BUT THEIR OWN LITTLE GROUP!

It is precisely here that the CWVTJ comrades are practicing an even bigger deception, I hope unwittingly. For it is Joseph and those who agree with him on this issue who have repeatedly asked CWVTJ to translate, and possibly print in the journal, an article from EL Machete illustrating its politics, followed by a commentary assessing their stands. This would be quite the opposite of sectarianism. Joseph and others repeatedly asked Chicago to provide translations of EM articles for all comrades to judge. First we were met by Raphael's arrogant refusal at the November meeting. Now, after his departure, things are handled more diplomatically perhaps, with Julie's statement that making such translations would be "too painful." But the results are the same: still no translations, still no in-depth presentation of EM's politics in their own words or in an analysis, and an endorsement of EM has been imposed on our whole trend by the CWVTJ editorial board. Technically, yes, the CWVTJ board is independent; in fact, as we all know, it has been regarded by us and others as the rallying point of our trend. If the Chicago comrades had wished to act in a comradely way on an issue they knew to be controver-

On Complacency, Part 2 (Excerpts)

By Joseph Green, Detroit
Feb., 1995

[The CWV has excerpted a couple of sections of the above polemic from Joseph which bear on the El Machete controversy.]

The CWV has displayed its intolerance towards disagreements in, for example, its foot-dragging on discussion of the issues in the controversy over CWVTJ's endorsement of El Machete. On this point, Oleg's attitude has hardened since his Jan. 4 letter to the "minority". At that time, he wrote that "Joseph also suggests a political analysis of the Zapatistas. Many of his points seem to be close to or on the mark. I don't have time to comment in detail on them. I do think he has a point that there is some tendency for those political activists who are involved in or close to the Mexican nationality movement to get carried away in their enthusiasm for the militancy and successes of the Zapatistas." And he added that "I appreciate Joseph's comments on the Zapatistas. They will be of use if I can get to write an article on the struggle in Mexico." Yet in his letter of Jan. 25 on the same material, he said that "not much of general politi-

cal worth has come out of it yet". And now he talks of "petty squabbles which have little theoretical content" (Feb. 15).

And so CWV, apparently sharing this growing intolerance, passed up the opportunity for CWVTJ #6 to carry theoretical material on a burning topical political issue.

Where's CWVTJ going?

So it looks like Oleg's opposition to the formation of an organization was for the sake of having CWV be the center—answerable to no one—that sets the general tone for the "minority" and decides matters for all. True, the CWV comrades say they don't have time to do this or that, to translate an article from El Machete, to give their views on the issues they tell us are important, etc. But they also insist that they must direct the work for the journal, even if they have no time for it. The CWV has displayed its intolerance towards disagreements in, for example, its foot-dragging on discussion of the issues in the controversy over CWVTJ's endorsement of El Machete. On this point, Oleg's attitude has hardened since his Jan. 4 letter to the "minority". At that time, he wrote that "Joseph also suggests a

political analysis of the Zapatistas. Many of his points seem to be close to or on the mark. I don't have time to comment in detail on them. I do think he has a point that there is some tendency for those political activists who are involved in or close to the Mexican nationality movement to get carried away in their enthusiasm for the militancy and successes of the Zapatistas." And he added that "I appreciate Joseph's comments on the Zapatistas. They will be of use if I can get to write an article on the struggle in Mexico." Yet in his letter of Jan. 25 on the same material, he said that "not much of general political worth has come out of it yet". And now he talks of "petty squabbles which have little theoretical content" (Feb. 15).

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continued on p. 36

Trends, Joseph, cont. from p. 34
sial among us, they would have declined (temporarily at least) to exercise their technical right and delayed decision on an EM endorsement until comrades could have read their material and expressed themselves. Instead, they imposed the endorsement on the rest of us as a decision of their small group alone. (Is this not an "organizational fiat"?) And Julie now has the temerity to describe Mark and Pete's suggestion that the whole trend consider (and decide democratically,

I might add) a change in the CWVTJ's editorial board as an "organizational fiat". Now, which would you say is or would be an "organizational fiat", the decision of a small group imposed on the whole trend, or a decision of the whole trend, in which the small group had their full say? Please!

And now we have the aspersion of sectarianism cast upon Joseph and others by the editorial guide. Those who have called for study, discussion and democratic decisions are painted as sectarians. Over the years we have

all felt the sting of similar unfounded charges at the hands of the opportunist left who have tried to prevent the clarification of issues in the light of Marxism-Leninism. It is painful now to experience such distortions at the hands of old comrades, especially some who have weathered the betrayal by our majorityites. I hope that you will repudiate these statements.

Tim
◇

ANATOMY OF A SPLIT, PART I

by Jake, Chicago

Since the last regular issue of Chicago Workers' Voice Theoretical Journal #6, (Feb. 10) there has been a split in our ranks. The Detroit Marxist-Leninist Study Group has started their own journal, called Communist Voice. Moreover, the major focus of this new journal is the "rejuvenation of communism" through polemical attacks on the supporters of CWVTJ and Los Angeles Workers' Voice.

Please note that we published a special issue of CWVTJ in order to inform our readers of the situation within our trend. The March 7 Special Issue contains all the debate documents between members of the former MLP "minority" from Nov. 25, 1994 through Feb. 26, 1995. Since we realize that the details of the disagreements between *Chicago Workers Voice* (the publisher of this journal) and Joseph and his supporters is of limited interest we limited our distribution to subscribers and anyone who

requested it. It is available for \$3.00 and should satisfy anyone who craves such details. For most, however, it will be difficult to extract the matters of principle. Difficult not only because it is such a large mass of correspondence, but also because Joseph and several of his supporters buried their plans and motives in piles of self-righteous rhetoric while they played political dodge-ball with a number of issues.

In this article I want to explain how the split developed and present an outline of the issues involved. One issue in particular, how Marxist-Leninists should deal with left organizations that are not "pure" (i.e. are not Marxist-Leninist or, at least, are not perfect Marxist-Leninists) is a central theme in our internal controversy and is discussed in several other articles in this issue.

THE PRELUDE

The present round of controver-

sies opened sharply when issue #5 of the CWVTJ carried an ad for El Machete, a left-wing Mexican newspaper. This ad caused a furor with Joseph in Detroit. It was taken as an endorsement of El Machete and nothing we said could change his mind.

After some initial and very angry correspondence (See CWVTJ Special Issue, March 7, 1995), Joseph wrote a letter with a more reasonable tone but no more reasonable content (included here on page 27). Even though he admitted that he hadn't read much of their paper and that he is not knowledgeable about Mexican politics, Joseph declared that El Machete was a hostile trend.

I want to point out the striking contrast between the way Joseph assesses El Machete and the way our former party, the MLP, judged other left organizations.

The MLP took a serious stand towards organizations and their politics. It judged groups by looking at their political stands, their social prac-

Complacency, cont. from p. 35

to give their views on the issues they tell us are important, etc. But they also insist that they must direct the work for the journal, even if they have no time for it.

...

I have pointed to the role of contact with the masses in the life of the "minority", and I suggested to CWV earlier to carry more local materials in the CWVTJ. But it wasn't insufficient practical work that caused the crisis of the "minority". It's business-as-usual complacency when CWV thinks more practical work is the issue facing us.

Moreover, the practical work itself will be nothing but floating with the tide unless there is a sharp political edge to the leaflets and a clear per-

spective about the relationship of this work to proletarian reorganization and the development of an anti-revisionist trend. Yet in the hymns to practical work sung by Oleg, Julie and Jake there is no discussion of the perspectives or problems facing practical work, any more than that of the problems facing the theoretical work. It's just that more practical work should be done.

And indeed, we have seen that the practical work of promoting the journal *El Machete* is proceeding, but the discussion of whether one should promote *El Machete* has been put off. The CWV has been looking towards *El Machete* for some time as a substitute for the independent thought of the "minority" on the problems of the revolution in Mexico. They don't see

that the practical work of solidarity with the struggles in Mexico requires the "minority", if it is to contribute something meaningful and important to the movement, to do hard work on analyzing the perspective for the Mexican proletariat. No, it is supposed to suffice to say that *El Machete* isn't exactly our trend, but is a useful source of information on the struggle. As Oleg put it in his Jan. 4 letter to the "minority", "We in Chicago can not produce timely articles on developments in Mexico. At least if one combines *El Machete* with social democratic and bourgeois sources, an activist might be able to keep up with events there." This is an example of reducing practical work to just floating in the left.

...

tice, their class base and their ideology. Joseph however declared El Machete to be a trend hostile to ours on the basis of a cursory examination. Joseph admits he hasn't read much of El Machete and that he is not knowledgeable about Mexican politics. Normally that would be cause to take a more cautious approach and conduct some study and investigation before drawing a firm conclusion. Not Joseph! His subjective denunciation became a law to be followed. The analysis that he has presented since his Dec. 14 letter is only to justify his initial stand (i.e. his prejudice).

More than two months after his initial assessment, Joseph elaborates that El Machete is a hostile trend because 1) they support Cuba and 2) they are not proletarian internationalists (March 2 Letter, see page 33). Note that Joseph's characterization was made **before** he knew that *EM* had carried an article favorable to Cuba, before he knew *EM* had published a nationalist article by an MLN supporter.

Regarding El Machete's support for Cuba, it's not clear exactly what they think of Cuba but it is certainly true that they don't consider it important to expose Cuba as a state capitalist regime. Cuba is not socialist and does not constitute any kind of model regime for working class revolutionaries to follow. In general, El Machete does not critique other left trends. It is not an anti-revisionist organization nor does it think it should be one. This is also a weakness. (See Julie's article on page 14 for an assessment of El Machete based on investigation.)

It is noteworthy that some of the revolutionary organizations that the MLP was very close to also had a softness for Cuba. For example, how did we assess MAP(ML) of Nicaragua? We considered their softness on Cuba to be a weakness. More importantly, we looked into the matter of their stand towards Castroism and

Cuba. We asked them what they really thought. They did not consider Cuba a socialist state nor did they follow Castro.

But Joseph doesn't bother to look into what El Machete's views on Cuba are, nor on what this means in the context of Mexico. Without doing so no serious assessment can be made.

For example, the MLP supported Albania as a socialist model for a long time and even after it renounced Albania as a model, it took the Workers' Advocate several years to clarify it. To understand the MLP's views one had to read the WA Supplement and not just the WA. This could be taken as a weakness in the MLP's press that confused its stand but there is a more important lesson here.

If we were to be judged by others who knew the truth about Albania and saw us as supporters of the PLA, would they be justified in assessing our politics by our international allegiances? No. Without looking at what we were advocating in the class struggle in our own country and what role we played in it, without considering how we view world politics and who we were cheering for internationally (workers or nationalist regimes), without reading what our conception of socialism and communism is (what we thought working people should do if they come to power), then no one had the right to judge us.

Joseph's second allegation, that El Machete is not proletarian internationalist, is based on a letter from Guillermo, an activist with MLN, that appeared in El Machete. This letter is pretty bad. MLN is a nationalist organization that laments the fact that no one is consumed with the struggle to reunite Mexico with its lost territory (i.e. the southwestern states of the USA). But the article was from MLN, not *EM*. This doesn't make the article any better and I think it is wrong to print such nationalist drivel, but one cannot conclude, simply from seeing

this letter, that El Machete has the same nationalist stand as MLN and therefore *EM* is a hostile trend. Moreover, Joseph started calling *EM* a hostile trend **before** he knew about Guillermo's letter.

There are certainly questions about *El Machete's* stand towards the struggle of workers in other countries, but for a serious look at it see Julie's critique of *El Machete* on page XX.

THE PRETEXT

When we informed comrades outside of Chicago of our plans for issue #6 of the CWVTJ, Joseph insisted that his letter of 12-21-94 had to be in that issue.

We disagreed. CWV preferred to postpone this discussion to issue #7 so that we could include with Joseph's letter major articles analyzing the situation in Mexico and assessing the politics of El Machete. At the same time, we wanted to make it clear that there was a controversy. Thus, we proposed that our Editorial Guide to #6 point out that the ad for El Machete in #5 was controversial, outline the general issues and promise that we would publish materials related to this controversy in issue #7. I discussed this plan with Mark (Detroit) and while he preferred we publish Joseph's letter immediately, he said he would be satisfied with recognition of our disagreement in #6 and publication of Joseph's letter in #7.

We then produced our sixth issue and its editorial guide stated:

"Please note that the next issue of CWVTJ will continue our coverage of Mexico including some topics of controversy with the ranks of our own supporters. In CWVTJ #5 we carried an announcement that El Machete, a left-wing Mexican newspaper was available through CWV. This ad was not meant as an endorsement of El Machete as a Marxist-Leninist organization.

"We note that several supporters of the CWVTJ strongly oppose any endorsement of El Machete and disagree with Oleg's announcement in the last issue. Joseph Green has written his concerns on this and Oleg has replied. This is being discussed among supporters of the CWVTJ. The disagreements include the relative merits or demerits of printing an announcement for a newspaper which comes out of a different trend and experience than ours, assessment of what the trend El Machete represents, assessment of the Zapatista revolt and other issues. The CWVTJ will carry materials on this discussion in the next issue."

It turned out that our editorial created even more anger than the original ad.

"I wish to vehemently oppose the characterization of the El Machete controversy in the editorial guide for the sixth issue of CWVTJ, which, unfortunately, has already gone to press. The commentary implies that there is a section of the minority that considers the fact that EM 'comes out of a different trend and experience than ours' equally as important as an assessment of EM's politics in judging this group. This paints the objections of Joseph, Mark, and other comrades to the endorsement of EM by CWVTJ is a sectarian light and is highly unfair. The objections of these comrades were never made on the grounds of EM coming from a different trend; this is absurd.... The issue is the politics. Unfortunately, many other readers on the left, to which CWVTJ editors are so attuned, will be quick to read the editorial guide's words as a veritable signboard saying: BEWARE OF THOSE JOSEPH-PEOPLE SECTARIANS! THEY LISTEN TO NO ONE BUT THEIR OWN LITTLE GROUP!" (Letter to the editors of CWVTJ by Tim, 2/17/95, reprinted in CWVTJ Special issue, p. 58. Emphasis as in the original)

5/25/95

Apparently even implied criticism of Joseph is a violation of Marxist-Leninist norms. We did not distort the issues in the slightest. Detroit sent us reports of their Study group discussions.

"One comrade, commenting on Oleg's defense of the 'El Machete' ad in the CWVTJ, thought Oleg was treating 'El Machete' just as a news source and not dealing with the fact that it represented a different political trend. The trend is against our trend."

"Another comrade commented on Oleg's reply that while he basically argues it's just a source of information, he admits it promotes 'People's Tribune', has a bad line on Prop 187, etc. The comrade noted 'El Machete' evidently considers Cuba socialist. While recognizing certain bad things, Oleg doesn't correlate that this means it is a different political trend."

[from Email from Mark to the minority dated 1-27-95, labeled "Report on the DMLSG meeting of January 15, 1995"]

Joseph had drawn a line in the sand. Publish his letter in issue #6 or else!. We didn't and to make matters worse, we stated what the issues were. Thus we were immediately confronted with new proposals from Detroit to form a national organization.

Here it may be hard to follow. We were talking about El Machete, right? About an ad for it and about Joseph's opposition. We were putting out a journal and we were developing detailed coverage of Mexico, right? So why does the focus now shift to forming a national organization?

At our November conference Mark (Detroit) had submitted for discussion a draft statement of principles. Detroit wanted to declare an organization. They said that it would not mean any practical changes, it would simply formalize what existed (which was basically a network of local organizations working together).

In February, however, the net-

work was gone and the organization we were being pressured to join was drastically different. Detroit proposed dismissing the CWV group as the editorial board of CWVTJ and replacing all of us with Joseph (Detroit), except that Julie (Chicago) could stay on as co-editor with Joseph. Detroit wanted Joseph to dominate this new board and since he has neither a family nor a job he would be in a position to do so. The new national organization would also give the editorial board (i.e. Joseph) the authority to set the tactical line that our local areas would follow, and would establish mandatory dues in order to finance publications....

Later, Detroit claimed that the new organization was necessary because it would allow for better organization of the theoretical work, it would direct the work and push it through. However that rationale was not part of the original proposal.

Actually, theoretical work organized under the loose network was developing and it was fruitful, providing a number of the articles published in this journal.

Once we had disobeyed Joseph, however, his supporters suddenly found that our theoretical work was fatally flawed.

For example, a letter Gary wrote was cited by Joseph several times as being thoughtful and important. It stated:

"And as Pete has pointed out, a lack of organization has led to drift and unfulfilled theoretical work. Unless the statement [Mark's draft presented at our conference in November— Jake] is taken up seriously and a more formal organization is formed, I see no point in travelling to Chicago [for the upcoming conference].

"On the work on the working class composition, it remains directionless. I have more statistics than we can use. For future reference, 4 sources are all that is needed to form

a statistical picture of class composition: the Statistical Abstract of US from the government, American Class Structure by Gilbert and Kahn, State of Working America 1995 from the Economic Policy Institute, and The Dispossessed by Jones. Basically, the poor are getting poorer, the rich richer, the working class gets poorer and more insecure, its educational requirements are increasing (old skilled jobs are not just jobs), old professional jobs are being proletarianized, there are less farmers and more managers, but the working class and underclass are still 2/3 to 3/4 of the population as it has been since WWII.

"But what is the point of this research? It is detached from any live political struggle. It started from a need to counter the 'majority' on its attacks on the working class, but the 'majority' is politically dead...."

"An agenda for March must be 1. the statement, 2. forming an organization, 3. editorial board and policy of a journal(s), t. refocusing the theoretical work.

(letter from Gary (NJ), 2/14/95, reprinted in CWVTJ Special issue, p. 51)

This letter is anything but thoughtful. Here Gary questions the entire premise of the work we were doing on the composition of the working class. The "rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer" what's the point asks Gary. He further complains that the work "is detached from any live political struggle" because the ex-MLP majority is now dead. Gary's solution, one that will give direction to this work and will connect it to live political struggle is to make Joseph the boss. Then Gary can get precise orders on what to do.

Aside from the MLP majority claiming that their class analysis was proof that we should give up the idea of organizing the working class for revolution, there is a larger section of "left" theorists with real influence who

5/25/95

push the same or similar views (as the theoretical work published in CWVTJ has been demonstrating) and we, as anti-revisionists, should demolish them. That's why this work has significance no matter what ex-MLP activists are up to these days.

If Gary really doesn't get it by this point, I don't think declaring a national organization and putting Joseph in charge will straighten him out. But then, since there are only 4 books needed for this work, class analysis should be a snap.

The worst thing about Gary's letter, however, is that it delivers an ultimatum that a minority meeting should only be held if it followed Gary's agenda. This gives one a good idea about what kind of organization Detroit wants and how it will deal with internal differences.

In addition to Gary's ultimatum about what agenda it must have, Joseph opposed discussing at our upcoming conference both our practical political work and continuing our discussion on the history of the MLP. Now these were both topics that we had agreed to pursue from the previous conference. Everything simplified to follow Joseph and quit complaining or else.

Consequently, Detroit formed their own journal and probably their own conference as well.

BUILDING A TREND OR BUILDING A SECT?

This pressure to form a national organization was surprising since previously both Chicago and Detroit had stressed developing our unity carefully in order to lay the basis for stronger organization.

For example, last August Joseph wrote a letter in regard to a bitter dispute between our LA and Seattle supporters:

"Comrades dream, and I wouldn't want to pour cold water on these

dreams, but I think we have to realize that the minority is a trend; what this means; and we have to learn how to dream within the context of a trend. If we deny our existence as a trend and believe that we must all dream the same, then I think we won't exist. In that case, we won't die because of lack of wise usage of our time, nor because some comrades don't do the same type of work other comrades prefer, but for a political reason—not having an idea of how to work within and advance a trend....

"Is it bad that different comrades are interested now in doing different things? I don't think so. I don't think the problem with theoretical work is that L.A. comrades do practical work (and I note as well that the L.A. comrades have always displayed interest in theoretical work, and were among the few comrades to continually comment on issues in writing to the center even during the last months and years of the party). On the other hand, is the problem with practical work that Frank dreams of books? No, and I am sure Frank and others do, as he says, keep up political contacts, look at theoretical tasks in connection with practice, etc. Would it help the work of our trend to force a uniform activity on Frank, the L.A. comrades, Detroit comrades, Chicago comrades, etc.? It's absurd to assume such a uniformity is possible at this time." ("On the recent exchange of remarks on the tasks of the minority between comrade Frank and the Los Angeles comrades," Joseph Green, August 23, 1994)

Here, Joseph was clearly trying to hold things together, to sort out ideas and over time achieve an ideologically solid long-term unity. Note that the comrades grouped around CWVTJ knew that we had significant disagreements, not only in regard to some thorny issues around assessing the history of the MLP, but even in regard to specifying what we mean by "anti-

CWV Theoretical Journal

revisionism." That is why most comrades urged caution and patience in regard to forming a national organization.

MAJOR ISSUES EMERGED

After the first line was drawn by Joseph over when to publish his Dec. 21 letter, the focus necessarily turned to Detroit's proposals on organization and ideology. This discussion brought out disagreements on a number of other important issues. Highlighting these issues is what was useful in this controversy.

What were these disagreements? They had existed since the dissolution of the MLP but were secondary to our struggle against the ex-MLP majority.

* **El Machete and related issues.** These include the assessment of the Zapatista revolt, of the politics of El Machete (which Joseph thinks is "hostile", nationalist and Castroite), and more generally, how we assess trends that advocate revolution and actively fight the bourgeoisie but have serious ideological and political differences with us.

We feel that we must judge an organization by what role it plays and by what are the main ideas that it follows. A cursory examination can never provide the basis for a scientific assessment.

* **Organization.** Should we form a national organization at this time? Detroit thinks it is imperative. We think we should digest the experience of the old MLP before starting another one.

* **MLP history.** We have different summations of the lessons of the MLP. Joseph's view is that basically everything was ok until some Central Committee members went bad. That's what killed MLP. (See Joseph's letter of XX on page XX.)

We, on the other hand, want a reassessment of Party norms and prac-

tices. Joseph and Mark are completely opposed to this. Mark supports the old norms and considers questioning them to be wrong. For example, Mark believes that it is correct for the Central Committee to complete the political and ideological analysis of the Party without any discussion among the membership. We feel that the rank and file should be involved in the process of developing that analysis.

* **Anti-revisionism.** We have differing assessments of what it means to be anti-revisionist and what is necessary to carry forward anti-revisionism. To date, Joseph and our Detroit comrades haven't furnished a view of what they think anti-revisionism is.

We think it is scientific socialism, fighting for real Marxism-Leninism and exposing its distortions. This makes it more of a process, more of an outlook and a method than a special group of people emerging from a specific organization.

Anti-revisionists work to distinguish real Marxism from the many varieties of false Marxism such as Trotskyism, Stalinism, Maoism, etc. In fact one of the problems with El Machete is they think that they can not be defined as any kind of "ism" nor do they think it is necessary to settle accounts with other "isms." We feel, however, that it is necessary to wage ideological struggle against wrong theories in order to clarify the way forward. Without opposing wrong theories, without exposing counterfeit communism, the working class

will not be able to defeat its class enemies on the ideological front nor will it be able to convince other toilers to follow it. Without defeating its enemies in the war of ideas, without convincing other struggling toilers to fight alongside it for socialism, how could the working class ever defeat capital in politics or in civil war?

Anti-revisionism means very definitely that we must settle accounts with Soviet revisionism, Trotskyism, Maoism, Castroism, social-democracy, anarchism, etc., even though the path to do so is sometimes not very clear.

* **Communist work in the mass movements.** The importance of practical work in the mass movements and what kind of work to carry out is another sore spot. Joseph denigrated practical political work in the mass movements and is generally skeptical of the value of organizing in the workplace. He upholds the primacy of theoretical work in the present situation. While wrong, this at least sounds reasonable but then Joseph defines theoretical work very narrowly as his polemics against the ex-MLP majority, something which is very definitely not reasonable. Reasonable or not, it is wrong to uphold the primacy of theoretical work while denigrating practical organizing. Groups that have no social practice are worthless at theory. Joseph and every ex-MLP member knows this, as does every real Marxist.

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Special Issue of *The Chicago Worker's Voice Theoretical Journal*

Documents on the controversies among the "minority" of the former MLP. This issue includes all email letters relating to this debate from Nov. 25, 1994, through Feb. 28, 1995.

Available by mail from CWV for \$3.00.

[Some of the documents written after Feb. 28 were printed in the Detroit publication *Communist Voice*. Write to them, address on p. 33]

On TROTSKY

INTRODUCTION, Julie, Chicago

This is the first in a series of articles by various comrades involved in the *CWV TJ*. This article is based on study that is being done on Trotskyism. Upcoming articles include: Trotsky and State Capitalism, Julie; Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky, Barb.

There are also several articles produced by the Marxist-Leninist Party while it was still in existence that expose some contemporary currents of Trotskyism.

For those who also see the need to refute the harmful political concepts and activities of Trotskyism and oppose its influence in the political movement, we suggest also reading these articles.

Articles critiquing the politics of the Bolshevik Tendency:

1. "Trotskyism and the Brutal Trampling of Afghanistan by the Two Superpowers," *The Workers' Advocate Supplement* Vol. 5 #2, February 15, 1989

2. *The Workers' Advocate Supplement* Vol. 5 #5, May 15, 1989 contains a reply from the Bolshevik Tendency and a comment on that reply "Trotskyist BT denies the right to self-determination of Afghanistan."

There are also several articles which refute the politics of the **International Socialist Organization** and the international tendency associated with it. These articles were written in regards to controversy with the **Communist League of Norrköping** which was an organization which came out of the anti-revisionist struggle. This organization later lost its revolutionary bearings and merged with the **International Socialist** trend. It then reorganized as the **Marxist-Leninist League of Sweden**.

3. "How to approach the study of capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union," *The Workers' Advocate Supplement* Vol. 5 #7, August 10, 1989.

4. "From the Documents of the Founding Conference of the Marxist-Leninist League of Sweden: Resolution on imperialism, the struggle of the oppressed people and the tasks of solidarity work," *The Workers' Advocate Supplement* Vol. 6 #2, February 15, 1990.

5. "Merging with the left-wing of social--democracy The Marxist-Leninist League of Sweden on the verge of dissolution," *The Workers' Advocate Supplement* Vol. 6 #8, September 20, 1990.

6. "On the history of the 'International Socialists tendency' in the U.S.," *The Workers' Advocate Supplement* Vol. 6 #9, November 20, 1990.

7. "On Red Dawn's views on permanent revolution and three worldism," *The Workers' Advocate Supplement* Vol. 6 #10, December 15, 1990.

There are several articles which discuss the bankruptcy of the **Spartacist League's** support of the Iraqi regime during the Persian Gulf war:

8. "More on the 'defend Iraq' slogan: Building an anti-imperialist movement or putting hopes in Hussein's military?" *The Workers' Advocate Supplement* Vol. 7 #2, February 20, 1991.

9. "The experience of the war and the fiasco of 'military support' for Saddam Hussein Building an anti-imperialist movement or putting hopes in Hussein's military?" *The Workers' Advocate Supplement* Vol. 7 #4, April 20, 1991.

10. "The hypocrisy of 'military, but not political, support' for tyranny Building an anti-imperialist move-

ment, or putting hopes in Hussein's military?" *The Workers' Advocate Supplement* Vol. 7 #5, June 15, 1991.

An article on the politics of the **Workers' World Party**:

"WWP defends Ceausescu's revisionist, anti-woman tyranny as 'socialism'," *The Workers' Advocate Supplement* Vol. 6 #3, March 20, 1990.



Comments on *Che Fare* Pamphlet

Julie, Chicago

As part of our ongoing work on Trotskyism, I took up reading the pamphlet from *Che Fare* "The Proletarian Revolution and the 'Russian Question': Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow."

I noted this passage in the introduction which I am quoting here:

"The October Revolution not only broke the Czar's power over Russia (as well as the power of a short-lived and inconsequential bourgeois democracy). The 'Russian' revolution projected itself towards socialism in the only way possible: by opening the way towards an international revolution based on the coming to power of a proletarian dictatorship *in loco*. Lenin and Trotsky (and even Stalin before 1924), would never have dreamed of speaking about a transition to socialism (especially 'immediate') in Russia alone. What was necessary there was to keep the reins of power in the hands of the party of the proletariat, making no 'democratic' concessions to the political representatives of other classes and

concentrating on the **international welding** of this **first** revolution of the **international proletariat** to those which were to come in the West. In terms of economics, **state control** should not have gone beyond the **revolutionary** development of structurally superior forms of social organization which, in the given circumstances, meant reclaiming the marshes of existing pre-capitalist feudal production relationships (particularly in the country) and raising the level of small-scale production units to that of establishing a 'State capitalism' which would remain firmly in the hands of the proletariat. These were the only economic 'bases of socialism' which could have and should have been developed. It was clear to the Bolsheviks that such a plan would have led to 'transition to socialism' not only in 'Russia' (because, in isolation, the development of capitalist relationships would only have led to the contradiction between political power and its economic base being resolved by harmonizing the latter with a corresponding bourgeois power, but by means of the eruption of proletarian revolutions in the advanced capitalist West. It is this which would have led to the initiation of truly socialist production relationships at an international level, upsetting the 'natural' evolution which, also in Russia, was leading towards the imposition of capitalism."

They then go on to a description of the Stalinist policy.

I was interested in this passage because it does seem fairly accurately to sum up Trotsky's perspective and program for this period in history. I have to look back over my notes to see if there are any contradictions.

In any case this passage is written by a group that is very definitely trotskyist and gives their perspective.

In any case, I said to myself, "This is sure a prescription for revi-

sionist tyranny."

It seems that there was little if any fundamental difference between Trotsky and Stalin and thus in the debate between Trotskyism and the communist movement of the 30's. Seeing the issues of the 30's as a great divide between Trotskyism and the communist parties probably did more harm than good to the communist movement as it may have served to cover up the real issues that were facing it.



Notes on Cliffism #1

NC, L.A.

These are notes on the political/economy of the T. Cliff trend and a critique of the writings of other Cliffites as well, Messers Binns, Kidron, Harman, D. Hallas, etc.

A main aspect of Cliffism is sly revisions of Leninism, Marxist and Leninist views on imperialism, its laws of motion in this epoch, the type and role of the party, tactics of the working class, etc.

Cliffism takes up aspects of the 'permanent arms economy' theory of various left social democrats, it tends to quote Marx and Engels a lot too, sometimes in an eclectic and non-historical way.

The Cliff 'permanent arms economy' (PAE), in the 50s-60s 'boom' period had a goodly amount of 'underconsumptionism' to go with it. It held 'peacetime' arms spending was a permanent feature of postwar capitalism, the 'key' to economic boom. It bought up excess production the exploited masses could not afford, diverted funds away from capital accumulation headed for consump-

tion goods and distributed the 'surplus' in the form of increased wages and state spending. Investment was thereby stimulated and profits increased via the 'increased purchasing power of the people along with new State arms orders, military clothing, bases, etc.' (Cliff-'Perspectives on Permanent War Economy,' reprinted in *Neither Washington nor Moscow* (1982), pg. 104).

For the immediate post WW2 period, Cliffs views were partially correct, as the G-7 states increased social welfare in response to rising workers' militancy in struggle, and this tended to moderate the cyclical crisis years (and struggle). Cliff warned also about the limits of PAE for social peace if its militarist budget costs soared ripping out the living standards of the workers. But the Cliffites shot themselves in their foot predicting the market competition would force the imperialist states to eventually cut back on this militarism or suffer ruination. They felt the eventual cuts would bring down the capitalist 'boom'.

LRP states that the Cliffites erred only in looking at the economics and not the political-military purposes as well—keeping rivals at bay and containment of anti-colonial revolutions. When seen in this light, the PAE becomes less and less expendable for imperialist states. Also sections of the ruling class benefit not just economically from the militarist binges, but also militarily, socially, ideologically, and politically as a whole.

Contrary to Cliff, by the early 70s, the postwar boom died down and economic 'stability' waned despite massive military budgets. This really showed the Cliffite fallacy as to whether arms spending declined as proportion of GNP as in the 60s or expanded as under Reaganism in the 80s. This underconsumptionist or

'military- Keynesian' solution to inevitable capitalist crisis proved false.

More recently in a period of cutbacks, layoffs and crisis, the Cliffites and their leaders try to slur over their theory's 'under-consumptionism'. They falsely claim that the Cliffite PAE theory was sound as it 'linked' the PAE to the falling rate of profit (FRP) law based on rising organic composition of capital. (P. Binns, "Understanding the New Cold War," *Int'l. Socialism* #19 — 1983.). Actually Cliffs views were a semi-revisionist concept that in practice played down and cover over the major crimes and contradictions of capitalist exploitation and violence from the post WW2 period to the late 60s.

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Notes on Cliffism #2

In the early 70s, events forced the Cliffites to re-work their 'permanent arms economy' (PAE) theory. M. Kidron claimed arms production was unproductive as weapons do not re-enter the productive circuit of capital either as production or consumption goods; they are paid for out of surplus value, similar to luxury goods of the rich for their decadent millionaire lifestyles. Surplus value available for expanding production is constantly reduced by arms spending, and slows the rate of economic growth. Accumulation being set back, so do all the laws of motion that follow from it, including the rising organic composition of capital and the falling rate of profit (FRP). The FRP tendency operates slower, and cyclical crisis can be forestalled or at least made less frequent.

Kidron claims Marx only saw a 'closed system' where 'outputs flow back as inputs' with no leaks. He says a 'leak could insulate the compulsion to grow from its most dire

consequences... there would be no decline in average profit rates hence no reason to expect severe crises'. Kidron says 'capitalism never really had such a closed system. Its wars and slumps destroy immense quantities of output, incorporating huge accumulations of value and prevent the production of more. Capital exports have diverted or frozen other accumulations for long stretches of time. High up is the export of arms. These 'leak' industries slow the rise in the organic composition of capital and the FRP. (M. Kidron, "Capitalism and Theory" 1974, Pg. 16.)

But Kidron does not explain how 'booms' get started. Even if arms spending slows the FRP, Kidron's 'leak' theory cannot explain the initial soaring rate of profits from which the decline was retarded. Really they depended on the class struggle, the depth of working class defeats plus the new possibilities for mass capital accumulation based on war destruction and bigger capital concentrations.

It seems only out of depression levels can arms spending play a really major role in getting a capitalist 'boom' period started.

The theory also cannot explain the extended duration of the postwar boom. With the economy humming arms costs are a drain on surplus value: they slow the accumulation and the normal rises in organic composition. Arms spending seems to slow the operation of the FRP tendency, but only by shifting industry to producing commodities that contribute nothing further to surplus value production. The arms budget keeps capital investment from rising but only by holding the rate of surplus value down as well. The leading arms producer, the USA which is in relative decline offers proof of this.

Kidron is very one-sided and thinks cyclical crisis are caused directly by the FRP. This is not a fact,

however. Cycles and the FRP are actually intertwined and crises also carry through counter moves to FRP by clearing out the less profitable capitals. State spending can only postpone more crises, It slows down the countertendencies to the FRP, promotes forming 'fictitious capital' and hence speeds up the FRP.

Only in exceptional cases could arms spending halt the FRP, e.g., if all surplus value were taxed for arms and new capital investment made nearly impossible. This theory is kind of absurd though. Since FRP induces stagnation, arms spending displaces the mode of the stagnation and cannot eliminate it. 'Normally' FRP reduces the amount of accumulation by lower the profit rate—arms spending reduces the rate of accumulation directly. FRP is still operative—by another method. Kidron puts forward yet another argument. That if one power steps up armament, so must the others competing. Kidron actually postulates that the existence of huge national military machines," both which require NO policing, INCREASES the chances for economic stabilization and compels other states to adopt a definite type of response and behavior which requires no policing by some overall authority" (M. Kidron, "Western Capitalism since the War" 1968—Chap. 3). But the OPPOSITE has really occurred. New massive investment was pumped into the bloated military of the USA, (former) USSR, Britain, France, etc. instead of more productive investment, as in Western Germany and Japan, etc. Accumulation slowed in some states while accelerating in the others. So as an overall force, the arms economy has really been a destabilizing force internationally. So FRP seems to operate unevenly within the economy, lowering profit rates in the more backward capitals. Thus the US arms budget actu-



DEALING WITH TROTSKY: Idiocy or Treachery?

By Barb, Chicago

"No theory is half so important as practice," Lenin

"Abandon illusions for which real events have punished you and will punish you more severely in the future," Lenin

It is time once more to deal with Trotsky. There is no way for the proletarian revolution to advance or for scientific socialism to rule the future without dealing with Trotsky. Of all the groups still out there calling themselves communists, scientific socialists or Marxists, a majority identify with Trotsky (or are labeled by

others as Trotskyites). There are, indeed, so many Trotskyite groups, and they are of such a warring nature, that they wouldn't sit down together at the same table even if Trotsky himself were hosting the dinner party! That fact in itself suggests something is vitally wrong.

During his Party career, Trotsky actually had a very small following -- of Menshevik-leaning comrades, non-party intellectuals, and impressionable youth with an anarchistic bent. It was only after Stalin displayed his rotten hand that others, some sincere socialists rightly disaffected with the Stalinist regime, were forced into the Trotsky camp. This was an unfortunate and false dichotomy, a choice between the fat and the

frying pan.

The best of the anti-revisionist and anti-Trotskyite groups have given up making excuses for Stalin. More and more people now realize there never was "socialism," let alone "communism," in the Soviet Union or in any of its satellites. We are finally liberated from the forced choice of Stalin or Trotsky which led so many astray, including the former M-L Party for a time. We no longer have to consider Trotsky as the only "alternative" to Stalin.

Trotsky -- idiocy or treachery? It's a close call. Stalin, of course, opted for "treachery," but that was a screen for his own treachery. Lenin seemed to prefer "idiocy," but at times he wasn't sure. I, myself, lean toward

Notes, 2, cont. from p. 43

ally hindered domestic investment allowing German and Japanese industry to surpass the still high American productivity, and carry forward the FRP in the USA, and not retard it!

Some Cliffites argue that arms budget cuts bring about occurrence of crises in the short term.

Kidron's theory says that arms cutbacks will lead to a surge in productive investment, a rising or-

ganic composition of capital and expansion and only long-term would it accelerate the FRP. The main Cliffites belief that arms spending declines accelerate recessions proves that IS in practice uses Kidron's analysis invoking FRP as its semi-marxist cover for its real 'underconsumptionist' explanation of crisis, where the military sucks up the surplus. The key problem with all PAE theory is it almost inevitably

claims that imperialism's necessary but wasteful drain of weapons production is healthy for capitalist accumulation. It is no doubt beneficial for SOME big capitalists. But the theory that arms spending was the pivot of capitals growth for decades many times conceals the real explanation—intensified exploitation of the working people of the world. ◊

the "idiocy" label. I do not think Trotsky was deliberately malevolent. I think he operated in a world of romantic, idealistic self-delusion, spawned from an incredible ego; a victim of *hubris*, if you will, which dragged others down with him. Trotsky wanted to be a hero, a revolutionary leader, but he never confronted the fact that he was not really willing to work to build socialism.

Let us credit Trotsky, a voice crying in the wilderness, with exposing many of the evils of Stalinism, even though few were listening. But because he did not criticize the Stalinist regime from a Marxist or materialist standpoint, those who were trying to make sense of things only got thoroughly confused. And, moreover, Trotsky's approach gave bourgeois enemies of Marxism fresh ammunition to discredit socialism and communism *per se*. Following Trotsky led nowhere, as many years of history testify. Every theory he ever held and every prediction he ever made came a cropper. And following Trotsky will never lead anywhere, neither toward proletarian revolution nor toward socialism. From beginning to end, the essence of Trotskyism is ultra-revolutionary-sounding, utopian "theories" and "principles" and "formulae," which in reality translate: "it can't be done." And his ghost is still out there impeding the creation of real Marxist-Leninist, communist forces.

So I volunteer to start off a [nother!] investigation of Trotsky. To begin, I will make a series of blatant assertions. They may sound naive. Perhaps I am merely going over old ground. But I hope they will prompt others to respond. That is the aim here.

Basically, there are two kinds of "Trotskyites:" those who believe Trotsky was the successor to Marx (and that Lenin was suspect, and per-

haps led to Stalin); and those who believe Trotsky was the successor to Marx and Lenin. Trotsky himself suggested both versions at various times. My contention is that he was neither.

My first assertion is that Trotsky was not a materialist but an idealist, hence, at best a "utopian socialist," at worst a social democrat. Trotsky had little real concept of economics, which is the basis of materialism and scientific socialism. Trotsky was incapable of real economic analysis; when he attempted it, he mostly parroted Lenin's analyses. And, thus, he could neither claim to be a materialist nor a dialectician. This is key to the fact that he was not a Marxist, not a Leninist and not a communist, because scientific socialism proceeds from the analysis of political economy. Politics grow out of economic relations. This failing led to major errors: Trotsky's refusal to acknowledge the uneven economic and political development of imperialism, and his lack of understanding of the role of the peasantry in the construction of socialism. Trotsky viewed the world as he wanted to see it -- as all romantic idealists do. And his "politics" consisted of inventing new, revolutionary-sounding terminology to disguise old social-democratic ideas. Therefrom follows my next assertion: that the shibboleths of Trotsky which arm the various Trotskyite groups: 1) his revolutionary theories -- "internationalism," "permanent revolution," "socialism in one country;" 2) his characterization of the Soviet Union -- "[degenerated] workers' state," "national socialism," "counter-revolutionary workers' state;" and 3) his characterization of the Stalin regime -- "bureaucratic caste," "Thermidor" and "Bonapartism" are non-scientific, non-economic, non-dialectical terms which were and are used to beat the

heads of serious socialist-minded people into a muddle and to prevent both actual analysis and action. They are metaphors which must be pricked like a balloon.

My next assertion is that Trotsky and Stalin were two sides of one bourgeois coin. Even the epithets they hurled at each other were identical -- petty-bourgeois, adventurer, menshevik, falsifier, betrayer, fascist. It was the pot calling the kettle black. The reason one can say this is because they both defended the same state system (albeit, Trotsky with criticism). Only the rhetoric was different: Stalin called this system "socialism" (and Khrushchev said in a few years it would be "communism"!); Trotsky called it a "[degenerated] workers' state" or "national socialism." Neither dared call the system what it was, what Lenin originally called it -- "state capitalism" [however, under the leadership of a proletarian government].

They could not call the system by its rightful name because "state capitalism" had by this time fallen under the control of a new class of [petty-]bourgeoisie, and the Soviet Union was *de facto* a capitalist nation -- albeit with state welfare features and socialist rhetoric -- and on its way to returning to an imperialist state. Both believed that the concepts of state-controlled industry and collectivization, of economic planning, in and of themselves, were "socialist" measures, or a legacy of the Revolution and, therefore, to be defended. In actuality, neither concept is a "socialist" measure when a bourgeois, capitalist class is in control of the profits and the workers are exploited under this system.

Moreover, both Trotsky and Stalin had a bureaucratic mind-set that one could impose "socialist" measures on the people from a top-down position. Stalin, of course, inflicted his crushing, brutal industrialization

and collectivization programs under the guise of a new "revolution from above." He thus decreed "the victory of socialism." Despite Trotsky's ranting and raving about the Stalinist bureaucracy, he simply wanted to remove the "bad guys," the bad bureaucrats, and replace them with "good guys" or good bureaucrats. What was Lenin's chief criticism of Trotsky (in his "Testament")? That "he has shown excessive self-assurance and shown excessive preoccupation with the purely administrative side of the work," in other words, that he was a bureaucrat. Furthermore, in addition to its mechanistic basis, bureaucratism implies a lack of faith in the masses. Both Trotsky and Stalin regarded the peasantry as a hostile force, and had no faith in the Russian proletariat to win over the peasantry, nor to influence its own future.

A final similarity is the penchant of both Trotsky and Stalin to rewrite history: 1) to make themselves the hero of the past with the "correct" Marxist theory, and 2) to establish themselves as "equals" of or even "advances" on Lenin. In doing so, they both distorted, misquoted and downright falsified the words of Lenin to conform to their own theories and actions and, on the other hand, claimed Lenin's ideas and analyses for their own, when at the time they had actually held contrary views which had been exposed as incorrect!

Trotsky, of course, was much better at this than Stalin, had more of a creative flair. He also had an advantage in that he never took any real part in trying to build socialism, but put his efforts into oppositional activities. Therefore, as Party "gadfly" and historian, he could retreat to an Olympic position as the repository of the "pure socialist ideal" and chide, "I told you so," "You should have done this," "You shouldn't have done that," "You should have done this differently," "You should have listened to

me." Toward the end of his life (in 1940), Trotsky referred to the "intellectual evolution of the hero of this biography" as if three decades of revolutionary struggle were mere background for his personal "evolution." I think that if Trotsky had been operating in peaceful times, he would have been a novelist, with all of his heroes thinly disguised Trotskys.

There will be a series of articles in subsequent CWVs which will deal with these matters in depth. But for now, let me tackle the matter of Trotsky's empty, romantic, and dangerous rhetoric. Trotsky's rhetoric is full of romantic terms: lots of "worldwide" this and that, "final or total or complete victories" of this and that, lots of "ideal" this and that. In contrast, Lenin's talks about "objective material conditions," "concrete analysis," and "what is to be done." It is the difference between dreaming about socialism and rolling up your sleeves and getting down to work to bring it about.

"Internationalism"

Trotsky's concept of "internationalism" underpins his theory of "permanent revolution" which, in turn, underpins this theory of "socialism in one country." Both before and after the Revolution, Trotsky's "internationalism" was nothing but an obstruction to the Revolution and the building of socialism. It was an idiosyncratic form of Menshevik social-democracy and a disguise for defeatism. It was used to oppose Lenin and the Bolsheviks every step of the way.

Let me begin with Lenin's definition of "internationalism:" "working whole-heartedly for the development of the revolutionary movement and the revolutionary struggle in one's own country, and supporting...this struggle, this and only this line in every country without exception." Trotsky's concept of

"internationalism" is quite different.

Before the Revolution, after a flirtation with Menshevism, Trotsky rested in centrism, conciliation and "internationalism." That sounded good. Communists are "internationalists: Marx was an "internationalist;" Lenin was an "internationalist." Trotsky was so "internationalist," he could envision "The United States of the World!" But what did Trotsky's "internationalism" mean in practice? For one thing, it meant that before the February Revolution, Trotsky urged the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks to reunite because he considered there to be only insignificant or "organizational" differences between them. After all, both advocated the goal of socialism, and both were "internationalist." Trotsky, however, could not recognize that the Mensheviks were a petty-bourgeois party and really wanted only a bourgeois revolution [some had a concept of the new bourgeois society lasting about 100 years!]; whereas the Bolsheviks were a proletarian party and regarded the bourgeois revolution as a brief preliminary stage to the socialist revolution.

When practice exposed the Mensheviks after the February Revolution, when not only did they throw their support to Kerensky but many joined the white guards, Trotsky admitted he had made a tiny mistake. He minimized his differences and jumped on the bandwagon of the winning side, the Bolshevik side. I forget who said "Trotsky didn't join the revolution; the revolution joined Trotsky!" But this is certainly the way Trotsky later portrayed it. He flatly insisted that Lenin "changed his mind" and the Bolsheviks adopted all of his theories. But Trotsky actually tried to delay the Bolshevik (socialist) revolution until the Constituent Assembly met. In this context arose the above-quoted phrase: Lenin called Trotsky's actions "either utter idiocy or sheer

treachery.”

“Internationalism” also meant that Trotsky did not believe the Russian proletariat could retain power, that at the most Russia could consolidate only a bourgeois revolution. Why? Because the European proletariat was not strong enough or enlightened enough to support the weak Russian proletariat – or to put it another way, the world proletariat was not “internationalist” enough. Trotsky predicted: “But should Europe [the European proletariat] remain inert, the bourgeois counter-revolution will not tolerate the government of the toiling masses in Russia and will throw the country back.”

Admittedly, Lenin feared this might happen, but he never elevated a fear into a theory! At the beginning of the Civil War, he had worried, “Without a revolution in Germany, we shall perish.” But when practice proved this fear unfounded, he re-analyzed the situation: “It has turned out that while our forecasts did not materialize simply, rapidly and directly, they were fulfilled insofar as we achieved the main thing. The possibility has been maintained of the existence of proletarian rule and the Soviet Republic even in the event of the world socialist revolution being delayed.” He posed the question: “Is the existence of a socialist republic in a capitalist environment at all conceivable?” And answered: “From the political and military aspects it seemed inconceivable. That it is possible, both politically and militarily, has now been proved. It is a fact.”

Moreover, after it was clear that European proletarian revolution would not be forthcoming in the foreseeable future, Lenin never spoke of material aid from the world proletariat (let alone from “proletarian governments” as Trotsky would have it), but only about material aid from the developed capitalist governments. But mere practice never shook any of

Trotsky’s pet theories.

Earlier, Trotsky had been certain that as soon as the peasants received their land, they would turn against the Bolsheviks and support the counter-revolution. He predicted: “...the working class of Russia will inevitably be crushed by the counter-revolution the moment the peasantry turns it back on it. It will have no alternative but to link the fate of its political rule and, hence, the fate of the whole Russian revolution with the fate of the socialist revolution in Europe.” More on his crucial miscalculations of the peasantry later, but for now note that he attributed the hostility of the peasantry to two factors: their petty-bourgeois character which would resist any attempts at collectivism and their “primitiveness” or lack of “internationalism,” defined as “their limited rural outlook and isolation from world-political ties and allegiances.” Once again, Trotsky was wrong; this did not happen.

The pernicious consequences of Trotsky’s theory of “internationalism” displayed themselves cruelly in the Brest-Litovsk disaster. As People’s Commissar of Foreign Affairs, entrusted with the task of negotiating peace terms with Germany and getting the completely battered and disillusioned Russian army out of the war, he refused to accept Germany’s terms. He arrogantly put himself on a level with Lenin as a “theorist” and came up with the absurd compromise slogan of “neither peace, nor war.” Trotsky’s rationalization was that the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany was a capitulation to imperialism that not only would dissipate support among the advanced elements of the Russian proletariat, but would also betray the world proletariat who were watching. He felt his compromise was a “holding pattern,” and insisted that the German troops could not invade the Soviet Republic because they would be

prevented from doing so by a German revolution – supposedly within the next few weeks! The Germans, of course, ignored such a meaningless proposal and continued their advances. Lenin was incredulous and furious at Trotsky’s utopian unreality.

Despite Trotsky’s high-minded rhetoric, Lenin regarded this stand as no different in practice from petty-bourgeois nationalism. Compare Lenin’s measured, realistic assessment: “There is no doubt that the socialist revolution in Europe is bound to happen, and will happen....But it would be a mistake to build the tactics of the socialist government on attempts to determine whether the European, and in particular the German, revolution will happen in the next half year (or some such short time) or will not happen.” Because of Trotsky’s “internationalist” theory, the Bolsheviks had to accept much harsher terms. Again, a close call between “idiocy and treachery.”

What did “internationalism” mean after the reality, the practice of the Bolshevik Revolution refuted Trotsky’s pessimism? At first Trotsky got carried away with the victory of the Bolsheviks during the civil war. He had had the opportunity to play such a glorious organizational and administrative role in the war that he didn’t mind admitting he had been wrong. This is the only point where Trotsky and Lenin ever met on the same ground. He had been the “boss” or administrator of the Red Army and the Revolutionary Military Council, and when Trotsky could be the “boss” (or “co-boss” with Lenin, as he conceived it), he was in his element. In fact, now Trotsky made a great utopian leap. He became convinced that the Party could impose “socialism” just as it had imposed “war communism” by military fiat. His schemes for the militarization of labor (including the peasantry) and militarization of the trade unions, which entailed

CWV Theoretical Journal

making them subordinate organs of the State, were surely utopian concepts, and termed as such by Lenin. [One can also see Trotsky's "internationalism" at work in his opposition to the Bolshevik's nationalities policy as he thought that giving nations the right to self-determination would deliver them into the hands of the national bourgeoisie and delay or prevent the unification of the world proletariat.]

But how could Trotsky have made such a leap from unfounded pessimism to over-optimism? First of all, because this is how the petty-bourgeois intellectual thinks. But, more concretely, it is because he constantly separated politics from economics. Because he wanted it to be so, he thought the political victory of the Bolshevik Party, of the proletariat, magically created a "workers' state," ignoring the economic quotient of the peasantry (more on this later). But Trotsky's "military" approach also evidenced his contempt for the Russian proletariat who needed to be bossed around as a "labor army" in order to build socialism. Moreover, his plans involved the continual appropriation of the peasantry, whom he held in even less regard. Here is how Lenin characterized Trotsky's labor schemes: "Trotsky's theses ...playto the worst in military experience...The sum total of his policy is bureaucratic harassment of the trade unions."

When Trotsky was forced to accept that facts that the Bolsheviks could not continue to order "socialism" after the Civil War, and that the revolution in Europe would not be forthcoming, he gave up. Not able to be a "boss" of anything anymore, Trotsky refused to play, and in fact resigned from, walked out of, or refused to take part in any working commission he was urged to participate in.

Trotsky dared not oppose Lenin's NEP program in public, but

privately regarded it as a downwards slide back into capitalism. He wanted the NEP period over with as quickly as possible, and proposed both super-industrialization and total industrial planning before they were materially feasible. Certain that the peasantry would never voluntarily take the path of socialist development, he felt that total collectivization of the peasantry was the only real solution, i.e., turning them into a proletarian labor force. He seemed to have a concept that the growth of capitalist forces precluded the growth of socialist forces at the same time, which was exactly the opposite of Lenin's view. This again is evidence of his idealistic, "either-or," non-dialectical nature. To confuse matters, even though Trotsky felt the NEP period was purely capitalist, he regarded it as a period of "socialist accumulation" -- another newly-invented term, although not original with Trotsky -- whereas Lenin called it what it was, "capital accumulation" -- to be used for the building of socialism. But it is a grave error to look for consistency in Trotsky.

So then, Trotsky used his theory of "internationalism" to "prove" that Russia could not create "socialism in one country;" it could only create socialism with help from the international proletariat. And the world proletariat was not advanced enough in "internationalism" to help her. For example, he blamed the failure of the German Revolution on the "weaknesses, unpreparedness and irresolution of the communist parties and the vicious errors of their leadership," as opposed to Lenin's concrete analysis of the social-democratic opportunists and other objective conditions. Even after Trotsky was expelled from the Soviet Union by Stalin, he continued to use "internationalism" to justify the failure of the revolution. How is this for an analysis? He stated: "The main cause of the internal defeat in the Soviet Union is insufficient

activity of the European Proletariat and lack of combativeness in the European communist parties." That's like the old tune "Blame it on the Bossanova!" Not only that, but even if a "satisfactory relationship between workers and peasants were ever achieved, it would only bring stability -- a 'breathing spell' until the European Proletarian Revolution, which would therefore bring an international division of labor." Earlier, he had said that the construction of socialism required the high technical level which could only be reached "if we [the international proletariat] take over the whole capitalist world!" Only then, could one proceed to build socialism. Well, if that's the case, I think I'll go back to bed!

As the "internationalist" *par excellence*, Trotsky was actually pretty inept at analyzing the international scene because he interpreted it from the idealist (platonic) perspective of his theory. Not only did he miscalculate the international proletariat, but also the international capitalists and the balance of economic forces. His failure to acknowledge the uneven development of capitalism, not the less under capitalist monopoly, underlay his "socialism in one country" theory.

Also in the late 30s, Trotsky applied his theory of "internationalism" to forecast the defeat of the Soviet Union in the imminent war against nazi Germany, adding that this defeat would be "only a short episode, in case of a victory of the proletariat in other countries." He confidently affirmed: "If it is not paralysed by revolution in the West, imperialism will sweep away the regime which issued from the October Revolution." Again, he was wrong on both counts. In fact, every time Trotsky applied his theory of "internationalism," he was wrong, but that never deterred him.

Finally, the way Trotsky later

CWV Theoretical Journal

used "internationalism" in his vain attempts to create a "4th internationale" could hardly inspire a new wave of proletarian revolution, because the people and groups he catered to in no way represented the proletariat -- labor leaders, academics, bourgeois journalists and writers, and anybody disaffected with Stalin. Ignoring nearly 100 years of history and struggle and practice, he attempted to pre-date Marx and Engels' 1st Internationale by gathering up remnants of anybody who professed "socialism." Even Cannon, the head of Trotsky's original Socialist Workers' Party, admitted that it had attracted an inordinate collection of "freaks always looking for the most extreme expression of radicalism, misfits, windbags, chronic oppositionists who had been thrown out of half a dozen organizations." Later, more "respectable" establishment intellectuals were recruited. The 4th Internationale (which was mainly on paper, anyway) was merely an attempt to create an "international" petty-bourgeois pressure to remove Stalin and company from the leadership of the Soviet Union. It was in no way a proletarian internationale, but undisguised social democracy.

In conclusion, Trotsky's theory of "internationalism" was nothing but a slogan of defeatism, a stymie to the revolution, and to the creation of socialism. It had more than little of magic about it. The international proletarian upsurge was always supposed to happen instantly, spontaneously -- is this even a hint of anarchism? It never did, of course. Then Trotsky would come down on the proletariat and berate them for not being "internationalist" enough. This wavering view toward the proletariat -- idealistic over-estimation and then disappointment -- is very characteristic of the petty-bourgeois position, then and now.

Trotsky seemed to view the Bolshevik Revolution merely as a

historical anomaly whose purpose was to give a "push" to the international proletariat to start the REAL revolution in Europe: as "the initiator of the world-wide liquidation of capitalism, for which history has created all the objective prerequisites." In contrast, Lenin regarded the Bolshevik victory as an integral link in the chain of world revolution, and the realistic duty of the international proletariat to defend, support and propagandize the Bolshevik victory in Russia -- not to go rushing around recklessly starting abortive revolutions everywhere where history had obviously not created all the objective prerequisites! Accusations against Trotsky for "exporting revolution," his ideological connections with Maoism, Castroism and Guevarism, and his youth-oriented (instead of class-oriented) approach all have validity -- but these are also the topics of other articles, and I hope someone will take them up.

"Permanent Revolution" and "Socialism in one Country"

These two theories are so intertwined that they must be considered together. First, there has been a lot of confusion about the terms "permanent revolution" and "uninterrupted revolution." Trotsky maintained that there was no real difference among Marx's, Lenin's and his formulations. He declared that his "permanent revolution" theory was identical with the "main strategic line of Bolshevism." This is absolutely false; there was a crucial difference in practice. To review again, how Trotsky, Marx and Lenin conceived the concept:

Trotsky:

"The perspective of permanent revolution may be summarized in the following way: the complete victory of the democratic revolution

in Russia is conceivable only in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, leaning on [or basing itself on] the peasantry. The dictatorship of the proletariat, which would inevitably place on the order of the day not only democratic but socialistic tasks as well, would at the same time give a powerful impetus to the international socialist revolution. Only the victory of the proletariat in the West could protect Russia from bourgeois restoration and assure it the possibility of rounding out the establishment of socialism."

This doesn't sound too bad, except for the part about "leaning" on the peasants. "Rounding out" socialism is conveniently vague. What this means in essence, however, is that it is impossible to build socialism in one country. Most important, it omits a concept of "stages" (the "uninterruptedness" aspect). Trotsky has been accused of skipping the stage of the democratic revolution, e.g., his pre-Revolutionary slogan "No tsar, but a workers' government," which left out the peasantry entirely, but I think it is equally accurate to say that he skipped the stage of the transition from the socialist political revolution to the economic creation of socialism because he thought it couldn't be done. Trotsky's concept of the "transition" period went more like this: the transition from the Revolution in Russia to revolutions in other countries.

He continued: "The organic interdependence of the several countries, developing toward an international division of labor, excludes the possibility of building socialism in one country. This means that the Marxist doctrine, which posits that the socialist revolution can begin only on a national basis, while the building of socialism in one country is impossible, has been rendered doubly and trebly true, all the more so now, in the modern epoch...." Except, Trotsky violated Marx.

Marx:

This is what Marx said, and it is very general: "While the democratic petty bourgeoisie wants to end the revolution as rapidly as possible...our interests and our task consist in making the revolution permanent until all the more or less possessing classes are removed from authority, until the proletariat wins state power, until the union of proletarians not only in one country, but in all the leading countries of the world, is sufficiently developed to put an end to competition between the proletarians of these countries, and until at the very least the chief productive forces are concentrated in the hands of the proletarians....the[ir] fighting phrase must be 'permanent revolution'."

What then did Marx mean by the phrase? He meant only that the ultimate goal of all communists is communism, which will be permanent. And so that it will not be rolled back, its course must be one of uninterrupted class struggle until classes are abolished. He did not really say anything about the possibility or impossibility of socialism in one country. But the phrase the proletarians not only in one country, but.... seems to me to imply the possibility. For example, at that time, Marx felt the British might be able to proceed to peaceful socialism by buying out the bourgeoisie. In other words, Marx never said just how socialism can or cannot be created, or how the "uninterrupted revolution" should proceed; he only gave the overall plan. He was fully aware of the differing conditions in different countries, and moreover, how the forces of the world can change. Yes, because Marx was a materialist and a dialectician. So Marx's definition of "permanent revolution" really cannot be used to support Trotsky's contention of the impossibility of "socialism in one country."

Lenin:

As a Marxist, Lenin was a materialist and a dialectician so he applied Marx's concept to the material conditions of Russia. How does one carry on "uninterrupted class struggle" in country as backward as Russia, with its peculiar economic mix? What is the strategy of proletarian revolutionaries where the bourgeois democratic revolution against feudalism has yet to be carried through to the end? Because, remember, the goal is to achieve socialism and eventually communism and to make it "permanent." So how does the proletariat in Russia carry through the democratic revolution in such a way that it grows over into a socialist revolution? And how do you make the transition from capitalism to socialism? Lenin definitely thought it could be done. He never changed his mind.

But whether "socialism in one country" is possible or not is a most meaningless, annoying debate which does nothing but delay the revolutionary movement. It has become a slogan meant to shut people up and absolutely prevent concrete analysis. It is absurd to blame Stalin's monstrous creation on Lenin because Stalin did not try to create any kind of "socialism in one country," not even an abortive form (in Trotsky's terms, "national socialism"). In fact, under Stalin, the transition to socialism came to a halt. At most the slogan gave Stalin a convenient cover to turn proletarian state capitalism into bourgeois state capitalism. And, therefore, Trotsky was certainly wrong in his thesis that trying to create socialism in one country would end up in the "re-emergence of capitalism" for this reason. What the Soviet Union had under NEP was state capitalism, exactly what Lenin wanted to see created, under at the time the hegemony of the proletariat. It remained state capitalism, although it assumed a different form (state-controlled industry

and collectivization), except that its control was usurped by a new bourgeois class. And these two conceptions are as different as day from night.

Lenin's totally materialist view was roughly: Let's give it our best shot. As he put it, "It would be a criminal betrayal of our socialist (communist) goal not to [take power]." Let's review what Lenin said chronologically. In 1915, Lenin unequivocally stated: "The uneven economic and political development is an absolute law of capitalism. Hence, the victory of socialism is possible first in several or even in one capitalist country taken separately." Lenin believed until his death that the Soviet Union was in the process of the transition from capitalism to socialism. Now if you don't believe you can establish socialism in one country, why are you continually pushing the transition (or the transition within a transition) forward? It makes no sense. Why are you concerned with establishing more and more "shoots of socialism" (or communism)? And how do you achieve "uninterrupted revolution" if you do not keep working toward socialism, planting "shoots" as it were. What do "shoots" do? They grow into something. One of Lenin's favorite phrases was the "growing over into socialism."

In 1919, after the first German Revolution had been crushed, Lenin talked about a "whole historical era distinguished by these transitional features." He spoke of the "first steps of communism," meaning the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the expropriation of the capitalists, of the banks, workers' management [but not control] of factories, electrification, and various forms of cooperative societies of small farmers. He confidently stated: "Nay, as far as the basic economic problem of the dictatorship of the proletariat is concerned, the victory of communism over capitalism in our country is

assured!" But he added: "the transition must of necessity be extremely protracted...it can be accelerated only by affording such assistance to the peasant as will enable him to effect an immense improvement in his whole farming technique to reform it radically." When it was clear that the European revolution was not going to happen, Lenin merely had said, "It will take us a little longer."

In 1921, explaining the NEP, Lenin outlined further transitional steps: "The CP and the Soviet government are now adopting special methods to implement the general policy of transition from capitalism to socialism." "We are taking only the first steps in the transition from capitalism to socialism...there will be the existence of the class struggle until the electrification of industry and agriculture is completed -- at least in the main -- and until small production and the supremacy of the market are thereby cut off at the roots." "The proletariat is the class foundation of the state accomplishing the transition from capitalism to socialism."

In Lenin's analysis, the key to achieving socialism in Russia was the peasantry, which composed 70-80% of the people and whose petty-bourgeois mentality was the main stumbling block to proceeding on the socialist path. It was imperative that a concrete analysis of the peasantry must be made, and that sections of the peasantry be wooed to the revolution, to the support of the proletariat. The peasantry was the problem that occupied most of Lenin's thinking, and in his mind, was the key to the successful transition to socialism.

The real point is that, as a Marxist, Lenin was an intensely practical and pragmatic person, as I believe all scientific socialists are. If something didn't work, if the social conditions changed, if the balance of world forces changed, he analyzed the situation and adjusted the plan. But he

always kept his eye on the goal -- to create socialism and eventually communism. And every measure he proposed was toward that end. Whereas Trotsky in his utopianism had to have the whole shebang at once or nothing, for he possessed the "socialist ideal."

Actually, both Trotsky and Stalin, in their different ways, believed that real socialism in the Soviet Union was impossible -- and dare I say, undesirable? Stalin in his cynicism called his monstrous creation "socialism" because he knew the people's sentiments were for socialism. And who knew? It was a brand-new concept. And Trotsky said "it can't be done" -- not yet." And either way, in practice, the progress toward socialism halted (e.g., see our book *From Baba to Tovarishch*).

"Workers' State"

So, not believing it was possible to create "socialism in one country," Trotsky settled for what he called a "[degenerated] workers' state," because there had originally been a proletarian revolution. He refused to acknowledge this system as a form of capitalism, and yet said by 1936, that it had "degenerated" so much that there was "not a shred of socialism" in it. And although it pained Trotsky, he felt the Soviet Union must be defended as the legacy of the Bolshevik Revolution. This "workers' state" had to be maintained as a kind of holding pattern for the indefinite future until the world proletariat became more "international."

But what kind of scientific, economic, let alone Marxist, term is "workers' state?" Doesn't "worker" really mean "proletariat?" If so, why didn't Trotsky use that term? Well, he obviously could not, because the proletariat was no longer in control. As a "worker's state," it was "degenerate"; as Trotsky put it, "that is the social diagnosis." But what is the economic

diagnosis? What kind of an economic system informs a "workers' state" -- that in Trotsky's thinking wasn't capitalist but wasn't socialist? And how could it be any kind of workers' state if the proletariat was not in control? So, what was it? At the beginning of Stalin's reign, Trotsky called it "national socialism." Later, he called it a "counter-revolutionary workers' state." But "national socialism" is what the nazis called themselves. And Trotsky maintained that if the world proletariat did not come to the aid of the Soviet Union, fascism would be triumphant. By this he also meant that capitalism would be "restored." But fascism arises from and is an aberration of capitalism. And what is the state of this state in the meantime? Trotsky was incapable of giving a concrete analysis of the relationship between the political and economic forces of this state, and no amount of clever terminology could substitute. [Marx was no doubt rolling over in his grave at the invention of such new "scientific" terminology!]

But Trotsky felt this whatever it was must be defended, even though he despised who was in control. Why? Because he felt that appropriation of bourgeois property and its conversion into state-owned land, that state-controlled industry and collectivization, that a planned economy, were gains of the Revolution and factors which made it a "workers' state," and that this conferred some sort of advantage on the workers, although by this time it was hard to see what it was. Trotsky was somewhat coy in his characterization of these factors. At times, he implied they were "socialist" measures; at other times, he avoided characterizing them as such.

Curiously, by the late 1930s, he had changed his mind about what was "socialist." In saying that there was not a shred of socialism left in the Soviet Union, he now meant some-

thing quite different, something totally non-economic: "Socialism, if it is worthy of the name, means human relations without greed, friendship without envy and intrigue, love without base calculation." But if these characteristics ever existed, didn't they arise from some kind of economic relationships? Or did they ever exist? And weren't the state-owned land, factories and farms still in place? If they weren't "socialist," why should one continue to defend them? In the end, Trotsky drew an analogy between defending the Soviet Union on the same grounds as defending the trade unions, while despising and ousting the old reactionary labor bureaucrats. One must rest at his final definition in 1939: "In the last analysis, a workers' state is a trade union which has conquered power." Scientific socialism has flown out the window. Has anarcho-syndicalism flown in?

So, Trotsky only wanted a "political revolution" against the controlling "bureaucratic caste"-- or clique or grouping or "parasitic growth" on the "workers' state." And while this caste were "petty-bourgeois democrats" (democrats?), they were not a "bourgeois" "class," but only tools of the international bourgeoisie. He refused to call this ruling group a "class" because "class" is an economic term, and that would concede that the state was under control of a capitalist "class" and therefore not a "workers' state." [I guess "caste" is what he would also call the labor bureaucrats?] And how is this for semantic creativity? Trotsky reasoned, if capitalism were restored, this "caste" might develop into a true class called "bureaucratic collectivism." A true class? What world was Trotsky living in?

If one's head isn't spinning by this time, there is more muddle. Trotsky loved to make analogies with the French Revolution, but they are all misleading because he did not consider the differences in the actual class

forces involved. For instance, he was fond of calling Stalin's "counter-revolution," a "Thermidor" and Stalin, a "[Napoleon] Bonaparte." This, again, was a metaphorical way of avoiding reference to economics and class. Thermidor was the counter-revolution of the more conservative bourgeoisie against the democratic republic, represented by the more radical bourgeoisie. Napoleon

Bonaparte's re-establishment of the Empire, a few years later, was a political coup, but in economic reality it represented a consolidation of bourgeois capitalism against feudalism. In destroying the more radical republicans, the Jacobins, and their petty-bourgeois/proletarian supporters, the Sansculottes, who wished to carry the logic of the revolution further, Napoleon was only carrying out the nationalist, monarchist intentions of the original bourgeois revolution. Is this really the characterization of the Stalin regime that Trotsky meant? Or is this just a metaphorical way of saying that Stalin was a bad guy?

'By the way, I think that Trotsky appropriated the term "caste" from Marx's analysis of the second Bonaparte, Louis Napoleon. What Marx actually said in this respect was that Louis Napoleon set himself up as an "artificial caste" above society's classes, but that he actually represented the class of conservative peasant petty-bourgeoisie and lumpenproletariat criminals. And since the new bourgeoisie soon rushed to his side, his coup really effected the victory of one section of the bourgeoisie over the other: the industrial/finance capitalists over the landowners, who also represented the last remnants of feudalism. Marx's point was that "caste" is not a scientifically accurate term and that, in fact, there is no such thing as political "caste" without it representing an economic class.

I don't want to belabor this

because Trotsky in no way attempted the kind of political/economic analysis that Marx made. But that is the point. He used these metaphorical terms loosely because they carried historically emotional weight, to say that the original revolutionary goals were co-opted by a counter-revolutionary dictator. However, if a thoughtful person were to seriously apply his analogy to the Soviet Union in order to understand "what happened," only confusion would result.

So, Trotsky didn't want a new political and economic revolution, which is what a proletarian revolution is, but only a "political revolution." In reality, politics to Trotsky meant personalities; whereas, politics to Marx, Engels and Lenin meant "the most concentrated expression of economics." So Trotsky wanted to preserve the same kind of system as Stalin, with new and improved bureaucratic administration, and this would somehow put the proletariat back in power. All his later ravings about getting the people up and moving, reviving the soviets, the trade unions, etc. were not to re-involve the masses in creating their own destiny, but merely to remove the "bad guys." I really see little difference between Trotsky's conception and Plato's "enlightened oligarchy," or in modern terms, "all we need is a few good men!"

Trotsky's awkward defense of the Soviet Union really rests on his major utopian error of conceiving the state as having been at one time a "workers' state." Lenin nailed this succinctly: "Comrade Trotsky speaks of a "workers' state. May I say that this is an abstraction.... The whole point is that it is not quite a workers' state. That is where Comrade Trotsky makes one of his main mistakes...ours is not actually a workers' state but a workers' and peasants' state -- with bureaucratic distortions."

So, Trotsky's air-headed formula goes something like this: some-

thing that NEVER WAS has degenerated, so the proletariat must rise and restore it to what it NEVER WAS. In his defense of this erroneously conceived "workers' state," Trotsky must bear not a little responsibility for the confusion on the left which impelled certain Trotskyite groups to defend every reactionary and imperialist policy of the latter-day Soviet Union, and which prevented a correct analysis.

And what about the peasantry? Just leave them in their prison of forced collectivization, I guess.

The Problem of the Peasantry

It all comes back to the difference between Trotsky's and Lenin's views of the role of the peasantry. To begin this section, I want to quote three out of many passages from Trotsky's *Permanent Revolution*, where he outright lies about Lenin's views. First: "...in consonance with all Marxist tradition, Lenin never regarded the peasant as a socialist ally of the proletariat; on the contrary, it was the overwhelming preponderance of the peasantry which had led Lenin to conclude that a socialist revolution was impossible in Russia." Next, he turned Lenin exactly upside down: "On the occasions when Lenin accused me of 'under-estimating' the peasantry, he did not have in mind my failure to recognize the socialist tendencies of the peasantry but rather my failure to realize sufficiently...the bourgeois-democratic independence of the peasantry, its capacity to create its own power and through it impede the establishment of the socialist dictatorship of the proletariat." And finally, "no one in the Marxist camp, and least of all Lenin, had regarded the peasantry as a factor of socialist development. Without the aid of a proletarian revolution in the West, he reiterated time and again, restoration is unavoidable in Russia. He was not

mistaken: the Stalinist bureaucracy is nothing else than the first stage of bourgeois restoration."

When Lenin said, "It is not quite a workers' state. That is where Comrade Trotsky makes one of his main mistakes...ours is not actually a workers' state but a workers' and peasants' state," he added, "and a lot depends on that." This is an understatement because everything depended on that. Trotsky's inability to actually analyze concrete situations is demonstrated in his view of the peasantry and his utter ignorance of their economic role, and of their overall role in the "uninterrupted revolution." In a nutshell, Lenin believed an alliance between the proletariat and [certain sections of] the peasantry was possible; Trotsky did not. He showed an arrogant disregard for the peasantry, almost a hatred [possibly stemming from his own experience as the son of a Ukrainian kulak], and he demonstrated a total lack of materialist analysis of their economic character, of the revolutionary potential of certain segments of them. They were only to be used, nay exploited, to improve the conditions of the workers; at times he would like to make them disappear. In much of his writing, the peasantry barely exist, until he comes to criticizing Stalin's methods of collectivization. In later years, in defending himself against accusations that he did not deal with the peasantry, Trotsky merely co-opted Lenin's analysis of the peasantry and of co-operatives as having been his own. But he did not hold these views at the time. From the first, he lumped the peasantry all together as a force "hostile" to the revolution, and the factor which would doom the revolution.

Trotsky's version is that of the dictatorship of the proletariat bas-ing itself on the peasantry. Lenin called this view "absurdly left." Trotsky even denied the alliance of the peasantry and the proletariat in the

first (bourgeois) stage of the revolution, and Lenin rightly accused him of underestimating its revolutionary role. This is something that Trotsky never admitted, but attempted to trivialize the crucial difference between him and Lenin: "I accused Lenin of overestimating the revolutionary role of the peasantry, and Lenin accused me overestimating the revolutionary role of the peasantry." Not only is this a violation of Lenin's ideas but, moreover, Trotsky further confused the issue by setting up a strawman argument in order to defend the idea that the peasantry was "utterly incapable of an independent political role." Lenin, of course, never talked about the independent role of the peasantry, but rather of a "special form of class alliance between the proletariat... and the [small] peasantry..." Trotsky took no notice of the class divisions within the peasantry.

Lenin: "On Co-operation"

To illustrate some of these points, I want to look closely at Lenin's "On Co-operation," January, 1923, the last important analysis he made before his death a year later. Stalin and other members of the CC wanted to suppress this essay, but were finally forced to publish it in *Pravda* (but not until May). [There was a nasty rumor at the time that a fantastic scheme was concocted to publish only one (fake) copy of *Pravda* featuring the essay to show to Lenin, but that the conspirators were dissuaded by the watchdog vigilance of Krupskaya!]

Be that as it may, "On Co-operation" laid out Lenin's new revised plan on how to get to socialism from capitalism -- how to proceed in the "transition." He began: "...since political power is in the hands of the working class, since this political power owns all the means of production, the only task, indeed, that remains for us is to organize the popu-

lation in co-operative societies. With most of the population organised in co-operatives,...socialism... will achieve its aim automatically." "Indeed, the power of the state over all large-scale means of production, political power in the hands of the proletariat, the alliance of this proletariat with the many millions of small and very small peasants, the assured proletarian leadership of the peasantry, etc. -- is that not all that is necessary to build a complete socialist society out of co-operatives, out of co-operatives alone?...It is still not the building of socialist society, but it is all that is necessary and sufficient for it...from the standpoint of transition to the new system by means that are the simplest, easiest and most acceptable to the peasant." "Given social ownership of the means of production, given the class victory of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie, the system of civilized co-operators is the system of socialism."

Does this sound like someone who agreed with Trotsky that you "can't build socialism in one country?" Or are these only the ravings of a sick and tired man? Lenin's body was paralyzed, but not his mind.

Lenin continued, however: "It will take a whole historical epoch to get the entire population into the work of the co-operatives through NEP. At best we can achieve this in one or two decades." He elaborated: "Nevertheless, it will be a distinct historical epoch, and without this historical epoch, without universal literacy, without a proper degree of efficiency, without training the population sufficiently to acquire the habit of book-reading, and with the material basis for this, without a certain sufficiency to safeguard against, say, bad harvests, famine, etc. -- without this we shall not achieve our object." What is "our object"? To build socialism. He is even stronger: "Co-operation under our conditions nearly always coin-

cides fully with socialism."

How is this to be accomplished? "By reorganizing the machinery of the state (getting rid of bourgeois bureaucratism) and, second, educational work among the peasantry, with the economic object to organize the latter in co-operative societies. If the whole of the peasantry had been organised in co-operatives, we would by now have been standing with both feet on the soil of socialism....but it cannot, in fact, be achieved without a cultural revolution."

And here we come full circle back to Trotsky. Lenin said: "Our opponents [including Trotsky] told us repeatedly that we were rash in undertaking to implant socialism in an insufficiently cultured country. But they were misled by our having started from the opposite end to that prescribed by theory (the theory of pedants of all kinds), because in our country, the political and social revolution preceded the cultural revolution, that very cultural revolution which nevertheless now confronts us. This cultural revolution would now suffice to make our country a completely socialist country...but we must achieve a certain development of the material means of production, must have a certain material base."

After Lenin's death, his plan for co-operatives was ignored. What co-operatives existed were mainly purchasing and marketing co-operatives, not production co-operatives, which is what Lenin was chiefly talking

about. By mid-1928, only about 2% of the peasants were in any sense "collectivized" and most of these collectives had been in existence since 1920. So then came Stalin's rapid, massive, and brutally forced collectivization by administrative fiat. Lenin's views on co-operatives says to me that this was certainly a wrong concept. But Trotsky didn't object to this, only wished it had been a little more gradual and less brutal.

I do not believe that either the rapid, super-industrialization or the forced rural collectivization figured in Lenin's plans for the "transition" to socialism and, thus, the failures of both cannot be attributed to Lenin's belief in the possibility of "socialism in one country" -- but again that is a topic for another day.

I have gone rather further than I intended to. I set out to present an overview of Trotsky which would make the point that taking Trotsky seriously as a revolutionary communist theorist leads only into the swamp. What Lenin said in 1921 remains true: "A study of our own practical experience would be a great deal more useful than anything Comrade Trotsky... [has] written."

[To save space, I have omitted citations. If anyone wants sources, of quotes or other information, I'll be glad to furnish them.]

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From Baba to Tovarishch: the Bolshevik Revolution and Soviet Women's Struggle for Liberation

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Book Review

Editorial Comment - Julie,
Chicago

In the last period, workers have launched strikes and other struggles against several companies. For example, there is the struggle of the Staley workers in Decatur, the strike of the Caterpillar workers and the strike at Firestone. There were strikes at the Safeway Stores in Northern California. The janitors in Los Angeles won some of their contract demands after street protest and civil disobedience.

During the 1980's, the number of strikes and other workplace struggles fell to a very low ebb. Hopefully, the upturn in the strike movement over the last year or two is an indication that the working class movement is again on the rise.

Those of us who put out the

CWVTJ were members of or worked with the Marxist-Leninist Party before its dissolution. The MLP stood for developing the independent organization of the working class. It recognized that the leaders of the AFL-CIO, the bourgeois dominated trade unions and the politics of the labor aristocracy stood against the working class struggle.

Unfortunately, the struggle to build an independent movement has not yet taken hold among the workers in struggle. There is certainly disgust with the sell-out trade union leaders. Yet, this disgust has not yet been channeled into an independent working class stand.

Unfortunately, there are those who are against the most blatant of the sell-out trade union leaders, but who are against a complete break with the labor aristocracy and the Democratic Party. They hold out the hope to workers in struggle that there are some trade union leaders and maybe at least

a few politicians who will help the workers in their struggles. Of note is an organization called the Labor Party Advocates. The goal of this organization is stated to be the founding of a Labor Party independent of the Democratic Party. In actual fact, this organization seems to be aimed at preventing workers from making a thorough break with Democratic Party politics.

Then, there is *Labor Notes* which probably makes up the left-wing of Labor Party Advocates. They talk about many of the struggles of the workers, but they also want to build alliances with the more "militant" section of the labor bureaucracy.

Clearly, a debate is needed in the struggles that are developing and among the activists in those struggles over what path to follow.

In that light, we are printing this article from Pete Brown critiquing an article by Kim Moody, one of the editors of *Labor Notes*.

Review of Kim Moody's article, "U.S. Working Class", in *Crossroads* #45 (Oct. 1994)

By Pete, Detroit

Following is a review of Kim Moody's article on changes in the working class and prospects for a new labor movement. The article is of interest to our research on changes in composition of the working class. It's also relevant to our attempts to build a genuine Marxist, anti-revisionist organization.

For Moody is a very typical example of the old revisionist style of thinking. Yes, he (she?) is pro-working class (at least in words); he's for militant struggle, for building an activist movement. He's against the business unionism of the bureaucrats (at least in words). He's for all these good things that everyone in the left — from the CP, to RCP, to the Trotskyites, to the social-democratic organizations — is for.

But just being for (in words) all these things is not enough. We need to ask hard questions about how can these things actually come about? What is decisive to moving towards these things? How can we break through the Reaganite muck suffocating the working class and build a genuine alternative? Moody has not faced these questions, much less answered them. He relies on a facile hope that things will change, because that's the historical pattern: when things get bad, then usually things get better afterwards. But that's not enough; we need to analyze what are the positive trends in today's society, and work to develop them, rather than speculating on what might be.

Introduction

Moody begins by noting some

of the changes that have taken place in the U.S. working class:

"... better-paying jobs are being replaced by "contingent" low-paying jobs. Poverty has spread and inequality has grown

"... For full-time workers the number of hours worked ... has grown

" "Lean" ... production is increasingly characterized by outsourcing and sub-contracting every kind of work. ... part-time, temporary and contract jobs employment created each year."

There is a fairly substantial body of statistics around these days to back up these assertions. Such stats get used by conservatives and demoralized leftists to promote "the end of the labor movement." But Moody

CWV Theoretical Journal

doesn't take that road.

Core Industrial Sector

Instead, Moody argues that the core industrial sector is more important than ever:

"... the core industrial working class produced 44% of U.S. private sector GDP in 1989 — actually up in real terms from 43% in 1960.

"... much of the service sector rests on this production. Also, their productivity is much higher than other sectors. For example, while productivity grew 14% from 1982 through 1995 for the private sector as a whole, it grew almost 29% in manufacturing."

Moody connects the importance of this core working class to the continued concentration of capital:

"... the Multinational Corporations (MNCs) directly control 40% of world assets, 40% of world trade, and dominate the chain of contracted production that runs from capital-intensive plant to sweatshop...."

Moody doesn't provide a lot of statistics here, but from other sources I've seen the point seems correct. The position of core industrial workers is more important than ever to the modern economy. The vast shakeup of old industry has made this difficult for workers to recognize, however. As Moody says, there is a constant process of "regrouping" among large units of capital — mergers, breakups, etc. And as this takes place workers' job security is destroyed. But even as workers are being pulled apart, "behind their back they are being pushed together under the heel of the largest, most centralized concentrations of capital in history." On the shopfloor itself, Moody notes that this is producing highly stressful jobs.

5/25/95

Moody thinks there's a potential for revival of the labor movement among the core industrial working class, which continues to hold an important position. But this potential is being blocked by divisions among workers.

Division or Diversity?

In this section Moody argues that "a more racially and ethnically diverse U.S. working class" makes the potential for unifying the working class questionable. He notes that the capitalists use divide-and-conquer schemes to keep the working class divided along racial, ethnic and gender lines. The information Moody provides here is helpful in puncturing the bourgeois myth that economic growth always generates the elimination of discrimination; on the contrary, the capitalists produce new forms of discrimination to keep wages down.

But Moody's assessment seems too pessimistic to me. For example, the assertion that the working class in the U.S. is more divided today than it used to be. Yes, there are a lot of Asian and Latino immigrants. But new immigrants are actually a much smaller portion of the population than they were in pre-World War II U.S. Yes, those immigrants were mostly from Europe; but they were sharply divided along ethnic and linguistic lines. Nonetheless working class organizations of the time (IWW, CP) were successful in overcoming these differences. And the history of the civil rights movement shows that racist reaction is doomed, despite the constant attempts by capitalism to regenerate it.

Moody pooh-poohs "increased diversity" as a bourgeois myth, but in fact there has been a good deal of integration that cannot be reversed. And Moody fuels divisive sentiments with statements like, "Urban-based

African American workers are increasingly forced into competition with immigrant workers for low-wage work." This despite studies which have shown that immigration does not take away jobs or raise unemployment.

Transnationalized Working Class

Economic links across national borders are more extensive and more intense than ever before. Workers in different countries are employed by the same corporations (MNCs) or "are linked in common production or service delivery systems." And Moody concludes, "... the potential for cross-border contact and solidarity is real if the political and cultural barriers can be overcome." There's a solid economic basis for uniting workers of different countries; the task is to transform this potential into reality.

In the midst of this Moody has some discussion of NAFTA, in which many of the myths about it are obliquely opposed. Moody clarifies that NAFTA is in many ways a "culmination" rather than a "cause" — that much internationalization of investment between U.S. and Mexico has already taken place. Thus Moody opposes the hysteria promoted by trade union leaders that NAFTA would decimate basic industry in the U.S.

Moody's points about NAFTA are quite insightful, and the point about the potential for international working class organization very important. It's notable, though, that in making these points Moody opposes any direct criticism of the trade union leaders who promote chauvinist narrowness among the working class and oppose international ties.

Reserve Army of Labor

Moody talks about the growing underemployment in the U.S., how this puts pressure on all workers, and

CWV Theoretical Journal

then gives the call for an alternative:

“... More militant, creative and solidaristic tactics conducted by more democratic, mobilizing organizations are required even to hold the line. It is also clear that politics “as usual” will not help much, as the current Democratic Party idea of job creation and labor law “reform” reveals. The elements of a new type of union strategy involve a new politics as well.”

Moody even gets in a little mild criticism of trade union leaders, noting that “the U.S. labor bureaucracy was willing to embrace cooperation and the competitive imperatives of capital without a fight” Then the call is given:

Toward a New Labor Movement

Here Moody calls for a revival of activism — organizing drives, militancy, etc. Interestingly, this call is backed up by noting changes that create some new conditions for bringing this off. For example, the structural changes in industry that have disorganized and confused the working class — Moody notes that previous upsurges in the labor movement were also preceded by structural changes in the economy. This is an interesting antidote to the demoralized views spread around today. It opens the perspective of organizing among the newly employed, low-wage, part-time and temporary workers. This sounds like a good call to activism; but Moody connects this to a particular scheme of his:

Multi-Organizational Model

Here Moody gives a scenario for reviving the labor movement:

“We need a labor movement that is political in a wholly different
5/25/95

way than the U.S. business union model of pressure politics — politics as real and potential power, not simply legislative results. Labor must have its own political wing(s) and its own class presence in the diverse working class communities. The model we should promote is not so much the social democratic model of Europe (trade unions plus party), as that of Latin America (and South Africa) where unions, parties, and mass urban community-based organizations (frequently led by women) increasingly function as arms of a single working class movement.”

The trouble is, this remains nothing but a pious wish unless you have an analysis of how to build such a movement. The trouble here is confusing “culmination” with “cause.” Generally speaking, in the last decades, the movement in Latin America and South Africa has been more widespread and militant than in Europe and North America. And its popularity and militancy have generated all kinds of mass organizations. This is nice — it’s nice to have the working class enveloped by all kinds of organizations. But we cannot simply import such a situation by saying “community-based organizations are the key.” Moody forgets that the problems he cites as affecting the labor movement — industrial restructuring, etc. — have also affected working class communities.

Moody expresses a mild desire to fight against opportunism:

“... today’s movements ... should unite the fight against the employer with that against leaders who bend to capital and the structures that promote apathy and powerlessness.”

But it’s very weak, as Moody promotes Ron Carey’s “reform movement” as the example of a fight against “the labor leadership.” And despite

Moody’s call for a new scenario of community-based political organizations, this call remains basically trade-unionist in outlook. Moody sees these organizations as basically sort of extended trade-union caucuses, supportive of trade unions which remain at the center, rather than as independent organizations. This is an important distinction, as Marxists have always made political independence the crucial first step toward reviving the labor movement. Moody doesn’t oppose political organizing — oh no, he promotes it, saying the more parties the better! But if these organizations are simply supporting and servicing the trade unions, how can we generate any serious opposition to the entrenched trade union bureaucracy? Further, how can we build a really broad classwide movement that deals with all the major issues of the day — not just trade-unionist issues, but social and political issues like war, foreign invasions, abortion rights, etc.?

But, Moody will say, he himself recognizes the need for a single party of the working class that deals with all kinds of politics. He discusses this in the last section:

Independent Politics and Links to Socialism

As the culmination of his article, Moody argues for a labor party and a pro-socialist movement. But what does Moody take as the most important “link to socialism” present today? The fight against NAFTA:

“The fight over NAFTA took shape as a class issue to a degree that few other recent legislative conflicts have The entire debacle has provoked a level of anger and a sense of betrayal in labor circles” Moody promotes this as a rank-and-file movement: “While the top levels of the AFL-CIO are prepared to forgive [the

CWV Theoretical Journal

Clinton administration] all, many in the lower and middle ranks are not. Talk of alternatives reached a new crescendo” And this talk is just what’s needed: “... it is clear that an opening has occurred for the idea of a new party based in the working class.” And, “The fight for a new political party of the working class is the first step toward a bolder idea of class political power.”

Workers feel betrayed by the Democrats, so an opening may exist for the idea of alternative, class-based politics. Fine. But where did this sense of betrayal come from? Moody doesn’t notice any sense of betrayal arising from, say, Prop. 187, the Rodney King trial, the Persian Gulf war, or the murder of doctors at abortion clinics. Apparently those aren’t working class issues. The only thing he sees as generating resentment among the masses is the anti-NAFTA campaign — which was mainly a chauvinist crusade launched and led by the trade union bureaucrats Moody is supposedly against! This is the basic problem, or contradiction, in Moody’s whole approach. He wants a new labor movement, a movement based on internationalism; but if the bureaucrats can generate some “militancy” and “anger” among workers by waging a chauvinist crusade, then he’s quite willing to take that, too.

Moody pretends to be opposed to the opportunism of the trade union bigwigs, but his desperate hunger for any kind of activism leads him into conciliating them when they get off their butts and get into motion, even if it’s in the wrong direction. The disgusting thing is, this comes right after he has clarified how far off from reality their campaign against NAFTA was, in the section “Transnationalized Working Class.” In that section he debunked their opposition to NAFTA. But of course he avoided naming

names. He did so in a quiet, academic manner, to show he himself was not a sucker for chauvinism. But in the end — well, what the hell, some workers are angry and that’s good, right? What does it matter if they’re angry over the wrong issue?

Worshipping activism ends up in opportunism

So Moody’s opposition to opportunism turns out to be a fraud. In fact this could be taken as the classic definition of opportunism: “I know the masses are wrong on issue Y, but they’re angry and active on the issue, and we (the intelligent ones) can use that to propel them into activism on other issues.” Who hasn’t heard such a formula preached by the Trotskyites? This is exactly the kind of demagogic thinking that anti-revisionist Marxists have always opposed, for our orientation is: the emancipation of the working class must be carried out by the workers themselves. And they cannot do this on an unconscious basis. Even if you could launch a mass political movement based on anger over NAFTA, such a movement would be narrow, trade-unionist, and essentially chauvinist in outlook. It could not be the basis for emancipating the working class.

Moody’s bowing to opportunism on the political issues is connected to his speculative scheming on organizations. Community organizations have been active in some countries — therefore that must be the key; never mind what these organizations stand for, what their history is, how they were built up. Or at the end, where he promotes Tony Mazzochi’s Labor Party Advocates: a big name is actually doing something, so that’s good, right? Never mind that Mazzochi’s plan is to keep his labor party firmly under the thumb of the trade union bureaucrats.

Moody’s plan is to keep the old unions and their officials at the center of “labor”, only to get them activated somehow. And then from that activity to generate some interest, stepwise, for a labor party. All this amounts to keeping the working class dragging along in the old ruts. The fact is, workers in many cases have shown their anger and resentment against the present system: in urban rebellions such as after the Rodney King verdict, in anti-war demonstrations, in demonstrations against the scapegoating of immigrants, in pro-choice demonstrations, etc. Of the working people who come out for such events, some are in unions and some are not. But all of them are manifesting a certain measure of anger and resentment against the establishment; and this is what needs to be consolidated as the first step.

Workers who see the need for socialism will build organizations of all kinds — trade unions, community organizations, political organizations, etc. — among the class. But the key thing is keeping a firm class perspective and opposing the bourgeoisie’s chauvinist crusades.

Moody’s article is notable for trying to turn a bad situation — the present decline in the strike movement and political activity — into something good. Unlike some ex-MLPers who have given up on the working class, he’s still interested in building organization and maintains faith in the masses. This makes his article refreshing to read. But for the workers to get organized so they can be delivered over to the tender mercies of Tony Mazzochi and the bureaucrats’ chauvinist politics — thanks, but no thanks! We already have a labor “movement” led by chauvinist bureaucrats; we need something new.



CORRESPONDENCE

The following are three leaflets published by the KPRP, the Union of Proletarian Revolutionaries of the Philippines:

PRK'S STATEMENT OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE EAST TIMORESE PEOPLE

The East Timorese people are mainly workers, peasants, fishermen and others who have been grossly exploited and oppressed by colonialism. They had been for several centuries ruled by the Portuguese colonialists. They had also experienced the colonialist attempts of the Spaniards, British and Dutch. In fact, they had been subjected to some few years of British occupation and had witnessed the contest between the Portuguese and Dutch colonialists for supremacy in their land. During the Second World War, they bled under the Japanese fascist rule. And, after the war, while the many throughout the world celebrated the collapse of the colonial system, they continued to suffer under Portuguese colonialism.

The East Timorese people have not accepted colonial rule through all those centuries of colonialist hypocrisy, deception, coercion, and violence. Thus, all colonial powers which have set foot on their soil have maintained themselves for some years or more by imposing tight control upon the minds and movements of the people, by suppressing their desire and efforts for freedom. And, despite all deception, control and suppression, the people have never ceased asserting themselves. They have built organizations for social change and liberation like the Revolutionary Front for the Liberation of East Timor (FRETILIN) and others. And, in 1975, they forced out of their land the Portuguese colonialists and established

an independent Democratic Republic of East Timor. They proved to the whole world that they are for independence, democracy and a truly just society.

The East Timorese people, however, have not yet completed their exodus to independence and democracy. For, ten days after they proclaimed their national freedom, the Indonesian ruling class reimposed colonialism. The Suharto regime invaded their homeland, set up a puppet fascist regime, and imposed its version of colonial rule. It has put upon itself the task of prolonging the history of colonialism in East Timor. And so it has been engaged in a counterrevolutionary war meant to annihilate the people's struggle for national independence. It has been bombing villages, burning homes, hamletting rural folk, destroying their farms, raping women, torturing captives, and killing the population including children. Its 1975 invasion and thereafter continuing occupation and savage rule in East Timor serve to introduce that the world's biggest Muslim country is a power to reckon with in Southeast Asia and warn the surrounding small countries including the Philippines that it can do what the past colonialists did and what today's powerful states like US, Britain, India, Israel, and others have been doing and it can do what it wants. Big-country chauvinism! And it enjoys the support of imperialist powers and other capitalist countries. In fact, Suharto was with the US President Gerard Ford and State Secretary Kissinger and also with the Australian prime minister when he unleashed the aggressor troops in 1975. Now, he is mobilizing the Ramos regime towards suppressing such simple exercise of democratic rights as an international conference on the human

rights situation in East Timor.

But the East Timorese people have not relinquished their struggle for national independence despite all the cruelest and most atrocious human rights violations which have decimated more or less one third of their population. In fact, they have raised it to the international level, exposing not only the Suharto regime but also US imperialism, Australian imperialism, and now the Ramos regime and rallying other people to their cause and the worldwide struggle for the defense of human and democratic rights. And they have always stressed the fact that, in the midst of the puppet fascist rule, counterrevolutionary war, extreme exploitation and grinding poverty, their struggle against human rights violations is part of their continuing struggle for national independence and their independence struggle is part of their struggle for a truly just society.

We who stand for the PROLETARIAN REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT in the Philippines wholeheartedly salute the EAST TIMORESE PEOPLE! To them, we say, "Your struggle serves as a candle in the immense world of darkness! A great inspiration during this dark period when revolutionary movements throughout the world have suffered great setbacks and the world capitalist lords are continuously making a lot of noise about the end of revolution." Continue the struggle, for only through struggle can we liberate ourselves and build our future. The Filipino workers and other toiling masses and their proletarian revolutionary movement are in solidarity with you! We support you!

And, most of all, we are also struggling and we pledge to continue on the road of struggle. Expressive of our struggle, we condemn the Ramos

regime for its repressive acts with respect to the international conference. We expose that such acts are acts of alliance and connivance with the fascist Suharto regime and acts of transgression with respect to the rights of the Filipino people, foreign friends and East Timorese people. Indeed, the Ramos regime and the Suharto regime are no different from each other: they are regimes of fascist generals and regimes of capitalists and landlords who are allies of US imperialism and world capitalism; they are bourgeois democratic regimes that have been doing violence to their respective peoples and have no respect for the rights of other peoples; and their proper places are not in human societies but in the garbage heaps of history.

Long live the struggle of the East Timorese people for independence, democracy and a truly just society! Support the just struggle of the East Timorese people! Build up the unity of the Filipino, Timorese, Indonesian and other peoples against their ruling classes, remnants of colonialism, neocolonialism and imperialism! Down with Ramos, Suharto, the landlords, and the bourgeoisie! Establish the gment of the toiling masses!

In our continuing revolutionary struggle, it is necessary that we learn from history including the ongoing historical period and be guided by its valuable lessons. To achieve victory, there is no substitute for a revolutionary movement of the exploited and oppressed masses led by the working class and guided by the genuine working class ideology. Bourgeois or petty bourgeois leadership, revisionism, Maoism, Trotskyism, and all other opportunist trends have no place in such movement. Hence, build and strengthen the leadership of the working class and take inspiration from and be guided by its genuine Marxist-Leninist ideology! Such is the only

5/25/95

correct road to the achievement of national independence, democracy of the toiling masses, dictatorship of the proletariat and genuine socialism!

Workers in all countries, unite! Rebuild, carry forward and bring to its victory the world proletarian revolution! The future of the human race is a world in which the development of each human being is the pre-condition for the development of the entire humanity!

Union of the Proletarian Revolutionaries of the Philippines, June 2, 1994

JUNE 3: TIANANMEN AND HUMAN RIGHTS

During the second half of the 1980s, the socialist world had been rocked by turmoils consequent of socialism's incapability to solve its economic crisis. Throughout the East Bloc, the masses of people boldly stood up to denounce the communist regimes. In Eastern Europe, Soviet Union, China and other countries, they exposed the rulers' incompetence in the face of crisis, rampant corruption, repression and grave human rights violations. And they were met with various means of deception, reforms, suppression and even violence. But they persevered in their struggle.

In 1989, the peoples' struggles resulted in the collapse of the communist governments in Eastern Europe. These events inspired similar movements in the Soviet Union and other socialist states. In China, the people were met with maximum state repression and violence. Martial law was declared by the Deng Xiao-ping-Li Peng regime in Lhasa and Beijing. And, on June 3, the Tiananmen massacre was unleashed by the regime's People's Liberation Army.

After battling the defenseless workers and peasants in several cities and towns throughout China, the re-

gime ordered its armed forces to proceed to the Tiananmen Square in Beijing and confront the youth who were in peaceful protest actions including hunger strike. And it ruthlessly employed military violence that decimated the peaceful assembly, mercilessly killing hundreds or thousands of young worker and student activists.

Thus, socialism in Eastern Europe collapsed. Later, also the one in the Soviet Union and other socialist states. In China, it collapsed in a different way. The so-called socialist countries collapsed in one way or another, after undertaking a series of grave human rights violations against their respective peoples. And their collapse was the height of exposure of their bogusness and bankruptcy.

Indeed, they were never real socialisms, for they were never proletarian dictatorships or workers' democracies. Economy-wise, they were state capitalisms; and, government-wise, they were bourgeois bureaucratic states. And their rulers were never real communists but revisionists, bureaucrats, dictators, tyrants and mad killers. Certainly, their current replacements are not any better, for they are private capitalisms or western-style capitalisms.

As advocates of human rights, we condemn all human rights violations including those done by imperialism, capitalist states like the Philippines and Indonesia, revisionist governments like the Deng-Li Peng regime, and revisionist parties like the CPP and its various terrorist factions. On this day June 3, we reaffirm our condemnation of the Tiananmen massacre and other human rights violations committed by the present government in China. Also our condemnation of the Digos massacre, Kampanyang AHOS, Operation Missing Link and other human rights violations committed by the CPP.

And we stress our unity with
CWV Theoretical Journal

all the people who are victims of human rights violations and/or struggling for independence, democracy and a truly just society.

To eradicate human rights violations and achieve the fullness of human rights, there is no other way than to continue, carry forward and bring to its victory the struggle for a society that is free from the exploitation of man by man — the only society that is consistent with human rights and free from human rights violations.

Long live the struggle for a truly just society and world! Long live revolution! Down with capitalism and build a genuine socialist society!

Union of the Proletarian Revolutionaries of the Philippines, June 3, 1994



CONSOLIDATE THE BISIG AT
LAKAS NG MGA
MANGGAGAWASA ASIA BREWERY INC.!

BUILD AND DEFEND
THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE
GENUINE WORKERS' UNION!

LONG LIVE THE FREE
UNION OF THE WORKERS IN
ASIA BREWERY INC.!

We want to publicly reveal to all the workers in the Asia Brewery Inc., in the neighboring factories, in all the factories in Southern Tagalog, in all parts of the country and throughout the world that WE THE WORKERS IN ASIA BREWERY INC. ARE NOW AN INDEPENDENT WORKERS' UNION. For us, with respect to our affiliation with the National Federation of Labor Unions-National Confederation of Labor of the Philippines (NAFLU-NCLP) EVERYTHING IS OVER! There is no longer any basis whatsoever for continuing
5/25/95

ourselves as part of the federation.

In order that those running the federation may not fall into an untoward act of disseminating baseless accusation or lies, we are stressing the fact that this decision of ours is not part of the trend of the splitting of the former single Kilusan Mayo Uno (May First Movement) into three opposing factions including the KMU-Beltran, Bukluran ng Manggagawa Para sa Pagbabago-Castillo (Aggregation of Workers for Change-Castillo), and National Confederation of Labor of the Philippines-Arellano (NCLP-Arellano).

Such is our free choice, free from the ongoing rivalry among the three factions to grab each others' unions and union dues. Such struggle which has expressed itself into sporadic violence confrontations has further exposed the fact that any of the factions is, in the words of the authors of the "Explanation Letter", sham and deceitful.

Based on our experience, the federation had become a fetter to our development, the very reason why we decided to tread the path of independent organization and class struggle. And, inasmuch as this step is a clear expression of our exercise of the democratic rights, we expect from all the organizations which interfere in our struggle that, if they are genuine advocates of what they have always referred to as the "struggle for freedom and democracy" like the PAMANTI-KMU (Pagkakaisa ng mga Manggagawa sa Timog Katagalugan/Unity of the Workers in Souther Tagalog-KMU) and the NAFLU-NCLP, they shall respect our right to self-determination.

We are hereby emphasizing that, by taking the path of independence, we are not detaching ourselves from the working class, on the contrary we are in fact strengthening our belongingness to the working class. When we were part of the fed-

eration, we experienced that we were not free from its opportunist influence and leadership. But, now, we are freely

working for the class interests and aims of the working class and freely making our strides along the road of genuine struggle of the working class. Thus, to all the workers, we are saying that now we are more united than ever before with you in the class struggle.

Why did we split from the NAFLU-NCLP? Here are some of the most reasonable events. In July 1991, the period covered by the previous CBA came to an end. What should have taken place was an immediate succession by a new one. But what happened was that eight months was allowed to elapse before the new CBA took effect. Thus, during such period, there was no CBA, indeed a form of concession to the capitalist, what a squander! Not only that. In the wage provision of the present CBA, the agreement is retrogressive, because what had been agreed upon as "across-the-board" has been replaced by one "mandated by the law" or "chargeable", an additional concession to the rich owner. Due to our affiliation to NAFLU-NCLP which misrepresented us in the bargaining table, we had done and could only do nothing except frown at the fact that they were pleasing our exploiter.

On March 19, 1994, the pro-capitalist tendency of the NAFLU-NCLP further worsened when they collaborated with the management by way of their proposal for "caretakership" and removal of our picket. On March 26, the federation made some agreement with the management without our knowledge; they agreed to lift our picket, but left leave to the management the task of explaining to the union membership.

On July 5, when we staged our peaceful demonstration against Ang and Tetongche, the federation, instead of supporting us, expressed anger at

CWV Theoretical Journal

us. On July 8, with respect to the demonstration, an attempt at grievance settlement was made, but our union panel particularly Sammy Santos and others were barred from participation. The ones who had usurped us and posed as our representatives were the federation's Casimo Carullo and Doming Mamangon. And, unsurprisingly, the result was an agreement to bring the dispute for "preventive mediation" wherein the lay-off of the 83 union officers and members was not to be included in the agenda. On July 11, on the basis of the reality of the management's attempt to bust the union with the help of the federation, Sammy proposed to file a "notice of strike", but the NAFLU-NCLP's reply ran as follows, "If you file a 'notice of strike', you'll strike alone and we'll not be responsible for you."

On July 12, prior to the start of the hearing in the National Conciliation and Mediation Board (NCMB) of Region IV under the direction of Conciliator Caragayan, Sammy and others insisted that what the management had been doing was union-busting, the reason why we filed the "notice of strike" and withdrew the "preventive mediation". But Attorney Romero, a NAFLU's lawyer, replied, "What the management is doing is not union-busting." And he insisted that we were the ones who violated the "CRR". Nevertheless, through the determined efforts of the union and in spite of the federation's opposition, the "notice of strike" was filed and "preventive mediation" was withdrawn.

And, on July 13-15, when we launched the strike, the NAFLU-NCLP did not do any legal action in favor of the local union. Chito Deauna, the federation's representative just looked at us who were then violently attacked by the factory's security guards and bombarded with water

from the two fire trucks. He had not shown any sympathy to us, while we were being fired at by an armed attacker and two of us were hit by bullets, Misa at the head near his right eye, while Aguirre at his left leg. And, on July 19-21, Chito Deauna spent for a drinking spree at the Carvajal Restaurant, while we were continuing our struggle. The federation had refused us any moral, financial or physical support. In fact, after the strike, what they did was to distribute leaflets which attacked our union officers.

It is thus crystal-clear to us that the NAFLU-NCLP is in cahoots with the capitalist. They want us to be destroyed by our enemy so that we would run to them for their pro-capitalist "protection" and "assistance". They want to show that they are necessary and very important to us and that we can not last any longer outside of their federation. But they are mistaken, because we have proven to them that we are capable of running our organization ourselves even in the midst of intense struggle. Yes, in the midst of intense struggle against the big capitalist and also against the federation's opportunist leaders who are in the service of capitalism.

Indeed, we need to expel those who are riding on our backs, because they are an additional burden of the workers and they are real extension of the bourgeoisie. And take the road of class independence and independent union struggle. The consolidation of our union means freedom from the control and influence of the opportunists, sham leaders, pro-capitalists labor leaders like Deauna, Carulla and Mamangon. A genuine workers' union is impossible if we are not liberated from the opportunists who are degenerate and corroding elements in the ranks of the workers' movement.

To all the workers, we exhort you to take the road of class inde-

pendence so that we can develop ourselves free from the influence of other classes and we will grow in terms of the ideology, politics, and organization of the working class. Remember: **THE EMANCIPATION OF THE WORKING CLASS IS IN THE HANDS ONLY OF THE VERY SAME WORKING CLASS!** It cannot be in the hands of the bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, labor aristocrats, union bureaucrats, opportunists and other extensions of the bourgeoisie in the workers' movement. For they are the roadblocks to the advance of our class independence and class struggle.

Thus, fellow workers, let us embrace our GENUINE WORKERS' UNION, the BISIG AT LAKAS NG MGA MANGGAGAWA SA ASIA (ARM AND STRENGTH OF THE WORKERS IN THE ASIA BREWERY INC.)! Let us build it on the firm foundation of class independence and genuine IDEOLOGY, POLITICS AND ORGANIZATION OF THE WORKING CLASS so that it shall become our instrument for the attainment of immediate economic improvement and for the development of our class consciousness, unity and brotherhood, and REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE!

LONG LIVE THE INDEPENDENT UNION OF THE WORKERS IN THE ASIA BREWERY INC.!

LONG LIVE THE BISIG AT LAKA NG MGA MANGGAGAWA SA ASIA BREWERY INC.!

LONG LIVE THE WORKING CLASS!

BISIG AT LAKAS NG MGA MANGGAGAWA SA ASIA, July 28, 1994



LABOR AND COMMUNITY STRUGGLES

BREAK THE CONTRACT ON AMERICA!

Leaflet of the L.A. WORKER'S VOICE

THE SOCIAL CONTRACT that was won my means of the mass struggles of the 1930's and 1960's is being torn to shreds and replaced with the **Contract On America**. Billions of dollars more will be cut from social programs that provide a subsistence level of relief for food, housing, health care and education for millions of working people. The main hit men and hit women who will carry out this "contract" are the politicians of the Republican Party and, yes, the Democratic Party as well. The only "argument" coming from the Democrats is over the means to be employed to make the cuts, i.e., are we willing to be subject to a blunted or sharpened meat cleaver? Whichever method they use, the cuts in spending will be made in order to compensate for the delicious tax breaks about to be served up for the rich.

FDR & LBJ Still Serving the Rich

These days there is a specter

haunting the movement -- the specter represented by the ghosts of Franklin Roosevelt, Lyndon Johnson and their respective "New Deal" and "Great Society" social programs. In reality, the reforms initiated during these administrations were not granted by the beneficent good graces of liberal politicians, but had to be fought for and won through mass organized struggles of the working class. Amazingly, there are some on the Left, like the Democratic (Party) Socialists of America, Tom Hayden and their kindred spirits who are still trying to rediscover the "Lost Soul" of the Democratic Party. These myths are nothing but big banana peels, that keep activists tied, especially to the Democratic Party, impeding or preventing their break from politics as usual.

The Best Government Money Can Buy

Another commonly heard myth is that the Democrats are "spineless," and just are not doing their job. The problem here is not that we are dealing with a party of invertebrates. Quite the contrary, the Democrats, just as much as the Republicans, are doing the job they were hired to do, which is to act as spokespeople for the

rich. For example, in the recent Feinstein-Huffington Senatorial contest, the millionaire Republican Huffington dished out nearly \$30 million, while the millionaire Democrat Feinstein anteed up about \$20 million. The average cost of winning a seat in the U.S. House in 1992 was \$555,000 while winning a seat in the Senate exceeded \$3.5 million [The Progressive, Sept. 1993, p. 18]. Just why are these "servants of the people" and their corporate sponsors willing to shell out so much money? You have to ask yourself, whose interests are these politicians really going to serve?

It's time to fight -- Stop the cut-backs!

BREAK THE CONTRACT - Build the Movement

Organize the struggle with the following Demands:

Tax the Rich: Make the Bosses Take the Losses!

30 Hours Work - 40 Hours Pay!

Defend Immigrant Workers - Workers Have No Borders!

Defend Affirmative Action Against Racist/Sexist Attacks!



Correspondence, continued, Letter from Ben

We received a letter from Ben, Seattle listing the table of contents from his work entitled:

The Confabulator Has No Clothes:

WHY IS JOSEPH AFRAID OF CONSCIOUSNESS ?

How Joseph Revises Marxism to Equate the Consciousness and Initiative of the Masses with the 5/25/95

Action of the Capitalist Marketplace and thus Attempts to Bar the Door Forward to the Theoretical Development of Communism for the Sake of the Organizational Stability of the Detroit-Chicago Sectarian Grouping.

Contents:

1. Is Communism Possible?

II. Joseph's Red Sweater

III. How the Hand and Brain Work Together

IV. Joseph's Theory in Action: Ray's 1988 Letter

Appendix: "J. Edgar Hoover" or "Information Theory" — YOU DECIDE

Available (free) in paper or electronic form from:

(Ben, continued from p. 63)

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Also Available:

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The twenty-five year history of the theoretical development of the Marxist-Leninist Party as culminated in this decisive debate over the theoretical question that will dominate the increasingly information-based economy of the 21st century.

"Distributed vs Central direction"

(Joseph's theoretical view)

"Rule of market vs. consciousness"

(Ben's theoretical view)

CAPITALISM: (Joseph)
Independent producers making decisions on the basis of local conditions.

CAPITALISM: (Ben)

Independent producers united by the market (ie: the laws of commodity production, money and capital.

COMMUNISM: (Joseph)

Producers directed by a supreme central authority.

COMMUNISM: (Ben)

Independent producers cooperating via the organized intervention of the conscious actions of the masses.

NOW ... You can get the full, unexcerpted version of the debate between Joseph and Ben.

WHO ... worships capitalism? ...
YOU DECIDE

HEAR ... what others are saying about these exciting articles !

"These articles from Ben show his view of eternal capitalism."

— Joseph (Detroit, January 28, 1995)

"Let's see, a society of independent producers who, despite conflicting with one another, 'somehow' produce a heaven on earth. Ben's 'cooperative anarchy' is just another way of describing capitalism, another way of praising the 'invisible hand' which unites the independent, conflicting entities. Socialism must overcome anarchy of production, it must overcome independent processes that are somehow coordinated." — Mark (Detroit, December 17, 1994)

"Joseph's 'Left-Wing Neo-conservatives' serves as a reply to Ben and more. Joseph attacks a growing problem in the left, bowing to the pressure of the conservative offensive." — CWV Theoretical Journal "Editorial Guide" (February 14, 1995)

"Ben makes silly speculations on economic issues without a clue as to how economy operates. ... Ben's niche is to take advantage of or play on the lack of study of economics among the circles which are audience for his papers, and dazzle persons with demagogical blather. It is a waste of time to pursue consideration of Ben's views. If persons are not interested in studying economics, that is their prerogative; but they will not advance their understanding through Ben's daydreaming. ... If one accepts this utopia of Ben's, then actually there would be no need for market relations to arise, since the milk and honey would flow automatically."

— Fred (Seattle March 24, 1995)

"interesting science fiction"

— Joe (Boston, March 28, 1995)

ALSO FROM BEN:

Postscript to Seattle # 72: Comrade Ray's 1988 Letter (4-26-95)

(The following postscript was written to accompany printed excerpts from Seattle # 72 that were distributed locally as part of a campaign to develop discussion in the local area. Portions of Seattle # 72 were printed that the Chicago Workers' Voice did not honor my request to print. As well, since the evasionist Joseph is currently attempting to disown his own very considerable and central role in the suppression of comrade Ray's concerns — and to evade discussion of the principles of party organization involved — this postscript serves as a reply)

Postscript: April 95 Ben)

Comrade Ray's 1988 Letter

In 1988 comrade Ray informed the CC of his concerns that the party's priorities were too heavily weighted in the direction of agitation and publication at the expense of the neglect of much needed and overdue theoretical work aimed at resolving the crisis in communist theory originating from the failure of the 1917 revolution.

Comrade Ray felt that he had no way to bring his concerns to the base of the party without igniting a nasty political inquisition in a very uptight atmosphere (and possibly splitting the party or plunging it into civil war). At that time, after nearly twenty years of existence in one or another form, the MLP had no regular, estab-

CWV Theoretical Journal

years of existence in one or another form, the MLP had no regular, established, open public channels for members and supporters at the base to air and communicate their concerns and opinions to one another.

The content of comrade Ray's concerns eventually spilled out in various forms to the entire party beginning in 1991 as the party's crisis deepened and it was becoming more clear that the accumulation of neglect of theoretical work had left us unprepared to maintain our unity and a clear focus of revolutionary work in the face of the continued decline of the mass oppositional movements. In fact the astounding theoretical neglect over the most basic and fundamental questions helped to accelerate the break-up of the MLP which occurred in November 1993.

Comrade Ray's hesitation, equivocation and concerns for unleashing such a storm as might have healed the party but also held the potential to destroy it in such an up-

tight atmosphere has been amply substantiated and can be well understood in light of the bitter tone of events in the period following the break-up of the party which have born witness to the most casual disregard for scientific methods of investigation and discussion and of the most blatant violations of the basic norms of polemical decency. —

—//—//

A Concise Statement on the Detroit-Chicago divorce (4-30-95)

It appears that Jake of Chicago has "suddenly" discovered that our dear comrade Joseph is a very skilled demagogue. Will wonders never cease? Joseph's very obvious charlatan methods have been just fine as long as they were used against the majority black hats. Unfortunately the majority has refused to become involved in polemics with such an obvious char-

latan (with a few exceptions such as myself — who believe it is useful to "beat the drowning dog") and the activists that Chicago would like to attract would hardly be impressed by the spectacle of Joseph getting his ass kicked good. Joseph's spam is no longer such a hot commodity and the unprincipled marriage of convenience is becoming unravelled.

What is the central argument between Detroit and Chicago over the decisive role of revolutionary theory?

** Joseph argues that the role of revolutionary theory is decisive.

** Jake argues that he is skeptical about Joseph's ability to come up with such theory.

Both sides are of course correct.

—//—//

STRUGGLE

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