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| <b>Communist</b><br><b>Voice</b> |  | <b>Volume 1</b><br><b>Number 2</b> |
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## Marxism and the Zapatistas

The peasant uprising in the Mexican state of Chiapas last year was greeted with enthusiasm by the left here in the U.S. as well as in Mexico. In a period where the masses are being squeezed everywhere, and where the left had little to cheer, the poor are rising up.

But cheering and understanding are not necessarily the same thing. In order to know what's going on in Mexico, in order to know how to support the Mexican working people, one needs to analyze the events in the light of revolutionary theory.

Marxism has long shown that the poor and exploited are divided into groups with varying class interests. To be revolutionary, the Mexican workers must support the peasant struggle against devastation by the rich, but they must have differ-

ent aims. The Zapatistas aim mainly at democratization and aid to the countryside. The Mexican workers must aim at developing the class struggle. The Zapatistas aim at replacing the one-party rule of PRI with a consensus of all social groupings in Mexico. The workers must organize the poverty-stricken masses around them to utilize democratization to step up the struggle against the Mexican bourgeoisie and world capitalism. The class-conscious workers must not be satisfied with democratization and patriotic phrases about the glories of the Mexican revolutions of the past, but must utilize the struggle for political freedoms in order to organize themselves as a class.

Here in the U.S., if we are to render effective support to our Mexican comrades, we must study the experience of their struggle closely. We must not only oppose U.S. and world imperialist pressure to crush the Mexican activists, but we must contribute to reorganizing the class struggle both here and in Mexico. For in both countries, the working class no longer has its voice. It needs to reorganize and develop its own organizations of struggle.

One of the articles in this issue of *Communist Voice* analyzes the views of the Zapatistas and shows they cannot serve as the basis to reorganize the proletariat and the left in Mexico. Other articles deal with the relationship of theory to the Chiapas event. One deals with the Marxist views on the peasant movement, and the proletariat's attitude to it. It shows that Marxism provides a framework that says a lot about the problems faced in Mexico. And another shows that anti-revisionism—the development of a fighting Marxism diametrically opposed to the official philosophies of the state-capitalist regimes—has to be more than just being militant in the mass struggle.

The bourgeoisie wants to strip the workers and the left of Marxism. It tells us that the failed regimes in China and Cuba and Vietnam and North Korea or the fallen regimes in Eastern Europe and Russia were Marxist or communist regimes. If so, Marxism and class confrontation should be put out on the scrapheap. If so, the path of consensus rather than the path of class struggle is on the agenda. If so, the path of fuzzy, feel-good theory and not the path of struggle against opportunism is on the agenda.

But real Marxism is not the theory of privileged bureaucrats ruling over the workers. It is a theory for workers who

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# Corrections to issue #2

The following correction sheet to issue #2 appeared in issue #3 on pages 12-13 (some of these corrections had already appeared in an insert to issue #2, but were repeated here)

## Corrections to our last issue

Unfortunately, our last issue, *Communist Voice* #2 (June 1, 1995), seems to have found itself at war with its word processing program, and it lost several battles. Thus several entire passages were accidentally deleted from *CV* #2.

Page 42:

### Lenin on land reform

On page 42, column 1, line 9, half of a passage in the extract from Lenin's "The Agrarian Program of the Liberals" (*Collected Works*, vol. 8, pp. 315-322, April 1905) is omitted at the garbled word "staéew". The passage concerned, with the omitted section in italics, is as follows:

The transfer of the land to the peasants would not at all do away with the predominance of the capitalist mode of production in Russia; it would, on the contrary, provide a broader base for its development; it would bring this development from the type approximating the Italian closer to the American. The property distinctions among the peasants, which are already tremendous, but relatively not very noticeable chiefly on account of the general oppression under the absolutist serf-owning system, would not in any way cease to exist. The expansion of the home market, the development of exchange and commodity production on a new scale, the rapid growth of industry and of cities—all these inevitable effects of a substantial improvement in the condition of the peasants would unavoidably increase property distinctions. The more illusions on that score are widespread among us, the more energetically must the Social-Democrats combat them, if they really want to represent the interests of the working-class movement as a whole, and not merely of one of its *stages*.

*Until there has been a complete socialist revolution, not even the most radical and most revolutionary measures for agrarian reform will eliminate the class of agricultural wage-workers. The dream of making all people petty-bourgeois is a reactionary platitude. For this reason we should start working now to develop the class-consciousness of the rural wage-workers and to rally them into an independent class organization.... We must see to it that the rising tide of the proletarian movement creates a specifically proletarian mood and proletarian methods of struggle among the farm-hands and day-laborers. [p.319]*

*The petty-bourgeois stratum of the population, the*

*peasantry in the strict and narrow sense of the word, cannot help being revolutionary at certain periods in history. Its present revolutionary attitude is an inevitable product of the conditions of the "old order", and we must vigorously support and develop it. But it will follow just as inevitably from the conditions of the new order, of the new, free, capitalist Russia, that part of the rural petty bourgeoisie will side with "order"; and the more land the peasants take away from the landlords now, the sooner this will come about. In the countryside, too, only the rural proletariat can be a truly revolutionary class, a class that, under all circumstances, is revolutionary until the end. The conversion of the wretched, downtrodden muzhik into a free, energetic European farmer will be a tremendous democratic gain; but we socialists shall not forget for a moment that this gain will be of no real use to the cause of mankind's complete emancipation from all oppression unless and insofar as the farmer is confronted by a class-conscious, free, and organized rural proletariat." [p. 320]*

Page 51:

### Last years of the MLP

An entire half page was left out of page 51. This deletion occurs in Joseph Green's article "*What really happened in the last years of the MLP?/On complacency (part two)*". The problem occurs halfway into the passage under the subhead "The environment and socialism", where a number of odd-looking accented letters appear and in fact a good deal of text and two other subheads are left out. So please replace the entire passage under the subhead "The environment and socialism" on page 51 with the following:

### The environment and socialism

This pattern continued.

Comrade Steve from LA started a debate with Earth First!'s Don Smith over the population bomb, the environment, and socialism. (See the 20 Dec. 1992 issue of the *Supplement*.) Fred (Seattle) however opposed Peterson's talk about socialism as "barren rhetoric." (See the *Supplement* of 20 May 1993, p. 14, col. 2) This was the first time someone was condemned in the party press for advocating socialism.

Who rang the alarm? Did Rene jump in on Steve's side? Did the Chicago comrades, ever-vigilant about the smallest detail in the *Workers' Advocate*, rush into the fray?

No, it was left to me (in the *Supplement* of 1 July 1993) and Steve (in the *Supplement* of 10 August 1993) to deal

with the issue.

### The reorganization of the Seattle branch

But Fred not only opposed Steve's talk of socialism, but directly flouted the resolution on the party crisis of the Fourth Congress. He spearheaded the reorganization of the Seattle Branch along liquidationist lines. He wrote about this in *Information Bulletin* #81 "On May Day issue and reorientation of the Study Group" (June 15, 1993)

Did Rene sound the alarm that something was rotten in this reorganization? Did the Chicago comrades take up the cudgels on this issue?

No, it was left to me to oppose Fred's liquidationism in my article "On the proposal to reorganize the work in Seattle" in *IB* #82, August 10, 1993.

The Chicago comrades may have said this or that among themselves on this and other issues, such as that of socialism and the environment. But they stood aside. Neither Rene nor Oleg nor any other Chicago comrade stood up and pointed out to the party what was going on. They didn't keep up a struggle, pointing out each and every dangerous manifestation of liquidationism. They had toured the country to discuss their criticisms of the *Workers' Advocate*, and that was that. They were passive or sectarian on these other struggles against liquidationism.

And now Oleg even ignores the existence of these struggles. According to Oleg, I didn't speak until the party was dissolving.

### Dave's criticism of Michael's report on the world situation

Comrade Dave of New York wrote a letter critical of Michael's report "The State of Global Economic and Political Power in the Aftermath of the Cold War". Michael's report was prepared as preparatory material for the Fourth Congress and appeared in *IB* #70 (24 July 1992). Dave's criticism appeared in *Information Bulletin* #73 (15 Sept. 1992) under the title "On the 'Report on the status of

global economic and political power' ". Many of its points are quite good, and stand up well with the passage of time.

Apparently, by the time of the 4th Congress in November, Dave had had second thoughts on his criticism. The same pattern appeared later. His article of Nov. 9, 1993 in the pre-dissolution discussion (*NY* #1) rode off in a number of different directions simultaneously but it had many sparks of life. Still he supported the "majority", and even signed Michael's *Open Letter* denouncing the "minority".

I regretted at the time of the Fourth Congress that I hadn't had the time to write discussing and supporting some of Dave's views. The Chicago comrades hadn't written either.

[The article then continues as on page 51, with the subhead "The Fourth Congress".]

### Page 51:

Also omitted on page 51 was an explanatory footnote added by *CV* about the discussion at the Fourth Congress on the revision of the *General Rules* of the MLP. It noted that the *GR* wasn't just a document on organizational questions but included a statement of the party's basic ideological and political standpoint. The *GR*, as discussed and revised by the Second Congress of Nov. 1983, was almost a decade old by the Fourth Congress, and way out-of-date.

Also note that all the other footnotes to the article "On Complacency—part two", except for number 2, which gives a page reference to *CV* #1 and is marked as being by *CV*, are from the original version of the article circulated on March 2, 1995.

### Page 14:

On page 14, three lines from the bottom of the first column, the word "w222as" should be "was". □

want to rise in struggle to build a new world. The history of the 20th century provides ample evidence that only Marxism-Leninism provides a firm theoretical foundation for the class struggle and the building of a communist revolutionary movement.

Marxism is the theory that shows how today, when clouds always seem to cover the sky whenever the left looks up, and privatization rules the roost, economic development is preparing for socialism. Marxism is the theory that always declared that state ownership alone is not socialism. It is the theory that shows the importance of going beyond the fancy names political groups give themselves and analyzing the different trends in the mass movement. It is the theory that shows the need to fight for principle, and not just drift along in the left in general. But for Marxism to play this role, it must be the Marxism that is not afraid to stand alone, the Marxism that relies on the exploited masses for its support, and that is not afraid to expose all the forces the falsely speak in the name of the revolution, whether Stalinist, Trotskyist, Castroist or whatever. The Marxism of today must be anti-revisionist Marxism, the Marxism that exposes state-capitalism and looks frankly at the both the successes and wrong turns of the past.

The working class made heroic attempts throughout the 20th century to overthrow capitalism and build socialism. These attempts failed, yet the wave of revolution unleashed by

working class activism played a key role in defeating world fascism, undermining the colonial system, and accelerating world history. The growth of poverty and insecurity amidst the technological progress shows that class struggle is still on the agenda. It shows that the working class—if it is not to be tortured forever—is going to be faced again, in the 21st century, with rising up to build a new system. If the working class is to do this in an organized way, the revolutionary activists loyal to it must take theory seriously. They must throw aside the fashionable petty-bourgeois versions of socialism that are so widespread today—among reformists, among labor bureaucrats, among Trotskyists, among anarchists—and that are so incapable of providing a firm basis for proletarian strategy.

Those who simply applaud exciting events without analyzing them may end up left with a fit of the blues. The Chiapas struggle didn't automatically suggest to people what should be done. But those who analyze events with the light of theory may find themselves inspired to lend their hand to the pressing task of proletarian reorganization. They will see how the building of an anti-revisionist Marxist trend today can help pave the way for a revival of the mass communist movement in the future.

— Joseph Green, Detroit □

## How to get in touch with *Communist Voice*

*Communist Voice* is published by the Detroit Marxist-Leninist Study Group with the support of comrades in other cities. We are all presently discussing the formation of a common organization to put out *Communist Voice*. *CV* will appear every month or month and a half.

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You can get in touch with *Communist Voice* by writing to:  
**CV P.O. Box 13261, Harper Station, Detroit, MI 48213-0261.**  
Checks or money orders should be made payable to Tim Hall—Special Account. □

# In this issue

This issue contains a number of articles with respect to the situation of the working class. Pete Brown continues his study of the significance of the changes in the size and occupations of the working class. This time he reviews C. Wright Mill's book *White Collar* which dealt with a similar issue back in the early 50's. He also writes on SOC's (Solidarity Organizing Committee) view on workplace organizing, which they subordinate to the union bureaucracy. And we also include the latest leaflet from the *Detroit Workers' Voice*, denouncing the capitalist contract on the workers and the poor.

We also begin a study of the changes in the world system of imperialism. This time Frank from Seattle begins a study of APEC, the Asian-Pacific Economic Co-operation Forum. He writes about the struggle of the working people of the poor Pacific country of Papua New Guinea, independent from Australia only since 1975, in defense of their environment. Papua New Guinea is one of the weakest APEC members, and is exploited by other APEC members.

We will carry additional material about APEC in future issues. Asia has a increasing weight in world capitalist affairs, and the importance of APEC is a reflection of that. Moreover, environmental issues are escalating in Asia—and the East Asian boom has resulted in the devastation of forests, shortages of water, etc. The struggle over the environment in Papua New Guinea is not an exception, but part of a major Asian and world issue.

This issue of the *Communist Voice* also contains a number of articles on issues raised by the peasant movement in Chiapas and the Zapatistas. It focuses on dealing with the political and

theoretical questions raised by this struggle. Mark analyzes the Zapatista strategy in his article "Turning democratization into a panacea". We also reprint the three major Zapatista declarations in their entirety so people can read the EZLN's strategy in their own words.

As well, the two articles in the section of our paper devoted to theory in its own right are also related to the Chiapas revolt. One of them is a collection of extracts from the works of Marx, Engels, and Lenin on the proletariat's attitude to the peasant movement. The other is an article on what anti-revisionism really is. Is it just being militant in the mass struggle and opposing capitulationist advice, in which case the Zapatistas themselves would qualify as waging the anti-revisionist struggle? Or have the Zapatistas in fact put forward fashionable theories denigrating Marxism?

## Where we come from

This controversy over anti-revisionism is directly connected to the differences between us and the *Chicago Workers' Voice* group, with whom we were recently united in what was called the "minority". A number of articles in this issue, as in our first issue, concern the splitting up of the "minority". The first issue of our paper contained articles explaining our political roots and what the "minority" was.

In brief, both ourselves and the *CWV* group spring from the Marxist-Leninist Party (MLP). Founded on Jan. 1, 1980, the MLP developed from a trend going back into the struggles of the 1960s, including the anti-draft movement, the GI resistance

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movement, the anti-racist movement, the workers' movement, and the women's movement. In 1969, a number of activists from various fronts of struggle founded the American Communist Workers' Movement (ML). Its goal was to rebuild a genuine communist party, as opposed to the capitulationist so-called "Communist" Party of the USA. These activists had investigated the other trends of the time that claimed to stand for communism, especially those that took part in militant struggles, and found them all anti-Marxist in practice. The ACWM(ML) and its successor organizations strove for years to develop different methods of work from what was fashionable in the left, and they rejected a number of their own original views—such as support for Chairman Mao or for the Party of Labor of Albania—as they tested them in the light of what was needed to build anti-revisionist theory.

But the MLP was founded as a long lull in the mass movements deepened. Eventually, the pressure of the stagnation in the mass movement as well as of the ideological crisis of the left took its toll. A section of the party began to doubt anti-revisionism and to associate Marxism with the various trends that the MLP had itself always fought. Gradually despair over the prospects of revolutionary work and doubts about Marxism took hold among a majority of the MLP's leaders. Another section of the MLP held that the times cried out for continued communist organization.

Thus the ideological unity of the party was fragmented; and its work and organization decayed. The party dissolved at its Fifth Congress in Nov. 1993, with a majority of the party abandoning the anti-revisionist cause. The "majority" even opposed further discussion of the revolutionary issues or the setting up of a common journal to encourage further research into the issues. But in the discussion leading up to this Congress, and then afterwards, another section of members and supporters of the MLP continued to look into the controversies that fractured the MLP. At the end of the Fifth Congress, this section first united into a grouping, the "minority", which resolved to fight the liquidationist ideas. For a time, the "minority" grouped around the *Chicago Workers' Voice Theoretical Journal*, which was founded after the Fifth Congress to carry forward the debate, and whose articles mostly came from outside Chicago.

But there were differences in the "minority". The CWV group, for example, itself shared a good deal of the skepticism of the "majority" towards anti-revisionism. It is complacent towards the pressing theoretical tasks needed to uphold anti-revisionist communism in the midst of the ideological crisis of the left. It is also intolerant of the views of other comrades, and refused to allow *CWVTJ* to reflect the discussion in the "minor-

ity". Nor did the *CWV* see much value in the "minority" becoming an organized grouping—it regarded it only as a support for its own work. Thus the *CWV* insists that the collapse of the "minority" wasn't very important—it wasn't even a "critical juncture".

The "minority" had a number of accomplishments to its credit. But it also proved incapable of even adopting a common statement, or even a real name. The growing intolerance and political narrowness of the *CWV* group finally doomed the "minority" as a coherent political grouping. The Detroit Marxist-Leninist Study Group and other comrades in Seattle and elsewhere are continuing the work to build an anti-revisionist Marxist trend. And that is the purpose to which *Communist Voice* is dedicated.

### Debating the meaning of anti-revisionism

Many articles in this issue relate to this split in the "minority". One facet of the *CWV*'s doubts about anti-revisionism are discussed in the article on anti-revisionism and the Zapatistas. As well, there is another section of the paper devoted to the continuing discussion of *CWV*'s views of split. In our last issue, we published Jake and Julie's article denouncing us, and the first replies to it. In this issue, we publish Frank's (Seattle) comments on it.

As well, we begin publishing material on MLP history, contrasting the *CWV*'s approach and our approach. We carry an exchange started by Jake (*CWV*), which explains the descent of the MLP majority into liquidationism by the supposed existence of "preppies" on the Central Committee. We also carry Joseph Green's article which outlines the various debates with liquidationism that took place in the MLP. It shows that the *CWV* group, despite its view of itself as the one and only defender of communism in the MLP, actually stood apart from the main debates on this subject and even advocated some profoundly anti-Marxist views of its own.

### Write in!

And finally, this issue has some material on the response to the *Communist Voice* among workers and activists. We welcome the comments of our readers. We will carry articles from those striving to build up anti-revisionist communism. We also welcome contributions from those who don't agree with us but who have prepared serious material of theoretical, political or historical interest on the problems we are investigating. □

# On the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum (Part 1): In Support of the Papua New Guinean People's Struggles Vs. Environmental Ruin

by Frank, Seattle

## Introduction

The article below is the first in a series being planned by a group of comrades supporting *The Communist Voice*. These articles are being written in connection with on-going theoretical research related to APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum) and therefore many of the ideas or conclusions in them are still tentative. Moreover, we don't think our work is the only work of value, or that others haven't studied, thought about, or even written about the issues we'll be addressing. Thus we would welcome any critical comments which readers of *CV* may have concerning this series. We also encourage readers to forward information or ideas to us which they think may be helpful to our research.

APEC is a relatively new international organization comprised of representatives of 18 Pacific Rim governments. The APEC member states are as follow (listed in order of the size of their respective total economies):

| APEC members        | GDP (per capital) | Population (millions) | Literacy |
|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|----------|
| United States       | \$22,000          | 252                   | 99 %     |
| Japan               | \$18,544          | 125                   | 99.6%    |
| Canada              | \$19,343          | 27                    | 98 %     |
| South Korea         | \$7,483           | 45                    | 96.7%    |
| Mexico <sup>^</sup> | \$3,470           | 90                    | 87.6%    |
| Australia           | \$16,285          | 18                    | 99.2%    |
| China               | \$2,485           | 1,150                 | 73.5%    |
| Taiwan              | \$9,624           | 21                    | 92.1%    |
| Indonesia           | \$2,460           | 186                   | 77.1%    |
| Thailand            | \$4,658           | 58                    | 93.3%    |
| Hong Kong*          | \$17,414          | 6                     | 90.2%    |
| Malaysia            | \$7,518           | 18                    | 78.7%    |
| Singapore           | \$20,741          | 3                     | 90.7%    |

|                    |          |     |       |
|--------------------|----------|-----|-------|
| Philippines        | \$2,286  | 64  | 89.9% |
| New Zealand        | \$14,118 | 3   | 99.2% |
| Chile <sup>^</sup> | \$2,730  | 14  | 93.4% |
| Brunei             | \$13,333 | 0.3 | 77.8% |
| Papua New Guinea   | \$950    | 4   | 52 %  |

<sup>^</sup> The figures for the "total economy" of Mexico, Chile and Papua New Guinea (the newest APEC members) were taken from a different source and for a different year than those of the other countries. Therefore the ranking of both Mexico and Chile on this list should only be considered approximate.

\* Of course Hong Kong remains a colony of Britain until 1997. In that year it's to be returned to China.

The Australian government was the driving force behind its initial formation in 1989. After two or three years it started to grow and today even more countries wish to join. As far as U.S. monopoly capital is concerned, it appears that the Clinton administration is placing much emphasis on building this organization as a vehicle through which to achieve advancement of its interests around the Pacific Rim, particularly in booming East Asia, but also world wide.

APEC's stated purpose is expansion of trade and investments. And in November 1994 it set the aim of creating the world's largest free trade zone by 2020. A future article will present a general overview of APEC and examine the many contradictions between its member states as well as within them. (And an examination of these contradictions reveals how problematic the goal of a Pacific free trade zone by 2020 really is.)

The APEC member-states are formally equals and it can only make decisions by unanimous consent. Nevertheless it's comprised of a number of imperialist wolves who prey upon the more economically backward and weaker members. The article below will dwell upon the struggle against environmental ruin which has been developing among the people of Papua New Guinea, a country which is being fed off of by Australian,

New Guinea is a large island in the Pacific Ocean, located just north of Australia. The western half is controlled by Indonesia. Papua New Guinea, independent from Australia since Sept. 16, 1975, includes the eastern half of New Guinea, the Bismarck Archipelago, the northern part of the Solomon Islands, including Bougainville, and many small offshore islands.

Canadian, U.S., Japanese, and other APEC wolves. We think this struggle raises several important theoretical issues which we'll begin to address with this article.

## Part One: In Support of the Papua New Guinean People's Struggles Against Environmental Ruin

### Introduction

Papua New Guinea gained political independence from Australia in 1975 and joined APEC in 1993. It's a weak country; at the bottom of the APEC heap economically, politically, and militarily. Of its four million people about 80% live at a subsistence level—farming, fishing, gathering nature's bounty from the land. They're divided into 740 language groups (nearly one-third of the world's total) with only 52% of the adult population being literate. And the indigenous natural economies built up for more than 50,000 years remain a factor in the country's economy today.

But Papua New Guinea is also a country rich in natural resources. For tens of thousands of years the people were able to exploit them in such a way that mass hunger or starvation were virtually unknown. And even today, unlike in much of the rest of the world, these nightmares have still to visit the people. Not surprisingly, the wealth of the land has become an attraction to capitalist vultures from the world over in recent years. They can only see the rich forests, earth and seas as a source of corporate profits. Driven by the laws of capitalist accumulation they're both cutting down the forests for lumber and tearing up the earth in search of minerals. The resulting environmental destruction, pollution of the rivers and seas, etc., is destroying the basis of the old natural or semi-natural economies. Capitalism from the "civilized" countries is beginning to bring hunger, want, social destruction, a "surplus population", etc. in its wake. In no way have things gone so far in this regard as in many other countries, yet almost everyone writing on Papua New Guinea these days notes the unmistakable tendencies underway.

In recent years the country has also become indebted to the lords of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). And it's not just the prey of corporations from the richest and most capitalistically developed countries. For example in the 1990s one of the struggles building among the people has been against devastation of the land by logging companies. The government wrote up more stringent logging regulations in response. But in early 1994 it suspended these regulations after intense pressure from *Malaysian*-owned logging companies. (Malaysia is *not* one of the richer or more developed of APEC countries.)

This kind of progress is an old story in the world. It's the story of the development of world capitalism itself. There's another side to it however. The raising of air-conditioned corporate offices in Port Moresby, etc., may *signal* that a living hell is coming to visit the people, but it's not fated that this will

occur in its worst or most brutal forms. APEC is an organization of governments representing capital. But those governments must contend with resistance by the masses of people to their policies. And, as we'll see below, even in far away Papua New Guinea the people, weak and disunited as they are, are resisting the effects of capitalist plundering—in defiance of both their own government and the powerful capitalists of North America, Australia and elsewhere.

But according to the Clinton Administration and capitalist press this side of the story shouldn't exist. The APEC countries are equal partners banded together for mutually beneficial trade and so on. Why if the market place is big enough and free enough it will bring a virtual heaven on earth to all. According to this capitalist fairy-tale, domination and exploitation of the poor and weak by the rich and strong is something which might have existed in some by-gone age, but never, never in a modern trading bloc that they're involved in. Yet in examining the very real and very present-day looting of Papua New Guinea by the multi-national corporations of some of its "partners" we'll see that the old imperialist relations of domination and exploitation of the weak by the strong remain in effect. In fact this country is suffering *more* domination and *more* exploitation than ever before.

Finally, we should note that, although in this article we're dealing with the issue of the looting of a weak country's natural resources, this isn't the only game in town in-so-far as APEC is concerned. In many ways it's just a side-show (unless you're a Papua New Guinean . . . or a big owner of a multi-national mining or logging corporation operating there). In Papua New Guinea the prize—more often than not—is gold literally, whereas in many other countries the prize is low wages, markets for goods, markets for lucrative loans and investments, etc. The latter are a relatively small factor in international capital's calculations regarding Papua New Guinea with its 4 million people scattered over mountains and valleys. But when it comes to China, for example, these factors are immensely important in calculations, which make it an extremely important and very grand prize. (A later article in this series will discuss questions related to China in some detail.)

### The mining boom

Papua New Guinea has been undergoing a huge minerals boom since the early 1980s. The largest copper mine in the world is located there as well as one of the largest gold mines. The forecasts are that it will very soon become the third largest producer of gold. And besides copper, gold, and silver (which is also being mined), other minerals slated to be stripped from the earth include chromium, platinum, nickel, manganese, aluminum, cobalt, lead, zinc, phosphate and sulphur. (The country also has oil and gas. The American Chevron Corp. is developing a project in the Central Highlands and refineries are being planned in two coastal cities.)

The Papua New Guinean government's whole "development strategy" is now centered on mining. But the benefits of this boom have been going first and foremost to the big mining corporations of Australia, Canada, and elsewhere. These include Broken Hill Propriety Co. (Australia's largest corporation),

Metall Mining Corp. (Canada), the Australian subsidiary of Canada's Placer Dome Corp., Conzinc Rio Tinto (Australia), Amoco Minerals (United States), and others. (Sometimes several of these multi-nationals will share ownership of a mine with the Papua New Guinean government.) For the masses of Papua New Guinean people, however, the mining boom is bringing brutal wage-slavery for those employed in the mines (and also deaths from explosions and other mining disasters) and a wrecking of the environment the masses of people must live from.

The capitalist press implies that the opening of big mines in Papua New Guinea is radically transforming the country, everything is allegedly booming, etc., but this is an exaggeration. The average growth rate of the economy from 1990 through 1994 was a little over 2%, low by APEC standards.

Besides this there have been busts. Cash crops remain an important factor in the national economy (and their production and processing still employ the overwhelming majority of workers). Over-production crises and falling prices of agricultural products on the world markets have therefore hit Papua New Guinea hard. The first time was in 1980-82 and the second in 1989-90. In the second instance the closure of the Bougainville mine compounded the recession. The country suffered a big negative balance of payments and the government ran up the national debt. It borrowed money from the IMF and instituted austerity measures. So now it's bleeding the people to make payments on its \$58 million obligation to the IMF.

### **The people's resistance to environmental ruin**

The ruining of the environment by the multi-national mining corporations has raised the people to struggle. It was an important factor in the secessionist struggle which broke out on Bougainville Island in 1989—a struggle in which 500 people reportedly have been killed and which has forced the closing down of the world's largest copper mine. (1)<sup>1</sup> It was a factor in a big fight in the 1990s over who would own a proposed gold mine on Lihir Island. And last year it led to 16,000 Papua New Guinean villagers filing the largest lawsuit in Australian history.

Because we lack information on the first two struggles we'll here deal with the issues surrounding the lawsuit only. But we should note in passing that this suit is a mere reflection of a deeper movement against environmental wrecking existing among the people. Both the American press and several books by Papua New Guineans and Australians mention that this

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<sup>1</sup>When the landowners' claims against the Bougainville mine were rejected in 1988 a group of them sabotaged the mine. The Australian operators agreed to raise royalties from 5% to 20% and briefly resumed mining. But this didn't satisfy many of the landowners. A government agent was killed and the government responded by sending 2,000 troops to the island to suppress the people. These events led to a civil war between the secessionist Bougainville Revolutionary Army and the government forces.

movement has been developing for a number of years, both against mining pollution and against deforestation. Unfortunately we have yet to find a source which really elaborates on the forms of struggle it's been using. However all imply that it's a force the capitalists must reckon with. Moreover, we lack concrete information on the real extent of the environmental damage which has so far occurred. It's clearly much, much less than that which has occurred to island ecosystems such as those of Borneo or Santo Domingo. But island ecosystems are fragile. And a "little" damage to them can rapidly be noticed by peoples directly living from the land. A "little" damage can destroy a whole way of life.

But to continue. The suit was filed on behalf of 16,000 villagers for \$3 billion in damages from the owners of the Ok Tedi copper and gold mine located on the Ok Tedi River. These owners are Broken Hill (52%), Metall (18%), and the government (30%). Their operation has polluted the Ok Tedi River, the lower third of the 700-mile Fly River (the country's largest), and then the sea near the top end of the Great Barrier Reef. The fish have been killed, the water has been made undrinkable, and the trees along the rivers are dying. The people who once depended on these resources face hardship and are struggling to find ways of getting redress and to stop the pollution.

### **The government sides with the polluters**

But the Papua New Guinean government has sided with the multi-national corporations against the people. First, after the tailings dam built to handle wastes from the Ok Tedi mine was destroyed in a landslide in 1984, the government just let the mining go on. For ten years it did nothing to stop the poisoning of the environment. And then, after the filing of the lawsuit, the Prime Minister went on a rampage against the villagers. He struck a nationalist pose by warning against foreign lawyers trying to drum up business among the rightfully angry village people, i.e.: "We do not want to see our country being used by lawyers from outside." He threatened to draft retroactive laws to block the claim against Broken Hill Propriety. He worried over the possibility of suits against other mining corporations and slurred them in advance by calling them "copycat" suits. And he expressed over and over the government line that development of the country can only come through turning it over to wholesale exploitation by the multi-national mining corporations.

### **Where is the government coming from?**

We think this government represents the interests of capital—both domestic and international capital. That's its class essence. But its social basis within the country is quite small and weak (i.e., Papua New Guinean capitalism is in its infancy) whereas its ties to the more powerful centers of capital are very strong.

In this regard it appears the Papua New Guinean government remains in the hands of the same bureaucratic elite which the Australian colonial masters built up and trained in the years preceding 1975. In the 1960s, under U.N. pressure to do something regarding its colony, Australia began to groom an elite to rule the country. In 1973 it granted "home rule", and in 1975 it

## Two lines on development

quietly granted independence to the government it had trained. Michael Somare, who had led the colonial administration for the Australians, became the first prime minister and held this post for most of the period between 1975 and 1987. Prime Minister Paias Wingti was originally a member of Somare's party. In the 1980s he formed a new party and it eventually won a plurality. (We haven't investigated what this split was over.) Further, it might be interesting to quote a professor from the University of Papua New Guinea regarding the government he supports. In the 1990s he writes as follows: "The design, infrastructure, and plan of Papua New Guinea is still basically Australian and must remain so for a long time to come. Advice on the nation's foreign policy is still heard from Australia and in the larger world context, this tends to align Papua New Guinea with the West. However, the nation is increasingly voicing independent opinions, particularly in the context of the emerging Pacific island states."<sup>2</sup>

After independence Australian "government by patrol" was replaced by a somewhat more sophisticated Papua New Guinean "government by patrol". But there were other changes taking place as well. The cash-crop export economy was rapidly expanding (it quadrupled in one decade) and the domestic bourgeoisie growing to some extent. (It should be pointed out that both the expansion and the growth were from very low starting points however.) And of course the major issue which has arisen since the 1970s has been the discovery of the great mineral reserves. This attracted capital from several metropolitan countries. The Australian corporations seem to have so far grabbed the greatest plunder but others are dogging their heels. Finally, we should note that Australia's share of trade with Papua New Guinea has been declining for two decades.

So even though today the big banks in Papua New Guinea remain Australian, the largest expatriate community is Australian, and Australia obviously has much going for it in the country, we think it would be wrong to conclude that it's all-powerful in its former colony. It's not. However, at this point we can't say what the real balance of power among the exploiters in Papua New Guinea is.

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<sup>2</sup>Well, the Papua New Guinean ruling class may well have "independent opinions" regarding the Pacific island states. It did send part of its 5,000 man army to suppress an uprising on Vanuatu a few years ago. Then again, its opinions may not be so independent. Our investigation has not went so far that we can determine if the invasion of Vanuatu was directly motivated by the independent class interests of the Papua New Guinean bourgeoisie, or was motivated by its interests running in parallel with those of the Australian (or other) bourgeoisie(s), or whether the Papua New Guinean troops were acting merely as hired guns for someone else.

(Of course strategically, by itself Papua New Guinea is in a weak position regarding Indonesia. This undoubtedly causes Australia to give Papua New Guinea plenty of foreign policy "advice".)

We've already mentioned that the government's line for development of Papua New Guinea is to bow before the multinational corporations. It wants investment capital and says over and over that this capital will be attracted by the mineral reserves. Its whole present development "strategy" centers around opening more and more mines.<sup>3</sup> But other Papua New Guineans have other ideas about how development should take place and about the future. For example, a clan leader from the people living downstream from the Ok Tedi mine says the villagers are "not against mining, but it has to be done properly to save the environment and protect the people". And elsewhere in the country people have been asking the very reasonable question: "what happens when the minerals and forests are gone?"

Last year an Associated Press reporter said Prime Minister Paias Wingti was "furious" with those raising such ideas and questions. He wanted "nothing to interfere with a minerals boom he hopes will bring prosperity to Papua New Guinea". But we think it's actually the domination of ideas like those expressed by Mr. Wingti which hold back development in the less capitalistically developed countries today, which are "interfering"—so to speak—with development. And it's the ideas expressed by the Papua New Guinean clan chieftain which can in fact bring most rapid development (and concurrently prepare conditions for socialist revolutions and prosperity for *all*).

But how can this be?

This is not a new question for the revolutionary movement. In fact we would like to begin discussion of it by quoting some comments made by Lenin which we think provide a relevant framework around which to work out an answer. These comments are from a letter to Maxim Gorky written in 1911.

As regards quixotism in the international policy of Social-Democracy, I think, you are wrong. It is the revisionists who have long been asserting that colonial policy is progressive, that it implants capitalism and that therefore it is senseless to 'accuse it of greed and cruelty', for 'without these qualities' capitalism is 'hamstrung'

It would be quixotism and whining if Social-Democrats were to tell the workers that there could be salvation somewhere apart from the

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<sup>3</sup>It wasn't always this way. Exploitation of mineral reserves played a very small role in the colonial economy. For example gold exports were only \$839,000 in 1969-70. This figure was last in the listing of the top ten exports from the country. At that time the top six exports were various cash crops, seventh was logs, eighth was lumber and plywood, and ninth was fish and fish preparation.

Between 1970 and 1979 the value of these exports increased more than fourfold with coffee, cocoa, tea, fish, palm oil and logs showing the greatest increases. But with the opening of first the Bougainville mine (in 1972), and then many others in the 1980s, copper and gold have become the main exports.

development of capitalism. But we do not say this. We say: capital devours you, will devour the Persians, will devour everyone and go on devouring until you overthrow it. That is the truth. And we do not forget to add: except through the growth of capitalism there is no guarantee of victory over it.

Marxists do not defend a single reactionary measure, such as banning trusts, restricting trade, etc. But to each his own. Let Khomyakov and Co. build railways across Persia, let them send Lyakhovs [blood-stained military men], but the job of the Marxists is to expose them to the workers. If it devours, say the Marxists, if it strangles, fight back.

Resistance to colonial policy and international plunder by means of organizing the proletariat, by means of defending freedom for the proletarian struggle, does not retard the development of capitalism but accelerates it, forcing it to resort to more civilized, technically higher methods of capitalism. There is capitalism and capitalism. There is Black-Hundred Octobrist [reactionary, pogromist] capitalism and Narodnik ('realistic, democratic', full of 'activity') capitalism. The more we expose capitalism before the workers for its 'greed and cruelty', the more difficult it is for capitalism of the first order to persist, the more surely is it bound to pass into capitalism of the second order. And this just suits us, this just suits the proletariat.

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The Germans have an exemplary journal of the opportunists: Sozialistische Monatshefte. There gentlemen like Schippel and Bernstein have long been attacking the international policy of the revolutionary Social-Democrats by raising an outcry that this policy resembles the 'lamentations of compassionate' people. That brother is a trick of opportunist swindlers. . . .

The international proletariat is pressing capitalism in two ways: by converting Octobrist capitalism into democratic capitalism and, because it drives Octobrist capitalism away from itself by transplanting this capitalism to the savages. This, however, enlarges the basis of capitalism and brings its death nearer. There is practically no Octobrist capitalism left in Western Europe; practically all capitalism is democratic. Octobrist capitalism has gone from Britain and France to Russia and Asia. The Russian revolution [1905] and the revolutions in Asia = the struggle for ousting Octobrist capitalism and replacing it by democratic capitalism. And democratic capitalism = the last of its kind. It has no next stage to go on to. The next stage is its death." (*Collected Works*, Vol.34, pp.438-39)

Prime Minister Wingti is not a revisionist politician like those Lenin was attacking. He's an ordinary capitalist politician who makes no Marxist pretenses. Nevertheless he does see the rape of his country by international capital as being progressive (from his class viewpoint). He sees it as being "senseless" (or worse) to in any way "hamstring" this cruelty. One might say that he's a champion of "Octobrist" capitalism and that his threats to draft retroactive legislation to outlaw the lawsuit against Broken Hill Propriety is a political reflection of this. (Banning lawsuits is hardly a democratic measure.) But the Papua New Guinean villagers are taking another path. They're struggling to find ways to *resist* capitalist plunder, i.e. to make the multi-national mining corporations clean up their act, "to resort to more civilized, technically higher methods of capitalism" as Lenin said, or to mine "properly to save the environment and protect the people" as our clan leader said. Thus one could say they're struggling for "Narodnik" capitalism—at least in an immediate, objective sense.

Such a capitalism would require *more investment*—investments for tailings dams and other measures to protect the environment, for environmental clean-up, for compensating people whose way of life was devastated nonetheless (for capitalism would still "devour"), for safer methods of mining, etc., etc. This expansion of capitalism, an expansion of a more "civilized" capitalism rather than the present plunder-and-run capitalism would result in a more rapid and all-sided development of the country.

But in Papua New Guinea (or other countries) such a capitalism can only be forced into existence through the class struggle of the workers and country-people against capital, against the multi-nationals, and against the "Octobrist" domestic political defenders of the looting of the country. The struggles of the working class internationally, and of the world environmental movement, can play an important role in assisting such forcing.

In his day Lenin observed that as "Narodnik" capitalism came into existence reactionary "Octobrist" capitalism was transplanted "to the savages" (as he put it). He held that: "This, however, enlarges the basis of capitalism and brings its death nearer." We think that as a general phenomena this remain true today. But Lenin didn't advocate that the working class and other oppressed people should passively suffer for generation after generation, waiting for capitalism to become so enlarged—either in the more democratic countries or in the backward or "savage" countries". He advocated that they fight back against all the devouring and strangling features of capitalism (which would continue to grow, and grow in ways which were affected by the struggles against it), and through such struggles prepare themselves for a socialist revolution to overthrow the capitalist system of production altogether. And he preached proletarian internationalism, preached that the workers' interests in one country were completely bound up with the workers' interests of all countries. Hence the workers of the world had to actively support each other's struggles, build international organizations to advance these struggles, etc. This was the path toward working class liberation.

(To be continued.) □

# The situation of the working class

This section of the *Communist Voice* contains articles on the situation directly facing the working class.

We reproduce a leaflet denouncing the current offensive on the workers and the poor—the “Contract with America” is not really a “Contract on America”, as the popular joke goes, but a contract on the working people on behalf of the wealthy elite.

Also, Pete Brown comments on the views of the Solidarity Organizing Committee. He shows that the SOC can't see beyond the trade union apparatus, so that all their big words about struggle end up simply grist to the mill of the trade union bureaucracy. This continues from last time our articles on the approach of different groups to workplace organizing.

And we carry Pete Brown's review of C. Wright Mill's book on the growth of the middle strata. This continues his discussion of the changes in the composition of the working class from our last issue.

## Fight the 'Contract' on the workers and poor!

Under the above title, the April 20 issue of *Detroit Workers Voice*, the paper of the Detroit Marxist-Leninist Study Group, contained the following articles and the appeal to demonstrate on April 22.

The Republican's “Contract With America” is an outrageous assault on the workers and poor. It has aroused disgust among a wide section of the masses and protests are beginning to break out against it. This is a good sign. Only a powerful class struggle of the oppressed can resist the capitalist rulers' efforts to drive down the living standards of the workers, tear the social “safety-net” to ribbons, incite racism to scapegoat blacks, Latinos and immigrants, and assault women's rights. Clinton and the other Democratic Party politicians are denouncing the “Contract” too. Not because they are worried about the masses, though. They agree with the Republicans that the budget axe must fall on the poor. They just disagree over how and how quickly to drive the masses down.

Right now, the Republican-controlled Congress has begun to push their “Contract” through Congress. What are the main features of their plan?

\* **Gutting welfare programs:** Some Republicans in Congress recently compared those on welfare to animals. And the “Contract” reflects this attitude. As capitalism impoverishes more and more people, those needing various welfare programs has grown. The Republican answer: let them suffer. They are trying to end various social programs as entitlements where each person qualifying for benefits automatically receives them. Instead they will place a cap on welfare spending and send a set amount of funds to the states which will develop their own welfare policies. If the need for welfare exceeds the cap, what happens? The states can choose between excluding a section of the needy from any aid, or covering more people only by cutting the amount of aid each recipient gets. By eliminating national

welfare standards, the most notorious welfare slashers like Gov. Engler Scissorhands will have an even freer hand to starve the poor. The list of welfare programs that are being placed on the chopping block includes such things as AFDC benefits, subsidized school lunch programs, food stamps, and public housing. Of course, to be fair, one must admit that the “Contract” does provide funds for one sort of “housing” program — more jails!

\* **Other social programs under assault:** The “Contract” will likely result in slashing the already inadequate Medicare/Medicaid health programs that the poor and elderly rely on. The Republican tax bill recently passed in the House included \$1.3 billion in education cuts. Financing for summer jobs programs for youth is also being targeted.

\* **Racism running wild:** Newt Gingrich and company are crusading against “affirmative action” programs. These programs don't begin to make up for the past and present discrimination against national minorities. But even the small relief they offer is supposed to be ended. This campaign seeks to scapegoat oppressed minorities for the unemployment caused by capitalism. The Republicans are also scapegoating immigrants. Not content to torture “illegal” immigrants, they plan to elim-

**Rally and March in Detroit!**  
April 22 2pm First Unitarian Church  
—4605 Cass at Forest—  
(Called by the National People's Campaign)

Now is the time to stand up to the “Contract”! Protests are starting to develop. On March 29, students at 150 campuses held actions. Rallies have been held in a number of cities. On April 5, in Detroit, 1,000 marched.  
**JOIN THE FIGHT!**

inate benefits to "legal" immigrants.

\* Discrimination against women and gays: Besides the attacks on poor women and their families in the welfare proposals, the elimination of affirmative action programs will also deny women access to jobs and scapegoat them like the national minorities and immigrants. Waiting in the wings are also more limitations on abortion rights. Measures that provide some protection for gays and lesbians are also being targeted.

\* A corporate assault on environmental, safety and health regulations: The "Contract" proposes eliminating many regulations under the guise that they are too expensive for the corporations or federal and state governments to endure. It also makes it easier to sue the government over environmental regulations while making it all but impossible for individuals to sue rich businesses.

\* A tax-relief bonanza for the rich: The GOP tax proposal reduces capital gains tax. About 76% of this tax relief goes to those earning \$100,000 or more (which is only the top 4% of those filing federal income tax forms). Another proposal will let businesses cut their taxes \$120 billion over ten years through accelerated depreciation allowances on equipment. There is also a proposal for a \$500/child tax credit for families earning up to

\$200,000. This would offer some tax relief to a lot of working class families, but not for the poorest who already are exempt from paying income tax. But overall, over half the relief goes to corporations and a thin layer of wealthy families. It is another shift of the tax burden onto the masses. And it is financed by cuts in services for workers and the poor.

### What is behind the rhetoric against "big government"?

The Republicans market their program as a blow against "big government". But somehow they exclude the \$270 billion military budget and the over \$200 billion to the financiers of the national debt from their definition of big government. The fat subsidies for the corporations and agribusiness also don't count. If you want to sue businesses for their crimes or get an abortion, the government will stand in your way. And if you are poor, or black or Latino, or an immigrant, there are more regulations over your life, more police-state measures and more prisons. Under rhetoric against government bureaucracy, the power of monstrous corporate bureaucracies will be strengthened and the rights of the masses weakened. □

## Democrats: no alternative

While the Republicans are pushing their "revolution" for the rich, Clinton and the Democrats are claiming to be the alternative. So let's see what sort of alternative the Democrats are offering.

Clinton has accepted the Contract's premise that the poor must bear the burden for the economic woes of the country. He agrees that welfare programs must be cut, but claims he wouldn't be so callous as the Republicans. Evidently Clinton considers his own proposals to finance "welfare reform" by cutting food stamps as an example of humanitarianism.

Meanwhile, the Democrats in the House tried to amend the Republican tax bill by agreeing to massive social welfare cuts provided the cuts went to balance the budget, not toward more tax breaks for the wealthy. Of course, making the poor pay for balancing the budget means making them pay for the past huge tax breaks for the rich which helped fuel the deficit during the Reagan-Bush era.

Well, one might argue, at least Clinton is not so backward

in his treatment of civil rights issues. Think again. On April 9 he took up the racist reverse discrimination rhetoric of the anti-affirmative action crowd. He justified a "review" of affirmative action programs asking "are they fair?" since "this is psychologically a hard time for a lot of white males, the so-called angry white males." Rush Limbaugh couldn't have done a better job of scapegoating minorities and women for capitalism's assault on all workers, and first and foremost, minorities and women.

Clinton can't seem to find any money to alleviate the social conditions that lead to crime. But he can engage in an impassioned debate with the Republicans over the best way to build up the police-state. Thus the President is upset that the Republican plan for more prisons might undermine his plans for 100,000 more police.

The Democrats might want to polish off some of the rough edges of the Republican "revolution" But they too have enlisted in the war on the poor. □

## 'Contract with America' means capitalism is bankrupt

The "Contract" isn't misery for all. It means more profits for the wealthy. No matter how much of the national wealth the rich monopolize, they want more.

If workers and activists are going to organize against these cutbacks, then we must see the basic reason for these continuing attacks on the workers and the poor. Capitalist society is divided

into classes, into those who work and those who benefit. What helps one class harms the other. This is why, although capitalism is triumphant, the conditions for the workers are getting worse. The victory of capitalism means intensifying the conflicts between the classes, not solving them.

Throughout the years there have been a lot of proposals for reforming capitalism. But they are all collapsing. There was the "welfare state". But today the social safety net is being cut and cut again. There was the hope that large corporations would be benevolent and provide security. But today these corporations are downsizing and becoming "lean and mean". Meanwhile, there was state-capitalism and the bureaucratic system in the Soviet bloc, China, Cuba, etc. But most of these regimes have collapsed, the others are turning into corporate clones, and market reforms are intensifying the long-standing class antagonisms in those societies.

And the "Contract with America" is proof that American capitalism too is going bankrupt.

There will be no lasting relief until capitalism is overthrown. Those who do the work must be the same as those who decide

what goes on. Only then, in a socialist society, will these attacks cease.

Right now there is little opposition to capitalism. But even small groups of workers meeting together would change the political atmosphere. And the spreading of the conviction that capitalism must go will help provide a powerful drive to the present-day struggles. In the past, it was precisely the interest of many workers and activists in opposing capitalism that provided the spark for the mass struggles for an 8-hour day, for higher wages, for welfare. But if the capitalist framework is accepted, then the only question is how to distribute the cutbacks, just as the Democrats propose. Only by questioning capitalism can we create the backbone for a real fight against all the capitalist parties—Republican, Democrat or Perot-ist.

We must come together to condemn the cutbacks and organize an immediate struggle. But we must also spread the truth that the system of profit-making is obsolete. Private ownership of factories, resources, and technical knowledge means misery for the non-owners, for the majority. Join with us to organize for the revival of the communist movement in this country. □

## Organizing for class independence is the way forward!

Within the "anti-Contract" movement, there are different views over how to fight back. We hold that neither the Democrats nor the present trade union bureaucracy are capable of such a fight. We believe this is a time for protracted efforts to establish independent class organization of the oppressed, hostile to capitalist politics. The leaders of the National People's Campaign are among those following a different path. This coalition of liberal and reformist forces has plenty of fire against the Republicans' "Contract." But when it comes to the Democrats, the National People's Campaign literature is all but silent.

True, some forces in the coalition will disagree with this or that Democratic Party policy or even claim to be fed up with the Democrats altogether. For instance, the principal organizer of the National People's Campaign is the trotskyite Workers World Party (WWP) which says it's against both capitalist parties. But even in their party press they heap praise on speeches from various trade union officials, NOW leaders, and other pro-Democratic Party types. The excerpts from the speeches at anti-"Contract" rallies they promote are notable for having nothing to say against the Democrats.

What it all comes down to is that despite their rhetoric, the WWP cannot see beyond the Democratic Party and are excited about the more liberal Democrats saving the day. Thus, they write: "Of course, not everyone in Congress sounded like they were campaigning to become the next Grand Dragon of the

KKK. The Congressional Black Caucus and others spoke against the Republican welfare plan." (*Workers World*, 4/6/95) Yes, the black liberals are quite good at grandstanding. But their role is to keep the faith of the masses in this capitalist party and to line them up to vote for the likes of halfway-Republicans like Clinton.

For the cause of the workers and poor to advance, a new kind of politics is necessary. We need politics which advances our interests as a class, not one that limits us to choose between the parties of the wealthy. We need a movement whose demands and militancy are not limited by what the capitalist establishment can accept, but only by our organized strength.

Workers and activists! Do not allow the mass energy at the anti-"Contract" protests to be channeled into voting campaigns for the "lesser of two evils." Use it to build up independent class organization in the workplaces, schools and communities. We need to draw the masses into militant struggle. We need organization which exposes the Democrats and reformist community organizers who trail in their wake. Let's establish networks of struggle among the rank-and-file workers and combat the illusion that the present corrupt trade union leadership is the workers' champion. The rich intend to ruin us, and if we are to resist we must prepare ourselves to wage a class struggle against them. □

# “Solidarity Organizing Committee” on the struggle in postal

By Pete Brown, Detroit

Postal workers have been singled out for attack this year. Labor union contracts for postal workers ran out last fall, and in negotiations postal management presented the unions with a list of severe takeback proposals. These included elimination of COLA, a two-year wage freeze, cutting sick leave in half, and cutting shift differential pay by two-thirds.

Fighting this attack is difficult. Over the years postal workers have been disarmed by the union leaders' constant assertions, “Don't worry; the arbitrator will take care of things.” Postal workers have lost the right to even vote on their contracts. Upper level bureaucrats decide what issues are to be negotiated. No news of the negotiations is allowed to leak out until the day it's announced: “No settlement was reached, so all issues will be referred to the arbitrator.” Once the arbitrator decides, that's it — there's no room in the process for any say by the rank and file.

Last December the Detroit Marxist-Leninist Study Group put out a leaflet on the struggle in postal with the heading: **Arbitration will not save postal workers! Organize against management's rotten contract demands!** A copy of this leaflet (*Detroit Workers' Voice*, December 3, 1994) can be obtained by contacting *Communist Voice*. In this leaflet we called on postal workers to begin developing opposition to the sellout being engineered by postal union bureaucrats.

Since then we have seen another publication also addressing the struggle in postal. This is a four-page newsletter, *The Postal Organizer*, put out by the Solidarity Organizing Committee (S.O.C.) and dated February 1995. Like our December leaflet, this publication denounced postal management's contract proposals, warned postal workers about the dangers of remaining passive during negotiations and arbitration, and gave a call for action.

But there's a difference in the call being given. Our leaflet emphasized the importance of the rank and file organizing themselves, and warned that the top trade union bureaucrats are planning a sellout. The S.O.C. newsletter, in contrast, encourages workers to keep things in the hands of the trade union bureaucrats and is horrified at the thought of independent organization.

This contrast can be brought out by analyzing the two lead articles in S.O.C.'s newsletter. The first article, entitled “Rotten postal deal; Return to sender!”, argues that instead of waiting passively for arbitration, postal workers should hold picket lines and local rallies, slow down the mail, and organize a national rally in Washington, D.C. This sounds like a positive, activist orientation. But they also call on the trade union leaders to head this up, saying workers should push the trade union leaders to call the national rally. Such an approach only reinforces passivity and keeps things in the hands of the bureaucrats.

(Since the S.O.C. newsletter came out some of the postal union leaders have in fact called a national rally in Washington, D.C. In typical bureaucrat fashion, they made it as difficult as possible for rank and file workers to attend. They scheduled it for May 23, a Tuesday, and for overnight accommodations they chose hotels charging \$150 a night! These arrangements are fine for a union bigwig with plenty of money and time, but how about the ordinary workers?)

The second lead article in S.O.C.'s newsletter is entitled “Chicago: hundreds respond to S.O.C.-led campaign against proposed postal cutbacks”. Here they describe a petition campaign they carried out in Chicago. Here again they make a point of calling on union officials in the first place to lead the petition drive. But they also say they mobilized “dozens of workers” to circulate their petition, and they gathered 300 signatures in one week. The main organizer of the petition drive, it seems, is an S.O.C. supporter who was also a steward for the postal clerks union (APWU).

Now, the national APWU leaders produce a lot of rhetoric denouncing management's takeback proposals. They say the proposals are “obscene”, “garbage”, and so forth. They say they are “fighting” the proposals. And they have even called some rallies against them. So one would expect them to welcome a petition against the proposals, right?

Guess again. APWU officials interpreted this as rank-and-file activism and so, of course, were dead set against it. As S.O.C. describes it:

“The January Chicago APWU meeting was turned into an attack by the local president on S.O.C. and the steward who helped initiate the petition drive. . . . The local president also announced that the . . . steward was immediately decertified and was ‘dead as a union steward.’ ” (Note: unlike in some other industrial unions, APWU stewards are not elected; they are “certified” and “decertified” — i.e., appointed and fired — by the local officials.)

Here we have the trade union bureaucrats acting like their true selves. The bureaucrats pretend to be against management, but their main job is to suppress any motion among the rank and file.

Of course, rank and file workers were very angry about this. As S.O.C. says:

“Several union members . . . stood up to defend the steward and the petition. . . . The more militant workers made a plan to do another petition demanding that the local president re-certify the steward.” This sounds good. But then S.O.C. goes on to their main concern: “Some others more cynically said they would just quit the union if he was decertified. We explained that this was absolutely the wrong way to go, that this

would leave the workers weaker than ever.”

Why is quitting the union in protest such an “absolute” no-no for S.O.C.? Because come what may, no matter how undemocratic the bureaucrats behave, they insist that workers must continue to channel their activity into the trade union structures, under the bureaucrats. What a narrow viewpoint this is! Compare this to the point of view expressed in *Detroit Workers' Voice*, where workers are encouraged to develop all kinds of forms for expressing their opposition to management.

As a matter of fact, quitting the union might sometimes be a good tactic, a good way of protesting such an outrage. Especially since postal unions don't have a closed shop, they are somewhat sensitive to this kind of pressure. It could be a nice slap in the face to the bureaucrats. This would have to be judged, concretely. But clearly it's wrong to “absolutely” rule this out, as S.O.C. does. Their dogmatic position limits workers, from the get-go, to what is acceptable to the bureaucrats.

S.O.C. tries to justify this position by adding an ambiguous

sentence:

“By winning more workers to become more active in the union, and against the bosses' plans, we can create a real force for change in the APWU.”

Now, this sentence seems to assert that “by getting workers active against the bosses' plans, we can create a force for change” — and this is definitely true. But this idea is intertwined, in this sentence, with another: “by getting more workers to be active along lines laid down by the labor bureaucrats, we can create a new APWU, one that stands against the bosses' plans.” And this thought is highly doubtful at best. It's doubtful that the AFL-CIO bureaucracies will ever, right up to the day of the socialist insurrection, turn into standard-bearers of class struggle. By promoting such illusions in the bureaucrats S.O.C. is undermining workers' attempts to build up a determined struggle against the bosses' plans. □

## Reactions to the *Communist Voice*

Continued from page 58

*CV* now. This man seemed pretty interested in what I had to say on these issues and said the *CV* looked good.

The second man was in his late 20's or so and our discussion covered these grounds as well as some others. Most notably, our attitude toward *Spark* (he'd run across them in the East and didn't like their politics) and on the necessity to develop theoretical work. This man encouraged the latter discussion quite a bit and seemed to agree with everything I said on it. He warmly thanked me for the journal a couple of times and said he was as happy to see it.

I later noticed both these people standing with friends and reading *CV*. (The speeches being given at the time were by an

African-American woman member of the State Legislature, a former black activist who's now a reformist poverty bureaucrat, a long-time member of the WWP who's unable to inspire even the reformists, an honest but politically confused young black woman, and a 70-year-old former radio personality who organizes for the Democratic Party.)

The third person to buy the journal was a woman around 50. I was talking to someone else at the time so she just came up, read the front of the journal, slapped a buck in my hand, thanked me and left.

So things haven't gone that badly even though I've been at home a lot. I may want a few more of the next issue but I'll decide that by the middle of next week. . . .

Frank □

# The growth of the middle classes, and the prospects for socialist consciousness

Pete Brown reviews C. Wright Mills' *White Collar*

Book review of *White Collar: The American Middle Classes*, by C. Wright Mills. (New York; Oxford University Press, 1953) by Pete Brown, Detroit..

The issues raised by ex-Marxist Leninist Party members Fred, Joe and Michael about the composition and orientation of the working class are not new. For decades theoreticians have debated the structure of modern society and what it means for the Marxist vision of a proletarian revolution leading towards a classless society. C. Wright Mills wrote his book, *White Collar*, in the late 1940s in an attempt to deal with some of these issues.

In Mills' day there were sociologists who made a big fuss about the "expanding middle class" and used statistics on that to say that Marxism was wrong about society dividing between the bourgeoisie and proletariat and the proletariat being destined to become the ruling class. Instead, they argued, America would become a middle-class dominated society.

Mills' answer to such views is, in a word, that they are absurd. The middle class cannot begin to equal the organization and power of the big bourgeoisie. The "white collar" strata of modern society are weak, divided, and destined to remain followers in the realm of big-power politics. White collar employees cannot constitute a "third force", a realistic alternative to rule by the bourgeois or proletariat.

At the same time, Mills shows that statistics documenting the rapid growth of white collar strata, both absolutely and relatively, are correct. He argues that the development of modern industry requires this expansion of the middle strata. And so he ends up, finally, in a fairly pessimistic political position. The only viable alternative to rule by the imperialist bourgeoisie is the revolutionary movement of the proletariat; but this alternative seems to be closed off by a number of factors, among them the increasing weight of the middle strata; hence there is no realistic alternative to a long-term, dehumanized existence under capitalism.

So Mills ends up in a position very similar to the liquidationist one espoused by some ex-MLP members. But his book gives a much more elaborate statement of such a position. Analyzing this position gives us a better handle on the issues involved in opposing liquidationism.

## Mills on "expanding middle class"

Here I summarize the main points Mills makes about the expanding white collar strata and its political significance.

1) First of all, Mills marshals statistics to show the expanding number of white collar elements. He then turns this into one of his main arguments *against* middle-class dominance. He argues that large sections of the middle class are being

proletarianized, and one of the main factors in this is simply the rapid expansion of numbers. Just by itself the sheer number of clerks in today's society ensures a drop in status from the position of clerks in 19th-century society.

2) Mills brings out other factors making for proletarianization. These include the growing insecurity of white collar occupations; the falling pay and benefits attached to these occupations; the expansion of public education, which means a fall in status for strata that previously monopolized education; the rationalization and mechanization of office work.

3) Mills also attacks the notion of a homogeneous middle class. Mills upholds the view (from Weberian sociology) that white collar strata have certain common features in terms of *status* — higher education, clean occupations, etc. But Mills also brings out the differences between white collar strata — e.g., between doctors and hospital clerks; between business executives and typists; between sales executives and sales clerks. He shows that these differences replicate the differences between classes in society at large.

Thus there couldn't be a middle-class dominated society, because the middle class itself is split. Large sections of it are in reality proletarian, or rapidly becoming proletarian, while others have a pro-bourgeois orientation.

4) Mills also gives facts from opinion polls and electoral politics to show that white collar strata are not homogeneous, and their opinions are midway between "business" and "labor." Hence they do not have an alternative, third-force ideology; they simply bring up the rear of whatever movement is presently successful.

The bulk of *White Collar* is devoted to developing these arguments. Together they present a powerful case that the idea of a middle-class dominated society is absurd. They refute the notions advanced by Fred and Joe that the first focus of communist organizing work should be among the middle strata. But as I mentioned above, Mills also argues that

5) there is no viable proletarian alternative to the present dominance of the imperialist bourgeoisie. This view is developed towards the end of his book. Unlike the main arguments in *White Collar*, this view is not well developed or supported by statistics. Mills doesn't give any extensive analysis of the revolutionary and working class movements of his times. He has some general criticisms of modern American society, but he doesn't see the possibilities for developing alternative movements. So Mills remains stuck in an Angst-ridden, impotent, intellectualist position; he sees many things wrong, but doesn't see what to do about them.

## Comparing Mills to Briefs

Mills' general approach to the proletarian revolutionary

movement can be brought out more clearly if we compare it to that of Gustav Briefs in his book, *The Proletariat*. (My review of the latter appeared in the *Chicago Workers' Voice Theoretical Journal* issue #6 dated Feb. 10, 1995.)

Briefs' main theme was the deproletarianization of the blue collar. The industrial working class, he says, has been "deproletarianized" since the time of Marx and Engels. The main thing responsible for this is trade union organization. Capitalism, with its growing productivity, creates the possibility for a higher standard of living for workers. The capitalists, by themselves, would never allow workers to share in the fruits of advancing productivity. But trade union activity can bring this about, even under capitalism. Briefs rules out a revolutionary alternative, and so opts for a reformist solution: governments should encourage and protect trade unions as a way to ameliorate class conflict. This is pretty traditional social-democratic stuff, and is right in line with the New Deal's encouragement of trade union organization at that time (late 30s).

Mills, writing ten or fifteen years later, is discouraged by the results of the trade union drive of the late 30s/early 40s. He recognizes some economic gains of Briefs' hoped-for "deproletarianization". Industrial workers have been achieving benefits previously monopolized by the white collars: higher wages, insurance plans, pensions, greater job security, etc. And Mills too, like Briefs, attributes this to trade union organization. But Mills sees that the basic political issues don't get solved by workers winning economic benefits. In particular, he's upset by the permanent war economy. He understands that the workers are still in a subordinate position; they lack initiative, they lack control of their lives and the economy. The trade union leaders themselves have been transformed into a bunch of bureaucrats no different than the business leaders who are their supposed antagonists.

So Mills, going beyond Briefs, insists that economic reformism is not enough. Given the inhumane status quo and the looming possibility (given that the Cold War may turn hot at any moment) for wide-scale destruction, the workers' gain of some bread-and-butter benefits is pretty small potatoes. It doesn't shake things up or constitute an alternative to imperialism. In calling for something more, Mills gives a radical call way beyond Briefs. But at the same time he gives this call, Mills closes the door on answering it; for he doesn't see the possibility for any movement coming up independent of the sold-out bureaucrats.

### **Chapter-by-chapter review of Mills**

Below I give more details of Mills' position and how it develops in his book.

## **PART ONE: OLD MIDDLE CLASSES**

### **Chapter 1. The World of the Small Entrepreneur**

Mills describes the world of Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln and Walt Whitman as a world of small farmers and craftsmen. Economically active people were both owners and producers.

They were connected economically by free, competitive markets. Thus, Mills argues, there was a real basis for the ideology of independent free-enterprisers.

Comment: there's a good deal of abstraction here. Already in the early 19th century capitalism and a propertyless proletariat were well on their way of development. Mills also ignores slavery; he says slave owners were insignificant because there weren't very many of them — as if that means they didn't have economic and political power! But in any case — he brings out the reality that existed in a large part of society.

### **Chapter 2. The Transformation of Property**

Turn-of-the-century urbanization...mergers, concentration of capital, development of monopolies... The closing of competitive markets accessible to free-enterprisers. The "rural debacle" — decades of low prices for farm commodities stretching from the 1880s into the 1930s — put the economic squeeze on small farmers, forcing them to sell out and move into the cities. Small entrepreneurs were transformed into propertyless workers.

The small-time holdovers of today, owners of dirt farms, Mom & Pop corner groceries, family restaurants, etc. Mills refers to as "lumpen bourgeoisie."

### **Chapter 3. The Rhetoric of Competition**

In this chapter Mills satirizes petty-bourgeois political ideology in the U.S., which continues to promote the 19th-century idea of the competitive entrepreneur. In reality, Mills says, small businessmen are intensely insecure, and the last thing they want is any real competition. Look at how these heroes of competition react when WalMart comes to town! Mills regards farm price supports as economically irrational and a cover for big-time agribusiness. Mills satirizes the bourgeois politicians who serve the interests of the monopoly corporations but do so by mouthing the ideology of small farmers and shopkeepers.

## **PART TWO: WHITE COLLAR WORLDS**

### **Chapter 4. The New Middle Class: I**

This chapter is jammed full of interesting facts and statistics. I'll quote a number of these. His main point is that the new middle-class elements are not owner/producers like 19th century farmers or storekeepers. Like Marx's proletariat, they are propertyless "sellers of labor power." But they have higher pay and status than the blue-collar, industrial proletariat. Mills calls the latter "wage workers"; white collar employees, by contrast, are generally salaried (paid by the week or month) or, as in the case of professionals, paid by fee.

p. 63: "In the early 19th century . . . probably 4/5 of the occupied population were self-employed enterprisers; by 1870, only about 1/3, and in 1940, only about 1/5, were still in this old middle class. Many of the remaining 4/5 . . . [are] working for the 2 or 3 per cent of the population who now own 40 or 50 per cent of the private property in the United States. Among these workers are the members of the new middle class, white-collar people on salary."

Comment: Among other things, this quote brings out the

concentration of capital into the hands of a small number of big bourgeoisie. These numbers ("2 or 3 per cent . . . own 40 or 50 per cent of the private property") haven't changed much since Mills' time. But they did represent a significant change from 100 years before.

p. 63: "Of the three broad strata composing modern society, only the new middle class has steadily grown in proportion to the whole." Mills illustrates this with the following table:

| <u>The Labor Force</u> | 1870 | 1940 |
|------------------------|------|------|
| Old Middle Class       | 33%  | 20%  |
| New Middle Class       | 6%   | 25%  |
| Wage-Workers           | 61%  | 55%  |
| Total                  | 100% | 100% |

So there's a growing middle class. But Mills immediately follows this with the comment on p. 64 that "The employees composing the new middle class do not make up one single compact stratum. . . . they now form, as it were, a new pyramid within the old pyramid of society at large . . . The great bulk of the new middle class are of the lower middle-income brackets . . ." And he illustrates this with another table:

| <u>New Middle Class</u> | 1870 | 1940 |
|-------------------------|------|------|
| Managers                | 14%  | 10%  |
| Salaried Professionals  | 30%  | 25%  |
| Salespeople             | 44%  | 25%  |
| Office Workers          | 12%  | 40%  |
| Total                   | 100% | 100% |

Mills comments (p. 64): "The major shifts in overall composition have been in the relative decline of the sales group, occurring most sharply around 1900 . . . ; and the steady rise of the office workers . . . . Today the three largest occupational groups in the white-collar stratum are schoolteachers, salespeople in and out of stores, and assorted office workers. These three form the white-collar mass."

The decline in percentage of salespeople reflects a decline in small, competitive markets. America used to be the land of "beaters" — traveling salesmen. Today they're replaced by corporate employees who plan advertising campaigns, total up sales, and research future sales. Thus the decline in salespeople is connected to the big jump in office workers.

The number of salespeople still left seems like a lot, but bear in mind: this includes sales clerks in stores — masses of retail sales clerks who are in fact proletarians. They aren't "salesmen" in the sense of traveling salesmen working on commission.

One odd thing: Mills notes that schoolteachers are one of the major occupational groupings, but he doesn't examine this grouping further in the book. He examines other, nonsalaried professionals; and he examines university professors. And he notes the rapid expansion of public education. But he neglects teachers.

Another table on p. 65 compares old and new middle class:

| <u>THE MIDDLE CLASSES</u> | 1870       | 1940       |
|---------------------------|------------|------------|
| <u>Old Middle Class</u>   | <u>85%</u> | <u>44%</u> |
| Farmers                   | 62%        | 23%        |
| Businessmen               | 21%        | 19%        |
| Free Professionals        | 2%         | 2%         |
| <u>New Middle Class</u>   | <u>15%</u> | <u>56%</u> |
| Managers                  | 2%         | 6%         |
| Salaried Professionals    | 4%         | 14%        |
| Salespeople               | 7%         | 14%        |
| Office Workers            | 2%         | 22%        |
| Total middle classes      | 100%       | 100%       |

Mills then has a discussion of "industrial mechanics" to explain why the rapid growth in white-collar occupations has occurred. This is an interesting discussion of the economic reasons behind what is generally called "the transition from a manufacturing to a service economy."

p. 66: "As the proportion of workers needed for the extraction and production of things declines, the proportion needed for servicing, distributing, and co-ordinating rises." Mills illustrates this with a table:

|                | 1870 | 1940 |
|----------------|------|------|
| Producing      | 77%  | 46%  |
| Servicing      | 13%  | 20%  |
| Distributing   | 7%   | 23%  |
| Co-ordinating  | 3%   | 11%  |
| Total employed | 100% | 100% |

And he comments (p. 66): "The white-collar industries themselves have grown, and within each industry the white-collar occupations have grown. Three trends lie back of [this] fact . . . : the increasing productivity of machinery used in manufacturing; the magnification of distribution; and the increasing scale of co-ordination." He follows this with statistics on different industries.

Then follows a section giving a general characterization of "white collar", what distinguishes them from "wage-workers." In terms of property, he emphasizes, there is no difference; if the working class were defined as simply those who were propertyless employees, then white-collar employees would be lumped in with factory workers. But there are differences with respect to:

1) kinds of work. Wage-workers deal with material things; white-collar employees deal with people and/or symbols.

2) level of income. In 1890, Mills says, average white-collar pay was double that of wage-workers. By the late 1940s it was still about one-third more. (He notes though that there's a wide range in white-collar pay, and the tendency is toward equalization with wage-workers.)

3) status. Here Mills brings out his Weberian sociology.

White-collar people have more prestige because they rub shoulders with the rich, have more education than wage-workers, wear street clothes at work (factory workers have to change into work clothes — Mills mentions this numerous times); and white-collars have the prestige of (usually) being native-born and white. Some of this is nauseating, but he does bring out differences between strata.

4) power. Some white-collars (not all) have upper-level positions in bureaucracies and thus have command over people, which wage-workers don't.

## Chapter 5. The Managerial Demiurge

Mills discusses the first major stratum of the new middle class: business managers. He notes that management types have taken over expanding bureaucracies not only in corporations, but also in government and labor unions. Business, labor and government all have the same stratum of big-time bureaucrats at the top.

The workplace supervisor — the foreman — is the bottom of the managerial totem pole. Foremen used to be people with experience and authority; now they are simply conveyors of corporate authority.

Mills polemicizes against the idea of “managerial revolution” (the idea that managers employed by the corporation will take business in directions distinct from those desired by the capitalist owners). Managers are totally subservient to the corporation and private property; they are hired to expand profits, that's what they're trained to do in business college, and that's what they do. They also intermingle with the capitalists (intermarrying, etc.).

But Mills brings out that there are differences from 19th-century managers. Corporate hierarchies continue to undergo greater and greater rationalization. In this process the human element becomes ever smaller, and the corporate organization becomes more and more “fetishized.” Corporate rules become more important than personalities or conscience. The bureaucracy eliminates any external systems of evaluation through “organized irresponsibility” — the hierarchy and division of labor are totally organized, and yet the result is that no one is responsible for answering human grievances. And forms of power shift from explicit authority — ordering workers around — to manipulation, getting workers to internalize the corporate rules as their own conscience.

## Chapter 6. Old Professions and New Skills

Here Mills examines the “free professions” — law, medicine, college teaching. His main point is that they're all becoming bureaucratized, industrialized, run by professional managers.

In medicine Mills notes the expansion of all occupations and the rise of corporate hospitals as the centers of the industry. The only occupation not expanding is doctors, an anomaly made possible by the political clout and strong organization of the AMA. (Mills notes that at the turn of the century doctors actually outnumbered nurses!) Doctors have maintained themselves as free professionals, an anomaly inside the big corporate

hospitals.

In law the tendency is towards corporate law firms and extreme specialization, dedicated to serving the monopolies. Among college teachers the tendency is toward narrow careerism instead of objective analysis of the world.

Mills points out the merging of business with the professions. The professions are becoming dominated by management types who run the big corporate hospitals, law firms, and universities. On the other hand, businessmen desiring the status of professionals are organizing themselves into AMA-type groups governing their occupations — accountants, engineers, statisticians, etc.

## Chapter 7. Brains, Inc.

Mills goes after the intellectuals (writers, editors, etc.) here. He develops the concept of what was later (by Marcuse) termed “co-optation.” He says intellectuals are not so much argued out of their anti-establishment positions as they are subverted out of them, by being employed by the corporate establishment and provided with a comfortable middle class existence.

## Chapter 8. The Great Salesroom

This chapter title is Mills' metaphor for American society. It's one great bazaar where everyone and everything is a commodity. And this salesroom is being bureaucratized. The old “beaters” are replaced by corporate marketing divisions. Salesmanship is converted into a science, broken down into parts and then practiced on a vast scale by advertising departments, pricing departments, etc. The small-town sundries store is replaced by the large urban department store. Department store buyers and floorwalkers, like factory foremen, lose their personal authority and independent judgment, becoming simply instruments of corporate policy. Retail sales clerks (“the salesgirls”) mold their personalities to fit in with the job and the psychological requirements of the corporation.

Mills concentrates on “the salesgirls” at Macy's. He shows that they are in fact becoming proletarianized. But he emphasizes that they still have illusions of being superior to wage-workers. They rub shoulders with department store management, and they tend to identify with their wealthy customers (even though they also hate them). Sales clerks maintain status features: they wear street clothes at work, in a clean environment; they have more-than-average education; their jobs are secure and salaried; etc. But, as Mills says, “status factors fall before economic rationalization.” As department stores rationalize, sales clerk jobs will be more and more proletarianized. Developments since Mills' time confirm this.

## Chapter 9. The Enormous File

Here Mills considers office workers. He emphasizes how clerical jobs have become rationalized to the point of almost complete proletarianization. In the 19th century a clerk was an unusually well-educated person, a person experienced in busi-

ness and knowledgeable about the firm he worked for. Today many clerical jobs have become routinized; office machinery has come in, and made many jobs similar to factory machine-operating; many clerical employees don't have any special education or experience, and many work for a short time or even as temporaries. Office work is still labor-intensive compared to factory work; but this simply means that there is enormous room for more rationalization (and hence more proletarianization). So far the main advances in office productivity have been in reorganization rather than mechanization. Mills says the major step, in the 1920s, was creation of the separate typing and steno pool. This eliminated the need for private secretaries for every executive or sales person, kept typists constantly busy, and converted them into specialized workers. He predicts big productivity gains to be made by mechanization, use of computers, etc.

## PART THREE: STYLES OF LIFE

In this section Mills tries to distinguish white collars using the Weberian concept of "lifestyles," which means status groups, consumption patterns, prestige groupings.

### Chapter 10. Work

Weber is famous for analyzing the Puritan work ethic as a driving force of capitalism. But Mills says this has now been lost due to bureaucratization of the workplace. The work ethic belonged to the world of the small entrepreneur. Surveys of white collars indicate they are "satisfied" with their jobs, but this satisfaction comes from income, status and power attached to their occupations, not to craftsmanship (as with Medieval/Renaissance guildmasters) or ethical/religious considerations (as with Puritan free-enterprisers). In the lifestyle of corporate employees, consumption and recreational activities are more important than their work lives. White collars are happier with their jobs than are wage workers, but this satisfaction is not due to any great personal attachment to the job itself.

### Chapter 11. The Status Panic

Mills says white collars are insecure in their status because status symbols are in a state of rapid change. In the past their main badge of prestige was education. Even in the 1940s the average wage-worker had completed only 8 years of education, while the average salesperson or office worker had completed 12 years — quite a gap! Even compared to wealthier middle class, office and sales clerks were better educated: the average businessman or manager had only 10 years of education! As Mills says, "Many a clerk... has a less educated, although more experienced, boss...." (p. 246)

But as high school education becomes more accessible to wage-workers' children, the white collars' monopoly on this status symbol disappears.

### Chapter 12. Success

In this chapter Mills questions the concept of social mobility

which has been raised by Briefs and others as justification for continued faith in capitalism. Briefs argued that even if the working class as a whole remained in a subordinate position, workers would hold off from rebellions if they saw a good deal of "social circulation" — *some* workers (or their children) rising into middle-class and bourgeois positions.

But first of all, Mills argues, social mobility is very difficult to define and even harder to measure precisely. There simply are no accurate data on people of different classes, of how long they've resided in that class and what class they moved there from, etc.

Secondly, he gives some general considerations why he thinks there is very little social mobility in the U.S. In the 1920s, he says, there probably was some. This was a time of stagnation in manufacturing employment but rapid expansion in office employment. So out of necessity, if for no other reason, there probably were wage-workers and their children who moved into clerical employment. But the depression of the 1930s tightened things up in the clerical as well as manufacturing fields. World War II opened things up, of course, but that was only temporary. (pp. 272-73)

Mills gives another argument, on education, which contradicts or at least qualifies what he was saying in the previous chapter. There he was saying that the mass accessibility of education took this status symbol of the traditional white collars away from them. But here (pp. 270-71) he notes the introduction of *tracking* into the public school systems of the late 1940s. The purpose of this was to steer wage-workers' children away from "unrealistic" goals (higher education) and towards vocational training. He quotes educators and politicians as saying that overeducated workers' children could mean a loss of "social solidarity." So even though wage-workers' children are going to high school in record numbers, they will still be tracked away from upward mobility.

## PART FOUR: WAYS OF POWER

This last section of the book draws out the political implications of the previous sections.

### Chapter 13. The New Middle Class: II

Mills says the main issue of the "new middle class" is how it impacts on Marxist political theory. In fact, he says, it was Marxist theoreticians who first discovered the new middle class around the turn of the century:

"... Marxist theoreticians ... expected that society would be polarized into class-conscious proletariat and bourgeoisie, that in their general decline the in-between layers would choose one side or the other — or at least keep out of the way of the major protagonists. Neither of these expectations, however, had been realized when socialist theoreticians ... began at the opening of the present century to tinker with the classic perspective.

"In trying to line up the new population into those who could and those who could not be relied upon to support their struggle, party statisticians ran squarely into the numerical

upsurge of the white-collar salaried. The rise of these groups as a problem for Marxists signaled a shift from the simple property versus no-property dichotomy to differentiations within the no-property groups. It focused attention upon occupational structure. . . . Although the new middle class was propertyless . . . [they] did not readily take to the socialist ideology. Their political attachments did not coincide with their economic position. . . . They represented a numerical upthrust of falsely conscious people. . . ." (p. 289)

Mills goes on: ". . . the range of theory had been fairly well laid out by the middle 20s. . . ." And he gives the four major lines of thought (pp. 290-91):

"I. The new middle class . . . will continue to grow in numbers and in power; in due course it will develop into a politically independent class. Displacing other classes in performance of the pivotal functions required to run modern society, it is slated to be the next ruling class. . . .

"II. The new middle classes will continue to grow in numbers and power, and although they will not become a force that will rise to independent power, they will be a major force for stability in the general balance of the different classes. . . . They will make for the continuance of liberal capitalist society. Their spread checks the creeping proletarianization; they act as a buffer between labor and capital. . . . They bridge class contrasts and mitigate class conflicts. . . .

"III. Members of the new middle class, by their social character and political outlook, are really bourgeoisie . . . This is particularly apparent in the tendency of these groups to become status groups rather than mere economic classes. They will form, as in Nazi Germany, prime human materials for conservative, for reactionary, and even for fascist, movements. They are natural allies and shock troops of the larger capitalist drive.

"IV. The new middle class will follow the classic Marxian scheme: in due course, it will become homogeneous in all important respects with the proletariat and will come over to their socialist policy. . . . With the intensification of the class struggle . . . it will be swept into the proletarian ranks. A thin, upper layer may go over to the bourgeoisie, but it will not count in numbers or in power." (On p. 296 Mills refers to Anton Pannekoek and L.B. Boudin as Marxists who wrote on this question.)

Mills spends the rest of the book chewing over these different lines of thought. First of all, he notes, there's a difficulty in comparing them because adherents of the different lines of thought are often, in reality, focusing on entirely different strata: "Those, for instance, who believe that as the vanguard stratum of modern society they are slated to be the next ruling class do not think of them as ten-cent store clerks . . . and stenographers, but rather as higher technicians and staff engineers, as salaried managers of business cartels and big officials of the federal government. On the other hand, those who hold that they are being proletarianized do focus upon the mass of clerkings and sales people, while those who see their role as in-between mediators are most likely to include both upper and lower ranges." Mills emphasizes that you have to clarify which stratum you're talking about. (p. 292)

Sorting this out helps clarify our argument with ex-MLPers. I'd say Fred's position is roughly [I], while Boston's is roughly [II]. While taking upper-level technicians as his model stratum, Fred also tries to sweep the clerks and stenographers in with them, which as Mills says screws up everything. Boston keeps the wage-workers in mind as a separate stratum, but insists on the growing numbers and power of the technical/managerial stratum.

So where is Mills? He rejects [IV] (see next paragraph), and also rejects [I]: he doesn't see anything independent or distinct about the middle classes, and he rejects the idea that economic indispensability will make them politically supreme. Mills' final position is probably a mixture of [II] and [III]; he thinks the middle classes do mitigate political conflict and preserve capitalist society, but he doesn't see this as such a great thing — he sees imperialist reaction behind a liberal facade.

On Mills' rejection of [IV]: "The greatest difficulty with the Marxist expectation of proletarianization is that many changes pointing that way have not come about by a lowering of the white-collar position, but often more crucially by a raising of the wage-worker position." (p. 299) Mills says the trend is for all the benefits of white-collar employment to be made available to wage-workers — medical insurance, pensions, life insurance, disability insurance, even job security (Mills exaggerates this, influenced by postwar "full employment" legislation). These are the factors making for equalization of wage-workers with white collars.

Here Mills argues that equalization is all one-way, in the direction of deproletarianization of the wage-workers. But this directly contradicts what he has argued previously about proletarianization of sales clerks and office workers. It also contradicts what he will be saying in the next chapter about the possibilities of organizing white collars into unions. It simply doesn't add up. We can only conclude that Mills does not have a consistent position on this question. He sees both phenomena and at different times emphasizes one or the other, but can't put them together consistently.

What are the implications of one-way "equalization"? If the wage-workers are getting lifted into the economic category of white collars and the latter remain middle class, then we'd be talking about a middle-class society, one with a large, mixed white-and-blue collar middle class. Politically we'd have to go with [II] or [I]. And note: this is exactly what the trade-union officialdom has done; they've bought into this notion of America as a middle-class society in which established sections of wage-workers have a major, if not the ruling, voice.

So Seattle Fred and Boston are echoing classic outlooks of the labor aristocracy. But *today* the labor bureaucrats themselves see the falsity of this. Bourgeois statistics show that wages, benefits, and job security have been declining for the past 20 years, and that poverty has been growing for most of the same period. The labor bureaucrats whine that this is "wrong," a "violation of the American dream," etc.; and they warn the bourgeoisie about increasing "class polarization." They urge Clinton to "restore the dream" of a middle-class society. They'd rather maintain a dream than deal with (and change) reality.

## Chapter 14. White-Collar Unionism

This chapter is a call for organizing white collar trade unions. Mills discusses and rejects various arguments against them — that white collars are too hung up in status, etc., to be organized. He shows that the key element is personal familiarity; once a white collar person becomes acquainted with some union members, he loses his standoffishness, gets interested in the economic benefits of union membership and even gets enthused about job action.

But while calling for organizing drives, Mills also recognizes the limitations of the official trade unions and their bureaucratic leadership. He notes that political conservatives no longer try to destroy the unions; they recognize “the need to cooperate with labor unions in order to control them.” Liberalism has become “administrative liberalism” . . . and “open political struggles are being translated into administrative procedures. . . . The labor interest, coinciding with sophisticated conservatism, is being vested within this administrative state and is in fact becoming one of its major pillars.” Then he concludes: “All these developments are going on within the building of a total war economy.” The “main drift” in America is “toward a society in which men are the managed personnel of a garrison state.” (pp. 322-23)

Here Mills develops his pessimist-economist position. He thinks it’s possible for white-collar (as well as other) employees to organize trade unions and to achieve some economic gains. But he says nothing radical will come of that. He ignores the possibility of working people organizing directly on political grounds — for example, against the war economy, against imperialist aggression, against discrimination, etc. As we know from the history of the 1950s and 60s, this is in fact what happened. The labor movement of the 1930s became bureaucratized, but radical movements came up outside the “labor movement” of the AFL-CIO. These were then reflected inside the labor movement; the most important organizing drives of that era were those that came up in connection with political struggles. For example, 1199 was made up largely of black women, and its organizing drives in New York and Charleston were connected to the civil rights movement.

## Chapter 15. The Politics of the Rearguard

In this chapter Mills draws his pessimistic conclusion. Nothing radical can be expected from the white collars. They have no independent views or aspirations; they’re strictly rearguarders. Even if they adhere to labor, joining unions, nothing will come of it. They’re a dead weight in an overall dead society. You can’t expect radical politics from the workers, blue or white collar.

Mills says there are big obstructions in America preventing the workers from coming to an understanding of their oppression. For one, the mass media, which dominate American culture with a common denominator of individualism and political banality. For another, the whole history of America as a place of refuge and rising standards of living. Long periods of peace kept political antagonisms at a low level. And finally, the political system itself dominated by two bureaucratic parties of capitalist corruption. In this situation, Mills says, political indifference is a rational response to a condition of powerlessness. So he predicts deep, long-lasting passivity.

Much of this is accurate and sharp criticism. But it’s overly pessimistic and mechanistic. Mills thinks that because the labor movement of the 30s did not usher in a mass socialist movement, that that’s the end of radical politics. Yes, the radical movements of the 60s were not *primarily* attached to union organizing drives. But there *were* such attachments, and radical movements did have a base in the working class. Furthermore, the seeds of those movements were present in Mills’ time, if he had taken the time to analyze them. For example, he notes the increasing number of blacks in the urban industrial workforce; he notes the increasing number of women workers; and he notes the repression connected with the “permanent war economy.”

This brings us back to today. As movements of the 60s came up in a different way than movements of the 30s, we can’t expect movements of the 90s to come up in the same form as movements of the 60s. But there will probably be some connections. And the seeds of those future mass movements exist today, if we take the time to look for them. □

# Zapatista views on the struggle in Mexico: Turning democratization into a panacea

By Mark, Detroit

The heroic uprising of the poor peasants in Chiapas has been taking place against the backdrop of a major political crisis facing Mexican capitalism. The long-held monopoly of power of the ruling PRI is beginning to crumble. This process, generally referred to as "democratization," means that there will likely be a greater opening for political activity. The downfall of PRI political strangulation would be welcomed by the oppressed toilers and provides certain opportunities to get organized on a class basis. But to take advantage of the situation, there must be a clear assessment of what democratization means for the development of the class struggle.

The Zapatistas (EZLN) have played a big role in the Chiapas peasant movement. But the Zapatista leadership does not see democratization as merely a possible opening for advancing the class struggle. They consider it as a panacea that can liberate the masses without the need for the social revolution of the future. And the rosy glasses through which the EZLN views democratization weakens the present struggle. It blinds them to the reality that destruction of a PRI monopoly will not mean a kindly government of the masses assumes power, but that the "free market" capitalist PAN and the bourgeois reformist PRD, which only split off from the PRI several years ago, will have a bigger role in defending the interests of the wealthy. It drives them to search for a reconciliation between exploiter and exploited. And it leaves them preaching that the fate of the struggle on a national level should be left to the likes of miserable reformists like Cardenas who only a few years ago was a player in the PRI before splitting off to found the PRD.

## The proletariat's attitude toward the peasant revolt

If the working class is to play a revolutionary role, it must support the peasant uprising. The Chiapas revolt is fighting against the extreme oppression of the indigenous peasants, the robbing of land by rich landowners, dire poverty, and the repression of the capitalist PRI government and local landowner gangs. If the poor are not to be ground down, they must wage a courageous fight. Such actions also inspire all those fighting oppression. The proletariat, because its goal is the complete elimination of all forms of exploitation, can only welcome the fight against the extreme backward conditions and abuse suffered by the peasants of Chiapas.

But in supporting the peasant movement, the class conscious workers must never forget the distinction between the class aims of the workers and those of the peasantry. It must keep in mind that the different class aims are reflected in different conceptions of the struggle. Support for the peasant struggle does not mean cheering on every view guiding that movement. It also means criticizing the weaknesses of the peasant ideology. The

proletariat's goal is liberation from wage-slavery which demands the overthrow of capitalism. The peasant movement's goals are confined to seeking the best conditions for the development of small-scale peasant economy. They seek land, freedom from tyranny, and various types of aid. The peasant movement may think that, in this way, it is establishing a society free from exploitation, but it is creating the conditions for the further development of capitalist relations and all its attendant social ills. Because the aims of the peasant struggle do not go beyond the framework of capitalism, it does not see that class oppression can only be ended under the dictatorship of the proletariat, the revolutionary rule of the workers at the head of all the toilers. Thus there is a tendency toward idealizing bourgeois democracy and hoping to reach a consensus between all the different class political forces of what the Zapatistas, for instance, call "Civil Society." This ignores that Civil Society is divided into classes — and the classes of wealth inevitably rule through this "consensus."

The fact that the peasant demands do not challenge capitalist relations per se, may seem to contradict the proletariat's goal of abolishing capitalism. But while democratization and land reform do not end capitalism, they clear the ground for the struggle against capitalism itself. The mass uprisings allow the peasants to keep from being totally crushed and creates a militant political atmosphere. The proletariat does not merely support certain peasant demands, however, but must make clear to the mass of peasants that capitalist development will eventually ruin most of them and therefore it is in the poor peasants' interest to ally with the workers against the system of capitalism.

While the workers support the peasant struggle, the fate of the Mexican revolution rests with the working class. The working class must not only organize itself, but fight for its views among the peasant masses. Only in this way can it play its historic role as leader of all the oppressed and the gravedigger of capitalism. But to accomplish its goals will require a whole period in which the Mexican working class gets its own act together. Today the Mexican proletariat is not rallied around its own independent class perspective. Its organized sections are mainly under the thumb of the ruling PRI's own unions. There has been some motion to break out of these shackles. But presently this involves a relatively small amount of workers. Moreover, those workers moving toward more radical positions do not yet have a true class party to guide them, but, as far as we are aware, the left-wing groups are mired in various anti-Marxist positions. The proletariat faces the task of re-establishing its own revolutionary class orientation and organizations.

The peasant movement in general, and the EZLN in particular, are not in a position to lead the Mexican revolution, much less take up the tasks of proletarian reorganization. But if the revolutionary activists in Mexico take up the tasks of proletarian reorganization, it will provide a pole for the radicalized workers to rally around. And to the extent the revolutionary workers'

movement grows, so will its ability to build ties to poor peasants, influence them, and help them see that their future lies not with the bourgeois reformist parties, but with the communist workers. The duty of the class-conscious workers in the U.S. is not simply to oppose the support which U.S. imperialism renders the Mexican exploiters, as important as that is. It is also to encourage the development of an anti-revisionist communist trend in Mexico which can illuminate the path out of class oppression.

To show the need for proletarian reorganization in Mexico, let's take a more detailed look at how the views of the Zapatistas are not those that can guide the struggle against Mexican capitalism, but rather a particular variety of peasant ideology with some fashionable anti-communism thrown in.

### Replacing social revolution with "political space"

The EZLN has reflected the militant spirit of the oppressed peasants of Chiapas. It has organized the armed seizures of villages in Chiapas, articulated a series of demands of the campesinos, and has weathered the PRI's attempts to wipe them out. They talk of their movement in terms of organizing a revolution. But the nature of the "revolution" they are talking about is not a social revolution against Mexican capitalism. What they call revolution is really certain reforms the peasantry thinks will solve all their problems. These reforms may be worthwhile, but this confusion about revolution shows the limits of the peasant perspective. There is no perspective of overthrowing Mexican capitalism which is the only way the peasants can hope to escape ruin in the long run.

But the problem is not just one of long-term goals. Their illusions in capitalist society tend to undermine the class consciousness necessary to build up the present movement. For the EZLN the results of "revolutionary change" are as follows: *"And its result will be not of one triumphant party, organization or alliance of organizations with its specific proposal but a democratic space of resolution of the confrontation between various political proposals."*<sup>1</sup> Similar statements appear throughout the key documents of the EZLN. If the statement was just supposed to describe the democratization process already under way, it would be of little significance. But by equating "democratic space" with revolution, and proclaiming against parties or even alliances of parties taking power, they eliminate the concept of a revolutionary government from the concept of revolution. In fact, the existence of "democratic space" is considered more important than the victory of any particular social program. Does the EZLN really expect good things will happen to the masses merely because the political

process is opened up somewhat? This outlook plays into the hands of the bourgeoisie which will tell the masses that democratization means they must now sacrifice even more. When the state-capitalist regimes fell in Eastern Europe a few years ago, the new capitalist rulers openly proclaimed that democratization would require belt tightening. And this is one promise the new "market-capitalist" regimes have kept!

It may be argued that such statements from the Zapatistas should not be criticized because a toilers' revolution is improbable in the near future. But even if we agree that the conditions for a revolutionary onslaught do not presently exist, if there is no goal of social revolution it cannot ever be achieved. As well, the lack of a revolutionary perspective creates a tendency to tone down the struggle for the immediate social demands.

Another example illustrates the later point more directly. The demand for democratic electoral reform is a just demand raised in opposition to the repression and manipulation by which the PRI has helped maintain its domination. Such democratic reforms could be used to help advance the class struggle. But the Zapatistas are excited about the prospect of honest elections leading to "resolution of the confrontation between various political proposals." They hope elections lead to an accommodation between the different class political interests. This is not using elections to further the class struggle but to mute it.

The EZLN imagines that their *"revolution will not end in a new class, faction of a class or group in power but rather in a free and democratic 'space' of political struggle."*<sup>2</sup> But class rule exists not just in PRI-dominated Mexico, but in the U.S., the parliamentary democracies of Europe, etc., which are the capitalist models of "democratic space." The Mexican political parties, like all political parties, represent class interests. The Zapatistas, however, rest content with talk about how democratic elections mean that the parties will have to win votes without PRI-style tricks and terror while ignoring that even in scandal-free elections all the advantages are with the parties of the wealthy and that once these parties come to power, they will serve definite class interests. *"Within this new political relation,"* they state, *"the different proposals of the system and direction (socialism, capitalism, social democracy, liberalism, Christian Democracy, etc.) will have to convince the majority of the Nation that its proposal is best for the country."* and *"the political parties will be obliged to deal with this majority..."*<sup>3</sup> They do not recognize that a system of free elections does not mean the interests of the oppressed majority must be met in Mexico anymore than it does in say, the U.S.

The EZLN talk against classes taking power in general not only obscures class rule under bourgeois democracy, but precludes the revolutionary class rule of the oppressed, too. But how else can the exploitation of the workers and peasants by Mexican and foreign imperialist capital be ended unless through

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<sup>1</sup>*Voice of Fire: Communiqués and Interviews from the Zapatista National Liberation Army*, edited by Ben Clarke and Clifton Ross, translated by Clifton Ross, et. al., New Earth Publications, Berkeley, California, 1994, p.58, Communiqué of Subcomandante Marcos, "Ski Masks and Other Masks", January 20, 1994.

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<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p.117, the EZLN's "Second Declaration of the Lacandona Jungle" of June 10, 1994. This EZLN communiqué is also reprinted elsewhere in this issue of the *Communist Voice*.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

the overthrow of the Mexican bourgeoisie? Can anyone really believe that if the ruling class is willing to kill and terrorize the peasants of Chiapas for asking for a few reforms, that they will peacefully give up their entire profit-system?

This does not mean that the Zapatistas could have organized a nation-wide revolution in the present conditions. Early declarations of the EZLN were full of bravado about the peasant army liberating the country on the way to Mexico City but in fact the Zapatistas knew, or soon found out, that such a course of action was not in the cards. In fact, they are not strong enough to hold the villages of Chiapas when the federal troops arrive. The revolution in Mexico will not be a matter of extending the present armed actions to the rest of the country.

However, the Zapatistas do not simply oppose a revolution on the grounds that the time is not ripe, but try to justify opposition to a revolutionary solution on the grounds that a peaceful democratic evolution can more easily accomplish the same thing. As part of their reasoning for opposing a revolutionary class rule in favor of a consensus of the political forces of all classes, they say "*the pain that this process [for a democratic electoral system — Mark] will mean for the country will inevitably be less than the damage a civil war would produce....*"<sup>4</sup> This is an argument for writing off revolution for all time and diverting the masses from the tasks of today that will make a revolution possible in the future. It means the down-trodden must endure their suffering forever because sacrificing for their liberation will be too painful. It downplays that even striving for the limited changes the EZLN wants has involved tremendous sacrifice and that, important as some reforms may be, the masses will still feel the heavy weight of exploitation on their shoulders unless there is a revolution. It is ironic the EZLN has resorted to such arguments because when they launched their own armed actions, they were right to argue they were a just response to the "peaceful" destruction of the peasantry. But now we are to forget that the untold suffering Mexican capitalism brings is precisely why the masses will eventually make heroic sacrifices to end this system.

And note also that in the passage above, the EZLN talks not about the pain of the masses, but of the country as a whole, i.e., the bourgeoisie and the toilers alike. In fact they commonly portray their movement as a patriotic movement or a "national liberation movement." To portray the stage of struggle in Mexico in this way hides that it is a country where the class contradictions have come to fore and that progress for the masses in Mexico today lies not in independent bourgeois development but the fight against capitalism, whether home grown or foreign.

### The EZLN Agrarian Reform

Among the social demands that the EZLN feels democratization will usher in, their agrarian reform is the centerpiece. Their program, enunciated in their *Revolutionary Agrarian Law* issued in December 1993, calls for redistribution of the big landholdings to landless peasants and to the present co-ops or communal lands. It also calls for various types of aid

for the peasant economy. Such measures may temporarily alleviate some suffering. It would help the indigenous peasants escape from economic marginalization. But becoming more integrated into the Mexican farming system will hardly mean an era of prolonged prosperity. Insofar as these reforms are actually carried out, insofar as they are *successful*, they will accelerate the growth of capitalist relations. The further development of small-scale peasant farming means the competition between the farms speeds up, class differentiation grows, and dreams of harmonious relations between the peasantry vanish. True, the EZLN program emphasizes the value of co-ops over individual farming. But this will not prevent competition, but put it on a somewhat larger scale. In any case, the inevitable spread of capitalist relations will lead to the impoverishment of many peasants alongside the enrichment of a relative handful. Government aid to the peasant economy is a just demand, but it too will not prevent class differentiation and is likely to speed it up. The Zapatistas are not wrong to advance certain reforms, but a fuller flowering of capitalist agriculture will not, as they imagine, bring the good life to the mass of peasants.

Moreover, if the peasant struggle is guided by hopes of class reconciliation, this means toning down the struggle or making the agrarian reform palatable to the exploiters and undermining the fight for a thorough agrarian reform. The situation is not that the movement is so powerful that the exploiters will have no choice but to make vast concessions, but that unless there is an upsurge in the class struggle across Mexico, the bigger demands of the EZLN program will not be met. For instance it is highly unlikely that the big landowners will be expropriated without such a struggle or that massive aid will flow to the indigenous peoples.

### The "National Democratic Convention"

In order to achieve the goal of democratization, the Zapatistas placed high hopes in the National Democratic Convention (NDC) that they organized. The basis of unity of the NDC has been opposition to the PRI political domination and includes various left-wing groups and reformist trends, even the PRD which split off from the ruling PRI a few years back. The NDC is supposed to form a transitional government that is to come to power through the abdication of the PRI government or through the present electoral system. The transitional government is to implement a new, democratic electoral law. This is what the EZLN has put forward for the transition of Mexican society.

But will democratic space actually bring the wonderful transformation that the EZLN desires? As far as national political forces are concerned, the weakening of the PRI control does not just create more possibilities for the reformists but for the PAN, a capitalist party to the right of the PRI. Last year's election results show the PAN making inroads on PRI territory. As well, the PRI has been trying to reach a deal to share some power with the PAN. The EZLN blames the neo-liberal policies adopted by the PRI for all the problems in Mexico. But the growing strength of PAN means that conservatism will continue to be a major factor in national policy for the time being. The Zapatistas are probably not fond of the PAN, but don't do much

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<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 118.

to expose the PAN either as if ignoring PAN will make them go away or make democratization more pristine. Possibly the PRD will also make some inroads. But a section of it at least has already been striving to reach a deal with the PRI. And the "best" that one can expect from the PRD is the capitalist politics of the PRI of yesterday, not the road to a bright tomorrow for the oppressed. This does not mean that one should back away from democratic reforms but that there has to be a realistic assessment of what to expect from them. They will not in themselves save the masses and should be used by the class conscious activists to organize the class struggle.

The Zapatistas' faith in the NDC reflects their stand that almost everyone who isn't in the PRI are forces the masses should rely on. Thus they "recognize the National Democratic Convention as the authentic representative of the interests of the Mexican people in its transition to democracy."<sup>5</sup> In particular, they have illusions in the bourgeois reformists of the PRD which has played a major role in the NDC. The Zapatistas conceive of their struggle as mainly one to create political space for others who will supposedly carry out the masses' will. They declare: "The flag is now in the hands of those who have faces and names, [i.e., not the EZLN who wear masks to hide their personal identity — Mark] of good and honest people who walk paths that are not ours but whose end is the same one that we walked longingly toward."<sup>6</sup> And who are the forces who will supposedly share the same goals as the Zapatistas? At one time, the EZLN's Subcomandante Marcos admitted that "we naively thought that the PRD had a plan for civil resistance"<sup>7</sup> to oppose election fraud. Yet even after that, Marcos continued to promote that "the social forces rallied around Cuauhtemoc Cardenas and the National Democratic Convention are recognized as an honest, civic, peace opposition."<sup>8</sup> Cardenas, former PRI bigwig, was the founder of the PRD.

### New shift, same basic orientation

Since it burst onto the scene, the EZLN has made some tactical shifts, but maintained its basic orientation. In January 1994 it declared its armed peasants would "advance to the capital of the country, defeating the Mexican Federal Army" in its "liberating advance."<sup>9</sup> But even then it was banking on others to come to power. Then when the government terror campaign threatened them in their strongholds in Chiapas, they founded the "Convention" and preached the wonders of peaceful change. Several months ago, there was another readjustment. With the peaceful pressure of the NDC failing to win demands and with the EZLN becoming frustrated with their reformist allies, they struck a more militant pose. They issued a call for a

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<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p.120.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, p.119, boldface added.

<sup>7</sup>*Socialist Action*, Jan. 1995, "Zapatistas take their distance from the PRD", p.7.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup>*Voice of Fire*, p.36

"national liberation struggle." But this national liberation struggle is a far cry from a revolutionary movement, for it is to be led by none other than Cardenas of the PRD! Thus in January 1995, in their "Third Declaration of the Lacandona Jungle" they declared: "We call on the National Democratic Convention and on Citizen Cuauhtemoc Cardenas Solorzano to head this Movement for National Liberation, as a broad front of opposition."<sup>10</sup> So the EZLN has consistently been looking to the bourgeois reformists to carry out the transformation of Mexico, and the more this orientation is covered with militant language, the greater the illusions created in the reformists.

The EZLN continues to hold on to its arms and peasant actions in Chiapas have continued. And they have so far rejected settling for PRI peace proposals that do not meet the most basic demands of the poor peasants. But their orientation of searching for the big political forces of the present like the reformist Cardenas to represent the aims of the masses is a dead end.

### Zapatista theories and fashionable anti-communism

The Zapatista leadership takes up petty-bourgeois nationalist politics and adds to this fashionable phrases against revolutionary principles that have become the rage in the left with the collapse of the phony communists of the revisionist state-capitalist regimes of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, in some quarters the politics of the Zapatista leadership is promoted as a great advance in revolutionary thinking. There are those who are enthused by the EZLN's petty-bourgeois nationalism and, in particular, their taking up fashionable phrases against communist principles in the name of opposing "vanguardism." For example, a co-author of a compilation of Zapatista communiqués and interviews entitled *Voice of Fire*, Ben Clarke, is enthused about the EZLN because it does not consider itself a "vanguard movement." If this was just meant as an accurate description of the EZLN's inability to lead the Mexican revolution, there would be no quarrel. But when Clarke and the Zapatistas rail against the idea of a vanguard revolutionary force, they are arguing something else. For them, the problem with vanguard revolutionary forces is such forces seek to guide the revolutionary classes to take power, do not consider democratic space as the be-all-and-end-all, take revolutionary theory seriously, and defend revolutionary ideas against bankrupt opportunist views.

For example, earlier in this article it was explained how the Zapatistas theorize against the idea of a new class coming to power and look to electoral reform as a panacea that can substitute for revolution. And we have seen how they paint up the reformist bourgeoisie as genuine representatives of the masses. These are some of the sad results of the war on vanguardism. Now let's see how Marcos considers a disinterest in clarifying political trends as a blow against vanguardism. He explains:

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<sup>10</sup>See elsewhere in this issue of *Communist Voice* for the text of the *Third Declaration of the Lacandona Jungle*.

"We don't want to monopolize as a vanguard or to say we are the light, the only alternative and deny the qualifications of revolutionary to one or another current. We have dignity, patriotism and we're demonstrating it. You go and do the same, within your own ideology..."<sup>11</sup> Marcos' gripe against the vanguard idea is it requires a fight against opportunism.

Marcos' attack on vanguardism is connected to his confusion of phony revisionist "communism" with the real thing. Referring to the revisionist state-capitalist regimes that had existed in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, he states: "We don't want another type of dictatorship, nor anything from anywhere else, no international communism or anything like that."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>*Voice of Fire*, "On Origins", Jan. 1, 1994, an interview with Subcomandante Marcos, pp.48-49.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p.48

Since the revisionists dressed up their corrupt parties and bureaucratic rule as a model of being a Marxist-Leninist vanguard, Marcos attacks communism instead of its revisionist distortion. For good measure, he makes sure to take up the stock nonsense that communism couldn't be relevant to Mexico if its from 'anywhere else.'

Far from advancing revolutionary theory, the anti-vanguard phrases emphasize the weakness of the views of the EZLN leadership. The class-conscious workers must support the revolt of the peasants. But this does not mean reconciling to the views of the Zapatista leadership. Real support includes providing the proletarian class stand for all the toilers of Mexico. The Chiapas revolt must inspire conviction to tackle the task of establishing a genuine Marxist-Leninist trend and rallying the worker and peasant masses around it. □

## Three key Zapatista declarations from the Lacandona Jungle

There have been many EZLN statements of interest, but below are the three main ones of the last year and a half. They give a vivid picture of Zapatista views, and some idea of how Zapatista tactics have changed over the last year. They barely deal with the EZLN's social demands, which are put forward in other EZLN statements. However, the content of the Lacandona Jungle declarations itself suggests why this is so, with its heavy emphasis on "civil society", the avoidance of appeals on the class struggle, and the belief in democratization pure and simple. These EZLN views are discussed in the article starting on page 22: "Turning democratization into a panacea".

The first two declarations are taken from the English translations in the book *Voice of Fire, Communiqués and Interviews from the Zapatista National Liberation Army* (edited by Ben Clarke and Clifton Ross, translated by Clifton Ross, et al., New Earth Publications, Berkeley, CA, 1994). The third declaration has been translated by Phil, a supporter of *Communist Voice* in Seattle, from the text in *El Machete*. We have added an overall title when listing the second statement. These statements appeared in Spanish in *La Jornada* on Jan. 6, 1994, June 12, 1994, and Jan. 2, 1995.

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# *First declaration of the Lacandona Jungle — Jan. 1, 1994*

## **Declaration of War of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN)**

DECLARATION FROM THE LACANDONA JUNGLE  
TO THE PEOPLE OF MEXICO:  
MEXICANS:

We are a product of 500 years of struggles. The first struggle was against slavery, in the war of Independence against Spain led by the rebels. Later, the struggle began to avoid being overwhelmed by North American expansionism. Afterwards began the struggle for our Constitution and the struggle to drive the French Empire from our land. When the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz refused the just application of the laws of Reform and the people rebelled, leaders such as Villa and Zapata arose, poor people like ourselves. We have been denied access to the most basic education so as to be used as cannon fodder and to be deprived of the wealth of our homeland. Little do they care that we have nothing, absolutely nothing, not even a decent roof over our heads, nor land, nor work, nor health, nor food, nor education. We're not entitled to freely and democratically elect our authorities. We have no independence from the foreigners, no peace, no justice for ourselves or our children.

But today we say ENOUGH! We are the heirs of the true founders of our nationality. We are the dispossessed millions and we summon all our brothers and sisters to join us in this call, as the only path to avoid starving due to the endless greed of a dictatorship that has prevailed for over 70 years now, headed by a group of traitors who stand for the most conservative sectors, traitors of our nation. They are the ones who opposed Hidalgo and Morelos and who betrayed Vicente Guerrero. They are the ones who sold more than half of our territory to the invading foreigners. They are the ones who brought a European prince to rule over us. They are the ones who were against the Petroleum Expropriation. They are the ones who slaughtered the Railroad workers in 1958 and the students in 1968. They are the same ones who deprived us of everything, absolutely everything!

To bring all this to an end and as a last resort, after attempting change through all legal means as set forth by our Constitution, to which we resort in order to apply Article 39, which reads: 'The national sovereignty resides essentially and originally in the people. All public power arises from the people and is instituted for their benefit. The people have, at all times, the inalienable right to alter or modify the form of their government.'

Therefore, pursuant to our Constitution, we issue this communiqué to the Mexican Federal Army, bastion of the dictatorship that afflicts us, monopolized by the party in power and led by a federal executive illegally occupied by the highest, illegitimate chief, Carlos Salinas de Gortari.

Consistent with this Declaration of War we ask other Powers of the Nation to dedicate themselves to the restoration of the legality and stability of the nation by overthrowing the dictator.

We also ask of the International Agencies and of the International Red Cross that they watch over and regulate the battles that our forces will unleash by protecting the civilian population. We declare now and forever that we are subject to that which is stipulated by the Laws of War of the Geneva Convention forming the Zapatista National Liberation Army as a belligerent force of our struggle for liberation. We have the Mexican people on our side, we have the Homeland and the tricolored Flag that is loved and respected by all the insurgent combatants. We are using the colors of red and black on our uniform, symbols of the working people in their struggles and strikes. Our flag carries the letters, 'EZLN', Zapatista National Liberation Army and we will always take this flag into our battles.

We reject outright any attempt to defame the just cause of our struggle with accusations of narcotrafficking or 'narcoguerrilla', banditry or other qualifications that our enemies might use against us. Our struggle is tied to constitutional law and has justice and equality as its banner.

Therefore, and consistent with this Declaration of War, we give our military forces of the Zapatista National Liberation Army the following orders:

First: Advance toward the capital of the country defeating the Mexican Federal Army, protecting the civilian population in your liberating advance and permitting the liberated people to elect, freely and democratically, their own administrative authorities.

Second: Respect the lives of prisoners and turn in the wounded to the International Red Cross for medical attention.

Third: Initiate summary judgments against soldiers of the Mexican Federal Army and the political police who have received courses and who have been trained, assisted or paid by foreigners whether within or outside our nation; against those accused of betraying our Homeland and against all those who repress and mistreat the civilian population and rob or assault the good of the people.

Fourth: Form new ranks with all those Mexicans who show interest in joining our just struggle, including those that, being enemy soldiers, surrender without fighting to our forces and swear to follow the orders of the General Command of the ZAPATISTA NATIONAL LIBERATION ARMY.

Fifth: Ask for the unconditional surrender of the enemy quarters before entering into combat.

Sixth: Bring to an end the plundering of our natural wealth in the areas controlled by the EZLN.

PEOPLE OF MEXICO: We free and honest men and women are conscious that the war we declare is a last and final measure. The dictators have imposed an undeclared and genocidal war against our people for many years. We therefore ask for your resolute participation in supporting this plan of the Mexican people who struggle for work, land, housing, food, health, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice

and peace. We declare that we will not cease fighting until we attain the fulfillment of these basic demands of our people, forming a government for a free and democratic country.

MEMBER OF THE REBEL FORCES OF THE  
ZAPATISTA NATIONAL LIBERATION ARMY  
General Command of the EZLN

## Second Declaration of the Lacandona Jungle (June 10, 1994)

"...those who bear swords, who draw blood and reveal fleeting flashes of military glory, aren't the only ones chosen to name the government of a people who want democracy. Those who have struggled in the press and in the courts also have that right, those who are identified with the ideals of the Revolution and have fought despotism that violates our laws. Because it is not only by shooting bullets in the battlefields that tyranny is overthrown, but also by hurling ideas of redemption, words of freedom and terrible anathemas against the hangmen that the people bring down dictators and empires . . . and the truth of history shows us that the destruction of all tyranny, the casting off of all corrupt government is the combined work of the idea with the sword. It is an absurdity, it is an aberration, it is an unheard-of despotism that wishes to separate the healthy elements that have the right to elect the government because the sovereignty of a people is made up of all those healthy elements that are fully conscious, that are conscious of their rights, whether they be civilian or accidentally armed, but that love freedom and justice and work for the good of the homeland [Patria]."

—Emiliano Zapata, in the voice of Paulino Martinez, Zapatista delegate to the Sovereign Revolutionary Convention, Aguascalientes, Aguascalientes, Mexico, October 27, 1914.

To the people of Mexico:  
To the peoples and governments of the world

Brothers and sisters:

The Zapatista National Liberation Army, at war against the corrupt government since the first of January, 1994, addresses itself to you to make known its thoughts:

### I

Mexican Brothers and Sister:

In December of 1993 we said ENOUGH! January 1, 1994 we called on the legislative and judicial powers to assume their constitutional responsibility to block the genocidal policy of the Federal Executive power imposed on our people and we based our call on the application of our constitutional right in Article 39 of the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States:

"The national sovereignty resides essentially and originally in the people. All public power originates in the people and is

instituted for its benefit. The people have, at all times, the inalienable right to alter or modify the form of their government."

The response to this call was a policy of extermination and lies; the powers of the Union ignored our just demand and permitted the massacre. But this nightmare only lasted 12 days when another force, superior to any political or military power, imposed itself on the two sides of the conflict. Civil Society assumed the responsibility of preserving our homeland and showed its dissatisfaction with the massacre by urging the dialogue. We all understood, then, that the days of the eternal party in power which took, for its own benefit, the fruit of the labor of all Mexicans, can no longer continue. We understood that the presidential abuse that sustained it impeded freedom and must not be permitted; that the culture of fraud is the method by which it imposes itself and the means by which it hinders democracy; that justice only exists for the corrupt and powerful; that we must assure that who rules must obey and there is no other way.

This, all honest Mexicans of good faith, Civil Society, have already understood. The only opposition comes from those who have based their success on the robbery of the public treasury, those who protect, in a prostitution of justice, those traffickers and murderers, those who revert to political assassination and electoral fraud to maintain power.

Only these political fossils plan a new step backwards into history for Mexico and to erase from the national consciousness the cry that the entire country made its own on the first of January, 1994: Enough!

But we won't allow it. Today we won't call on the bankrupt powers of the union who didn't know how to fulfill their constitutional duty, allowing the Federal Executive to control them. If this legislature and the magistrates have no dignity, others will come who will understand that they must serve their people and not a single person. Our call goes beyond a six-year term or an upcoming presidential election. It is in CIVIL SOCIETY where our sovereignty resides. It is the people who can, at all times, alter or modify our form of government and they are assuming that task now. It is [the people] to whom we make our call in this:

SECOND DECLARATION OF  
THE LACANDONA JUNGLE

First: We have carried out acts of war without any violation of the conventions of war established at the world level. That has warranted the tacit recognition by citizens and foreigners of [the EZLN] as a belligerent force. We will continue to abide by the above mentioned conventions.

Second: We order all our regular and irregular forces in the entire national territory and beyond the EXTENSION OF A UNILATERAL CEASE FIRE.

We will respect the cease fire TO PERMIT CIVIL SOCIETY TO ORGANIZE ITSELF IN THE FORMS IT CONSIDERS PERTINENT SO AS TO ACHIEVE A TRANSITION TO DEMOCRACY IN OUR COUNTRY.

Third: We condemn the threat against Civil Society to militarize the country with personnel and modern repressive equipment on the eve of the federal elections. There is no doubt that the Salinas government is attempting to impose the culture of fraud. WE WILL NOT ALLOW IT.

Fourth: We ask all independent political parties to recognize the state of intimidation and deprivation of political rights our people have suffered for the last 65 years and that those parties name a government of political transition toward democracy.

Fifth: We reject the manipulation and the attempt to separate our just demands from those of the Mexican people. We are Mexicans and we will abandon neither our demands nor our arms if there is no resolution to the problems of Democracy, Freedom and Justice for all.

Sixth: We repeat our desire for a political solution in the transition to democracy in Mexico. We call on Civil Society to reassume the role of protagonist that it had in ending the military phase of the war. We ask it to organize itself to lead the forces of peace toward Democracy, Freedom and Justice. Democratic change is the only alternative to war.

Seventh: We call on all those honest elements of Civil Society to a National Dialogue for Democracy, Freedom and Justice for all Mexicans.

Therefore we say: "WE WILL ACCEPT NOTHING THAT COMES FROM THE PUTRID HEART OF THE CORRUPT GOVERNMENT..."

## II

Brothers and Sisters:

After the beginning of the war in January, 1994, the organized cry of the Mexican people ended the confrontation and called the contending parties to a dialogue. The federal government responded to the just demands of the EZLN with a series of offers that didn't touch the essential point of the problem: the lack of justice, freedom and democracy in Mexico.

The limits of the federal government's offer to the EZLN's

demands is defined by the political system of the party in power itself. This system has made it possible, in the Mexican country-side, that another power exist over and above the power of the constitution, the roots of which make it possible for the party in power to maintain itself. It is this system of complicity that makes possible the existence and belligerence of "caciques" in their domains, the omnipotent power of large ranchers and merchants and the penetration of narco-trafficking . . . The mere offering of the so-called Commitment for a Dignified Peace in Chiapas caused a great commotion and an open challenge from these sectors. The single-party political system attempts to maneuver in this reduced horizon that it imposes on itself: it can't touch these sectors without attacking itself nor can it leave things as they were without increasing the belligerence of the campesinos and indigenous peoples. In summary, the fulfillment of the commitments necessarily implies the death of the system of a State party. By suicide or by execution, the death of the current political system of Mexico is a necessary, although incomplete, condition for the transition to democracy in our country. Chiapas will have no real resolution without solving the national problem of Mexico.

The EZLN has understood that the problem of poverty in Mexico is not only the result of a lack of resources. Beyond that, its fundamental contribution is to understand and propose that any effort, in one sense or in every sense, only postpones the problem if these efforts are not made within a new framework of national, regional and local political relations: a framework of Democracy, Freedom and Justice. The problem of power isn't who will hold it, but rather who exercises it. If power is exercised by the majority the political parties will be obliged to deal with this majority and not just with themselves.

To reframe the problem of power in the framework of Democracy, Freedom and Justice will require a new political culture within the parties. A new class of politicians must be born and, doubtlessly, a new type of political parties will be born.

We are not proposing a new world, but rather something anterior: the entryway of a new Mexico. In this sense this revolution will not end in a new class, faction of a class or group in power but rather in a free and democratic "space" of political struggle. This free and democratic "space" will be born over the stinking corpse of the State party system and presidentialism. A new political relation will be born. A new political reality whose basis will not be a struggle between political organizations but rather the confrontation of its political proposals with the different social classes since the REAL support from these will determine the title to political power and not its exercise. Within this new political relation the different proposals of the system and direction (socialism, capitalism, social democracy, liberalism, Christian Democracy, etc.) will have to convince the majority of the Nation that its proposal is best for the country. But not only this, they will also have to be "watched over" by that country, so that they move in such a way that they are obligated to a regular account and judgment to the Nation to either continue on or be removed from power. The plebiscite is a form of regulated confrontation of the power of the Party and the policies of the Nation (*Poder-partido politico-Nación*) and

it holds a worthy place in the highest law of the country.

The current Mexican legal system is too narrow for these new political relations between governors and governed. A NEW NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION is needed so that a PROVISIONAL or TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT might follow, either from the abdication of the federal Executive or through the electoral process.

NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION and GOVERNMENT OF TRANSITION must lead to a new Magna Carta within whose framework new elections would be convoked. The pain that this process will mean for the country will inevitably be less than the damage that a civil war would produce. The prophecy of the southeast is valid for the entire country. We can learn now from what has happened and make the birth of a new Mexico less painful.

The EZLN has a concept for a system and a path for the country. The political maturity of the EZLN, its maturity as representative of the feelings of one part of the country, is shown in that it doesn't wish to impose this conception on the country. The EZLN claims that which is evident to itself: the maturity of Mexico and its right to decide, freely and democratically, the path it must take. From this historical entrance not only will a better, more just Mexico emerge, but a new Mexico will also emerge. On this we have staked our lives, that the Mexicans of the future won't inherit a land where it is a shame to live.

The EZLN, in an exercise of democracy without precedent in an armed organization, conferred with its membership regarding whether or not to sign the federal government's peace proposals. Seeing that the central themes of Democracy, Freedom and Justice for all had not been resolved, the base of the EZLN, in a majority composed of indigenous people, refused to sign the government's proposal.

In conditions of siege and pressure from different directions which threatened extermination if the agreement weren't signed, we Zapatistas reaffirmed our decision to seek a peace with justice and dignity and in that spirit to nourish our life and our death. Once again the history of the dignified struggle of our ancestors has found place in us. Insurgent Vicente Guerrero's cry for dignity, "Live for the Homeland or die for Freedom" once again rises up in our throats. We cannot accept an undignified peace.

Our path of fire opens when confronted with the impossibility of a peaceful struggle for the basic rights of a human being. The most valuable of these is the right to decide, with freedom and democracy, the form of government. Now the possibility of a peaceful transition to freedom and democracy confronts a new test: the electoral process of August, 1994. There are those who bet on the post-electoral period, pointing to the apathy and disillusionment resulting from immobility. They attempt to use the blood of fallen combatants, violent or peaceful, in the city and the countryside. They base their political project on the conflict following the elections and hope, without doing anything, that the political demobilization would open, once again, the gigantic door of the war. They will, they say, save the country.

Others bet that the armed conflict will start now, before the elections and that the ungovernability will be taken advantage of by them to maintain themselves in power. As they subverted

the popular will yesterday by electoral fraud, today and tomorrow, with the river surging from a pre-electoral civil war, they attempt to prolong the agony of a dictatorship that, masked in the State party, has lasted decades. Still others, sterile apocalypticists, reason now that war is inevitable and they sit down to watch the body of their enemy pass by — or that of their friend. The sectarian supposes, erroneously, that only the action of guns will bring the sunrise that our people have sought since night closed in on Mexico with the deaths of Villa and Zapata.

All these thieves of hope believe that ambition and adventurous heroics are behind our arms and that this will guide our conduct in the future. They are wrong. Behind our arms of fire are other arms, the arms of reason. And hope animates both. We will not allow them to rob us of this.

The hope with a trigger had its place at the opening of the year. Now it's essential that it wait. It is essential that hope march and the great mobilization return to act in the place that belongs to it by right and by reason. The flag is now in the hands of those who have faces and names, of good and honest people who walk paths that are not ours but whose end is the same one that we walked longingly toward. We salute these men and women, offering them our respect and our hope, that they may carry that flag where it must be. We will be waiting, standing with dignity. If this flag falls, we will know how to raise it again . . .

May hope organize itself and walk now in the valleys and the cities as it did yesterday in the mountains. Let them fight with their own arms and not worry about us. We will know how to resist to the end . . . and how to return if, once again, all the doors against dignity's struggle forward are closed.

Therefore we address ourselves to our brothers and sisters in the non-governmental organizations: the campesino and indigenous organizations; the field and city worker's organizations, teachers and students, housewives and neighbors, artists and intellectuals and independent Mexican parties:

We call you to a national dialogue with the theme of Democracy, Freedom and Justice. For this we put forth the present convocation for the National Democratic Convention.

We, the Zapatista National Liberation Army, struggling to achieve the democracy, freedom and justice our country deserves and considering:

First: That the supreme government has usurped the legality that we inherited from the heroes of the Mexican Revolution.

Second: That the Magna Carta that governs us is no more than the popular will of Mexicans.

Third: That the abdication of usurper of federal Executive is not enough and a new law for our new country is necessary, one that will have to be born from the struggle of all honest Mexican.

Fourth: That all forms of struggle are necessary to reach the transition to democracy in Mexico.

We call for a sovereign and revolutionary National Democratic Convention from which would result a call for a transition-

al government and a new national law and a new Constitution that would guarantee the legal fulfillment of the popular will.

The fundamental objective of the National Democratic Convention is to organize civil expression and the defense of the popular will.

The sovereign, revolutionary convention will be national as regards to its composition and representation, including all the states of the federation. It will be pluralistic insofar as all the patriotic forces will be represented. It will be democratic in decision-making, resorting to consultations with the nation.

The convention will be freely and voluntarily presided over by civilians, public personalities of recognized prestige, without regards to political affiliation, race, religious creed, sex or age.

The convention will be formed through local, regional and state committees in *ejidos*, neighborhoods, schools and factories by civilians. These convention committees will be in charge of gathering popular proposals for the new constitutional law and the demands to be fulfilled by the new government that would arise from this.

The convention must demand free and democratic elections and to relentlessly struggle for respect of the popular will.

The Zapatista National Liberation Army will recognize the National Democratic Convention as the authentic representative of the interest of the Mexican people in its transition to democracy.

The Zapatista National Liberation Army is now in every part of the national territory and can offer itself to the Mexican people as guarantor Army for the fulfillment of the popular will.

For the first meeting of the National Democratic Convention the EZLN offers as a center a Zapatista village, with all the resources to be found there.

The date and place of the first session of the National Democratic Convention will be made known at the earliest opportunity.

### III

Brother and sister Mexicans:

Our struggle continues. Continue waving the Zapatista flag in the Southeastern mountains of Mexico. Today we say we will not surrender!

Facing the mountains we speak with our dead so that their word will reveal the right path for our silenced faces to walk.

The drums will resound and our pain and our history will speak with a voice of the earth.

"Everything for everyone," our dead say. As long as this is not so there will be nothing for us.

Speak the word of other Mexicans; encounter the hearts of those listening, for whom we struggle. Invite them to walk the path of dignity, of those who have no faces [the EZLN militants wear masks—*CV*]. Call everyone to resist, that no one take anything from those who rule. Make of those who refuse to sell out a flag for the others. Ask that not only an inspiring breath arrive for our pain. Ask that it be shared, ask that they resist with you, that they reject all the alms that come from the power-

ful. That good people in all these lands today organize their dignity and resist and not sell out. That tomorrow this dignity will organize itself to demand that the word that dwells in the hearts of the majority have receive truth and health from those who govern. That the right path be imposed on the ruler, that the ruler rule obediently.

Don't surrender! Resist! Show no lack of respect to the word of truth. Resist with dignity in the land of true women and men. May the mountains protect the pain of the people of corn. Don't surrender! Resist! Don't sell out! Resist!

So spoke the word of the hears of our ever dead. We saw that the word of our dead is good. We say that there is truth and dignity in their advice. Therefore we call all our indigenous Mexican brothers and sisters to resist with us. We call on all the campesinos to resist with us, all workers, all employees, all people in the neighborhoods, all housewives, all students, all teachers, all who make their lives from words and thoughts, all those with shame and dignity, all those we call on to resist since the corrupt government doesn't want democracy in our land. We will accept nothing that comes from the putrid heart of the corrupt government: neither a coin, nor medicines nor a stone nor a grain of food nor a crumb of the alms they offer so our dignity won't continue.

We will take nothing from the supreme government. Although they increase our pain and suffering, although death continues with us at the table, land and bed, although we see others sell themselves to the hand that oppresses them, although everything might suffer, although pain might cry even in the stones. We will accept nothing, we will resist. We will receive nothing from the government. We will resist until the ruler rules obediently.

Brothers and sisters: Don't sell out. Resist with us. Don't surrender. Resist with us. Repeat with us, brothers and sisters, so that the words "We won't surrender! We resist!" is not only heard in the mountains of southeastern Mexico but also in the north, in the peninsulas, in both coasts, in the center, until it is heard crying in the mountains and valleys and resounding in the city and the countryside. Unite your voice, brothers and sisters, cry with us, make your own voice:

"We will not surrender! We resist!"

May dignity break the siege with which the corrupt government, with dirty hands, strangles us. We are all besieged. They won't allow democracy, freedom or justice to enter Mexico. Brothers and sisters, we are all surrounded. We will not surrender! We will resist! We will claim our dignity! We won't sell out!

What is the wealth of the powerful worth if it doesn't buy them the most valuable thing in this land? If the dignity of all Mexicans has no price, what power have the powerful! Dignity will not be surrendered! Dignity resists! Democracy! Freedom! Justice!

From the mountains of Southeastern Mexico  
CCRI-CG of the EZLN, June, 1994 □

# **To form a movement for national liberation, a call by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation**

## **Third Declaration of the Lacandona Jungle (January 1995)**

After one year of the Zapatista uprising, we declare today:

“Our Native Land Lives! And it is ours! We have been unfortunate, it is true, in that fate has been unkind to us many times, but the cause of Mexico, which is the cause of right and justice, has not succumbed, has not died and will not die, because there still exists a Mexican force, in whose hearts burns the holy fire of patriotism, and, anywhere in the Republic that they exist, they are taking up arms and the national flag, there as well as here, so there will exist the life and energy of the protest against power. Understand well the unwary man who has accepted the sad mission of being the instrument of enslaving a free people: his unsteady throne does not rest on the free will of the nation, but on the blood and corpses of thousands of Mexicans who have been sacrificed without any reason and only because they defended their liberty and their rights as Mexicans: those who might have the misfortune to live under the grip of the usurpation, did not resign themselves to carry the yoke of shame that weighs upon you. You do not deceive yourselves with the false insinuations of the supporters of those deeds which were committed, because they are and have always been the supporters of despotism. The existence of arbitrary power is a permanent violation of rights and justice, which neither time nor armies can ever justify, and which it is necessary to destroy for the honor of Mexico and of humanity.”

Manifesto: resolutions for New Year's Day  
Benito Juarez, January 1865, Chihuahua.

To the people of Mexico:  
To the peoples and the governments of the world:

Brothers and Sisters:

On the 1st of January, 1994 we issued the First Declaration of the Lacandona Jungle. On the 10th of June, 1994, we launched the Second Declaration of the Lacandona Jungle. Both the first and the second encouraged the desire for the struggle for democracy, liberty, and justice for all Mexicans.

In the first declaration, we called on the people of Mexico to take up arms against misgovernment, the principal obstacle to

the transition to democracy in our country. In the second declaration, we called on Mexicans for a civil and peaceful effort, through the National Democratic Convention, to achieve the profound changes which the nation demands.

While the supreme government was displaying its falsity and arrogance, we, between the first and second manifestoes, made an effort to display to the people of Mexico our social support, the justness of our demands, and the dignity which gives life to our struggle. Our arms were silent then and we stood so that the legal struggle could display its possibilities . . . and its limitations. Starting with *the Second Declaration of the Lacandona Jungle* the EZLN attempted, with all its resources, to avoid the reinitiation of hostilities and searched for a political path, a worthy and just one, to resolve the demands represented in the eleven points of our program of struggle: housing, land, work, nourishment, health, education, justice, independence, liberty, democracy, and peace.

The pre-electoral process of August 1994 raised our hopes, in extensive sectors of the country, that a transition to democracy would be possible by the electoral route. Knowing that the elections are not, under present conditions, the road for democratic change, the EZLN gave orders to stand aside to provide an opportunity for the struggle of the legal political forces of the opposition. The EZLN put its words and its forces, then, into the search for a peaceful transition to democracy. Through the National Democratic Convention the EZLN called on a civil and peaceful force which, without opposing the electoral struggle, would not exhaust it and would search for new forms of struggle which would include most of the democratic sectors in Mexico and would link up with democratizing movements in other parts of the world. On August 21 came the termination of these illusions of an immediate change to the peaceful road. A corrupt, immoral, unequal, and illegitimate electoral process culminated in a new mockery of the good will of the citizens. The party system of the State reaffirmed its anti-democratic vocation and imposed, in all parts and on all levels, its arrogant will. In the face of an unprecedented vote, the Mexican political system opted for imposition and cut down, in this way, the hope of an electoral road. The reports of the National Democratic Convention, the Civic Alliance, and the Truth Commission brought to light that which was hidden by the shameful complicity of the great organs of communication: a gigantic fraud. The multitude of irregularities, the inequity, the corruption, the blackmail, the intimidation, the theft, and the falsification was the mark which was to be found inside the dirtiest election in the history of Mexico. The high percentages of abstention in the local elections in Veracruz, Tlaxcala, and Tabasco demonstrated that civil skepticism will continue to reign in Mexico. But, not

conforming to this, the party system of the State sought to repeat the fraud of August by imposing governors, mayors, and local congresses. Just like at the end of the 19th century, when the traitors held "elections" to guarantee the French intervention, today it is said that the nation welcomes with approval the continuation of the imposition and the authoritarianism. The electoral process of 1994 is a crime of the State. Such criminals ought to be responsible to a court for this mockery.

On the other hand, gradualism and cowardice appeared in the ranks of the opposition, who took a great fraud and made it seem as a multitude of small "irregularities". There began to appear great disunity in the democratization struggle in Mexico: the prolongation of agony for the neatness of a transition "without pain" or a "coup-de-grace" whose light illuminates the road to democracy.

The case of Chiapas is only one of the consequences of this political system. Ignoring the desires of the people of Chiapas, the government repeated the dose of imposition and predominance.

Confronted with a wide mobilization of repudiation, the party system of the State opted to repeat until satiety the lie of its triumph and exacerbated the confrontations. The polarization presented in the scene of the Mexican Southeast is the responsibility of the government and a proof of its incapacity to resolve, with any depth, the political and social problems of Mexico. By means of corruption and repression, they try to resolve a problem which only has a solution recognizing the legitimate triumph of the popular will in Chiapas. The EZLN has been holding its ground all that time, on the edge of the popular mobilization, in spite of being confronted by a great campaign of disparagement and indiscriminate repression.

Hoping for signs of a desire by the government for a just and dignified political solution to the conflict, the EZLN looked on, impotently, as the best sons of Chiapan dignity were assassinated, incarcerated, and threatened, looked on as their brothers in Guerrero, Oaxaca, Tabasco, Chihuahua, and Veracruz were repressed and received a mockery as an answer to their demands for a solution to their living conditions.

During all of this period, the EZLN not only resisted a military siege and intimidating threats by the federal force, but also resisted a campaign of calumny and lies. From the first days of 1994, we were accused of receiving military support and financing from abroad, they tried to get us to lay down our banners in exchange for money and governmental posts, they tried to take away the legitimacy of our struggle by diluting the national problem in the framework of an indigenous local one.

All the while, the supreme command was preparing a military solution to the indigenous rebellion in Chiapas and the nation would plunge itself into hopelessness and boredom. By deceiving us with a supposed desire for dialogue that only hid the wish to liquidate the Zapatista movement by suffocation, misgovernment was allowing time to pass and permitting death in the indigenous communities of the whole country.

Meanwhile, the Institutional Revolutionary Party, political arm of organized crime and drug trafficking, was continuing its phase of decomposition more sharply by resorting to assassination as the method of solution of its internal conflicts. Incapable

of a civilized dialog within its own ranks, the PRI was staining the floor of the nation with blood. The shame of this sight usurped by the national colors in the shield of the PRI was followed by all Mexicans.

Seeing that the government and the country was becoming covered with a stench and the indifference of the original inhabitants of these lands, seeing that cynicism and laziness took possession of the feelings of the Nation again, and that, besides their right to a minimum condition of worthy life, they had denied to the Indian towns the right to govern and govern themselves according to their reason and will, seeing that they had made the death of our martyrs useless, seeing that they had left us no other road, the EZLN gambled to break out of the military encirclement that contained it and came to the aid of its other indigenous brothers who, having taken the peaceful road, had become sunk in desperation and penury. Searching from coast to coast to avoid staining the Mexican soil with the blood of its brothers, the EZLN saw itself obliged to call the attention of the Nation once again to the grave conditions of indigenous Mexican life, especially of those that had been supposed to have already received governmental support but, however, had continued to stagger under the penury that they had inherited, year after year, for more than 5 centuries. With the offensive of December of 1994, the EZLN sought to show, to Mexico and to the world, the indigenous essence and the insolubility of the local social situation, if it were not to be accompanied by a profound change in the political, economical and social relationships in the whole country.

The indigenous question will not have a solution if there is not a RADICAL transformation of the national agreement. The only way to incorporate this, with justice and dignity, to the indigenous to the Nation, is by recognizing the peculiar characteristics of their social organization, culture, and politics. Home rule is not separation, it is the integration of minorities as more humiliated and forgotten peoples in contemporary Mexico. This is what the EZLN has understood, since its formation, and this is what has oriented the indigenous bases that set forth the direction of our organization.

Today, we repeat:

**OUR STRUGGLE IS NATIONAL**

We have been criticized by those who say that the Zapatistas ask for much, that we ought to take advantage of the charities offered to us by the misgovernment. To this we say that we are willing to die for a just and legitimate cause, and that it is right for us to ask for anything. We Zapatistas are ready to offer all that we have, our lives, in order to demand democracy, liberty, and justice for all Mexicans.

Today we reaffirm: **FOR ALL, EVERYTHING; NOTHING, FOR US!**

At the conclusion of 1994, there exploded the economic farce with which Salinas-ism has defrauded the Nation and the international community. The homeland of money called to its breast the great men in their power and magnificence, and they didn't hesitate to betray heaven and earth in order to enrich themselves with Mexican blood. The economic crisis aroused Mexicans from a sweet sleep with a brutal dream of the entry into the First World. The nightmare of unemployment, short-

ages and misery will now be sharper for the majority of Mexicans.

This year which has ended, 1994, finished as it demonstrated the true face of the brutal system that dominates us. The political, economical, social, and repressive programs, of neo-liberalism have demonstrated the inefficiency, falsehood, and cruel injustice that is its essence. Neo-liberalism as a doctrine and as a reality should be thrown, immediately, into the rubbish pile of national history.

#### BROTHERS AND SISTERS:

Today, amid this crisis, it is necessary for all honest Mexicans to decide on actions to achieve a real and profound change in the destiny of the nation. Today, after having first called for weapons, and subsequently for civil and peaceful struggle call to the people of Mexico to fight **BY ALL METHODS, ON ALL LEVELS, AND IN ALL PARTS**, for democracy, liberty, and justice, through this . . .

#### IIIrd DECLARATION OF THE LACANDONA JUNGLE

in which we call upon all social and political forces of the country, to all honest Mexicans, to all who struggle for the democratization of national life, to the formation of a **MOVEMENT FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION**, including the National Democratic Convention and **ALL** the forces that, without distinction of religious creed, race, or political ideology, who are opposed to the system of the Party of the State. The Movement for National Liberation will fight for a common program, by all methods and on all levels for the restoration of a transitional government, a new constitution, a new Magna Carta and for the destruction of the system of the Party of the State. We call on the National Democratic Convention and on Citizen Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas Solórzano to head this Movement for National Liberation, as a broad front of opposition.

**WE CALL ON THE EMPLOYEES OF THE STATE, THE WORKERS IN THE FIELDS AND IN THE CITY, ON THE TENANT FARMERS, ON THE TEACHERS AND STUDENTS OF MEXICO, ON MEXICAN WOMEN, ON THE YOUTH OF THE ENTIRE COUNTRY, ON THE ARTISTS AND HONEST INTELLECTUALS, ON THE CONSISTENTLY RELIGIOUS PEOPLE, ON THE MILITANTS AT THE BASE OF THE VARIOUS POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS** so that, by the methods and forms of struggle that they consider possible and necessary, to fight for the end of the system of the Party of the State, incorporating themselves into the **NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION**, if they have no party, and into the Movement for National Liberation if they are militants in any of the political forces of the opposition. Therefore, in keeping with the spirit of this **IIIrd DECLARATION OF THE LACANDONA JUNGLE**, we declare that

**FIRST:** — The federal government is withdrawn from its custody of the Fatherland. The Flag of Mexico, the supreme law of the Nation, the Mexican National Anthem, and the National Coat-of-Arms will now be in the custody of the forces of the resistance until legality, legitimacy, and sovereignty are restored in all of the national territory.

**SECOND:** — The original Mexican Political Constitution, enacted on February 5, 1917 is declared valid, while incorporating the Revolutionary Laws of 1993 and the Statutes of Autonomy included for the indigenous regions, which are decreed to be an attachment to it until the new constitution is instituted and there has been established a new Magna Carta.

**THIRD:** — You are called to a struggle for the search for a “government of transition to democracy”, to be endowed by the very same distinct communities, social and political organizations, who are maintaining the federal pact agreed upon in the Constitution of 1917, and are included, without regard to religious credo, social class, political ideology, race or sex, in the Movement for the National Liberation. The EZLN will support the civilian population in the task of restoring the legality, the order, the genuineness and the national sovereignty, and in the fight for the formation and installation of a national government of transition to democracy with the following character:

1.— That it will liquidate the system of the Party of the State and really separate the government from the PRI.

2.— That it will reform the electoral law in terms that guarantee: cleanliness, credibility, justness, citizen participation, not by parties and not governmental, recognition of all national political forces, regional or local, and that it will summon new general elections for the federation.

3.— That it will summon you to a constituent assembly for the creation of a new constitution.

4.— That it will recognize the particularities of the indigenous groups, recognize their rights to inclusive autonomy, and their citizenship.

5.— That it will guide the national economic program, putting aside pretenses and lies, and favoring the most deprived sectors of the country, the workers and peasants, who are the principal producers of the wealth that others appropriate.

#### BROTHERS AND SISTERS:

Peace will come from the hand of democracy, liberty and justice for all Mexicans. Our path to a just peace which redeems our dead cannot be found if it costs us the dignity of Mexico. Our land is restless and lives in our hearts. The mockery of our dead requires us to fight in order to wash away their pain. We will resist. Shame and arrogance will be defeated. As when Benito Juarez opposed the French intervention, the Homeland goes now to side of the patriotic forces, against the anti-democratic and authoritarian forces. Today we say:

Our Native Land lives! And it is ours!

Democracy!

Liberty!

Justice!

From the mountains of the Southeast Mexico.

The Indigenous Clandestine Revolutionary Committee

Commander General of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation

Mexico, January of 1995. □

# Theory and the communist movement

If there is to be a rebirth of the communist movement, there must be serious attention to revolutionary theory. The revolutionary struggle deals with matters affecting the life of millions. It should not be waged by hit-or-miss methods or by relying on mere "common sense", which is simply a pale reflection of the theories of yesterday. Nor can one get a satisfactory idea of the Marxist framework from the cardboard simplifications and vulgarizations that appear in the works of bourgeois or opportunist writers. The study of theory is a sphere of activity in its own right, as vital for the movement as any other front of activism.

One article in this section deals with the views of Marxism on the agrarian question. Take for example the issue of the prospects for co-operatives under capitalism. Is this the way out for the small farmer or the agricultural laborer? This shouldn't be answered by guesswork or by whether co-operatives sound vaguely socialist. It requires definite study of the nature of small-scale production under capitalism and of the meaning of collective production. The article gives some thought-provoking extracts from Marxist writing, hoping to inspire the reader to a more thorough study of revolutionary theory.

The other article points out that one of our differences with the *Chicago Workers' Voice* group is over the significance of anti-revisionism. The term "Marxism" has been used by state-capitalist bureaucrats and reformists of various stripes—to be revolutionary, Marxism must be anti-revisionist. But the *CWV* group tends to see anti-revisionism more as simply taking up militant stands in the struggle and standing for socialist slogans, and not as a definite trend in itself.

On the stand of *Chicago Workers' Voice*:

## Denigrating anti-revisionism and glorifying Zapatista theories

by Mark, Detroit

The building up of the revolutionary working class trend demands the development of an anti-revisionist communist theory to guide it. These days, the exploiters gloat about the death of communism while the oppressed often wonder if their hopes for liberation are doomed. Anti-revisionism holds that what has collapsed in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe was not communism but state-capitalist regimes under the thumb of a bureaucratic elite. The growth of "market reforms" in China, Cuba and other so-called "communist" countries is not the result of communism, but has evolved out of the bureaucratic state-capitalist system in these countries.

What has died is not Marxism, but the revision of Marxism. Revisionism kept various trappings of communism while emptying Marxism-Leninism of its revolutionary content. Anti-revisionism shows how revisionism abandoned a Marxist path for the development of the mass struggle. It exposes the revisionist state-capitalist systems and explores the roots of their decay. Yes, there is much left to analyze about the tragedies that

have beset the revolutionary movements of the past. There are also many new developments in world capitalism that beg for analysis. But anti-revisionism stands for taking up these questions in light of Marxism-Leninism.

There are many political forces among the masses, many which engage in struggle of one sort or another. But anti-revisionism is not simply participating in militant activity. It is revitalizing Marxism and spreading its influence among the masses. It means applying communist principles to point the path forward for the oppressed and critically examining all other trends. But the *Chicago Workers' Voice* group is skeptical about building up such an anti-revisionist trend. They promote other trends as if they are taking up the tasks of anti-revisionist communism.

### At the November 1994 "minority" meeting

For example, in a November 1994 meeting, some *CWV* members ridiculed the notion of anti-revisionist communism while promoting that the real anti-revisionist fight was taking

place inside the Zapatista-organized National Democratic Convention.<sup>1</sup> In a special issue of the *CWV Theoretical Journal* they claimed to give a complete record of the controversy over anti-revisionism and other issues that developed between themselves and the present supporters of this journal, *Communist Voice*. But they omitted certain important documents such as lengthy notes of the November 1994 meeting.<sup>2</sup>

According to these notes, the *CWV*'s Rene compared a comrade's remarks that there is a need to fight for "Leninist anti-revisionism" to oppose the trotskyite trends and challenge their erroneous theories to "absolutist views, like Catholics and the Pope." In other words, the fight against opportunist distortions of Marxism was not seen as a fight to uphold a live, viable theory, but the defense of dead dogma. (Since these remarks, Rene's reconciliation with opportunism has led him to drop out of the *CWV*.)

For Rene, there is no particular importance to the work of the anti-revisionist communists because "activists everywhere are interested in analyzing Soviet history" and other subjects and "we don't make ourselves the center by calling ourselves 'anti-revisionist'." Yes, many trends analyze Soviet history. But unlike Rene, the anti-revisionists consider this a reason to develop *their own* analysis. Anti-revisionism does not rest content with the fact that others have put forward views on this matter. It is not satisfied with the bourgeois critique that Soviet history shows communism is no good, the revisionist analysis that glorifies the state capitalist regimes, the trotskyite stand that critically supports the revisionist regimes on the grounds that the existence of state-owned property means the economy is really socialist, and so on. Anti-revisionism strives for a revolutionary Marxist critique and joins hands with anyone else interested in doing so. Rene considers this critical attitude toward what the other trends say as sectarian, as just arbitrarily "calling ourselves 'anti-revisionist'." He obliterates the distinction between a Marxist-Leninist analysis and any other trend. And in so doing, he lays the basis for declaring any trend he wishes to be anti-revisionist.

Rene's stand is that anti-revisionism describes any trend proclaiming itself for the mass struggle. For instance, later on in the November 1994 meeting he described in glowing terms the "anti-revisionist" struggle supposedly being waged by those

in the EZLN's Convention who opposed telling the peasants to give up the mass struggle and participate in the elections. This supposedly was anti-revisionism because it was a section of the PRD, which included some remnants of the revisionist Mexican Communist Party, who were preaching capitulation. Rene didn't care whether those opposed to calling off the mass struggle were fighting for a Marxist conception of the class struggle or not, or whether those opposing capitulation had petty-bourgeois nationalist conceptions. He didn't bother to explain whether these alleged "anti-revisionists" had views that tended to undermine the struggle of the oppressed or not. They were more militant than some ex-revisionists in the PRD, and that's all that mattered.

Rene might not have meant that it was the Zapatistas who took this so-called "anti-revisionist" stand but some others. But Rene's criterion for anti-revisionism does not require going beyond the framework of the Zapatista leaders. Since Rene has reduced anti-revisionism to being for mass struggle as opposed to outright surrender to the government, the EZLN rightfully belongs as part of Rene's version of anti-revisionism. The fact that the EZLN doesn't even claim to be guided by Marxism, doesn't have a vision of socialism on their agenda, considers revisionist state-capitalism as communism, etc., isn't an issue for Rene. The "real" anti-revisionism of Rene is anti-revisionism without the fight against opportunism and without Marxism-Leninism. It is anti-revisionism in name only.

At the November meeting, another *CWV* member, Anita, echoed Rene's sentiments. She stated "we cannot save the movement by repudiating trotskyism. The main contribution is by people in the middle of mass struggles." Anti-revisionists point out how trotskyism is the political twin of Stalinism and Soviet revisionism as a whole. Anita's opposition to exposing trotskyism makes a mockery of the notion of anti-revisionism.

And who were these forces in the mass movement that Anita claimed were making "the main contribution" to what she calls "sort[ing] out what is genuine Marxism"? The same forces Rene described who were simply opposed to this or that stand of the ex-revisionists but were not defenders of revolutionary Marxism. For instance, both Rene and Anita are excited about the *El Machete* group which promotes narrow nationalism, hails Cuba as the model of socialism, does not identify itself as Marxist-Leninist and basically supports EZLN politics as the revolutionary road in Mexico despite some minor criticisms.

### Attraction to the weaknesses of Zapatista ideology

The loss of belief in anti-revisionism goes hand-in-hand with *CWV* members promoting the views of the Zapatistas as a great advance in revolutionary theory. At a May Day meeting the *CWV* organized in 1994, some *CWV* members were excited that the Zapatistas don't consider themselves the vanguard with the correct path of struggle. A logical reaction to this frank admission would be that some other force would have to lead the Mexican revolution. After all, while the Zapatista leaders say they are not "the light" that has the answers, they do promote quite definite opinions about the struggle, views that

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<sup>1</sup>November 1994 saw the last of several meetings of representatives from most of the circles of the "minority". The "minority" was those from the late Marxist-Leninist Party, USA who proclaimed a desire to fight the liquidationist views of what, at the end, constituted the "majority" grouping of the MLP. The "minority" split into the *CWV* group and its supporters, and those who are now producing the *Communist Voice*.

<sup>2</sup>The notes on this meeting were prepared by comrades of the Detroit Marxist-Leninist Study Group and circulated to the *CWV* group and other comrades for correction. Most of the period of verification of the notes, along with the final circulation of corrected notes in January, fell inside the period of Nov. 25, 1994 to Feb. 26, 1995 that the *CWVTJ Special Issue* claimed to cover in its entirety..

replace a revolutionary class perspective with faith in the bourgeois reformists like Cuauhtemoc Cardenas (founder of the PRD). But instead of analyzing that despite organizing militant actions, the EZLN also promoted harmful and liquidationist views, just about anything the Zapatista leaders did was fawned on as a great new discovery in revolutionary thinking.

For example, *CWV* members presented the EZLN organizing an armed force of toilers and having ties to mass organizations as a new breakthrough in political thought. Presumably, these accomplishments were an outgrowth of the brilliant new "anti-vanguard" politics. Yes, the militant actions led by the EZLN were an important accomplishment. But they were not some new discovery. In fact there have been more powerful armies of toilers organized throughout Latin America in recent years (e.g., in Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Peru). And generally, the armed movements had links to other mass organizations. Moreover, these movements actually succeeded in smashing the old regime in one case (the overthrow of Somoza in Nicaragua) and, at their peak, represented bigger threats to carry out a revolution than the Zapatistas do. The rising up of the peasants in Chiapas is important in its own right and deserves support, whatever the shortcomings in the views guiding the struggle, but embellishing Zapatista politics as a great theoretical advance does the poor peasants no favors. It clouds the path to their liberation.

Nevertheless, the published May Day speech of the *CWV*, while making a bow to the need for the rebirth of the revolutionary working class movement in Mexico, gushes over how allegedly "the EZLN has shown really admirable political maturity and tactical sense and it obviously has learned lessons from the experiences of the guerrilla and other radical movements of the recent past."<sup>3</sup> But what really distinguishes the views of the Zapatista leadership from the other radical movements is *not* that the EZLN has discovered new revolutionary answers. In general, the EZLN shares the same petty-bourgeois nationalist outlook as many of these other trends. What distinguishes EZLN is that they tack on to this the fashionable theories promoting such things as the futility of revolutionary parties fighting to bring the revolutionary classes to power and open scorn for the fight against opportunism. In fact, these types of views are not unique to the Zapatistas these days, but reflect the decay of the radical movements in various countries. For example, the FMLN/FDR in El Salvador, which had organized a powerful revolutionary struggle, gave up their revolutionary perspective in the early 1980's in favor of seeing

the mass struggle simply as a means to pressure for democratic space. Today that democratic space exists and the former radical leaders have transformed themselves into several factions of run-of-the-mill parliamentarians. Meanwhile, the basic social goals of the masses, such as land reform, remain unmet and the mass struggle is disoriented. The EZLN has not collapsed into becoming respectable parliamentarians. However, the EZLN theorizing tends to imitate the worst tendencies in modern "radical" politics such as their illusions in the democratization process. Yet it was the anti-vanguardist phrases of the EZLN that was considered a sign of political advance by members of the *CWV*.

While Rene and Anita promote that the real anti-revisionist struggle is coming from within the Zapatista "Convention," the *CWV*'s Oleg seems to think that the EZLN leaders are really standing up to opportunism. He writes that "the Zapatistas knew full well what rotten opportunists the PRD are and decided for strategic reasons that they needed to try to use them."<sup>4</sup> But the truth is that the EZLN has big illusions in the PRD (or, at least Cardenas, its founder) and promotes these illusions among the masses. True, Oleg will not call the Zapatistas Marxist-Leninist. But if they are so politically clear, if one can talk about the mighty EZLN struggle against opportunism without regard to the content of it, then what need is there of anti-revisionism?

### What divides us?

In the months after the tirade against anti-revisionism from some members of the *CWV* at the November 1994 meeting, comrade Joseph of the Detroit Marxist-Leninist Study Group raised that the "minority" (circles of the former Marxist-Leninist Party who expressed a desire to oppose the liquidationist views of some other remnants of the MLP) faced a crisis and that it must take a clear stand in favor of the anti-revisionist concept. But the *CWV* en masse scoffed at the idea that the declarations in their ranks against anti-revisionism was a serious matter. They then announced they could not unite in an organization based on anti-revisionism because they had serious disagreements on this issue with those who are presently supporting *Communist Voice*.

So despite Rene leaving the *CWV* group and despite certain variations of views in that group, and despite certain lip-service still given to "anti-revisionism," the ideas expressed by Rene, Anita and Oleg currently are influential in the *CWV*. □

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<sup>3</sup>*Chicago Workers' Voice Theoretical Journal*, #3, June 1, 1994, p.6.

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<sup>4</sup>Oleg's letter to the minority, Jan. 4, 1995 (mistakenly dated 1994 in Oleg's original and its various reproductions). See for example *Communist Voice* #1, p. 23, col. 1.

# Marxism on peasant and proletarian demands

Scientific communism, or Marxism-Leninism, has devoted much attention to analyzing the position of different sections of the toiling population. Marxists have shown that workers and peasants, while both toilers, are in different class positions. And they have discussed how a socialist party should work in the countryside.

From the start, Marx, Engels and Lenin backed the struggle for agrarian reform and the struggle of the small peasants and the rural proletariat. At the same time, they opposed the utopian ideology of the agrarian movements, and pointed out that the continuation of marketplace relations spelled ruin for the majority of the rural population.

These Marxist views come alive in looking at current issues such as the peasant uprising in Chiapas and the demands of the Zapatistas. Communism is quite different than approaching the countryside with sentimental phrases about the nation, or believing the land program of the earlier Mexican revolutions can ensure prosperity.

Below we include just a few extracts from a large literature. They deal with a number of different situations, from the demand of poor American workers in the 1840s for land, socialist agitation among West European peasants in the late 1890s, and the peasant movement in Russia in the early 20th century. The prescriptions for one situation can't be carried over to another without serious analysis and thought about what applies and why and what has to be changed. But these extracts bring out that Marxism has discovered a number of important principles about the agrarian situation, principles that clash with all those theories, whether from the bourgeoisie or from radicals, that aren't based on materialism and a serious study of the class struggle. Thus these extracts suggest a different approach than is fashionable today, and they will, I hope, encourage a closer study both of Marxist communism and of the actual conditions of the peasants and rural proletariat in the different regions of Mexico.

— Joseph Green, Detroit

## From the works of Marx, Engels, and Lenin

### Lenin: *Marx on the American "General Redistribution"*

*Collected Works*, vol. 8, pp. 323-29, April 1905

*Here Lenin discussed Marx's views about the movement of the mid-1840s in the U.S. for land reform and a "general redistribution", so to speak, of free land among the working people. This agitation was sponsored by the National Reform Association, founded in 1845, whose core was the organization*

*"Young America", based on workers and handicraftsmen.*

... Hermann Kriege, a co-worker of Marx and at that time a very young man, had gone to America in 1845 and started a journal ... for the propaganda of communism. But he conducted this propaganda in such a manner that Marx was obliged to protest very strongly in the name of the German Communists against Hermann Kriege's discrediting of the Communist Party.

The point is that the agrarian question at that time had been brought to the fore by the course of the American social movement. . . . ; it was not a question of a developed capitalist society, but, on the contrary, of the creation of the primary and fundamental conditions for a real development of capitalism. . . .

Kriege gave no data in his journal for a concrete study of the distinctive features of the American social system and for defining the true character of the movement of the contemporary agrarian reformers who campaigned for the abolition of rent. What Kriege did do, though . . . was to clothe the question of the agrarian revolution in bombastic and high-sounding phrases: "Every poor man," wrote Kriege, "will become a useful member of human society as soon as he is given an opportunity to engage in productive work. He will be assured such an opportunity for all time if society gives him a piece of land on which he can keep himself and his family. . . . If this immense area (the 1,400,000,000 acres of North American public domain) is withdrawn from commerce and is secured in restricted amounts for labor, an end will be put to poverty in America at one stroke. . . ."

To this Marx replies: "One would have expected him to understand that legislators have no power to decree that the evolution of the patriarchal system, which Kriege desires, into an industrial system be checked, or that the industrial and commercial states of the East coast be thrown back to patriarchal barbarism."

Thus, we have before us a real plan for an American general redistribution: the withdrawal of a vast land expanse from commerce, the securing of title to the land, limitation of the extent of landownership or land tenure. And from the very outset Marx subjects this utopianism to sober criticism, he points out that the patriarchal system evolves inevitably into the industrial system, i.e., to use present-day idiom, he points out the inevitability of the development of capitalism. [pp. 323-24]

... But it would be a great mistake to think that the utopian dreams of the participants in the movement caused Marx to adopt a negative attitude to the movement in general. Nothing of the kind. Already then, at the very beginning of his literary activity, Marx was able to extract the real and progressive content of a movement from its tawdry ideological trappings. In the second part of his criticism . . . Marx wrote:

"We fully recognize the historical justification of the movement of the American national Reformers. We know that this

movement strives for a result which, true, would give a temporary impetus to the industrialization of modern bourgeois society, but which, as a product of the proletarian movement, and as an attack on landed property in general, especially under prevailing American conditions, must inevitably lead, by its own consequences, to communism. Kriege . . . clothes this simple fact in bombastic phrases, without entering into the content of the movement, thereby proving that he is quite at sea as regards the connection between Young America and American social conditions."

"...[Kriege demanded that the land be preserved as 'the common heritage of all men' and that 'Of this still untouched property of the people nobody is to take possession of more than 160 acres, and this only on condition that he cultivates them himself.'] Thus, in order to preserve the land as 'inalienable common property', and for 'the whole of mankind' besides, it is necessary immediately to begin parceling it out. Kriege, moreover, imagines that he can rule out the necessary consequences of this allotment—concentration, industrial progress, and the like, by legislation. He regards 160 acres of land as an always fixed quantity, as though the value of such an area does not vary according to its quality. The 'peasants' will have to exchange among themselves and with other people, if not the land itself, then its produce; and once they go so far, it will soon turn out that one 'peasant,' even without capital, thanks to his labor and the greater original fertility of his 160 acres, will have reduced another to the position of his farmhand. And then is it not all the same whether 'the land' or the produce of the land 'falls into the hands of predatory speculators'? [Marx then goes on to calculate how large "all mankind" can be if it is to live on the land that Kriege would have set aside for it.] . . .

"Had Kriege regarded the movement for freeing the land as an early form of the proletarian movement, necessary under certain conditions, as a movement which, by reason of the position in social life of the class from which it emanates, must necessarily develop into a communist movement; had he shown why the communist aspirations in America had to manifest themselves initially in this agrarian form, which seems to contradict all communism, there would have been nothing to object to. But he declares what is merely a subordinate form of a movement of definite, real people to be a cause of mankind in general. He represents this cause . . . as the ultimate and highest aim of every movement in general, thus turning the definite aims of the movement into sheer bombastic nonsense. In the same article . . . he continues to chant his paean: 'And so the old dreams of the Europeans would at last come true. A place would be prepared for them on this side of the ocean which they would only have to take and to fructify with the labor of their hands, so as to be able proudly to declare to all the tyrants of the world, 'This is *my* cabin, which you have not built; this is *my* hearth whose glow fills your hearts with envy.'

"He might have added, This is *my* dunghill, which I, my wife, my children, my manservant, and my cattle have produced. And who are the Europeans whose 'dreams' would thus come true? Not the communist workers, but bankrupt shopkeepers and handicraftsmen, or ruined cottars, who yearn for the good fortune of once again becoming petty bourgeois and peas-

ants in America. And what is the 'dream' that is to be fulfilled by means of these 1,400,000,000 acres? No other than that all men be converted into private owners, a dream which is as unrealizable and as communistic as the dream to convert all men into emperors, kings, and popes." [pp. 324-26]

### **Karl Marx: *The nationalization of the land***

March-April 1872, published June 15, 1972 in *The International Herald*. See *Selected Works of Marx and Engels*, vol. II, pp. 288-90.)

*Marx points out that, in a capitalist society, the consequences of individual ownership of small plots of land are not avoided by co-operatives. Under capitalism, the individual co-operatives are eventually subject to the same laws of competition and the marketplace that affect individual small farmers. Communism is not the ownership and farming of the land by co-ops, but by society as a whole. The nature of cooperatives under capitalism, and whether they help the poor peasants and rural proletariat, depends on the particular cooperatives being discussed. But cooperatives, in a society ruled by the marketplace, are not the same as the socialized large-scale production that exists when society as a whole directs production.*

To nationalize the land, in order to let it out in small plots to individuals or working men's societies, would, under a middle-class government, only engender a reckless competition among themselves and thus result in a progressive increase of "Rent" which, in its turn, would afford new facilities to the appropriators of feeding under the producers.

At the International Congress [of the International Workingmen's Association, Sept. 6-13, 1868—JG] of Brussels, in 1868, one of our friends said:

"Small private property in land is doomed by the verdict of science, large land property by that of justice. There remains then but one alternative. The soil must become the property of rural associations or the property of the whole nation. The future will decide that question."

I say on the contrary; the social movement will lead to this decision that the land can but be owned by the nation itself. To give up the soil to the hands of associated rural laborers, would be to surrender society to one exclusive class of producers.

### **Frederick Engels: *The Peasant Question in France and Germany***

Nov. 1894. See *Selected Works of Marx and Engels*, vol. III, pp. 457-76.

*In this work, Engels here warns against the consequences of small-scale farming, and he discusses various co-operative plans as a means of transition for the peasants towards communism. But he doesn't think that co-operative ownership by itself saves the peasantry from the disaster facing small-scale production under the rule of the marketplace. He talks of different types of co-operatives, and only co-operatives under the control of a society as a whole—to be exact, of a socialist soci-*

ety—are regarded as socialist co-ops.

The rural population to which we can address ourselves consists of quite different parts, which vary greatly with the various regions. [p. 458]

Let us say it outright: in view of the prejudices arising out of their entire economic position, their upbringing and their isolated mode of life, prejudices nurtured by the bourgeois press and the big landowners, we can win the mass of the small peasants forthwith only if we make them a promise which we ourselves know we shall not be able to keep. That is, we must promise them not only to protect their property in any event against all economic forces sweeping upon them but also to relieve them of the burdens which already now oppress them: to transform the tenant into a free owner and to pay the debts of the owner succumbing to the weight of his mortgage. If we could do this we should again arrive at the point from which the present situation would necessarily develop anew. We shall not have emancipated the peasant but only given him a reprieve.

But it is not in our interests to win the peasant overnight only to lose him again on the morrow if we cannot keep our promise. We have no more use for the peasant as a Party member if he expects us to perpetuate his property in his small holding than for the small handicraftsman who would fain be perpetuated as a master. These people belong to the anti-Semites. Let them go to them and let them promise to salvage their small enterprises. Once they learn there what these glittering phrases really amount to and what melodies are fiddled down from the anti-Semitic heavens they will realize in ever-increasing measure that we who promise less and look for salvation in entirely different quarters are after all more reliable people. [p. 469]

Almost twenty years ago the Danish Socialists . . . were already drawing up such plans. The peasants of a village or parish . . . were to pool their land to form a single big farm in order to cultivate it for common account and distribute the yield in proportion to the land, money and labor contributed. . . . if we apply this idea to a region of small holdings we shall find that if these are pooled and the aggregate area cultivated on a large scale, part of the labor power employed hitherto is rendered superfluous. It is precisely this saving of labor that represents one of the main advantages of large-scale farming. Either additional land taken from big estates in the neighborhood is placed at the disposal of the peasant co-operative or the peasants in question are provided with the means and the opportunity of engaging in industry as an accessory calling, primarily and as far as possible for their own use. In either case their economic position is improved and simultaneously the general social directing agency is assured the necessary influence to transform the peasant co-operative to a higher form, and to equalize the rights and duties of the co-operative as a whole as well as of its individual members with those of the other departments of the entire community. How this is to be carried out in practice in each particular case will depend upon the circumstances of the case and the conditions under which we take possession of political power. [p. 470, *emph. added*]

Neither now nor at any time in the future can we promise the small-holding peasants to preserve their individual property and individual enterprise against the overwhelming power of capitalist production. We can only promise them that we shall not interfere in their property relations by force, against their will. Moreover, we can advocate that the struggle of the capitalists and big landlords against the small peasants should be waged from now on with a minimum of unfair means and that direct robbery and cheating, which are practiced only too often, be as far as possible prevented. In this we shall succeed only in exceptional cases. Under the developed capitalist mode of production nobody can tell where honesty ends and cheating begins. But always it will make a considerable difference whether public authority is on the side of the cheater or the cheated. We of course are decidedly on the side of the small peasant; we shall do everything at all permissible to make his lot more bearable, to facilitate his transition to the co-operative should he decide to do so, and even to make it possible for him to remain on his small holding for a protracted length of time to think the matter over, should he still be unable to bring himself to this decision. [p. 471]

Accordingly we can do no greater disservice to the Party as well as to the small peasants than to make promises that even only create the impression that we intend to preserve the small holdings permanently. It would mean directly to block the way of the peasants to their emancipation and to degrade the Party to the level of rowdy anti-Semitism. On the contrary, it is the duty of our Party to make clear to the peasants again and again that their position is absolutely hopeless as long as capitalism holds sway, that it is absolutely impossible to preserve their small holdings for them as such, that capitalist large-scale production is absolutely sure to run over their impotent antiquated system of small production as a train runs over a pushcart. If we do this we shall act in conformity with the inevitable trend of economic development, and this development will not fail to bring our words home to the small peasants. [p. 472]

. . . The big estates thus restored to the community are to be turned over by us to the rural workers who are already cultivating them and are to be organized into co-operatives. They are to be assigned to them for their use and benefit under the control of the community. [p. 474, *emph. added*]

. . . It goes without saying that we are more interested in their male and female servants and day laborers than in them [the big and middle peasants—JG] themselves. If these peasants want to be guaranteed the continued existence of their enterprises we are in no position whatever to assure them of that. They must then take their place among the anti-Semites, peasant leaguers and similar parties who derive pleasure from promising everything and keeping nothing. We are economically certain that the big and middle peasant must likewise inevitably succumb to the competition of capitalist production and the cheap overseas corn, as is proved by the growing indebtedness and the everywhere evident decay of these peasants as well. We can do nothing against this decay except to recommend here too

the pooling of farms to form co-operative enterprises, in which the exploitation of wage labor will be eliminated more and more, and their gradual transformation into branches of the great national producers' co-operative with each branch enjoying equal rights and duties can be instituted." [pp. 473-74, emph. added]

... it is of vastly greater importance to win the rural proletariat east of the [river] Elbe than the small peasants of Western Germany or yet the middle peasants of Southern Germany. It is here, in East-Elbe Prussia, that the decisive battle of our cause will have to be fought . . . [p. 476]

### **Lenin: *Socialism and the peasantry***

*Collected Works*, vol. 9, pp. 307-15, October, 1905.

... It is absurd to confuse the tasks and prerequisites of a democratic revolution with those of a socialist revolution, which, we repeat, differ both in their nature and in the composition of the social forces taking part in them.

It is on this last mentioned mistake that we propose to dwell in detail. The undeveloped state of the class contradictions in the people in general, and in the peasantry in particular, is an unavoidable phenomenon in the epoch of a democratic revolution, which for the first time lays the foundations for a really extensive development of capitalism. This lack of economic development results in the survival and revival, in one form or another, of the backward forms of a socialism which is petty-bourgeois, for it idealizes reforms that do not go beyond the framework of petty-bourgeois relationships. The mass of the peasants do not and cannot realize that the fullest "freedom" and the "justest" distribution even of all the land, far from destroying capitalism, will, on the contrary, create the conditions for a particularly extensive and powerful development of capitalism. Whereas Social-Democracy singles out and supports only the revolutionary-democratic substance of these peasant aspirations, petty-bourgeois socialism elevates to a theory this political backwardness of the peasants, confusing or jumbling together the prerequisites and the tasks of a genuine democratic revolution with those of an imaginary socialist revolution." [p. 309]

... Bourgeois economists are doing their utmost to instill in the small peasant the idea that capitalism is compatible with the well-being of the small independent farmer. That is why they veil the general question of commodity production, the yoke of capital, and the decline and degradation of small peasant farming by stressing the particular question of the concentration of landed property [i.e. whether large landlord plantations will take over all the land—JG]. They shut their eyes to the fact that large-scale production in specialized branches of agriculture producing for the market is also developing on small and medium-sized holdings, and that ownership of this kind is deteriorating because of greater leasing of land, as well as under the burden of mortgages and the pressure of usury. They obscure the

indisputable fact of the technical superiority of large-scale production in agriculture and the fall in the peasant's living standards in his struggle against capitalism." [p. 311]

In other words: a failure to understand the difference between a democratic revolution and a socialist revolution leads to a failure to express the genuinely revolutionary aspect of the democratic aims, while all the nebulosity of the bourgeois-democratic world outlook is brought into the socialist aims. The result is a slogan which is not revolutionary enough for a democrat, and inexcusably confused for a socialist.

On the other hand, Social-Democracy's program meets all requirements both of support for genuinely revolutionary democracy and the presentation of a clear socialist aim. [p. 314]

### **Lenin: *The Agrarian Program of the Liberals***

*Collected Works*, vol. 8, pp. 315-322, April, 1905.

*Lenin points out that property distinctions among the Russian peasants are, at the time he writes, obscured by their general degradation, poverty and misery. And the liberal landlords keep quiet about the rural proletariat and the class distinctions in the countryside, call for certain measures of state aid to the countryside, and hope to convert as many of the peasants into "their ally, into a man of property, a pillar of order." But a general improvement in the condition of the peasants, however desirable, would also accentuate the class and property differences immensely. It is not the task of socialists to dream of a society where everyone is petty-bourgeois, but to organize the rural proletariat. Socialists should zealously support for the revolutionary movement of the peasants for a radical improvement in their conditions and the end of miserable, oppressive relations in the countryside, but never forget that this will accentuate class divisions and that special attention should be paid to the rural proletariat.*

We are in full sympathy with the peasant movement. We would consider it a tremendous gain both for the general social development of Russia and for the Russian proletariat if the peasantry, with our help, succeeded in wresting from the landlords all their lands by revolutionary means. But even assuming this most favorable outcome—even then, the mass of agricultural hired laborers would only temporarily diminish in number but could in no event disappear altogether. Even then, the independent interests of the rural hired laborers would remain independent interests.

The transfer of the land to the peasants would not at all do away with the predominance of the capitalist mode of production in Russia; it would, on the contrary, provide a broader base for its development; it would bring this development from the type approximating the Italian closer to the American. The property distinctions among the peasants, which are already tremendous, but relatively not very noticeable chiefly on account of the general oppression under the absolutist serf-owning system, would not in any way case to exist. The expansion of the

home market, the development of exchange and commodity production on a new scale, the rapid growth of industry and of cities—all these inevitable effects of a substantial improvement in the condition of the peasants would unavoidably increase property distinctions. The more illusions on that score are widespread among us, the more energetically must the Social-Democrats combat them, if they really want to represent the interests of the working-class movement as a whole, and not merely of one of its staeww, free, capitalist Russia, that part of the rural petty bourgeoisie will side with "order"; and the more land the peasants take away from the landlords now, the sooner this will come about. In the countryside, too, only the rural proletariat can be a truly revolutionary class, a class that, under all circumstances, is revolutionary to the end. The conversion of the wretched, downtrodden muzhik into a free, energetic European farmer will be a tremendous democratic gain; but we socialists shall not forget for a moment that this gain will be of no real use to the cause of mankind's complete emancipation from all oppression unless and insofar as the farmer is confronted by a class-conscious, free, and organized rural proletariat." [p. 320]

### Lenin: Revolutionary Adventurism

*Collected Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 184-206, Aug. 1/Sept. 1, 1902.

The Socialist-Revolutionaries have kept themselves pure of the baneful influence of modern socialist doctrines. They have fully preserved the good old methods of vulgar socialism. We are confronted by a new historical fact, a new movement among a certain section of the people. They do not examine the condition of this section or set themselves the aim of explaining its movement by the nature of that section and its relation to the developing economic structure of society as a whole. To them, all this is an empty dogma, outlived orthodoxy. They do things more simply: what is it that the representatives of the rising section themselves are speaking about? Land, additional allotments, redistribution of the land. There it is in a nutshell. You have a "semi-socialist program", "a thoroughly correct principle", "a bright idea", "an ideal which already lives in the peasant's mind in embryo form", etc. All that is necessary is to "brush up and elaborate this ideal", bring out the "pure idea of socialism". [p. 198]

The minimum program of the Socialist-Revolutionaries, based as it is on the theory we have analyzed, is a real curiosity. This 'program' includes two items: 1) "socialization of the land, i.e., its conversion into the property of the whole of society, to be used by the working people"; 2) "the development among the peasantry of all possible types of public associations and economic co-operatives . . . ( . . . ) . . . for the gradual emancipation of the peasantry from the sway of money capital . . . ( . . . ) . . . and for the preparation of collective agricultural production of the future." Just as the sun is reflected in a drop of water, so is the entire spirit of the present-day "Social-Revolutionarism" reflected in these two items. In theory, revolutionary phrasemongering instead of a considered and integral system of views; in practice—helpless snatching at this or that modish petty expedient instead of participation in the class struggle—that is

all they have to show. We must admit that it has required rare civic courage to place socialization of the land *alongside* of co-operation in a *minimum* program: Babeuf [an early French communist], on the one hand, and Mr. Levitsky [a liberal Narodnik and founder of agricultural artels], on the other. This is inimitable.

. . . It is deception to assert that "co-operatives of every kind" play a revolutionary role in present-day society and prepare the way for collectivism rather than strengthen the rural bourgeoisie. It is deception to assert that socialization of the land can be placed before the "*peasantry*" as a "minimum", as something just as close at hand as the establishment of co-operatives. Any socialist could explain to our Socialist-Revolutionaries that today the abolition of private ownership of land can only be the immediate prelude to its abolition in general: that the mere transfer of the land "to be used by the working people" would still not satisfy the proletariat, since millions and tens of millions of ruined peasants are no longer able to work the land, even if they had it. And to supply these ruined millions with implements, cattle, etc., would amount to the socialization of all the means of production and would require a socialist revolution of the proletariat and not a peasant movement against the remnants of the serf-owning system. The Socialist-Revolutionaries are confusing socialization of the land with bourgeois nationalization of the land. Speaking in the abstract, the latter is conceivable on the basis of capitalism too, without abolishing wage-labor. But the very example of these same Socialist-Revolutionaries is vivid confirmation of the truth that to advance the demand for nationalization of the land in a police state is tantamount to obscuring the only revolutionary principle, that of the class struggle, and bringing grist to the mill of every kind of bureaucracy.

Not only that. The Socialist-Revolutionaries descend to outright reaction when they rise up against the demand of our draft program for the "annulment of all laws restricting the peasant in the free disposal of his land." For the sake of the Narodnik prejudice about the "commune principle" and the "equalitarian principle" they deny to the peasant such a "most elementary civic right" as the right freely to dispose of his land; they complacently shut their eyes to the fact that the village commune of today is hemmed in by its social-estate reality; . . .

. . . When it came to action, the Socialist Revolutionaries did not reveal even a single of the three conditions essential for the elaboration of a consistent socialist program: a clear idea of the ultimate aim; a correct understanding of the path leading to that aim; an accurate conception of the true state of affairs at the given moment or of the immediate tasks of that moment. They simply obscured the ultimate aim of socialism by confusing socialization of the land with bourgeois nationalization and by confusing the primitive peasant idea about small-scale equalitarian land tenure with the doctrine of modern socialism on the conversion of all means of production into public property and the organization of socialist production. Their conception of the path leading to socialism is peerlessly characterized by their substitution of the development of co-operatives for the class struggle." [pp. 202-4]

(In all the above extracts, American spelling has been substituted for British.—JG) □

# Looking into the history of the Marxist-Leninist Party

Part of our controversy with the *Chicago Workers' Voice* group is over how to assess the history of the late Marxist-Leninist Party, and what its collapse means for future work. The *CWV* cites the past as a reason for not uniting with other comrades, and for not wanting to build up a distinct anti-revisionist trend. They have trouble analyzing the development of political trends and instead reduce party history to a matter of personalities or arbitrary grievances or to a reason to be skeptical of organization in general. Thus Jake of the *CWV* discovered that a liquidationist majority emerged on the MLP Central Committee because it was full of "preppies". It turns out that by "preppies", he means comrades he didn't like. We include the exchange between him and Mark of the Detroit Marxist-Leninist Study Group on this issue.

The supporters of the *Communist Voice* have various views on MLP history, but they tend to focus on analyzing the political trends that emerged in the Marxist-Leninist Party. We carry an article by Joseph Green, part two of his series "On Complacency", which traces some of the political history of the last few years of the MLP. The *CWV* have a mythology that they had the correct views which others rejected because they were "preppies" or because the MLP had a bad internal atmosphere (i.e. other comrades disagreed with them). Joseph lists the political fights that broke out in the MLP discussion journals and shows that the *CWV* in fact abstained from most of the struggles against liquidationism that took place. Most of the innerparty polemic they did wage was mistaken and focused not against the liquidationists but at comrades who were striving to maintain anti-revisionist work.

## On "preppies"

From Jake

to minority  
February 18, 1995

.....  
In some other left organizations, leadership was rotated. This creates another set of problems. But some considered it important that there be changes in the composition of the leadership to keep it from stagnating.

Still others (the Spark claims to be one) insist that at least some members of their leading body not be full-time or professional revolutionaries but factory workers. Making sure there were workers in the leadership is a major issue for communists, in our case there were just way too many preppies in the CC of the MLP.

I am not endorsing any of these practices, I just want to point out that the CC of the MLP was nearly constant, that it was nearly all full-time activists (only at the end did several CC members have jobs) and that it did stagnate. I think we need to sum up the experience of the MLP on how it composed its leadership and how that leadership operated. □

From Mark

To: the "minority"  
Date: 3-1-95

On the question of preppies, it's true some comrades (Jake, for instance) went to [an Ivy League school] or are now engaged

in the teaching profession. And largely we came from youth/student circles. But Jim never got out of high school, Manny junked his college courses for revolutionary politics, and Jake comments how proletarian Slim is. Others had more education. But in general you cannot find differences in class background between the CC and the party as a whole. If Jake could demonstrate that there was some real division of class background in the party and all the working class folks were squeezed out, his point would have some validity. But this wasn't the case. And I have seen comrades noted for workplace organizing go by the wayside, too — either burnt out, or becoming renegades.

Meanwhile, being on the CC was indeed a privilege. It was a privilege to serve the party. But from my experience, it was a position that required huge responsibilities and workloads and often comrades living on the edge of poverty. What I found to be interesting was that the less political some decaying CC members were, the more they scoffed at self-sacrificing work, the more they said they . . . wanted to just get jobs or careers. Indeed the more they mocked the whole notion of working hard for the party. The point is that political renegacy coincided not with corrupt individuals flocking into some allegedly cozy positions of party leadership, but with running away from those positions.

In closing, I want to emphasize that it is perfectly proper to critically examine the history of the MLP. From my own re-examination of this history, and from considering the critical comments of others, I still consider it a very positive develop-

ment in the development of working class organization in the U.S. If someone can provide better ways of doing things, I'm all ears. But I find the arguments about how undemocratic the MLP was from some Chicago comrades less than convincing when their own social practice does not measure up to the standards by which they judge the MLP and when their general concepts of doing better are aimed against the simplest organizational notions. □

### Jake replies

to Mark  
cc:minority

March 5, 1995

Dear Mark,

Now regarding "preppies." I made a quip in my letter that there were two many preppies in the Central Committee. I connected this to the issue of class composition of the CC.

Mark replies: "On the question of preppies, it's true some comrades (Jake, for instance) went to [an Ivy League school] or are now engaged in the teaching profession. And largely we came from youth/student circles. But Jim never got out of high school, Manny junked his college courses for revolutionary politics, and Jake comments how proletarian Slim is. Others had more education. But in general you cannot find differences in class background between the CC and the party as a whole. If Jake could demonstrate that there was some real division of class background in the party and all the working class folks were squeezed out, his point would have some validity. But this wasn't the case. And I have seen comrades noted for workplace organizing go by the wayside, too — either burnt out, or becoming renegades."

Firstly, preppies are not people who go to elite or prestigious universities but people who attended prep school. If I ever had any doubt where I stood on the pyramid of class rank on campus, it was made perfectly clear to me in college that was near the bottom and belonged there. The preppies were at the top. They were raised and trained in school to be the leaders. I went to high school and was trained to obey. Of course, those of us who went to high school made fun of preppies and generally, I think, we had more fun in school. Overall, we worked harder as well since most of us would not inherit the family business nor would we benefit from the "old school tie" networks. There is an "old boy" network in the Ivy League and near-Ivy League schools (in the Midwest Univ of Chic. and Northwestern U. overshadow Harvard and Yale and the Big Ten schools carry way more prestige than they do in the east) but it operates to favor preppies.

Regarding CC members, Jim, James (who left the MLP years ago), Manny and Michael were precisely the preppies in the CC that I was referring to.

Jim attended the [ . . . ] school. He liked to portray himself as a high school dropout but he was a prep school drop out. Moreover the term "preppy" is an epithet commonly applied to people who, regardless of where they went to high school, act like preppies. It is a general epithet used on people who in some ways act like a bourgeois.

I think James went to a high school but he is the most

preppy of the lot. In the early '80's when there was a "prep" fashion style and a "punk" fashion style that glamorized the geek look, James became quite trendy, all by accident. Now he is a college prof and the tweed and patches are just part of the uniform. The kids have been into black and leather for awhile.

Michael went to a prep school (a mission school I believe) but he is a preppy because of his upper class arrogance.

I don't know where Manny went to school but I suspect it was Bronx High School of Science. Private schools like Horace Mann are definitely prep schools but certain public schools are lumped in with them. Bronx HS of Science grad were considered preppies by me and my classmates. Oak Park HS (IL) was another one we considered a prep school 20 years ago, but today it most definitely is not.

These CC members have many of the preppie characteristics, including a certain amount of self-centered arrogance that typically is found among preppies but is typically not so prevalent among factory workers. I made a connection between the way they treated me and others and the way real preppies at college and other "preppies" that I have encountered over the years in work and politics treat the people around them.

Secondly, you make your own arbitrary qualification to the issue of working class composition of the CC:

" . . . in general you cannot find differences in class background between the CC and the party as a whole. . . . If Jake could demonstrate that there was some real division of class background in the party and all the working class folks were squeezed out, his point would have some validity."

No. The question is: regardless of the class background of the party members as a whole, should there be people working factory jobs in the CC? Should the CC not only be composed of professional revolutionaries but also of professional workers?

Regarding the class composition of the party, I think you are confusing the question of the class background of party members with their actual class. Even people who went to prep school but who are working in a factory (or other occupation that is working class) can be considered working class. The issue I am raising is should the MLP have considered putting on its CC people with full time working class jobs.

What was the class composition of the MLP? Most members were workers so far as I know. I don't have information to characterize their class backgrounds but I do know many ex-comrades personally and they usually came from families falling in the petty bourgeoisie. Several were from working class families and at least one was from a bourgeois family.

A lot of our comrades did go to prestigious universities, like [ . . . ], where Mark played football. (Football! The imperialist sport that simulates war! Or now after the Persian Gulf war is it militarism that simulates football? Whatever. But worse than football, Mark pledged a fraternity in college! Since Mark doesn't drink he was unfortunately pegged a loser and black-balled. You gotta suck down the suds if you want to join Phi Tappa Keg. Just kidding.)

Regarding teachers: Nothing personal to comrades who teach for a living but I generally dislike school teachers and the school teacher/school master attitude that so many of them have. Note that a lot of leftists in Chicago are teachers (Earl Silbar,

most of *Spark*, a lot of PL, etc.). In the MLP we had several but I'd like to single out Matt (New York) for being, in my opinion, a Stalinist schoolmaster.<sup>1</sup>

You may recall that TK used to denounce school teachers frequently. He had to be told to cut it out. I think he was kicked around in school. But regardless of anyone's subjective feelings towards schoolteachers, they are the largest occupation listed as "professionals." They are a big part of the middle class and exactly where they fit into the class fabric of this society is something we have to grapple with.

Regarding my own teaching career: . . .<sup>2</sup> □

### Mark answers

To: all

Date: 3-10-95

Subject: Reply to Jake's remarks of March 5

In Jake's letter of 2-13-95, he raised that the CC of the MLP suffered the consequences of having "just way too many preppies" on it. Since the term "preppies" clearly implies something about one's background, I pointed out in my 3-1-95 reply that there was no significant difference between the class background of the CC and the MLP as a whole. To further demonstrate that preppies were not overrunning the CC, I pointed out as one example, two CC members who eventually took up liquidationist politics. Far from being preppies, I noted how one of these people did not even graduate high school and the other dropped out of college to pursue revolutionary politics.

But in his March 5 letter, Jake says that his use of preppies was not meant to have anything to do with one's background. He says "I think you are confusing the question of the class background of party members with their actual class" (i.e. their present class position). So presumably Jake is arguing that he wasn't raising the question of background at all. Jake then proceeds to do exactly what he claims he wasn't doing. He goes on and on about what he thinks about the personal background of various CC members. The interesting thing in this analysis, is that try as Jake might, he still cannot show much of a preppie background among CC members.

Jake calls four former CC members preppies. Jake admits that one of them *dropped out* of his high school. But that doesn't matter to Jake. For him it is really important that the high school was, in Jake's opinion anyway, a prep school. Of course if that's true, Jake has shown that this person *had rejected being a preppie*. Jake said he doesn't know where a second person went to high school. But he thinks it's important for us to know that his high school buddies did not like several schools in New York City and, after all, the person did go to school

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<sup>1</sup> Jake is apparently describing what he thinks of Matt, not what Matt did for a living.—CV

<sup>2</sup> Omitted at Jake's request. Suffice it to say that Jake thinks that his teaching activities, as opposed to that of others, are "subversive" and a "good gig".—CV

*somewhere* in New York City. Jake's third preppie went to an ordinary public school according to Jake. But Jake must let us know how fashionable or not his clothing was. And as for the fourth person, Jake is obscure about his schooling, telling us that he went to a "mission school I believe." (He omits that it was a mission school in one of the world's poorest countries where public education is so scarce that the literacy rate is about 29%.)

Jake drags us through the supposed preppie backgrounds and fails to make his case. But Jake has a trump card. It doesn't matter if someone on the CC was really a preppie or not! He argues that "the term 'preppie' is an epithet commonly applied to people who, regardless of where they went to high school, act like preppies" or "act like a bourgeois." So all the efforts to demonstrate actual preppies on the CC were just a charade. Preppie is just an epithet for Jake to hang on anyone he considers arrogant or who doesn't wear the right clothing styles of the day.

Jake seems intent on showing that the really bad people are only those who went to prep high schools. Only such people could be arrogant. Other students whose background gave them privileges and advantages over the mass of workers and poor students are OK though. And attending elite universities evidently could not lead to arrogance either. Jake is forced into such hair-splitting because he is intent on showing that there was some uniquely evil personal traits among certain CC members who decayed.

This is a diversion from really analyzing what the problems of the MLP were. The real problem was not that those who turned out to be liquidators had elitist backgrounds (real or imagined) or that they were the ones in the MLP who had some bad personality traits. No. The people who decayed (and it wasn't just those in the CC, but people who spent their adult lives in the factories, too) underwent political development and change. Whatever their background or personality, at one point they advanced politically and stepped forward to take up the cause of the proletariat and many of them labored hard and well in this cause for a long time. They also underwent a process of political decay. And if we want to really learn something from all this, we must focus on the battle of political trends in the MLP. We must examine the political-ideological arsenal that led to liquidationism. We must further demonstrate the validity of Marxism-Leninism in the present world. All we are given by Jake is some arbitrary standards to condemn people who had backgrounds not that different than most of us. Such arbitrary, pseudo-political attacks are just the type of intolerance that should be avoided by those who really want to stand up against liquidationism.

In closing, I want to raise some initial thoughts on Jake's suggestion that maybe it would have helped to have had full-time factory workers on the CC along with professional revolutionaries. The *Spark* group supposedly uses such a method he says. But as Jake himself notes, a number of MLP CC people did have jobs. In fact, some had jobs for many years. They might not have been factory jobs, but they were earning a living in the real world. This did not prevent the decay that set in. In fact, in our particular circumstances, the desire of some CC

members for full-time jobs was a sign of their declining political drive. And this lack of professional revolutionaries was a big problem. It cut the party's capacity to deal with various issues at a time when there was no shortage of critical issues to deal with. It placed a great strain on the ability to put out the *WA*, the *WAS* and other work the party wanted the center to accomplish. Having some more people without time on the CC would not have helped here. It would not overcome Jake's conception of

"hierarchy" either because the professional revolutionaries on the CC would still have more time for political work than the non-professionals. And from my experience with *Spark*, its timid politics and organizing methods are anything but an advertisement for a more non-professional CC. □

## What really happened in the last years of the MLP? On complacency (part two)

From Joseph Green

To: Minority

March 2, 1995

RE: Reply to Oleg's letter of Feb. 15

In his letter to the "minority" of Feb. 15, Oleg gives his views on some of the issues facing the coming "minority" meeting, although he says it may take him a few more months to go more deeply into matters. This would make his views only available months after the prospective "minority" meeting, which had been tentatively planned for March. He did add a further note on his views on Feb. 21.

Meanwhile events have been moving fast. I was about to send out an earlier draft of this article on Feb. 20, but I had some final changes to ponder and I let it sit awhile. In the meantime the situation has changed dramatically. When I wrote the earlier draft of this article, Julie was still asking me—in her article of Feb. 19—why I thought there was, to use her words, a "critical juncture" in "minority" affairs. Today the *CWV* [*Chicago Workers' Voice* group] finds things so critical that they have decided to rush out a special issue of the *CWVTJ* [*Chicago Workers' Voice Theoretical Journal*] to publicize the controversies.

And the fragmentation of the "minority"—the possibility of which I had been warning about for some time—is now pretty much an accomplished fact. It is no longer a question of what changes are needed in the "minority" journal, but instead there will be two theoretical journals. But this is not the "two journals" solution I talked about in December as one way to meet the changing needs of the "minority". Back then, one of the plans I put forward as a possibility envisioned two coordinated journals, both of which were responsible to the "minority" as a whole. Now we will have two independent journals; the "minority" as a cohesive grouping is a thing of the past; and the next "minority" meeting has been postponed from March to April, and might now be pointless. [It never took place.—CV]

Still, it will be of value to examine Oleg's article of Feb. 15. Subsequent articles by Julie and Jake show that there is substantial agreement in the *CWV* on the main points in these articles. So Oleg's article helps illustrate the complacent reasoning that led the *CWV* to refuse to join with others to plan a "minority" perspective for the coming year.

Oleg's article also raises some issues of MLP history. It shows that some *CWV* comrades overlook the actual course of

the struggle against liquidationism, write off the views and struggles of anyone outside Chicago, and refuse to re-examine the theoretical stands they put forward in debate inside the MLP [Marxist-Leninist Party]. This blinds them to the problems facing the struggle against liquidationism in the MLP, which they simplify into looking for organizational reasons why other comrades didn't support their views. What actually happened in this struggle, and why it failed, casts a good deal of light on the problems that have now smashed up the "minority".

### The party-type organization

First of all, Oleg's article of Feb. 15 was written against the proposal that the "minority" should declare itself and form a loose network. While we all talked of a "minority", the "minority" was in fact just an informal grouping which never even adopted a common statement of purpose.

Oleg says he won't join a national organization. He says he doesn't like "the kind of organization that Mark is proposing", and he has no alternative plan for an organization.

The proposed organization consists of a network with a statement of principles. The local areas decide their own methods of organization and program of work. They determine to what extent they participate with and share the views of others in the organization. And there is a national journal which provides a forum for analysis and debate. Cooperation takes place through consultation on local work; spreading leaflets of the various areas around; volunteering to work on research projects and other common activities; and work on the national journal.

Oleg rejects this loose network as "a fairly centralized" or "maybe party-type" organization. And he is wary of organization because "there were a lot of deficiencies in the way the MLP was organized", none of which he names.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>More recently, Jake has written his views on MLP history. Basically he accuses it of anti-democratic failings. If such failings were the main aspect of the MLP, it's hard to see why it would be so hard to form an organization today that avoided these problems—especially as many of his complaints against the MLP refer to events long past. But apparently Jake regards such anti-democratic failings as inherent in organization. And

(continued...)

On the face of it, this simply expresses the current anti-party mood of the times. Any organization, other than that of one's local circle, is regarded as suspect.

But moreover Oleg says that the proposed loose network has "a central committee (the editorial board)". Actually the COUSML [predecessor of the MLP] was never able to have the Central Committee (then called National Committee) function as an editorial board, and it stopped trying, and the MLP never tried to combine those two institutions. (However, in those days an editorial board for a publication consisted of those who actually spearheaded the research and writing.)

Nevertheless, it's notable that Oleg, a member of the *CWV*, which edits the *CWVTJ*, regards an editorial board as similar to a Central Committee. If Oleg is really opposed to having an Editorial Board/Central Committee, and if he is not simply saying that *CWV* has to have a privileged position in the "minority", then he should suggest a way of running a national journal or the *CWVTJ* without an editorial board.

Meanwhile, Oleg's attitude towards the "minority" forming a loose network has hardened since the "minority" meeting of November. Since then two things have happened. Mark no longer proposes that the *CWV* should necessarily edit the organization's journal. This upsets Oleg. As well, theoretical disputes have broken out which Oleg is intolerant of, calling them "petty squabbles".

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."<sup>2</sup> 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).

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?

<sup>1</sup>(...continued)

he doesn't see that the lack of organization precludes democracy at all. It seems to me that this reflects the anti-party ideas that are predominant in the left today.

<sup>2</sup>J. Green's letter of Dec. 21, 1994 against endorsing *El Machete* and with some views on Zapatista strategy can be found in the first issue of our journal, pp. 19-22.--CV.

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.

In fact, the formation of a national organization would be a call for more input from everyone on common decisions than presently exists. As of now, *CWV* discusses among itself, and you don't hear from them until months and months of controversy stir them to say a few words.

Well, if *CWV* wants to lead the "minority", where does it want to see the "minority" go?

It seems like Oleg envisions that the "minority" should orient itself to floating in the general left movement. Oh, he's willing to talk in general about the importance of theoretical work, and even elevates it to our "main contribution" in his note of Feb. 21, but he denigrates theoretical controversy when it appears in the flesh. Nor is he concerned about the problems facing the theoretical work of the "minority", such as those raised by Gary in his letter of Feb. 14. Instead Oleg stresses strengthening the practical work as the big issue.

Since Oleg's article of Feb. 15, Julie and Jake have developed this theme further. I wrote about Julie's views in Part One of this article. I showed how complacent words about how wonderful all the articles are—all, without exception, are a theoretical advance—go hand in hand with a refusal to discuss the issues facing the theoretical work. Jake, in his letter of Feb. 23, goes so far as to say that "the most important task" is "to help solve some of the vexing theoretical problems facing our class". But the only issue he sees in the current theoretical work, is that it requires practical work. He too doesn't bother to answer any of the issues raised by Gary, although he was supposed to be working on the same issue of the composition of the working class as Gary.

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 perspective 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.

### Can we just keep on truckin’?

Oleg thinks that the “minority” should just follow the *CWV* in this direction. He looks forward to the continuation of the past situation, where—among other things—the *CWV* were the only ones with formal rights in the “minority” grouping. But he didn’t realize that the old status quo couldn’t continue and already was broken.

The past status quo was based on enthusiastic agreement about the need for an open debate with the majority; on the view that *CWVTJ* should be an open forum for all comrades; and on the expectation that *CWV*, although not formally responsible to anyone, would informally show the same tact and consideration for others that the editorial board of a national organization is bound to show towards the organization as a whole.

Now Oleg says that the debate is dying down, obliquely criticizes the idea of an open forum, and regards disagreements with *CWV* as “petty squabbles”. On top of that, the death of e-mail as a lively channel also changes the role of “minority” journals. And the “minority” has been facing for some time the pressing need to have its own banner, as the term “minority” has been increasingly inadequate to express what it was. The status quo has been eroding before our eyes.

But for Oleg, it is as if there are no changes and nothing to decide. Why, *CWV* has been clear for the last six months or so, he says—too bad they didn’t tell anyone else at the November meeting. For those of us who have talked to *CWV* members, and listened to what they said about the *CWVTJ*, and about the problems they face, Oleg’s assertions are just whistling in the dark—what we used to call “official optimism”. But he insists that *CWV*’s plans are just rolling along, and if others are worried, too bad.

### Oleg’s Suspicions

Beyond that, Oleg’s letter suggests that mistrust and suspicion of myself and others is another good reason not to form an organization. This is the point of history that he brings up.

On this issue, Oleg is in agreement with Rene. Oleg says that while “there are many grounds to criticize Rene’s political stands and actions”—none of which Oleg mentions—Rene was really on the mark in his view of MLP history at the November meeting.

Well, it wasn’t so long ago that Oleg suggested that Rene’s views weren’t relevant to the discussion of *CWV*’s ideas because Rene “has ceased all political cooperation with Chicago Workers’ Voice” (letter to the “minority” of Jan. 4). Then in his letter of Jan. 25, Oleg suggested that the differences between Rene and myself were simply a mutual “personal antagonism”. I objected that political differences were at stake. And now Oleg too thinks there are political differences. All but abandoning his attempt to appear above the contending sides, he says he thinks Rene was right in his view of MLP history in the November meeting. And he says that such issues emphasize “the point that...we don’t have a good enough summation of the history of the MLP to avoid screwing up again.”

Examining what Rene said at the November meeting and the points Oleg’s Feb. 15 letter puts forward, what comes out is that Oleg has a sectarian stand towards many outsiders (outside Chicago). And he identifies Rene as a comrade who historically encouraged him in these sectarian grievances towards others.

Oleg goes into some issues of MLP history. He has the view that Rene alerted the Chicago Branch of the MLP to the rot setting in, which they then studied through criticizing the *Workers’ Advocate* [national journal of the MLP]. He denies that anyone else fought liquidationism. Instead the outsiders simply refused to listen to the correct analysis from Chicago. I will not give a full treatment here of the history that Oleg treats so casually. That’s a matter for other articles. But a brief, preliminary survey will show that the history of the struggle against the liquidationism that grew inside the MLP is broader and more interesting than Oleg’s account suggests, and that this history shows the need to take theoretical issues more seriously than Oleg does at present.

### The polemic over *Workers’ Advocate*

Let’s start with the issue of the *WA* articles that Oleg raises in his Feb. 15 letter. Oleg also raised this point in his article in *CWVTJ* #5 on the Haiti controversy of 1991-2.<sup>3</sup> He implied in *CWVTJ* #5 that the problem was that no one was listening to anything that the Chicago comrades had to say. And his letter of Feb. 15, by endorsing Rene’s outbursts at the November meeting, suggests that the outsiders were all just the same as the liquidationist “majority” leaders.

But why did the Chicago comrades lose in the debate leading up to the Fourth Congress? Is it really true that no one was listening? Was it a result of organizational shortcomings of the MLP? Or of a bad “internal culture”, as Oleg put it in his Feb. 21 letter? But maybe, just maybe, it really had something to do with the views they put forward.

Oleg, Rene, and other Chicago comrades directed their line

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<sup>3</sup>See Oleg’s article “Was there any substance to my criticism of an article on Haiti in the Nov., 1991, *Workers’ Advocate* or was it just ‘silliness?’ ” in *CWVTJ* #5, Dec. 1, 1994. I wrote to Oleg’s about his article in letters to him of Nov. 10, 1994 (Oleg kindly gave me a copy of his article while *CWVTJ* #5 was still in production) and Jan. 3, 1995.

of fire not against the gradually-emerging CC [Central Committee] majority nor against such major advocates of liquidationism as Fred (Seattle) nor against liquidationism itself. Instead they concentrated on the *Workers' Advocate*, which was an institution that never adopted the standpoint of liquidationism. It is of course the duty of all members of a democratic centralist organization to critically evaluate the organization's journals—and that means criticism as well as praise. But was their criticism of the *WA* mainly correct? The views from different Chicago comrades varied. But if I recall it right, some of the highlights of this criticism included:

\*\* Rene held that the *WA* was making "a blatant attempt to COVER UP FOR US IMPERIALISM" (emphasis as in the original);

\*\* the *WA* was also denounced for holding that the Peruvian bourgeoisie, as well as imperialism, was responsible for Peru's cholera epidemic;

\*\* there were objections to appeals to soldiers in the imperialist army, and opposition to the concept of the poverty draft;

\*\* Rene denounced welfare and support for the welfare rights movement;

\*\* Rene called Mexico a U.S. colony, described mainland China as under the American wing, etc.;

\*\* the *WA*'s denunciation of the Mexican bourgeoisie was also regarded as abandoning anti-imperialism;

\*\* the number of times an article used the words "imperialism" or "socialism" was regarded as the measure of its anti-imperialist and communist fervor—moreover, each issue of the *WA* wasn't taken as a whole, but each article in *WA* was measured separately in this regard;

\*\* recognition of the multi-polar tendencies in world imperialism was denounced as apology for US imperialism; etc.

This was how Rene showed Oleg and others that "there was something rotten right in the heart of the MLP", as Oleg puts it. It rather shows that something was rotten in the nature of Rene's theorizing.

However, as Oleg point outs, the Chicago comrades took up the criticism of *WA* as their focus in dealing with MLP controversies. This meant that they tried to defend the essence of Rene's approach, even though they couldn't defend Rene's formulations.

What was the result?

One can see it in Oleg's article on Haiti in *CWVTJ* #5. Yes, says Oleg, the article was pretty good and it denounced imperialism and called for revolution etc. but, you see, it didn't give as much history of imperialism as previous articles. He wrote that "my point was just that when I compared this article to WA articles on Haiti from 1986, '87, '88, I felt that this article did not develop the discussion of the history of U.S. imperialist domination of Haiti as well as those earlier articles. I admit that this point is hard to prove." (*CWVTJ* #5, p. 10, col. 2)

Is it any wonder that this criticism was rejected by most comrades as inconsequential?

Similarly, when Rene would denounce appealing to the soldiers, other Chicago comrades would try to clean up Rene's views. They would say yes, it's correct for *WA* to appeal to soldiers, and yes, the *WA* article makes good points, but the

article called the cannon fodder "comrades", or didn't use this or that particular phrase or slogan.

This is the approach that dominated the Chicago polemic and isolated the Chicago comrades.<sup>4</sup> This isolation was due first and foremost to their polemic's erroneous theoretical and practical stands. And whatever the intention, as a result of the focus on the *WA*, most of the polemic by the Chicago comrades wasn't against the CC majority, but against those who were trying to continue communist work.

And now Oleg is simply repeating this approach. His article of *CWVTJ* #5 shows a complacent attitude to the theoretical errors in the earlier Chicago criticism of *WA*. There were no errors—it's just the outsiders wouldn't listen.

But far from being ignored, the Chicago comrades had a major impact on the MLP's internal discussion. In the period leading up to the Fourth Congress, the issues they raised had a

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<sup>4</sup> Of course, in the text above I am characterizing only the general trend of the Chicago polemic, and not the pros and cons of each individual article. For example, Jake's article in the Oct. 8, 1992 *Information Bulletin*, whatever else it may say or however it answers the question, is quite correct to raise the issue "What unites the MLP?" as its theme. This question should have been one of the pivots of the Fourth Congress of Nov. 1992. But Jake's article no more succeeded in orienting the discussion in this direction than did my article in the Sept. 20, 1991 *IB*.

Slim tried to deal with essentially this question with his resolution on the party crisis presented to the Fourth Congress. But, although the resolution was passed, it failed to solve the question of what unites the MLP.

I tried to deal with this question through pushing the revision of the *General Rules* of the MLP and through encouraging a discussion on it. I did this because I believed that the resolution on the party crisis was insufficient to see if there really was agreement on what the MLP had to do. But this too failed to solve the question, and the *GR* revision was eventually just brushed aside after the Congress.

Julie described her views of what the MLP faced in her letter published in the same *IB* that contained Jake's "What unites the MLP?" It contains proposals for incremental improvements in this or that front of writing for the *Workers' Advocate*. It clearly is based on the idea that the basic organization of the MLP will continue and the main force will still be around and not that a large part of the CC and a number of other comrades are wandering away. In essence, despite provision for further decline in numbers, the same idea underlie both the resolution on the party crisis, and the proposed revision of the *General Rules*. It is also implicit in the idea, raised by Jake at the Fourth Congress, that the *WA* should have had signed articles. (And in "What unites the MLP?" Jake stressed that "(7) Unity must be guarded.") But this underlying assumption was mistaken. And there was no overall proposal at the Fourth Congress over what to do if discussion showed that the MLP was not united, and it might lose much of its forces or split or fragment.

tendency to overshadow other issues that had been raised concerning liquidationism. It was of course the Chicago comrades' right to criticize the *Workers' Advocate/WA Supplement* in any way they pleased and to involve as many comrades as possible in this, just as it is my right today to criticize mistakes in the *CWVTJ*. But if one is to re-examine the closing years of the MLP, it has to be asked: was the main drift of their criticism accurate? Or did the mistaken focus of this criticism prove helpful to the "majority" leaders in pushing aside criticism of the liquidationist views they were gradually uniting on?

### Sectarianism

While Oleg suggests that others didn't listen to the Chicago comrades, he himself doesn't consider what others put forward in the inner-party discussion. Instead of looking into the content of this discussion, Oleg's takes the sectarian approach of trying to prove that, outside of Chicago, there really wasn't any opposition to the "majority". Nothing but Rene and those who learned from him.

Oleg looks at the period from 1991. This was a complex period, with many things happening at once. But Oleg simply tries to discredit the rest of the party outside Chicago.

For example, he presents that Rene was the only one who said there were problems. He writes that he learned from Rene in 1991 that there was rot at the heart of the MLP, while "Joseph certainly didn't tell us anything like that until the party collapsed."

Picking up on Oleg's view of history, comrade Neil from LA wrote on Feb. 24: "It galls me no end that some who are shooting from the hip today at a few errors of the *CWVTJ* would not even reach for a cap-gun when it came to working around the apparently years long duplicity/renegecy of the former MLP leader majorityites, like Jim, Michael, Joe, etc. It is obvious that a big contradiction exists here. Is this proletarian justice or something else? It must be corrected."

In fact, there were a series of struggles against liquidationism. In the long run, none of these struggles succeeded, and the comrades opposed to liquidationism were left disunited until the Fifth Congress and not sure what to do. But as a result of these struggles the MLP never became a voice for liquidationism until the last weeks before the final congress of dissolution and demoralization. Any number of criticisms can be made of the inadequacies of the various struggles against liquidationism, inadequacies that made it hard to grasp the general picture. But the history shows a widespread concern and unease about liquidationism growing in the MLP and a number of sharp clashes. And these clashes paved the way for the development of a fuller and more devastating critique of "majority" liquidationism.

And if this is so, it suggests that the main problem wasn't a lack of democracy, or a bad "culture" in the MLP, or the rejection of Rene's cock-eyed views, or a failure to reach for one's cap-gun. The main drawback was the lack of existence of an overall program for what the anti-liquidationist forces should do, a lack of sufficient theoretical analysis, and a lack of orientation towards how the MLP should be transformed. It suggests that the problem was more one of theory and strategy, and not

mainly one of the MLP's organizational structure.

But first let's see if there was anyone but Rene who raised an alarm.

### Did anyone sound an alarm in 1991?

Back in 1991 Ray of Seattle (then a CC member) and Fred of Seattle proposed dropping the hammer and sickle emblem from party literature and changing the name of the party. This was not a mere technical proposal, but the reasoning behind it reflected liquidationist views. When the CC rejected this proposal—although some members expressed liquidationist views in common with those of the proposal—Ray wanted to keep the matter silent. But I insisted that the controversy be brought to the whole party. And I wrote in the *Information Bulletin* for Sept. 20, 1991 on this subject (pp. 6-11), pointing out that the issues before the party included that

\*\* "it is presumably presented that Leninist communism has played itself out";

\*\* "the distinction between anti-revisionism and revisionism ends up pushed aside as somewhat irrelevant";

\*\* "the class nature of the party";

\*\*\* "the question of the conception of the dictatorship of the proletariat";

\*\* "the question of Marxism-Leninism as the theory of the party, or perhaps whether the Party should have a theoretical basis";

\*\* "whether it is religious to name a theory after individuals"—i.e. whether it was religious to talk about Marxism;

\*\* "the question of why our party existed"; etc.

This looks like an excerpt from the index of *CWVTJ* polemics with the "majority" in 1994, and it raises the question of the MLP's existence, yet it comes from what I wrote in 1991. But Oleg denies I sounded any alarm. Rene's influence helped blind Oleg and others to the struggle of others against liquidationism. And now Oleg is stuck in this sectarian position.

### The technical and cultural basis for workers' socialism in the modern world

So Oleg's view that Rene and no one else rang the tocsin in 1991 is just factually wrong.

But let's look a bit further at what was going on historically. The orientation of focusing the criticism on basically good articles in the *WA* helped push Oleg and others to abstain from a good deal of the struggle against liquidationism. It's not just that Oleg doesn't remember the issues I raised in the *IB* of Sept. 20, 1991 against liquidationism. It's that the Chicago comrades didn't write on them, and stood aside from this struggle.

Or again, in 1992 there was a public discussion in the *Workers' Advocate Supplement*, with signed articles, about the Seattle May Day speech of 1991. This speech had been published in the July 20, 1991 *Supplement* under the title "The technical and cultural basis for workers' socialism in the modern world". The discussion on it was kicked off by Pete (Detroit), with a letter to the *Supplement* (see the *Supplement* of 20 Jan. 1992) and continued for quite some time. Besides Pete,

Frank (Seattle) and I also spoke for the left-wing in this controversy, while Fred (Seattle) developed his increasingly liquidationist views. A number of points of political economy that we are just now getting back to discussing were first put forward in this discussion of 1992.

But the Chicago comrades mainly abstained from this discussion.<sup>5</sup> And Oleg ignores it in his view of history.

See *Correction Sheet for this section and 2 missing ones.*

### → The environment and socialism

This pattern continued.

Comrade Steve from LA started a debate with Earth First!'s Don Smith over the population bomb, the environment, and socialism. (See the 20 Dec. 1992 issue of the *Supplement*.) Fred (Seattle) however opposed Peterson's talk about socialism as "barren rhetoric." (See the *Supplement* of 20 May 1993, p. 14, col. 2) This was the first time someone was condemned in the party press for advocating socialism.

ÅÆ November, Dave had had second thoughts on his criticism. The same pattern appeared later. His article of Nov. 9, 1993 in the pre-dissolution discussion (NY #1) rode off in a number of different directions simultaneously but it had many sparks of life. Still he supported the "majority", and even signed Michael's *Open Letter* denouncing the "minority".

I regretted at the time of the Fourth Congress that I hadn't had the time to write discussing and supporting some of Dave's views. The Chicago comrades hadn't written either.

## The Fourth Congress

Oleg does talk about the Fourth Congress. He says that I am wrong to be concerned about whether there was an alternative to the resolution on the party crisis. (I wrote him about this in my letter of Jan. 3.) Who needs a plan, an analysis, to provide a rallying point for the forces opposed to liquidationism? He implies that this downplays the issue of "the fight against the erroneous views of Michael, Manny, Jim, and Joe." And he suggests that the problem was simply that everyone except maybe Rene "faltered" in the struggle.

But it's typical of his approach that Oleg overlooks most of the fight that took place at the Congress—on the issues of imperialism, Leninism, party-building, etc. This is not an accident. Rene denigrated this debate when he spoke at the "minority" meeting in November, and Oleg thinks that Rene's arguments "were right on the money".

Yet the Fourth Congress was notable for a sharp clash over the world situation and imperialism. Rene pooh-poohed this

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<sup>5</sup>Jake referred briefly in "What unites the MLP?" (*IB* #75) to the fact that "Some of the views coming from comrades in Seattle sound like 'techno-socialism' to me; they could lead to placing too much importance on the more skilled strata of the working masses." At the Fourth Congress, when Fred (Seattle) denounced the "plebeian revolt" to general astonishment, Julie spoke in opposition to Fred. There are undoubtedly a few more things here and there. But on the whole the Chicago comrades stayed aloof.

debate in order to downplay my participation in it—I had the most worked-out criticism of the liquidationist position on imperialism—but this ends up hiding the participation of the Chicago comrades as well.

Nor does Oleg mention the differences that came up in the discussion over the proposed revision of the *General Rules*. This included such issues as whether one could speak of Leninism as a consistent theory. I was the author of this draft revision, and it was also my insistence on keeping it in the Congress agenda that prevented the CC from recommending that it be dropped.

The only thing Oleg mentions is an incident from the debate which, although he doesn't mention it, was over whether the articles in the *Workers' Advocate* should be signed articles. (I had a different view, that the internal debate should be brought into the *Workers' Advocate Supplement* and thus made public.) Since I didn't agree with Jake on this, Oleg makes it into the all-important point, the one which was really "vicious". To judge the rights and wrongs of this particular incident, one would have to examine a record of it, but this incident was only one part of the Fourth Congress.

The only thing that is concrete in Oleg's account is that he is for this individual and against that one. Don't talk about plans and views, but give us the dirt about this or that individual. But that isn't good enough. That can't be the basis for a correct view of history or useful plans for the future.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>In his note of Feb. 21 to "clarify a few points", Oleg insists that he isn't the one who is only concerned with discrediting individuals. Why, allegedly, it is Mark and Joseph who "believe that the question of analyzing MLP history is just to analyze which individual comrades in the MLP developed erroneous, non-Marxist, and non-revolutionary views."

Let's see. I write to Oleg on Jan. 3 talking about the necessity for a plan to oppose liquidationism, and I criticized the resolution on the party crisis at the Fourth Congress. I stressed that what had been needed at the Fourth Congress was "putting forward a perspective for what anti-revisionist work meant in the coming harsh period—ideologically as well as organizationally—and how it was to be carried out." And I point out that this wasn't provided by the comrades opposed to liquidationism, not by me or anyone else. No, no, no, no, says Oleg, on Feb. 15—the only problem was a faltering in the struggle against "the erroneous views of Michael, Manny, Jim, and Joe". And yet Oleg can say with a straight face, in his letter of Feb. 21, that it is I who want to reduce history to simply analyzing which individual had liquidationist ideas?

On Feb. 15, Oleg writes off all the struggles against liquidationism in 1991-3, apparently because they didn't talk about exactly which individual said this or that. And then he turns around on Feb. 21 and says that is it I who simply want to analyze which individual had liquidationist ideas?

Moreover, in his note on Feb. 21, what is the issue which Oleg wants to raise?

Does Oleg now see that the Chicago comrades made serious  
(continued...)

## Slim

Oleg also writes off Slim, a member of the National Executive Committee of the late MLP. Oleg simply says he “denied the existence of deep divisions in the CC”. Oleg doesn’t otherwise describe the content of Slim’s views or give the context of what Slim said about the divisions in the CC. But apparently Oleg is giving a simplified account of the ideas that led Slim to author his resolution on the party crisis. Oleg shies away from my criticism of that resolution, but indignantly denounces Slim for the ideas that form the basis of the resolution.

My impression from other discussions is that Oleg and other

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<sup>6</sup>(...continued)

theoretical errors in their criticism of the *WA*? No, the only reason he sees why comrades disagreed with his views on *WA* is that the party had a bad “internal culture” that made the democratic structure of the party “just an empty formality”. If others agree with the Chicago comrades, it’s a good internal culture. If they disagree, by definition it’s a bad internal culture.

Does Oleg now see that there was a need for the comrades opposed to liquidationism to have developed a platform, a program, a perspective, a plan for what the revolutionary Marxist-Leninists should do? No. He still doesn’t see that. Everything was supposedly clear. So all the other comrades would simply have exposed the mistakes of a few bad apples in the CC—if only the party had a proper “internal culture”.

Thus Oleg’s framework still revolves around the view that the problem was a few bad apples, and especially a few bad apples in the CC basket. It is he who thinks the issue is “just to analyze which individual comrades in the MLP developed erroneous, non-Marxist, and non-revolutionary views”.

Yes, the bad apples did a lot of damage. They just didn’t fade away, but insisted that if they didn’t want to be active anymore, than no one should. They not only capitulated to the liquidationist ideas of the time, but carried out an intolerant and dictatorial “scorched-earth” policy against Marxist activity. And they worked as hard as possible to deny that there were differing perspectives before the party, and to camouflage their views.

But when one discusses why the struggle against them remained fragmented, the answer can’t simply be that the bad apples were rotten. And that’s where Oleg leaves it. The answer has to have something to do with the theoretical and other weaknesses of the forces opposed to liquidationism. And this is what Oleg wants to deny. And by denying it, he makes it harder to correct these weaknesses.

Oleg makes the answer to the tragedy of the MLP depend simply on bad organization, which allowed the bad apples to escape detection. This allows him to take a complacent attitude to the theoretical and political views put forward in the debates of 1991-3. He especially doesn’t want to admit any mistake in the views of Chicago comrades. So he works from the standpoint that everyone would certainly have rallied around the correct and outstanding ideas of Rene and the Chicago branch—if only there hadn’t been horrible organizational sins. This is the height of self-satisfied theoretical and political complacency.

*CWV* comrades generally judge Slim this way. They don’t judge Slim’s overall political stands, but they just repeat their grievance about Slim’s description of the CC. And they don’t even note the relation of Slim’s description to either the resolution of the party crisis or their own proposals to the Fourth Congress. This way of judging people looks sectarian to me.

Slim sought to maintain communist work, disagreed with the “majority”, and supported polemics against various of the liquidationist views. I didn’t agree then, or now, with some of Slim’s assessments of what is to be done. I think that Slim was mistaken in believing that a political organization could only deal with the formal positions of various CC members or other comrades at a time when ambiguity and equivocation and false fronts and empty agreements were the stock in trade of liquidationism. And Slim’s position at the Fifth Congress should probably be regarded as neither in the majority nor in the emerging minority. (However, he did vote in favor of the proposal that united the “minority”, namely, the proposal for a “temporary” journal). Nevertheless, such disagreements with Slim are disagreements among those critical of the “majority” and are part of the fragmentation of the opposition to the liquidationism that I wrote to Oleg about.

It can be noted that Slim not only voted for the “temporary” journal but also took part for awhile in the work of the Detroit Marxist-Leninist Study Group, dropping out because of life difficulties. This suggests the value of an overall plan and orientation for the struggle, because such a plan opens the possibility (not certainty!) of uniting comrades who are for communism but have some differing viewpoints.

But why do *CWV* comrades look at Slim so one-sidedly?

For one thing, Slim opposed the mistaken views of Rene and other mistaken views from Chicago. And for this, perhaps, there are some who will never forgive him. Slim painstakingly wrote some truly fine and thoughtful articles on the issues of anti-war work raised by the Chicago comrades. He sought not to discredit but to understand the Chicago comrades. In return, Oleg and others treat him as a dead dog.

### Moving forward from the *WA* articles

Despite Oleg’s talk of a “fight against the erroneous views of Michael, Manny, Jim and Joe”, he instead insists on the importance of focusing on *WA* articles. But these are two different things. Trying to equate them, Oleg’s article in *CWVTJ* #5 took on the unenviable task of looking for liquidationism in a *WA* article which he himself admits is basically correct. Talk about “petty squabbles”, Oleg.

But such “petty squabbles” are necessary in order to show that most everything outside Chicago—and especially Detroit—was corrupt. Did the *WA/WAS* show zealous enthusiasm for the class struggle, accomplish some important theoretical work, carry some material against some of the liquidationist theses, etc.? Instead of seeing something positive in this, this work had to be discredited. And starting in *CWVTJ* #5, Oleg has gone back to this strategy today.

Moreover, what alternative does Oleg put forward to the *WA* article of Nov. 1991 that he objects to? In Oleg’s article in the *CWVTJ* #5, he points out that he was comparing an article from

Nov. 1991 to earlier ones "from 1986, '87, and '88," which he was satisfied with. I wrote to Oleg on Jan. 3 about his comparison of the Nov. 1991 article to those of '86-'88. I tried to show him that we cannot stand pat on the level of analysis of '86-'88. But Oleg doesn't even bother to refer to this point.

Yet the struggle against liquidationism will go nowhere if it is just based on trying to uphold the formulas of five years ago or so. Such complacency makes a mockery of talk about theoretical work.

### **The status quo is dead**

And similarly the "minority" is in the process of

fragmenting because the *CWV* has tried to maintain the organizational status quo of the last year. And we will be irrelevant or worse if we follow the *CWV* in its plan for complacently floating among the left trends. We need to take up the tasks that are crucial for us. If revolutionary Marxism-Leninism is to exist as a grouping or trend, we need our own banner. We need to take seriously the inadequacy of the general left theorizing today and the need to revitalize the anti-revisionist critique. We need to continue work on what the world is changing into. And we need to organize ourselves in a way that facilitates our work, not holds it back. □

### **Special Issue of the *Chicago Workers' Voice Theoretical Journal***

The special issue of the *CWVTJ* of March 7, 1995 contains 59 letters and articles on the differences between the *CWV* and other comrades of the "minority", and an overall editorial summing up *CWV's* side of the issue. It contains a good deal of interesting material. Unfortunately, it is slapped together in a way that makes it hard to follow, which its own 'Editorial Guide' apologetically admits. It also leaves out some relevant documents from the other side, even within the time range it claims to cover. All this is probably related to the irritation the Editorial Guide displays over the *CWV* having to publish the material at all, calling the discussion "inopportune", "acrimonious" and "force(d)" on them, and adding that "comrades from Detroit have said they intend to publish a journal.". The *CWV* also announced elsewhere that it would refrain from circulating its own special issue except to subscribers and those who wrote in for it.

However, for those who are interested, the special issue is available from *CWV* for \$3.00 by mail. Write to *Chicago Worker's Voice*, P.O. Box 11542, Chicago 60611.

As far as regular issues of the *CWVTJ*, they are available from *Chicago Workers' Voice* for \$3 an issue by mail, or six issues for \$20. Their mailing address is *CWV*, P.O. Box 11542, Chicago IL 60611. □

# Ongoing controversy

Our last issue carried the article by Jake of the *CWV* entitled "Regarding communist work and mass work—by Jake with help from Julie", as well as Jake's letter of inquiry about whether there would be another minority conference. (See *Communist Voice* #1, pp. 44-50). These articles expressed Jake's view of the splitting up of the "minority". In them, he blames it all on one bad individual, Joseph Green; at the same time, he says that the split in the "minority" isn't that important, not even being a "critical juncture"; and he casts doubt on the prospects for anti-revisionist theoretical work and focuses simply on more and more agitational leaflets. *CV* #1 also included some replies and counter-replies to Jake and Julie's views by Joseph Green, Mark (Detroit), and Neil (Los Angeles). Below we continue our coverage of this debate with Frank's reply to Jake. We have omitted a brief endnote from Frank's letter that dealt with more private material, and added reference footnotes.

## Frank on Jake's view of communist work

To: "minority" only  
April 17, 1995

Dear Comrades,

I would like to add a few points to the discussion of the materials which Jake sent out on April 5. Since I haven't yet seen the recent exchange of letters between Mark and Neil I hope they're not repetitive.

(1) Jake wrote as follows: "I was disappointed but not surprised to hear from Oleg that in a letter some weeks ago Frank discussed a proposal, apparently from someone else, to hold a minority meeting without Chicago. (I am not on Frank's email list but would like to be and would appreciate it if Frank could send to me as well as Oleg.) I was surprised, because Joseph in one of his snide asides speculated that Chicago was no longer interested in the conference. It's undemocratic for Joseph to appoint himself our spokesman. He's also wrong...."

No. What Frank wrote was the following: "To prevent further disintegration we need to rapidly adopt a statement of principles and get better organized to carry out the tasks we agree upon. I don't think we need a meeting (minus the Chicago comrades declaring against organization) to do this even though it would be nice...." I was *not* discussing a proposal made by anyone else. But since Julie, Oleg, and Jake had clearly declared against organization (while the L.A. comrades at the time were being less explicit) there was an issue of how the rest of us should proceed. Hence I raised the possibility of a meeting minus the comrades declaring against organization and rejected it for the time being. (My rejection centered on the issue of finances with little discussion of other reasons I thought such a meeting would be premature. This was a weakness in the letter from which the quotation is taken.)

And isn't it rather amazing that Jake reports that he only heard by word of mouth about a letter from me which was sent out "some weeks ago"? Actually the letter to which he refers was sent out on March 8, almost a month before his note of

April 5. It's possible that somehow I made an error and didn't E-mail him a copy. But even if this is so it's still rather amazing. Don't the Chicago comrades regularly meet and discuss what has been on E-mail? Moreover, my letter was sent out after the old "minority" had just gone through months of internal debate, division, and disintegration. These had also been months in which I had been generally silent. So I would think that everyone would want to see for themselves what Frank had to say (or what any other comrade who had been silent during this period had to say). Are we so jaded (or so elitist) that we're really not interested in the views expressed on E-mail unless they come from a select few? Or is this just another reflection of the Chicago comrades complacency (and wrong views) on what it means to struggle to preserve and patiently build up an anti-revisionist trend in the country? I tend to think it's both.

(2) In his letter dated March 31 Jake had the following to say: "Not long ago Frank (Seattle) stated in a letter on national organization that he wants a national agitational press. We agree but we think Joseph is largely opposed to it....Joseph has no enthusiasm for mass work and he has denigrated mass motion...etc., etc."

So Jake also seems to have heard from Oleg that my letter of March 8 dealt with national organization. That much is correct. But what I wrote regarding national agitation was this: "I continue to think our chief practical activity for the time being should be to press ahead with the theoretical work. Once this work reaches a certain stage (and we'll have to collectively decide when that time has come) we should concentrate on organizing national political agitation and build a more sophisticated structure. That's the perspective from which all that follows is written...."

This should not have been new to Jake since I've given the same view many times over the past year, as well as giving opinions on why I think it's the only correct orientation for our situation. But hard as it is to believe, maybe Jake didn't receive those letters either, or maybe he forgot about the exchanges of letters between Neil and myself last summer, etc. And of course

I also vainly attempted to get comrades from Chicago to give their views on the perspective I set out for many many months. At any rate, Jake now says “we agree” to something he doesn’t agree with in the slightest.

When I’ve written of developing national political agitation it’s always been premised on the idea that this agitation would represent the views of a group united around the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism, a group that was not divided on such basic principles as continuing to take a Marxist critical attitude toward groups such as the one represented by *El Machete*.<sup>1</sup> (This doesn’t rule out that we might not also participate in a joint agitational project at some point, but even then we would maintain our own independent press.) And since fairly early in 1994 I’ve held that this should be something we should be aiming for in the *future*, something we should set about organizing once the theoretical investigation is maturing. At one point I even ventured to say that this would be in a couple of years (or less than a year and a half from now.)

Jake doesn’t agree with this at all. He wants to begin now to build a press, beginning with national leaflets, etc. But he, Julie and Oleg don’t even agree to a basic elaboration of the anti-revisionist principles upon which this press is to be built—for example as in the statement Mark began drafting almost six months ago. Of course they still say they’re anti-revisionists and are apparently even working out a new and better “definition” of anti-revisionism. Six weeks ago Julie told me that she and Anita had begun to do precisely this. And since Anita seems very close to Rene politically, it’s no wonder that this new definition of anti-revisionism is slow in coming forth.<sup>2</sup> Be that as it may, it may turn out that comrades in Chicago produce a document which is so general that no one can disagree with it...in general. I don’t think such a definition can be used to paper over the following points however.

Now we all know that MLP [Marxist-Leninist Party—CV] was filled with people who went from mental wavering to out and out liquidationism during its last few years. The old “minority” was not immune from mental wavering either. And I think it’s reflected in the *El Machete* endorsement, Oleg’s desire to attend Trotskyist picnics, \$75 meetings of social-democrats, etc., the aversion to signing the proposed statement of principles (while going on a search for a “new” anti-revisionism), the aversion to organization.<sup>3</sup> In these ideological conditions I’m only interested in organizing national political

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<sup>1</sup>*El Machete* is a leftist journal from Mexico which supports Cuban revisionism as socialism, regards the American southwest as “occupied Mexico”, etc. The *Chicago Workers’ Voice* group endorsed it strongly in issue #5 of the *Chicago Workers’ Voice Theoretical Journal*. CV #1 had a good deal of material on the debate within the “minority” over this endorsement..

<sup>2</sup>For a discussion of Rene and Anita’s views on anti-revisionism, see “Denigrating anti-revisionism and glorifying Zapatista theories” on pp. 35-37 of this issue of CV.

<sup>3</sup>CV #1 contains Oleg’s advice about going to meetings of *Spark* and *Labor Notes*, and replies by others with analysis of these groups.

agitation (i.e. a modest newspaper) with those strictly defining their attitude toward such wavering. I think anything else would result in either endless and paralyzing debates or conciliation of the wavering.

But look at Jake’s ideas on national agitation in this regard. How can we have articles on, say, the movement in Mexico, if part of our forces want to prettify groups like *El Machete* and the rest of us want to maintain a Marxist critical attitude toward such groups? It seems there are a couple of obvious possibilities:

(1) After a lot of haggling we could come out with compromise articles that often pleased no one and which would likely be boring to the reader because they didn’t speak to the most vexing questions.

But who would be enthusiastic about building such a press?

(2) We could just not print articles over which there was division.

But what if the issue was one all felt was important to agitate on? Well, we could lay everything aside until we resolved who was right and who was wrong in theory.

And this leads to the heart of the matter, I think. Our experience with the *El Machete* controversy has revealed that our divisions are deep and there’s been no indication this is going to change. I and several others think the Chicago comrades were wrong in theory and that they’ve been proven wrong. But the Chicago comrades don’t want to accept this, they justify their stand and indicate that they’re going to continue with the same politics. How can we accept that they would come under the discipline of Marxist theory on future controversies when they’ve shown no inclination to do so regarding those of the past period? (Or contrary-wise from the perspective of some Chicago comrades.)

Jake’s ideas about an agitational press also contain empty lamentations over “what might have been” combined with teeth-gnashing over the fact that the old status quo has broken down. He pines after the situation when Detroit and Chicago “exchanged drafts and discussed leaflets with one another” (and each could then go on to do what they pleased afterwards). He writes: “Not a newspaper necessarily, but perhaps national leaflets on selected topics or agreements for local organizations to provide some regular coverage of particular topics. Perhaps a division of labor of sorts on political affairs coverage. We are still in favor of this.” But this is pretending that the split between us (and Jake says there’s a split) doesn’t exist. It sweeps everything under the rug in an attempt to drag us backward. And one has to question whether Jake himself is serious about national agitation. He would have been more honest had he written that he was for “national” agitation.

For example, if his ideas were really aimed at developing a national agitational press then the issue of who would be on the editorial board would loom up. But we’ve already seen how three Chicago comrades reacted when it was proposed that the *CWVTJ* come under the discipline of the old “minority” as a whole and have an elected editorial board. So Jake must be proposing something else, a polycentrist set-up where the different groups or groupings reach certain agreements regard-

ing agitation, fight to find the “lowest common denominator”, etc. (And of course he doesn’t raise such sticky subjects as which local organization would provide regular coverage of Mexico for example.) The present “local organizations” are accepted as inviolate and everything that Jake suggests under the qualifier “perhaps” must meet with the Chicago group’s approval if it’s going to become a reality. Furthermore, from an earlier letter by Oleg it appears that every individual in the Chicago group would also have to approve. (Remember that Oleg, and maybe Julie, couldn’t agree to a proposal by Joseph during the *El Machete* controversy until Jake was convinced.<sup>4</sup>)

(3) Thus “democratic” Jake is pining after the very undemocratic situation we ended up with regarding the *CWVTJ*. He wants to return to the old status quo. But a grouping of comrades are convinced that to do this would rapidly spell the end of the anti-revisionist work in the U.S. which was taken up by the MLP and its predecessors. Faced with this reality Jake has begun to single out Joseph as the ogre causing all his troubles. And in doing this he’s reached into the arsenal of Fred, Ben and some of the CC [Central Committee] members of the late MLP.<sup>5</sup>

Remember when Ben swore up and down that he was for the reconstitution of a Leninist party in the U.S.? His only proviso was that first we “had to find out what went wrong last time”. And that “finding out” consisted of a witch-hunt against Joseph. Meanwhile Ben was silent on such (then) present-day burning political questions as Fred’s variety of reformism. Unfortunately Jake is now in a similar position. He’s an anti-revisionist and all for unity. But first we must discuss what went wrong last time. And what went wrong last time is more and more being turned into a campaign of subjectively one-sided and often hypocritical charges against Joseph. Meanwhile he’s relatively silent on such burning political questions as the *El Machete* controversy, a real critique of Rene’s politics, etc.

Jake will undoubtedly be offended by my making this parallel. No doubt he’ll think that his views on the history of the MLP (or Joseph’s role in that history) are generally correct while Ben’s or Fred’s were generally wrong (or “correct” but coming from wrong positions) etc. Even though he shares their views on lack of democracy in the MLP, has come to some of the same views as Fred regarding Joseph’s alleged “trend building approach to debate”, has an organizational conception that is very similar to the one laid out by Ben and Fred in late 1993, etc. he’ll undoubtedly feel I’m being unfair in raising these things because his politics differ from those gentlemen (which they still do). Nevertheless I feel I must offend Jake both in an attempt to make him think and in order to defend the politics which I believe are our only hope.

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<sup>4</sup>See Oleg’s letter of Jan. 25 in the *CWVTJ* Special Issue of March 7, 1995, p. 35.

<sup>5</sup>Frank is referring to members of the “majority”, against whose liquidationist views the “minority” came together. Fred and Ben in Seattle are among the most extreme and vocal ideologues of the “majority”.

In his March 31 letter Jake said that Joseph “has no enthusiasm for mass work...has denigrated mass motion...counterposes theoretical work to agitating among and organizing working people...etc.” Of course he could just as well have said the same things about me for most of the past year but he didn’t. Instead he preferred maintaining the atmosphere of great silence when it came to discussing an orientation toward the future which I think existed in the “minority” for most of its history. But then came Mark’s draft unity statement and organizational proposal. This was something concrete which a number of comrades supported. It was closely followed by the split with Rene at the November meeting, the *El Machete* endorsement, Joseph’s timely critique of this endorsement and the way the Chicago comrades were handling controversies in the *Journal*, then a whole series of letters from comrades in Detroit (and New Jersey) critical of the political stands, wrong thinking and methods coming from Chicago. The old status quo which Chicago comrades were happy with had broken down. But instead of considering the explanations given by various comrades as to why they thought that status quo was no good from a mature proletarian perspective comrades like Jake in particular began to react like anarchists. For example, instead of confronting the political questions tearing the minority apart Jake went on a crusade against alleged lack of democracy in the late MLP, instead of a careful analysis of MLP history he raised absurd shouts against too many “preppies” on the CC of the late MLP, etc.<sup>6</sup> And since Joseph had taken the lead in maturely analyzing the political mistakes, sectarianism and complacency of the three Chicago comrades (four, if we count Rene) he began looking for mud to throw in Joseph’s direction.

I only started to know Jake in the fall of 1993, and then mainly through his writings. He seemed to be a comrade who wanted to say a lot but never found time to say it (and I appreciate the fact that most of us work full time, have family responsibilities, etc.). He came out for an ideological struggle against the leaders of the “majority” and participated in it to a certain extent by firing off some initial militant volleys (but I always wanted to hear more from him since his first volleys were followed by a lot of silence). And of course he was the only comrade voting against the dissolution of the Party.

All of this seemed quite leftist. But at the same time it was coming from a comrade who not long before had supported the Chicago Branch’s statement accepting the status quo of a dis-integrated MLP. It would carry on as before, exchange E-mail and publications with other branches and areas, etc. (see my letter of March 16<sup>7</sup>). Moreover, about the time Jake was writing his letters of early December 1993—saying that the MLP didn’t dissolve but ended in a split—Julie wrote me a letter in which she went on as if the split with the majority didn’t amount to much. In opposition to the ideas I was then arguing about developing national agitation she wrote as follows: “I do see circulation of agitational literature and using what is useful

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<sup>6</sup>See “On preppies” on pp. 43-46.

<sup>7</sup>See *CV* #1 for Frank’s letter of March 16, and p. 36 for the passage cited.

from city to city. i.e. if *CWV* published an article on *Roe v. Wade* for example, other people may like to use it—in so far as they agree with it. And similarly with *DWV* or *Bay Area Worker's Voice*....<sup>8</sup> Here, when it came to agitational literature, all distinctions between Leninists and liquidators were wiped out. Moreover, there was no perspective of either fighting to overcome disagreements or splitting if that was not possible. No, people would just use what they agreed with and not use what they didn't agree with. So in the early days of the "minority" the Chicago group actually combined militant denunciations of the "majority" with a complacent attitude about just going on as if nothing much had occurred when it came to practical politics. Of course they were also complacent about Rene's politics.

This isn't to say that there haven't been changes since 1993; there have been. Then Jake stood up at the Fifth Congress and opposed the dissolution of the MLP.<sup>9</sup> Now he writes that "among all the comrades in Chicago I have talked to, there is no enthusiasm for joining another MLP" (February 23, 1995)—this even though the organizational plans he's opposing are very modest when compared to that of the MLP.<sup>10</sup> Now, in discussing the difficulties confronting Chicago comrades in the mass movements he says "on top of all this, the most serious handicap *may be* the loss of the MLP (March 31, 1995, emphasis added). So you see it *may be* also that a local collective in Chicago has found a way to organize in the mass movements which the MLP never found. Jake isn't sure yet. In 1993 he denounced Fred, Ray (Seattle), and the leaders of the "majority" for social democracy and liquidationism (as well as at one point charging, but not proving, that Joseph had argued positions on several issues which "dovetail(ed) with social-democratic and reformist preaching"). Now he's silent when Oleg urges former "minority" comrades to attend this year's social-democratic *Labor Notes* conference while trying to make the politics of this group sound new and exciting (without endorsing them of course).<sup>11</sup>

But I think this last point is worth discussing.

Earlier Oleg complained that the Chicago group didn't have time for doing such things as writing timely articles on events in Mexico. He gave this as a justification for writing the advertisement prettifying *El Machete*. The political implication of

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<sup>8</sup>*Detroit Workers' Voice* would come out as a voice of the Leninist "minority" opposed to liquidationism, while the *Bay Area Workers' Voice*, if it had appeared, would have been a voice of the liquidationist "majority".

<sup>9</sup>The MLP dissolved at its Fifth Congress in November 1993.

<sup>10</sup>Jake's letter of Feb. 23 is reprinted in *CWVTJ's* Special Issue of March 7. See p. 72 for the passage cited by Frank.

<sup>11</sup>See *CV* #1, pp. 11-16.

this was that all we could do was tail after groups like the one putting out *El Machete*. We didn't have "time" to develop anti-revisionist politics. But Oleg does have time to advocate running to social-democratic meetings to meet people, hear what interesting things they have to say, etc., even when the meetings will only be attended by the most convinced opportunists (i.e. those willing to shell out \$75 to get in the door), even when the positions of the group are readily available through their literature and are practiced in the mass struggles in Chicago, Detroit and other cities for all to see.

It would seem if someone were determined to build up a political trend in opposition to revisionism and opportunism that they would consider it important to say "wait a minute, what orientation is Oleg following?", they would think it important to delve into this matter. But Jake doesn't breathe a word against Oleg's orientation in public. It's very likely that if you pinned him down he would "disagree" with this or that formulation given by Oleg. And privately, within the Chicago group, he and Oleg undoubtedly have differences. It seems though that maintaining factional unity, sectarian unity, a common front against the "main danger" has become (and has been) more important in Chicago than waging a thorough-going struggle for Marxist-Leninist principle. Various questions may be argued over within the group itself but when it comes to outsiders a common front must be preserved.

In my view this policy acted against the kind of democratic and militant atmosphere which was needed in the old "minority" if it was going to advance instead of fragmenting. It acted to hide differences on matters of fundamental principle and channel discussion onto "safe" topics. It's been connected to long-standing ideological differences between the Chicago comrades and the majority of the rest of us. (I discussed a couple of these in my letter of March 16 and other comrades supporting the *Communist Voice* initiative have discussed the same ones as well as many others.) In my view also it's why Jake, Julie and Oleg want a federation, a "trend of trends", "post-party" collectives, a pluralist "organization" or whatever else you wish to call it.

I don't condemn such an organizational set-up to the seventh circle of Hell (whatever that may be). Under certain conditions communists might be able to use it to their advantage. It could provide a field for revolutionary political maneuvering, etc. But more germane to our situation is that it gives the maximum opportunities for political diffuseness, for complacently going on with an eclectic ideological framework. It's a form which makes logical sense if someone on the one hand sees value in pushing forward with the anti-revisionist cause while on the other hand they see practical abandonment of that cause as a necessary political expedient forced by objective difficulties.

In struggle,  
Frank □

# Reactions to *Communist Voice*

## Taking *Communist Voice* to the workers

While the opportunists on the left claim that the working class is not revolutionary, I can report definite interest among postal workers in the first issue of *Communist Voice*.

I took *CV* to eight workers at my job at a large postal facility. I have been doing political work there for seven years and the Marxist-Leninist Party focused a good deal of work there before it collapsed in 1993. So these workers are all regular readers of *Detroit Workers' Voice*, *Struggle* magazine and, formerly, *The Workers' Advocate*.

Only one of the eight turned *CV* down, while keeping the latest *DWV*. Almost all the others readily paid the dollar price for *CV* and some raised interesting points in discussion.

Workers were interested in the questions:

what is socialism?

what were the so-called communist regimes?

is the industrial working class being eliminated?

is the American working class revolutionary?

do the masses simply need a great leader or, in fact, what kind of organization is needed to lead the struggle?

can capitalists be satisfied with a "reasonable" profit or is insatiable greed built into the system?

and does Marxist terminology turn people off and need to be replaced or is it a necessary tool of scientific analysis and planning for the struggle?

By Tim Hall

□

## Letter

5 - 21 -95

Dear Comrades,

Please find enclosed a check for \$25 for a 6-issue subscription of *Communist Voice*.

I thought Joseph Green's article on "The Occupation of Haiti" in the 12-1-94 *Chicago Workers' Voice* presented a strong Marxist-Leninist analysis of the occupation. I also agree with Green's questioning of how an organization can be effective in mass work without an identity presented in 3-7-95 "Special Issue" of *CWV*.

Sincerely,

[...]

Brooklyn, New York

□

## From Seattle

May 7, 1995

Comrades,

Just a brief note on how distribution of *Communist Voice*, Vol. 1, #1 has been going.

As you know I ordered quite a few in order to do some

experimenting in-so-far as distribution is concerned. I've been bogged down writing and have therefore proceeded slower than I'd originally intended. Nevertheless things don't look that bad.

Of the 20 copies you sent—

3 went to our study group

3 were sent to friends in [2 other cities]

4 went to a xerox/print shop

4 went to a bookshop

3 were sold at the WWP demonstration against the contract on America (May 6, here)

Thus I'm down to 3 and still haven't investigated the best newsstands in the city. Nor have I tracked down a contact I think a great deal of.

Although I continue to think we'll sell very few in the bookshops I think it's well worth the effort to place them there for awhile to see what happens. Of course we'll be turned down by some, and I've already been turned down by one (anarchist opposition to anything having to do with Leninism). On the other hand I'm somewhat optimistic for the following reasons:

—Two copies went out from the xerox shop within a few days of my placing them there. (I haven't been back since then.)

—The young man in charge of the political literature at the bookshop (he appears to be in his 20s) wanted to discuss who we were and where we were coming from politically for some time. He'd seen *The Worker's Advocate* in the past and seemed to have some grasp of the fact that it fought hard against opportunism and revisionism. But this didn't put him off and he took a journal to read for a few days. I contacted him once and he said he was still reading. I contacted him again (over the phone) and he said he'd read over half the journal and that it was something they would want to carry.

Although I haven't seen this man again I think it's pretty good that we have *CV* in a bookshop where the responsible person seems to take a genuine interest in the political literature which is carried. And it's even better that this person seems to think that there's something of value in anti-revisionist politics.

The unfortunate thing about this bookshop is that although it's in the gay "ghetto" in Seattle and is visited by a lot of working class people it's fairly new, doesn't have a reputation as someplace to go to get leftist literature (and it doesn't carry that much) and it's somewhat off the beaten path.

—The May 6 demonstration was really quite small (40-50 people at the beginning) and because of the physical layout at the rallying point I was able to approach less than a third of the people there. Still I sold 3 copies, and all to people who passed up the literature of ISO, RCP, and WWP.

Two of the people I sold the journal to read it for a few minutes first, then they paid me and we had a few minutes of discussion.

The first was a man in his 40s who appeared to have some grasp of the trends in the left but who'd never run across the MLP. So a lot of the discussion revolved around where we came from historically, and what we were trying to achieve with the

— Continued on bottom of page 14 —

# Struggle

## A magazine of proletarian revolutionary literature

*Struggle* is an anti-establishment, revolutionary literary journal oriented to the working-class struggle. We seek to reach “disgruntled” workers, dissatisfied youth and all the oppressed and abused and inspire them to fight the rich capitalist rulers of the U.S. and the planet.

*Struggle* is open to a variety of artistic and literary forms and anti-establishment political and cultural views. We look for works with artistic power which rebel against some element of the capitalist power structure or against the system itself.

*Struggle* believes in the initiative of the oppressed themselves and opposes the bureaucratism that turned the Soviet workers’ government away from the socialist path in the early 1920’s. Until November 1993, *Struggle* was published by the Detroit Branch of the Marxist-Leninist Party, USA, and the party gave great creative, political and material support to the magazine. But at the party’s Fifth Congress in November, a majority, discouraged by the lull in the mass movements, voted to disband the party without proposing any worked-out revolutionary alternative. The Detroit Marxist-Leninist Study Group and groups in other cities produce the *Communist Voice* theoretical journal, continuing in the spirit of the MLP. *Struggle* is associated with this trend. We will continue, but we need greater readers’ input, donations, subscriptions and help in distribution.

(Excerpted from the Editorial Policy)

*In the Spring 1995 issue, Vol. 11, No. 1:*

*Editorial:* “What is Revolutionary Literature?”

*Fiction:* “Expelled”  
“Voices”  
“The Skin off My Knuckle”

*Poetry:*

|   |  |
|---|--|
| “Time and a Half”                             | “Some Things Change the Rest of Your Life” |
| “La Chota”                                    | “What Do You Do?”                          |
| “The Problem with Meditation”                 | “An Indignant Tomorrow”                    |
| “Follow Orders”                               | “Los Angeles Is Always Burning”            |
| “Dog Spawn Rising (Election Day Gothic 1994)” | “Anthem”                                   |
| “A New Christian Ethic”                       | “Pledge of My Allegiance”                  |
| “You Said IQ? How Much Need You?”             | “Red Tide”                                 |
| “A Miscarriage of Justice”                    | “Siren-Barred Bote”                        |
| “Son of a Birch”                              | “Oh, Freedom”                              |
| “Prospect Point”                              | “G.O.P.”                                   |
| “Shopping Trip #35 at the Mall”               | “DEM.”                                     |

[authors’ names omitted]

*Announcement:* “New Voice for a Rebirth of Communism”

*Struggle’s* editor is Tim Hall, an activist and Marxist-Leninist since the 1960’s. *Struggle* is a non-profit magazine, produced and distributed by the voluntary labor of a very few people. *Struggle* welcomes poems, songs, short stories, short plays, line drawings. Manuscripts will be returned if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. It pays its contributors in copies.

Subscription rates are \$2 per issue (\$2.50 by mail), \$10 for a subscription of four, \$12 for four for institutions, \$15 for four overseas, free to prisoners. Bulk discounts and back issues (on anti-racism, against the Persian Gulf War, depicting the postal workers’ struggle) are available.

Checks or money orders must be made payable to Tim Hall—Special Account.

*Struggle* can be reached at P.O. Box 13261, Detroit, MI 48213-0261. □