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*The Bolshevik Agrarian Program, Part II

*New series on the Cuban Revolution
First article: The Economic Background

*May Day in Mexico City and the July 6th Elections

*Introducing the Working Peoples'
Action and Education Network

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Editorial Guide to issue #13

by Jake

This issue of Chicago Workers' Voice Theoretical Journal features the second part of Barb's series on the Bolshevik agrarian program. Here she covers the period from 1903 to 1917.

We are taking up the subject of Cuba and the Cuban revolution. Sarah begins another new series of articles. The first installment discusses the economic backdrop to the Cuban revolution.

Jack Hill introduces the Working People's Action and Education Network (or WPAEN), an activist organization

in Chicago with which he has been working. Along with Jack's article we publish some of WPAEN's documents and agitations, a short comment from myself about WPAEN, and a sample of email messages debating the Labor Party's stand on current strikes, the trade union bureaucracy and the question of how to agitate.

As always, we have news from Mexico. Anita provides a report from Mexico City on the May Day demonstrations and an article about the July 6 elections.

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The Bolshevik Agrarian Program Part II

by Barb, Chicago

Chernyshevsky: "A wretched nation, a nation of slaves, from top to bottom -- all slaves." (1)

After the Bolshevik/Menshevik split of 1903, the two Social-Democratic factions became more and more estranged. Each faction held separate congresses and conferences, and each altered the uneasily-put-together joint agrarian program of 1903 in directions which predicted their ultimate political positions. After the massacre of Bloody Sunday in January, 1905, the first stage of the Revolution surged forward with mass proletarian strikes and the creation of the St. Petersburg and other soviets. Inspired by the proletariat, the peasants also began to organize. An All-Russia Peasants' Union (2) was created which organized mass peasant insubordination -- refusal to pay taxes, labor and rent strikes -- and condoned spontaneous "wreck and riot" actions -- burning, trashing, and pillaging of landlord estates. The democratic masses, in general, were demanding their civil rights, political representation, a constitution, even a republic. The downfall of the tsarist autocracy and the victory of the democratic revolution was now seen as a viable possibility.

However, the Bolsheviks foresaw both victory and a possible abortion of the revolution. Therefore, through materialist analysis of the dialectics of the social forces, they adjusted their agrarian program to deal with these contingencies.

The Social-Democratic principle had always been never to oppose or limit the peasantry. As the most exploited section of society, the peasants were not only the force which would overthrow feudal property, but they comprised approximately 80% of the population: "We have always said that it is not by any means the business of the Social-Democrats to restrict the scope of the peasant movement" (Vol. 10, "The Revision of the Agrarian Programme of the Workers' Party," p. 177). "[The socialist proletariat] is only the more class-conscious adviser of the peasantry" (Vol. 10, "Cadets, Trudoviks and the Workers' Party," p. 459). Still, Lenin characterized the difficulty of the S.-D. agrarian program as knowing when to "advise" what:

Under certain circumstances, in certain situations, this attitude must be one not only of sympathy, but of direct support, and not merely support but actual "incitement". Under other circumstances, the attitude can and should be neutral (Vol. 8, "The Proletariat and the Peasantry," p. 233).

In concrete terms, this meant:

Aid to the peasant when his struggle with the landlord contributes to the development and strengthening of the democratic forces; neutrality towards the peasant when his struggle with the landlord is merely a matter of squaring accounts between two factions of the landowning class, a matter to which the proletariat and the democrats are indifferent (p. 234).

Depending on the outcome of the revolutionary upsurge, the Bolsheviks had a contingency for the worst possible scenarios — the failure or partial success of the democratic revolution, i.e., a constitutional monarchy—but also for the best possible scenario — a democratic republic. The latter possibility demanded that tactics be established to link the democratic revolution with the next stage, the proletarian-socialist revolution.

The Peasant Resolution of 1905

"Together with the peasant proprietors, against the landlords and the landlords' state; together with the urban proletariat, against the entire bourgeoisie and all the peasant proprietors." (3)

In the two years from 1903 to 1905, the Bolsheviks finalized their agrarian program. The entire peasantry was now revealing itself as a revolutionary force against feudalism. Lenin characterized them as the most radical of the bourgeois democrats. Therefore, there were necessary adjustments to the program. At the Third Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. (April, 1905), which was purely a Bolshevik congress as the Mensheviks refused to take part, a "Resolution on Support of the Peasant Movement" was passed. First, the demand for return of the cut-off

lands and redemption payments was deleted. (4) Instead was substituted: Social Democracy aims at giving the most energetic support to all revolutionary measures taken by the peasantry and likely to improve their condition, measures including confiscation of land belonging to the landlords, the state, the church, the monasteries, and the imperial family. It was now obvious that the landlords were not going to "return" any lands or redemption payments, and that subtler measures such as a progressive income tax were out of the question. Moreover, the peasants were not willing to settle for this. They had, by themselves, "passed through the door" of the cut-off lands; they had begun an assault on private property. In fact, directly impelled by the peasant uprising, the government was forced to institute a gradual cancellation of the redemption debts. Lenin changed the old wording "expropriation" to "confiscation" because the former implied the possibility of compensating the landlords. It was also now recognized that it would be impossible to separate the mixture of capitalism and feudalism ("serfowning") in landed property, so that all the landlord estates must be confiscated. The two forms of "labourvalue" could not be separated with the precision of an "apothecary's scale."

As in the 1903 program, the Bolsheviks called for independent class organization of the peasants in the form of revolutionary peasant committees that shall have as their aim the carrying out of all revolutionary-democratic reforms in the interests of the peasantry and the liberation of the peasantry from the tyranny of the police, the officials, and the landlords. These committees had been envisioned as the organizational structure of the battle against feudalism, but now they were also viewed as one of the kernels of a future provisional revolutionary government which would ensure that the peasants held on to the confiscated land. They would establish the peasants politically as a social estate under feudalism, increase the politicalization of the peasants, and make clear the bourgeois-democratic nature of the revolution.

In this program revision, there was a decided emphasis on the unity of the proletariat and the peasantry. The Bolsheviks pledged to strive for the independent organization of the rural proletariat, for its fusion with the urban proletariat under the banner of the Social-Democratic party, and for the inclusion of its representatives in the peasant committees. (5) As stated previously, this point set them off from all other "revolutionary" groups such as the Mensheviks or S.-R.s, for it pointed to the beginnings of class struggle in the countryside. Now, it was more clearly stated that this organiza-

tional tactic would be a means to unite the rural and urban proletariat for the next stage of the revolution -- the struggle against capitalism. It would form the link between the democratic and the proletarian-socialist revolutions.

Finally, the Bolsheviks pledged to recommend to the peasantry non-performance of military service, flat refusal to pay taxes, and refusal to recognize the authorities, in order to disorganise the autocratic regime and support the revolutionary onset directed against it. The Bolsheviks also promised to support the Peasant Union, as well as all strike actions by the rural proletariat (Vol. 8, "Draft Resolution on the Support of the Peasant Movement," pp. 405-06).

It was essential to clearly characterize the ongoing revolution as a bourgeois-democratic revolution and to remove all confusing, reactionary admixture of pseudosocialist aims, such as S.-R. rhetoric about "equalization" or "socialization of land" or "revolutionary communes" or the "laboring class." In this light, Lenin also objected to the creation of special "peasant sections" of the S.-D. Party, as proposed by some ultra-left members. That would only weaken the revolutionary strength of the democratic all-peasant committees in the fight against feudalism. Lenin was very aware of the low political consciousness of the peasantry. He feared that if the objectives of the democratic and the socialist revolutions became confused in their minds, all would be lost.

Lenin spelled out the dual nature of the Russian Revolution as:

...two distinct and different social wars: one waged within the present autocratic-feudal system, the other within the future bourgeois-democratic system, whose birth we are already witnessing. One is the struggle of the entire people for freedom (the freedom of bourgeois society), for democracy, i.e., the sovereignty of the people; the other is the class struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie for a socialist organisation of society (Vol. 9, "Socialism and the Peasantry," pp. 307-08).

It was imperative that the democratic revolution be completed:

There is no other road to socialism save the road through democracy, through political liberty (Vol. 9, "Petty-Bourgeois and Proletarian Socialism," p. 442).

But this revolution was different from all other democratic revolutions in the past in that the liberal bourgeoisie were not the leading force. In fact, they would most likely hamstring the revolution if they could. The radical democrats -- the peasantry -- were the motive force which would destroy feudal property; it was a "peasant bourgeois revolution." The peasants, however, were not capable of bringing the revolution to completion, of securing a democratic republic, because they were not politically conscious enough.

And since commodity production does not unite or centralise the peasants, but disintegrates and disunites them, a peasant revolution in a bourgeois country is possible only under the leadership of the proletariat (Vol. 13, "The Agrarian Programme of Social-Democracy in the First Russian Revolution 1905-1907," p. 346).

The Social Democrats, with their allies, the peasantry—the only class which had "stable, common economic interests with the proletariat"—must take power to ensure its success (Vol. 11, "The Proletariat and Its Ally in the Russian Revolution," p. 374):

A decisive victory of the democratic revolution is possible only in the form of a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry (Vol. 9, "Socialism and the Peasantry," p. 308).

From the democratic revolution we shall at once, and precisely in accordance with the measure of our strength, the strength of the class-conscious and organised proletariat, begin to pass to the socialist revolution. We stand for uninterrupted revolution (Vol. 9, "Social Democracy's Attitude Toward the Peasant Movement," pp. 236-37).

The Revision of the Bolshevik Agrarian Program

"Nationalization of the land is, as it were, landlordism without the landlord." (6)

Events had moved so rapidly that the tsarist autocracy foresaw its doom unless it made major concessions to the demands of the masses. Therefore, it conceded to establish an elected parliament or *Duma*. This *Duma* (Bulygin

Duma), which had consultative powers only, was a total sham, controlled by the tsar's ministry. The revolution reached its peak with the "October Strikes" before it could convene. The terrified tsar then issued his [in]famous "October Manifesto," a constitution of sorts which vaguely granted the "inviolability" of conscience, speech, assembly and association. Shortly after, the government instituted an "Election Law" which promised to extend the franchise and institute a new Duma with more legislative powers. This first Duma was still totally controlled by the noble landlords and big bourgeoisie. It was clear that the autocracy would never grant the masses their rights. Still. the Duma allowed the peasants a public voice, and the Trudoviks (peasant delegates) (7) and the other radical democrats were calling for confiscation of landlord land, and some were even calling for a national land fund, which meant appropriation of peasant allotments as well. With the prospects of a democratic republic in view, the Bolsheviks could now add to their program nationalization of the land.

Nationalization of the land was a complicated issue. It meant that the state controlled all the land, and that peasants who were willing to work the land and had the means to do so would rent land from the state. Local, all-peasant land committees, elected by universal suffrage, would handle the actual redistribution of the land.

[Nationalization is] a matter of dividing the land among a given number of farmers, of "sorting out" the real farmers who are capable of "cherishing" the land (with both labour and capital) from the inefficient farmers who must not be retained in agriculture -- and to attempt to retain them would be reactionary (Vol. 13, Agrarian Programme," p. 393).

Since nationalization meant, in practice, state "ownership," it all depended on what kind of state was established. If the revolution went all the way and established a democratic republic, then nationalization was the optimal solution for land redistribution. It was viable, however, only under the conditions of a true democratic republic, where representatives were elected and subject to recall by the masses, where the masses controlled the army and had oversight on the bureaucracy, etc. If the revolution was aborted at the point of a constitutionalmonarchy, then nationalization could not be advocated for, as stated previously, this would keep ownership of the land in reactionary hands. In this case, "division of the land," or private peasant property, was a necessary but second-best solution. According to Marx, nationalization was the ultimate bourgeois reform which would free the productive forces to develop under capitalism. Lenin quoted from Capital: ["Nationalization of land] promotes economic development, facilitates competition and the influx of capital into agriculture, reduces the price of grain, etc." (Vol. 10, "Report on the Unity Congress of the R.S.D.L.P," p. 346). Parcelling out the landlord estates into private peasant property meant that the old feudal allotment/landlord land divisions would remain. It also meant that peasant capital, which otherwise would go to the improvement of agriculture, would go into the buying of land. Moreover, it would put the peasants at the mercy of usury and life-long debt again. This would preserve an agriculture based on the petty-producer and would retard production. Nationalization would mean "the removal of all obstacles to the free investment of capital in agriculture and to the free flow of capital from one branch of production to another" (p. 316).

Opponents cried that nationalization took land away from the peasants. Not at all, Lenin explained: "Nationalisation means transferring to the state the right of ownership of the land, the right to draw rent, but not the land itself. Nationalisation does not by any means imply that all the peasants will be forced to transfer their land to anyone at all" (Vol. 10, "Revision of the Agrarian Programme," p. 183). Others maintained that the state should give the land gratis, not rent it. Lenin replied that the S.-D.s could not support giving free land to the peasant bourgeoisie who exploited labor. Rent would be means of appropriating some of their surplus profit. Still others argued that nationalization was only suitable to a state of advanced capitalism. Lenin replied that it was actually appropriate to emerging capitalism, quoting Marx's analysis that in highly developed capitalism, there were two chief obstacles to nationalization:

First obstacle: the radical bourgeois lacks the courage to attack private landed property owing to the danger of a socialist attack on all private property, i.e., the danger of a socialist revolution

Second obstacle: "The bourgeois has territorialised himself" (Vol. 13, "The Agrarian Programme," p. 320).

Russia, however, had a "radical bourgeois" who had not yet "territorialized" himself -- the Russian peasant (p. 322).

Although only nationalization could complete the bourgeois-democratic revolution by irrevocably "clearing the estates" of the feudalists, Lenin conceded that it might turn out to be a "mere transition to division." The Bolsheviks were not opposed to private peasant property, the buying and selling of land, under certain circumstances. After nationalization, the peasants might very well opt for division: "The fanaticism of the private property owner can and should assert itself in due time, as a demand of the newly-hatched farmer for the assured possession of his farm" (p. 322). On the other hand, division might even be evoked to "quieten" the proletariat and semi-proletariat strata "for whom nationalisation of the land will be an element that will 'whet the appetite' for the socialisation of the whole of social production" (p. 323) — obviously another benefit.

Therefore at this time, the Bolsheviks could not take a definitive stand on nationalization. Not only did it depend on the outcome of class forces, but also on what the peasants themselves desired. Lenin emphasized that "Social-Democracy... does not in any way link the destiny of socialism with either of the possible outcomes of the bourgeois revolution. Either outcome implies the development of capitalism and the oppression of the proletariat...only an absolutely independent and purely proletarian party is able to defend the cause of socialism" (p. 347).

Lenin maintained that the peasants' call to destroy private property was tantamount to calling for "nationalization," but expressed in naive terms, i.e., the land was "God's land" or the "people's land" or "nobody's land." Since the peasants' only experience of a state was the reactionary, autocratic state, they could only have a negative concept of nationalization in the sense that the land would belong to the state; and they could have no concept at all that a state could represent all the people. It might seem paradoxical that the peasants, the class of pettyproprietors, were not more fanatical about personal private property at this time. There were several reasons for this. Obviously, the concept of "private property" itself was tainted by the centuries of injustice they had suffered under landlord ownership. Consciously or unconsciously they knew that the medieval landlord/allotment system was holding back the development of agriculture and their goal to become "free farmers." The peasantry had no problems whatsoever with total confiscation all landed estates, although they were divided on the issue of compensation to private landlords. They knew the parasitic landlords had no right to "own" the land; the land should go to those who worked it with their own hands. But while the peasants held this mystical view of the land being "ownerless," they were also very pragmatic. To the majority of illiterate peasants, a slip of government paper representing a legal land deed probably would not mean very much, and past experience had taught them that no government decree or legal paper could be trusted. What they called for was, in their own terms, a fair "general redistribution": sufficient land and the right to use it any way they saw fit, plus the right to dispose of any allotment land they could not farm.

The following excerpts from speeches by members of the Peasant Union represented the more radical, yet typical, positions of the simple, unlettered peasants:

Land is not the product of human hands. It was created by the Holy Spirit, and therefore should not be bought and sold. No one really bought it [in the beginning] for money; somebody knew how to take it away from the peasants...Whether the land was taken away in the time of our ancestors by the Tsars, or by princes, or by someone else, we do not know, and in any case are not to blame. Therefore it is not necessary [if the land be reclaimed by the people] to pay compensation to anyone.

It is necessary to take the land and give it to the working peasants. Pay compensation! What for?

Comrades! Let us not make the mistake that our fathers made. In 1861 they [the masters] gave us a little, in order that the people should not take everything. The peasants were ignorant and unorganized then, but now things are different. With millions of voices we insistently declare the sacredness of our right to the land. If persuasion does not help, then, friends, plowmen, get up, awaken, straighten your backs! For the moment we shall lay our plows aside, and take up the club (Robinson, p. 162).

"Redistribution of the land" was the essential key to the smashing of feudalism. But the S.-D.s could not dictate what should happen to the land after appropriation. At this time, the Bolsheviks refused to get involved in the endless discussions raging on how the land was to be redistributed or who was to do the redistributing and to whom and under what conditions. "What should be done with confiscated land is a secondary question. It is not we who will settle this question, but the peasant" (Vol. 9, "Socialism and the Peasantry," p. 314). The first and main point was destruction of feudal property relations. Lenin added: "The very worst distribution of land after a reform of this sort will be better from all standpoints than what we have at present" (p. 315). But there were no guarantees. The Bolsheviks could not tie their hands; their

program had to include a Variant A, an alternative to nationalization. They wanted "to remove any idea that the workers' party wants to impose upon the peasantry any scheme of reforms against their will and independently of any movement among the peasantry" (Vol. 10, "Revision of Agrarian Programme of the Workers' Party," p. 193).

Just as the unsophisticated peasants' cry for "Land and Freedom" implied a concept of nationalization of the land, Lenin maintained that this was also actually a call for a democratic republic, for there was no other means of granting the peasants even the first steps of political freedom they demanded. And a democratic republic implied that a national Constituent Assembly be established. Ultimate "freedom" could not, however, be achieved under capitalism; it could only come with socialism. Therefore, the Bolsheviks now pledged to carry the message of socialism into the countryside.

The Bolsheviks established their immediate priorities: completion of the bourgeois revolution and establishment of a democratic republic, the acceleration of class struggle in the countryside, the education of the rural proletariat. Whereas the early programs were directed against feudal agrarianism, the revised program was characterized more clearly as an opposition to the bourgeois agrarian reforms being proposed. It also pointed toward the future. Its key demands were: Confiscation of the landed estates. without compensation and, in definite political conditions, nationalization of the land; confiscation by peasant committees pending the convocation of a Constituent Assembly; the separate organization of the rural proletariat and semi-proletariat; and, most significantly, propagation of the socialist revolution. This revised program established the Bolshevik position until after the February Revolution.

The revolutionary situation had impelled the Bolsheviks to try to rejoin with the Mensheviks. A strong and united Social-Democratic Party was seen as an imperative. Therefore, in preparation for a joint congress to be held in April, 1906, the Bolsheviks submitted their revised draft program:

With a view to eradicating the survivals of the serf-owning system, which are a direct and heavy burden upon the peasants, and for the purpose of facilitating the free development of the class struggle in the countryside, the Party demands:

- (1) the confiscation of all church, monastery, crown, state, and landlord estates;
- (2) the establishment of peasant committees for the purpose of immediately abolishing

all traces of landlord power and privilege, and of actual disposal of the confiscated lands, pending the establishment of a new agrarian system by a constituent assembly of the whole people;

- (3) the abolition of all taxes and services at present exacted from the peasantry, as the tax-paying social-estate;
- (4) the repeal of all laws that restrict the peasants in disposing of their land;
- (5) the authorisation of the courts elected by the people to reduce exorbitant rents and to annul all contracts that entail an element of bondage.

If, however, the decisive victory of the present revolution in Russia brings about the complete sovereignty of the people, i.e., establishes a republic and a fully democratic state system, the Party will* support the striving of the revolutionary peasantry to abolish private ownership of land and seek the transfer of all the land to the state.

*Variant A: ...seek the abolition of private ownership of land and the transfer of all the land to the whole people as common property.

Furthermore, the object of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party in all circumstances and whatever the situation of democratic agrarian reform, is steadily to strive for the independent class organisation of the rural proletariat; to explain that its interests are irreconcilably opposed to those of the peasant bourgeoisie; to warn it against being tempted by small-scale ownership, which cannot, so long as commodity production exists, abolish poverty among the masses; and lastly, to urge the necessity for a complete socialist revolution as the only means of abolishing all poverty and all exploitation (Vol. 10, "Revision of the Agrarian Programme," pp. 194-95).

The Menshevik Program

"A peasant agrarian revolution without the overthrow of the autocracy -- such is the highly reactionary idea the Mensheviks advocate." (8)

The Menshevik program, chiefly devised by Plekanov, was a program of reform, not revolution. For one thing, it retained the old idea of not confiscating all the landed estates. Lenin had felt sure that the Mensheviks at least agreed on total confiscation but, in fact, that was not the case. On the one hand, the Mensheviks insisted that some big estates represented an advanced capitalist type, and so to divide them up would be reactionary. This idea seemed to be based on the premise of a socialist -- not a democratic - revolution. On the other hand, their program retained the idea of appropriating the rest of the "feudal" lands, which they called alienation, a vague term which left open the idea of compensating the landlords. The Mensheviks were afraid to put forward the slogan of nationalization at all because they felt it would antagonize the peasants. They believed the peasants were totally behind the idea of owning private property in the bourgeois sense.

The Mensheviks got all tangled up in the problem of how to redistribute the land after the revolution. They argued for a concept of municipalization. What this meant was that the peasants would retain their allotments, but that "ownership" and distribution of the confiscated land would be transferred to local, self-governing bodies. e.g., the old Zemstvos purged and democratized, instead of to a centralized government. The peasants would rent land from these bodies. This was not too different from the S.-R. conception and, in fact, Lenin often used the term "Socialist-Revolutionary Mensheviks." The reasoning behind this lay in the fact that the Mensheviks did not envision or call for a democratic republic. While they insisted they were advocating "revolution," they appeared to be content with the prospects of a constitutional monarchy and a partial land reform.

The Mensheviks had a mechanical view of a two-stage revolution. They believed the liberal bourgeoisie led and took power in the democratic revolution, with the "assistance" of the proletariat, who then remained a "revolutionary opposition" fighting for workers' reforms while capitalism built up its productive forces and prepared the ground for the socialist revolution. The proletariat then led and took power only in the socialist revolution. Mensheviks were totally against the S.-D.s taking or even sharing power after the democratic revolution. Mensheviks' logic was formulaic, not materialist, and largely based on the experience of the French Revolution. They did not understand the dialectics of this bourgeois revolution, in which the so-called "liberal" bourgeoisie were really not democrats at all but actually counterrevolutionary, whereas the peasants were the radical bourgeoisie, the true democrats, who with the proletariat, would accomplish the revolution. The Mensheviks under-

estimated the class differentiation taking place in the countryside. Therefore, they greatly feared the seizure of power by the peasantry on the grounds that the peasantry as a whole was a reactionary class which would gain power and oppose the proletariat's (eventual) fight for socialism. In fact, they accused the Bolsheviks of being "anarchists" -- S.-R.s and Narodnaya Volyas -- for supporting a peasant uprising. So just what the Mensheviks saw as the "peasant revolution" was a mystery. Their position was so muddled that it elicited the sarcasm of Lenin: "A peasant agrarian revolution without the overthrow of the autocracy!" (Vol. 9, "Agrarian Programme of Social-Democracy," p. 334). Incredulous, he queried how one could have a peasant revolution if the peasantry did not seize power! It seemed, at this point, that the Mensheviks' revolutionary theory merely needed "straightening out," in their confusion between the democratic and the proletarian revolutions plus their confusion between the two forms of bourgeois revolutions. But, in fact, this muddle-headedness covered the essential class nature of the Mensheviks, as petty-bourgeois liberal democrats. This only became apparent later.

The Unity (Compromise) Program of 1906

"Not well shod on four hoofs, but with all four shoes loose." (9)

The two S.-D. factions attempted unity at the Stockholm Conference ("Unity Conference") in 1906. The agrarian program proved to be a particularly bitter fight. Three other drafts, in addition to Lenin's, were presented, but it boiled down to a head-to-head confrontation between Plekanov and Lenin. The two main points of contention were the Mensheviks' stands on municipalization and alienation (appropriation with landlord compensation) vs. the Bolsheviks' stands on nationalization and confiscation (appropriation without compensation).

Lenin characterized municipalization thus: "The peasants' land can remain the peasants' property; as for the landed estates, let the peasants rent them from the Zemstvos, only they must be democratic Zemstvos" (Vol. 10, "Report on the Unity Congress," p. 329). He argued against municipalization on three grounds: (I) it was not revolutionary, (2) the peasants would not agree to it; and (3) it would be harmful if only made conditional on "democracy" in general, and not specifically on a republic.

First, the Menshevik program was reformist not revolutionary because the so-called "capitalist" estates were actually partly feudal. Also, alienation with compensa-

tion only propped up the old landlord class; this was nothing more than the old "redemption payments." Leaving the allotment land tenure intact merely dragged out the death of feudalism. More importantly, the Menshevik program did not call for a revolutionary method of changing the agrarian system. The desired change in agrarian economic relations mandated that the political struggle be carried through to the end -- a democratic republic. The Mensheviks only called for "democratic" local bodies, but since even the "liberal" bourgeoisie called themselves "democrats," this was a meaningless phrase. Only with the seizure of the land by the peasants and the disposition of the land by the peasants themselves could there be a peasant revolution. If the revolution were not victorious. municipalization would be only another swindle for the peasants, like the Reform of 1861. Lenin also argued that the Peasant Union advocated nationalization. Mensheviks replied that the Peasant Union was controlled by the S.-R.s, and so did not speak for the peasant masses. Lenin countered with the fact that the Duma Trudoviks declared for nationalization, in the sense that they proposed a "national land fund," the dispensation of the land to be entrusted to local bodies. This meant, in effect, a centralized government, i.e., a republic -- definitely not a call of the S.-R.s.

Second, Lenin maintained that the peasants would not agree to pay rent to the Zemstvos. They would not trust these local organizations, formerly vehicles of punishment and coercion. They would either say, "Let us divide all the land among ourselves or let us make all the land the property of the whole people" (p. 330). Since in the Menshevik plan, the peasants kept their allotment land, this trapped the peasants and kept them from becoming "free farmers." The allotments, were, after all, the worst land and most remained in divided strips. Both the Zemstvos and the allotments were remnants of their oppression. Moreover, "The peasants regard every agrarian reform from the point of view of whether they will have the right to sell the extra land they obtain" (p. 286).

Third, munipalization would be harmful if made conditional on "democracy" in general, and not specifically on the establishment of a republic. If the central government were not fully democratic, the local authorities could not possibly be "democratic" or independent bodies. They could in no way conduct a "fight against the central monarchy"; moreover, the government would never allow local bodies to be in control of the land. The idea that these local bodies were supposed to fight against the central monarchy as "local republics" was preposterous. Lenin argued that the revolution needed a "central revolutionary authority" to succeed. He regarded the peasant

committees as one of the instruments of this authority, to be supplemented by a provisional revolutionary government and a Constituent Assembly. Moreover, Lenin's draft advised the "peasant committees to seize the land and dispose of it pending the convocation of a constituent assembly" (p. 336). Lenin summarized: "In my opinion, municipalisation is wrong and harmful; division, as a programme, is wrong, but not harmful" (p. 344).

Plekanov argued that municipalization would be a "guarantee against restoration." His argument was so muddled that Lenin made short work of it, explaining that only a democratic republic would free the capitalist forces and be the best "guarantee" against restoration of a halffeudal monarchy. He conceded to Plekanov the point that the petty-bourgeoisie (the peasants) would inevitably be the bulwarkof restoration against the proletariat, but pointed out that they would be so no matter whether the land was nationalized, municipalized or divided into private ownership. However, "the more far-reaching the revolution is, the more difficult will it be to restore the old order and the more gains will remain even if restoration does take place" (Vol. 13, "Agrarian Programme," p. 327). Only a socialist revolution in the West would be a real guarantee against "restoration." Lenin argued that a peasant revolution in Russia and the establishment of a democratic republic would be a "moral" inspiration for the socialist revolution in the West. Moreover, nationalization would free up the class struggle and prepare the ground for the socialist revolution. Munipalization only obscured it; it was a form of "class peace." Lenin called Plekanov's argument a "purely Cadet idea," the "bourgeoisie's political weapon against the proletariat" (Vol. 10, "Report on the Unity Congress," p. 339) and, moreover, pointed out that the bourgeoisie were beginning to praise Plekanov and claim him as one of their own.

The Mensheviks also insisted that the Bolsheviks were being hypocritical and inconsistent because nationalization still contained the idea of renting the land after confiscation. Lenin explained patiently that the peasant revolution was a bourgeois capitalist revolution and that, under capitalism, abolition of "ground rent" was not possible. In fact, because capitalism meant "ownership," it was just this renting of land which distinguished the capitalist mode of production in agriculture. The point was, should the peasants pay exploitive rent to local agencies even partially under the control of the bourgeoisie or a to reactionary government (absolute rent), or should they pay nominal rent to a democratic government monitored by the people which would use this rent for the good of the people (differential rent)? (10)

Since the Mensheviks would be content with an

outcome in which "the monarchy was restored," Lenin regarded Plekanov's program as "deal with reaction. In other words, the Mensheviks were only a "left" arm of the bourgeoisie, but at this time, Lenin did not go so far as to accuse them of this.

The upshot was that, due to the ratio between the two factions (62 Mensheviks/46 Bolsheviks), the Bolsheviks were outvoted. On the one hand, confiscation did win out over alienation. (11) However, the redistribution part of the program ended up as an irrational combination of nationalization (certain lands were to become national property— forests, waters and lands for colonization), municipalization (privately-owned lands were to be transferred to large local self-governing bodies — except small peasant holdings) in the event of a favorable outcome, and division in case of an unfavorable outcome. (12) There was no resolution on tactics of when and under what conditions to support these alternatives.

Lenin regarded the Stockholm program as a step forward in that "by recognising confiscation of the landlords' estates, the Social-Democratic Party resolutely took the path of recognising the *peasant* agrarian revolution" (Vol. 13, "Agrarian Programme," p. 258). But he was very uneasy about the compromise. He felt the Unity Congress made a mistake in not stating plainly that land reform could be entrusted only to a democratic republic. He called the S.-D. program a "castrated" program. Instead of it being a program "well shod on four hoofs, [it has] all four shoes loose" (p. 348). Practical and political considerations had prevailed over theory and economics.

Furthermore, Lenin feared that the practical workers would only be confused and would "vulgarize" the present program just as, after the 1903 program, they had vulgarized the demand for the restitution of the cut-off lands, i.e., regarded it as the maximum demand. They would "convert a minor mistake into a major mistake" (p. 345). Lenin was worried that because of the undesirability of nationalization under the current regime, the workers would try to convince the peasants of the desirability of division — all because the program omitted the goal of a democratic republic, which would validate nationalization.

And in fact, Lenin later concluded that, like the compromise 1903 program which only called for return of the cut-off lands and not total confiscation such as the S.-R.s called for, this compromise program bore even greater responsibility for the S.-R.s gaining control over the peasantry: "Because of this error of the Mensheviks, the Social Democrats have handed over criticism of private ownership of the land to the Socialist-Revolutionaries" (Vol. 25, "The Agrarian Program of Social-Democracy in

the Russian Revolution," p. 170). The S.-R.s clearly called for nationalization of all the land, even if they did not call for a republic, whereas the S.-D.s were cautious and inconsistent. Still, the goal of this conference had been met: the Party was reunified. Lenin said that the ambiguities in the agrarian program could be dealt with later.

The Stolypin Reforms

Stolypin: "Wager on the strong." "The muzhi will help us out." (13)

Lenin: "The second big step in mass violence against the peasantry in the interests of capitalism. It was the second 'clearing of estates' for capitalism by the *landlords*." (14)

Because of the loud cries in the *Duma* and in the streets to appropriate the landlords and establish a republic with a Constituent Assembly, the government had to take quick action. In July, 1906 it dissolved the *Duma*, and in November issued what has come down as the Stolypin Land Reform Policy, (15) Stolypin then being the Prime Minister. (16)

The Stolypin decrees granted the peasants the right to withdraw from the commune and to take over their allotments as private property, thus becoming homesteaders or petty-capitalists. They could either remove their domiciles and settle on *khutors* (house and farmlands conjoined) or retain the old village arrangement on *otrubs* (house and farmlands separated). Insofar as possible, the isolated strip lands were to be consolidated, and the use of communal lands -- pasture, forests and water sources -- were granted in perpetuity. Additional crown, state and private lands were put on the market, and the peasants were promised low-interest loans from the Peasant Land Bank to purchase these and also additional land belonging to the communes. This was made possible by cancellation of all of the redemption debts.

Both Engels and Lenin had foreseen the possibility of government "redistribution" happening before the peasant revolution could succeed. It was clear that many segments of society realized that the time had arrived to break up the old, medieval system of landownership. The Stolypin solution bore out what the S.-D.s had been saying all along. The transition to capitalism in Russia could take place in two ways. That is, it could be effected by reforms decreed from the top, the Prussian or Junker way, which would mean a gradual evolution of feudal landlordism into capitalist landlordism which would still, however, pre-

serve feudal features and allow the plunder of the communes by the *kulaks*. Or it could be effected through a revolution from the bottom by the peasants, by the "American path," which would abolish landlordism through "land nationalization," create a democratic republic, and a nation of free farmers. (17)

The Stolypin solution was a last-ditch stand of the aristocracy to preserve itself since its bureaucracy and police could no longer protect it from the onslaughts of the masses. Lenin called it "the last [valve] that could still be opened without expropriating all the landed estates" (Vol. 18, "The Last Valve," p. 250). It was a reform which gave "dying serfdom a new lease of life" just as the Reform of 1861 had given the old corvee system a "new lease of life" (p. 250). It also served to pacify the peasants who were outraged at the meaningless slaughter of their numbers in the tsar's latest fiasco, the Russo-Japanese War.

Basically the plan was meant to quell the rural uprisings by offering to sell the peasants more land. Since in reality this meant that only the better-off peasants could purchase land, it was a means of splitting the peasant movement and building up a force which would support the autocracy. The government threatened the richer peasants that expropriating the landed proprietors would only lead to a general redivision of peasant holdings, with a consequent loss to them of land. Stolypin quite overtly explained the policy thus:

The government has placed its wager, not on the needy and the drunken, but on the sturdy and the strong -- on the sturdy individual proprietor who is called upon to play a part in the reconstruction of our Tsardom on strong monarchical foundations (Robinson, p. 194).

The means to do this was to subject the commune to attrition and free the allotment lands for sale. Previously the government had supported the commune as a bulwark against capitalism that ensured feudal privilege. Now (no doubt frightened by S.-R. rhetoric), it saw the commune as a threat: as based upon "socialistic foundations," as the "nursery of socialist bacilli" (Robinson, p. 182). The tsar's advisors, The Council of the United Nobility, (18) had cried: "The Commune -- there is the enemy!" (p. 194). It had urged: "If the State wishes to set a limit to socialism, it ought to abolish the commune" (pp. 182-83). But there were other forces that impelled this reform: pressure from both urban and rural capitalists who saw that feudalism stood in the way of economic progress. They saw Russia headed toward a bourgeois constitutional monarchy, and a system of large landholdings based on capitalist relations. Therefore, the state offered to put some of its own land on the market, to buy private land with state funds and re-sell it to the peasants (supposedly at a cheap rate), and to give increased aid to colonization. As for the allotment lands, the government proposed that each holder should receive a consolidated plot in exchange for his scattered strips; that communes which had not repartitioned land for 24 years be declared dissolved; and that active repartitional communes should change over to a system of hereditary title. In short, not only did this give the peasants the right to leave the communes and establish bourgeois private property, but it actually pushed many of them out.

Nicholas II had proudly announced that Stolypin's policy was the "final stage of 'the great Reform' of February 19, 1861" (Vol. 17, "The Peasant Reform' and the Proletarian-Peasant Revolution," p. 119). And Lenin had concurred: the Stolypin policy was the <u>second</u> feudal plunder of the peasantry. It was "laws for the rich and made by the rich, a policy for the rich and carried out by the rich (Vol. 19, "The Agrarian Policy of the Present Government," p. 191).

It consists in protecting the interests of a handful of big landowners, courtiers and dignitaries, protecting their right to exploit and oppress the people. Neither land nor freedom! - this is what the government has announced to the people through its mouthpiece Stolypin (Vol. 12, "Apropos of Stolypin's Declaration," p. 193).

It was an attempt

to bribe a tiny minority of village bloodsuckers and *kulaks* with petty hand-outs to help them plunder the ruined countryside of whatever is left, as a reward for their aid to the autocratic government (p. 194).

Robinson maintains that the gist was this: "The communal property-right of the peasants must be abolished, in order that the private property-right of the landlords will not have to be" (p. 183). He characterizes the dominant idea behind the Stolypin Reforms as to instill in the peasant respect for the property rights of others [i.e., the landlords]: "not to give the peasants land, but to teach them not to try to take it." Its new system of property-right was "its moral equivalent for land" (p. 189).

On the other hand, the Stolypin policy was progressive in the "scientific-economic sense" because it enabled the mobilization of peasant land required under capital-

ism, opening the way for new technology and modern cultivation methods. In so doing, it removed some intolerable conditions, such as the repressions of the commune and the divided strip holdings. Most important, it facilitated class conflict by creating a peasant bourgeoisie and a huge mass of poor peasants and rural proletariat which would come into conflict with it.

The government had to establish, in effect, a "military dictatorship" to enforce the Reforms. The tsar threatened: "We will permit no lawlessness or insubordination, and with the full power of the State We will subject the lawbreakers to Our Imperial will" (Robinson, p. 195). Liberal and revolutionary groups protested, e.g., the S.-D.s announced an unsuccessful general strike. In fear of these protests, the autocracy dissolved the Second Duma, and the S.D.s were arrested and sent into exile. The workers' strike movement had been damped down, the Peasant Union was crushed, the leaders of the Petersburg Soviet were arrested, and the country was put under martial law. Despite vicious reprisals -- "Wipe the rebellious village off the face of the earth, and...exterminate the rebels...without mercy" (Robinson, p. 189), the peasantry were not initially cowed by the "generous" land reforms. Peasant actions, as well as worker actions, did not totally trail off until well into 1907. (19) Still, the Stolypin Reforms accomplished their goal, which was to divert the radical democratic movement. With the aid of huge foreign loans, the autocracy finally put an end to the revolution. A long night of reaction set in which was to last for a decade.

The Years of Reaction

Tsar Nicholas II: "To the Emperor of All the Russias belongs supreme autocratic power. Submission to His power, not only from fear, but as a matter of conscience, is commanded by God Himself." (20)

The Condition of the Peasantry

The Stolypin Reforms initiated a period of intense activity — buying and selling, exchanging and moving, separating and consolidating, but they did not appreciably alter economic relations in the countryside. The large landlords were mainly left intact; they became supplemented by a small number of peasants who became petty-capitalist farmers and themselves exploited labor. Despite government aid to the homesteaders, the overwhelming

majority of peasants elected not to remove their private property from the communes. Overall, farming remained primarily feudal: medieval categories of landlord land and allotment land were preserved, and the ratio between landlord and peasant land did not alter drastically. Although much vaunted as a selling point of the Reforms, agricultural output did not improve appreciably; it still lagged far behind Europe, and yields on individual farms lagged far behind those on the old landed estates. Nor did agricultural technology appreciably advance. Just previous to WWI, fully half of the peasants still plowed their land with crude hand tools, and there were only 166 tractors in the whole of Russia! (Robinson, pp. 244, 260). The worst results of the Stolypin Reforms were continual crop failures and famines which brought more than 30 mil. small proprietors to the brink of ruin. Lenin summed up the situation:

All the contradictions have become sharper, exploitation has increased, rent has risen, and progress in farming is quite negligible (Vol. 18, "Some Results of the 'Land Distribution' Policy," p. 581).

The situation was very complex and no reliable statistics were kept, but a rough picture can be drawn. The nobles had lost or sold 3/7s of the land they had held at the time of the Emancipation Reform (Robinson, p. 261). Only a very few of the large estates actually did convert into "agricultural factories" and begin to operate in a true capitalist manner with modern technology and crop cultivation, and wage-labor. It is estimated that only about 2 mil. peasants actually withdrew their land from the commune. While, initially, withdrawals seem to have been about equally divided among the poor, middle and well-todo peasants, in the end there were surprisingly few individual homesteads (dvors) established. Lenin quoted government figures of 1913. Only 2.9% of the peasants now owned separate farmsteads out of the total number obtaining titles. Only 6.5% owned land in one piece, and fully 1/3 of the land transferred to original title-holders had already passed into other hands (Vol. 19, "The Land Ouestion Settled - Landowner Fashion," p. 104). In short, the well-to-do peasants had bought up the poor peasants' land "for a song." Since there was no attempt whatsoever to "equalize" lands when they were withdrawn, one withdrew what one held at the time of the Reform which not only perpetuated the feudal allotments, but perpetuated the class distinction among the peasantry already begun under the commune system.

The total land added to peasants' land was 9.5 mil.

dessiatines. The state sold 239,000 des. directly to the peasants; the crown sold 1,258,000 des. and the nobles, 10,200,000 des. to the Peasant Bank to be resold. At the end of 1914, the peasants held about 156 mil. des., or only 40% of the total land. The average peasant holding was now 11 des. [formerly, 7+], but this increase was due mainly to the expansion of *kulak* farms. The Cossacks were much better provided with an average of 52.7 des. Even though the government had promised low interest, the terms of the loans made through the Peasant Bank were much higher than before 1905. The land sold through the Bank was exorbitantly priced, and the landlords profited mightily all around. It is estimated that by the eve of WWI, 3/4s of the official valuation of the peasants' land was mortgaged to the Bank (Robinson, p. 231).

Most of the landless peasants then joined the labor force in the cities; the rest were exploited on the farms of the prosperous farmers. Frequently, the poor peasants did not sell but rented out their pitiful parcel of land while they sought wage labor. On the other hand, many of the poorer peasants continued to rent landlord-land, or continued to farm the nobles' estates on a metayer basis. This indicated the reluctance of the peasants to let go of the land and become proletarianized. But it only perpetuated the hateful "labor service," the fines and rent for crossing or using the landlords' land, etc. Fully half the peasants remained "bonded" in some form. The peasants remaining on the communes appeared to be the worst off, those on otrubs were slightly better off, and those on khutors were the most prosperous.

There were many difficulties in detaching from the commune. The redemption debts had been cancelled, but there were still very complicated laws regarding land tenure. Lands which continued to be held in repartitional tenure (subject to periodic redivision) could not be withdrawn until they were changed to hereditary standing. Separators were required to "alienate" (sell) all their lands which had not been physically consolidated, but the commune itself could not purchase these lands. Consolidating the strip lands in a fair fashion was almost impossible. although both peasants electing to leave and those electing to stay had this right. Robinson estimates that on the eve of the February Revolution, of the 5 and 1/2 mil. of the new dvors, 3/4s retained scattered lands, which in effect assured a low level of production -- and peasant misery (p. 216).

Then there was the matter of the communal resources, i., e., pastures, forests, water. There were two possibilities. The desirable option was to cut off portions and attach them to the homestead, but since this was almost impossible to do, the separated peasants continued to

share these resources with the commune peasants. In addition, there was the problem of the formerly-shared farm implements and animals; the communal use of these also usually continued. All of these matters related to separation had to be approved by a 2/3's vote of the commune. In addition, there was the considerable problem of moving the house and garden areas from the village to the homestead. This involved buying and selling, tearing down and building up, and in the end most of the homesteaders remained domiciled in the old villages on otrubs. So, even if legally separated from the commune, the homesteaders were not entirely free of its former influence.

On the other hand, the government set up Land-Organization Commissions which had the right to overrule commune decisions, and so often came into conflict with them. These Commissions were under the control of the bureaucracy and non-peasant proprietors, and favored the new capitalist homesteader. But the land redistribution was so fraught with difficulties that the Commissions were flooded with requests for assistance, which imposed a great financial burden upon the public which was obligated to support them. Fully two-thirds of peasant withdrawals were contested by the communes (Robinson, p. 232). The government even began to give loans without interest and subsidies to the homesteaders, and also set up model farms and "farm-advisers" to help them. Its goal was very definitely to destroy the communes, yet the communes fought back to hang on because most peasants could not make it on their own. Particularly in the area of central Russia where conditions were most crowded, the peasants clung to the commune.

The Stolypin Reforms did not get rid of "all the rotten rags" of the old medieval land relationships. They obviously left the old landlord class more or less intact, mainly with old methods of production and of exploitation of labor. But in addition, the new "free-farmer" remained bound by the old land categories and rent relationships. To demonstrate this, Lenin gave a typical profile. The holdings of the new peasant "capitalist" now might consist of his own allotment, a rented allotment from a poor commune member, rented land from the state, land leased annually from a landlord, and additional land purchased from the bank (Vol. 13, "Agrarian Programme," p. 280).

In contrast to the Stolypin or "Prussian" type of piecemeal and retarded capitalism, Lenin counterpoised the benefits of the "American" type. He determined that if <u>all</u> the landlord estates were transferred to the peasants, the category of small ruined peasants would disappear as they would become "middle peasants" with an increase of from 7 to 18 dess. of land. The new bourgeois peasants'

land would increase only slightly, from 46 to 47 dess. This scenario could be effected, even by allowing the former landlords to retain 50 des. of their land (p. 229).

While the individual peasant now had authority over his own land in the matters of crop-cycles and agricultural techniques, Robinson states that the land still retained the special characteristic of "allotment-land," rather than pure private property in the western sense, in that the government placed crippling restrictions on land "mobilization" -- that is, what the peasants could do with their newly-acquired private property. For example, peasants could not sell their land to anyone other than the peasantry. This imposed a severe crisis on the smaller peasants whose very life depended on getting rid of the land they could not farm. There were also restrictions on how much additional land a peasant could purchase. These laws created much fraud, For example, non-peasant purchasers registered themselves as peasants or signed fraudulent deeds in the names of relatives, etc. Peasants were also prohibited from mortgaging their land to individuals or private institutions, which resulted in corrupt speculative deals. As Lenin stated: "Given living conditions that are at all tolerable, the peasant will never sell his land. On the other hand, when want or other conditions...compel a peasant to sell his land, no law can stop him" (Vol. 18, "Mobilisation of Peasant Lands," p. 539.) The Stolypin Reforms ensured that the poorer and even the middle peasants would hardly survive, and under the conditions of famine, could not survive. Yet even the kulaks were held on a short leash because these restrictions were meant to limit the size of their holdings.

So while the Reforms gave some advantages, they took others away. The peasants did gain some political freedoms. They had a much fairer representation in the Zemstvos, being elected instead of appointed, and the Zemstvos had less power to fine or punish peasants The volosts (rural courts) not longer had the power to inflict corporal punishment. The archaic, repressive powers of the commune were destroyed. For example, joint responsibility for taxes and public obligations was abolished, and the communal assemblies lost their power to put out errant peasants at forced labor. Elected peasant officials and heads of households lost their right to control passports. Peasants could freely choose their place of residence or migrate to the city. However, they could not leave the peasant class, or estate; they were still subject to a huge number of governmental regulations regarding their rights, duties and institutions. Even if peasants withdrew from the commune and got rid of their land, they was still required to register as member of the "peasant estate." If they chose to work in a city as factory laborers and still

retained land in the commune, they were subject to all commune taxes.

The peasant family structure also was changed. Instead of the allotment belonging to all the members of the household, now, in true capitalist manner, it was solely the property of the head of the household. On the one hand, this gave junior members more freedom, insofar as passports, leaving for jobs, etc., but on the other hand, it cut them out of land. And the old hereditary laws were not changed to suit the new circumstances. Robinson states it thus:

Millions of peasants were deprived, at one grand sweep, of their most important property-right — the right to share in the use of the household allotment, and under certain conditions to secure, even against the will of the head of the house, a partition of this land for their own benefit (p. 227).

But while there was no more family household ownership, there was still joint responsibility for taxes; and taxes themselves increased on the household. While prices for food stuffs remained fairly low, this also meant that the farmers sold low. Conversely, prices of and taxes on manufactured necessities continued to escalate. Especially virulent were the taxes on the two chief commodities the peasants deemed "essential" to ameliorate their terrible living conditions: vodka and religious icons -- both state-controlled. (21) There was no decline in handicraft cottage industry, which remained an economic necessity to supplement income.

The other prong of the Stolypin Reforms was the much-lauded "resettlement" policy. In reality, it signified two things: (1) that the government was packing off superfluous or troublesome peasants to Siberia and the East in fear of "storm clouds and the starving peasantry," or (2) emigration was an act of desperation on the part of the landless peasants. (22) The colonization policy formed a tragic chapter in Russian history. The resettlement agencies were often fraudulent; bureaucratic theft, embezzlement, wastefulness, and incompetence were rampant. The trek outward was inhumanely long and arduous, and government stipends were cruelly inadequate. When the peasants arrived, they often found that much of the land was worthless -- rocky, arid, semi-frozen tundra -- or already occupied. The luckless peasants then became rural laborers or beggars. On the other hand, the chauvinistic government pushed some non-Russian nationalities off the land they had occupied for centuries to make room for the new settlers. In the resettlement areas, there were

few roads, and often no ploughlands or pasture but only forests, which the colonizers were forced to destroy in order to live. Frequently, there was no water whatsoever! In some areas, disease and starvation claimed from 25%-30% of the settlers. To cite some typical figures: A total of nearly 3 mil. peasants moved from European Russia to the Asiatic provinces between 1905 and 1914; between 1906 and 1910, the average migration was 500,000 a year. However, the return of colonizers increased at an amazing rate. For example in 1911, 60% of the 183,000 emigrants returned as landless, defeated or angry paupers to join the ranks of the wage laborers (Vol. 19, "Significance of the Resettlement Scheme," p. 66).

In the end, colonization also objectively became a progressive measure for it had increased the ranks of the proletariat and raised their level of consciousness, as well as almost completed the agricultural cultivation of Siberia. Lenin emphasized that cultivation of other of these lands would also be entirely feasible under advanced capitalism, with its technology and resources.

The area of hired agricultural labor showed an interesting profile. While there were at the least 3 mil. farm laborers, there was, in fact, a decided limit to the demand for wage-labor in agriculture. For one thing, the large landlord estates, many much reduced in size, began to mechanize. And while all kulaks and most middle peasants hired "day-workers" (short-term workers) for cyclical farming operations, sowing, harvesting, etc., existing records show that even the most prosperous peasant farmers did not employ much permanent hired labor, or "term-workers." Agricultural laborers were viciously exploited, lacking even the scant legal protection the urban workers had won. The old "winter hiring" and other abusive practices persisted. The average work-day could stretch to 15 hours, and wages were not only pathetically low, but paid irregularly. In 1910, Lenin estimated that since the Stolypin Reforms, the income of farm laborers had not risen in real wages, while the income of the landlords had doubled (Vol. 20, "Farm Labourers" Wages," p. 175).

Agricultural workers were forbidden to strike, and were imprisoned for so trying or for quitting contracts before expiration. Even more harsh were the penalties for members of any organization which "incited" agricultural laborers to strike -- up to 4 years imprisonment and permanent loss of the rights to vote and hold office. This was, of course, aimed directly at individual agitators or radical organizations, especially the S.-D.s and the S.-R.s. Thus, the agricultural laborers remained almost entirely unorganized during these years.

So, huge numbers of landless peasants went off to the

cities where industry was growing rapidly, but they did not become entirely proletarianized. For example, typical figures just prior to WWI show that 2/3s of the members in Moscow's printing trades retained connections with the village. They either actively conducted farming operations or still had households in the village (Robinson, p. 249). Industrial wages, while still extremely low in comparison with Europe, rose somewhat, but so did prices, and the peasant-proletarians usually sent part of their wages home so that family members could survive.

One feature of note was the growth of the cooperative movement, which in a way replaced some of the commune's old functions. This took many forms: savings and credit associations, purchasing, marketing, manufacture (creameries, milling, etc.), and other collective enterprises involving cooperative farm work, animals and machinery. While coops increased twenty-three times over between 1905 and 1914, this was still a drop in the bucket. The S.-D.s supported all cooperative endeavors, but emphasized that these coops were bourgeois, not "socialist" institutions, and mainly benefited the kulaks. One interesting sidelight is that some peasants rejoined their freed lands into a new type of "commune." Lenin saw this as a hopeful seed of the future, when after the socialist revolution, the peasants would see the advantages of voluntary communalism.

In the end, the Stolypin Reforms worked against themselves. In spite of their divisive nature, they enabled the peasantry to overcome much of their ignorance and isolation. Educational reforms had been instituted and literacy increased (although what officially was called "literacy" was extraordinarily low). Peasant-proletarians returned to their villages radicalized by contact with urban workers and began to organize. Migration in general raised the level of sophistication through the contact with new peoples. The Trudovik representation in the Duma gave the peasants their first taste of political experience. The government's inability to deal with the terrible famine of 1911 created a great leap in peasant consciousness. Then came World War I which co-opted millions of peasants into the army and totally altered the material conditions of peasant life. The war inflicted desperate and meaningless sorrow, and totally exposed the corruption of the autocracy and the ulterior motives behind the peasant reforms.

Lenin's tasks during his long years in exile were to keep track of the evolution in peasant consciousness, to analyze the changing positions of the various parties -- especially in the *Duma* where the battle now had to be fought -- and to clarify the proletariat's tactics in relation

to the peasantry.

The Fight in the Duma

After revolution waned and reaction triumphed, the struggle transferred to the *Duma*, the lower house of parliament. While instituted solely out of the autocracy's fear for its survival, the *Duma* was a definite gain of the revolution. A short summary of the four *Dumas* is necessary to track the history of the ideology of agrarian reform during the period from the 1905 Revolution to the February, 1917 Revolution. To answer the peasants' cry for "Land and Freedom," how did the responses of the various political factions measure up to that of the Bolsheviks?

The first planned Duma (Bulygin Duma) was to be merely a "consultative" body with no legislative powers. It disenfranchised all but the feudal landlords, the big capitalists, and a small number of the more prosperous peasant householders. The peasants were given only 51 seats out of 412. Workers, poor peasants, farm labourers, the intelligentsia, women, servicemen, students, all persons under 25 and many subject nationalities were not allowed to participate. Lenin called it "the most barefaced mockery of 'popular representation'" (Vol. 9, "Oneness of Tsar and People, and of People and Tsar," p. 194). The "Unity Congress" had carried the motion that the S.D.s could take part in parliament, and so the Mensheviks were prepared to participate in this mockery. The Bolsheviks (and S.-R.s) led a boycott against this Duma, advocating armed uprising, a revolutionary army and participation in a provisional revolutionary government. The Peasant Union also boycotted it. If this Duma had taken place, it would have been entirely controlled by the nobility, the Russian Nationalists (the Black Hundreds, who were vicious anti-Semites), (23) and the super-reactionary bourgeoisie. Although the "Constitutional Manifesto" promised a vague "universal" suffrage for Duma elections and legislative responsibilities, almost immediately afterwards, the tsar curtailed many Duma responsibilities, and subjected all legislation to his approval. As Robinson states, it was "an autocracy without content, and a constitution without the name" (p. 191).

The First Duma (Witte or Cadet Duma) convened in April, 1906. The agrarian debate was the issue which led to the tsar's abrupt dismissal of this Duma after only four months, in July. Its electorate now was divided into four curias: (landed) peasants, landowners (landlords), urban residents, and large-scale factory workers. The peasants comprised 42% and the workers less than 4%. It still

disenfranchised two mil. working men, landless peasants, nomads, servicemen, males under 25 and all women. One landlord vote equaled 3 votes by the urban bourgeoisie, 15 peasant votes and 45 worker votes. The Mensheviks participated in this *Duma*, (24) while the Bolsheviks (and S.-R.s) again boycotted it on the grounds that the revolution was still viable. Later, Lenin was to admit that this was a tactical error, based on a misjudgment of the revolutionary situation, which actually was in its decline.

The Cadets ("Party of the People's Freedom" or Constitutional- Democrats) dominated this *Duma*. The Cadets arose out of the 1905 struggles and were a "semilandlord" party of liberal-capitalists, parliamentarians, *Zemstvoists*, and urban-bourgeois intellectuals. The Cadets wanted a constitutional monarchy which would support a capitalist landlord class purged of feudal traits. They agreed to compulsory alienation of part of the landed estates, but advocated compensation to private landlords and a landlord-dominated settlement of land redistribution based on complicated "labour standards" of division. (25)

The Trudoviks were the second largest faction. This was not a party per se but consisted of peasant representatives elected by the Peasant Union, and a few intellectuals from various Narodnik groups, e.g., the Popular Socialists (26) and the S.-R.s. They proposed total confiscation, immediate nationalization of all land, and its distribution only to those who worked the land. They were divided on the issue of compensation. Specifically, the Land Reform Bill of the Trudoviks was based on "equalitarian land tenure": the creation of a national fund from state, crown and monastery lands, and also privately-owned lands if the estates exceeded the established "labour-standard." In their false colors as "liberal democrats," the Cadets gave lip service to the Trudovik call for a "national land fund."

The other significant faction was the Octobrists (Union of October Seventeenth), a counter-revolutionary party of the bourgeoisie and large capitalist landlords, which was founded after the tsar's Manifesto in 1905. The Octobrists supported government policies unreservedly. Forming the "Right" with the Black Hundreds, they wanted to perpetuate the *status quo*, sharing power with the nobility. Obviously they were for neither land nor freedom.

In the end, the *Duma* proposal to the tsar stated only "compulsory alienation of private property with just compensation." Even this obviously Cadet-colored proposal threw a scare into the government, which disbanded the *Duma* on the grounds that it was going outside its legal competence by appealing to the people on the land question. A result was the "Vyborg Manifesto" issued by 200

delegates, mostly Cadets and *Trudoviks*. It called for the people to refuse to pay taxes or comply with the military draft until a new *Duma* was called. The government arrested most of the signers, sentenced them to prison, and disenfranchised them.

The Second Duma ("Left" Duma) convened in February, 1907. Despite the government's attempt to engineer the electoral process, it lost 2/3s of its Cadet "center" and grew in right and left extremes. It had a much higher representation of S.-D.s (10%) and S.R.s (.07%), and approximately the same representation of Trudoviks. The Bolsheviks participated in this Duma. Lenin advised the S.-D.s to go in as "fighters...not petitioners." The plan was to use the Duma as a platform to expose "constitutional illusions" and particularly to educate the Trudoviks that peasant demands could never be met by the Duma or the government.

In Lenin's draft speech of the S.-D.s to the Duma, he answered the objections of the other political parties to the proposal of the S.-D.s and Trudoviks for total confiscation of all the lands (the S.-D.s arguing against compensation and the Trudoviks arguing for nationalization). The Rights and Octobrists were solidly behind Stolypin. Their position was: "Abandon the idea of increasing the area of peasant-owned land....landed farming is better organised, more "cultured" than peasant farming...the peasants cannot get along without the guidance of the landlords" (Vol. 12, "Draft Speech on the Agrarian Question in the Second Duma," pp. 268-69). Lenin made short work of this argument, demonstrating how "landlord culture" was merely feudal exploitation, the "preservation of landlord serf-ownership...usury perpetrated against the impoverished peasant" (p. 273).

While in the First Duma the Cadets had supported the Trudoviks as "democrats," in the Second Duma, their true colors became apparent. The Cadet argument was full of contradictions, which could not disguise the central fact that they feared a democratic revolution. They argued that "the abolition of private property in land would be the greatest injustice, as long as the other forms of property, real and personal estate, still remain" (p. 281). It was a false "everything or nothing" argument, oddly based on the premise of "socialism" whereas the Cadets clearly came out as the party of the "new" capitalists. Their argument against nationalization rested on the revealing premise that "since ours is not a democratic state there is no need for us to present democratic land bills" (p. 285). The Cadets also falsely argued that there was "not sufficient land to help the peasants" (p. 286) based on their calculation of a fair "labour standard." Lenin countered with statistics that showed that there was actually 102 mil.

des. available if <u>all</u> landed estates were confiscated. The Cadets also argued that in the event of a peasant revolution, private landlords should be compensated and that landlord-dominated committees should handle the land distribution. Lenin answered that the peasants themselves would distribute the land and devise their own "labour standards" regardless of what any political party wished.

Lenin summed up the Cadet position: "[They] are opposed to any form of socialised land tenure in any form, they are opposed to alienation without compensation, opposed to local land committees in which the peasants will predominate, opposed to revolution in general and to a peasant agrarian revolution in particular." There hidden agenda was to "betray the peasants to the landlords" (Vol. 13, "Agrarian Programme," p. 378).

The allies of the S.-D.s in the Duma were the Trudoviks. But the differences between their stands had to be carefully exposed. The Trudovik bill revealed the "selfish and individualistic' aspirations of the small farmers." They did argue for the nationalization of the land with, however, the stipulation that the allotments and small private holdings were to be left in the possession of their present owners, provided legislative measures were taken to enure that they "gradually become the property of the whole nation" (p. 271). They argued for "equalitarian principles of land tenure" based on a "subsistence norm," (27) with the proviso that land should not be bought or sold. They asserted that the idea of compensating or not compensating the landlords was a matter of indifference to the Largely under the influence of Narodnik intellectuals, the Trudoviks argued from the old premise of "peasant socialism." They did not see that the democratic revolution would be incomplete if the landlords were compensated, nor that after the peasant (democratic) revolution, the conditions of capitalism would prevail, under which no "equality" of land could be achieved, nor the buying and selling of land prevented. Lenin replied:

As long as the power of capital lasts, no equality between landowners will be possible, and any sort of ban on the purchase and sale of land will be impossible, ridiculous and absurd. Everything, not merely the land, but human labour, the human being himself, conscience, love, science -- everything must inevitably be for sale as long as the power of capital lasts (Vol. 12, "Draft Speech on the Agrarian Question, p. 298).

It was really the simple and non-party peasant delegates who argued closest to the S.-D. position, repudiating all private property and advocating expropriation

without compensation, <u>including peasant land</u>. They were totally unconcerned with "labour standards," feeling only that the land belonged to those who were willing to work it. One peasant delegate put the matter to rest with simple eloquence:

It has been said that alienation without compensation would hit many peasants who had purchased land with their hard-earned money. There are few such peasants, and they have little land, and they will get land in any case when it is distributed (Vol. 13, "Agrarian Programme," p. 284).

Lenin drew this distinction:

The Narodnik intellectuals are very bad socialists and lukewarm democrats. The peasant Trudoviks are far from playing at socialism, which is quite alien to them, but they are honest, sincere, ardent and strong democrats (Vol. 18, "What Goes On Among the Narodniks," p. 556).

The S.-R.s offered their own bill. As expected, they advanced their old ideas of preserving the commune and "socialization of the land." They were, as usual, utopian and grandiose: "This form [i.,e., the village commune] may develop into a world movement, capable of offering a solution to all economic problems" (Vol. 13, "Agrarian Programme," p. 401). Significantly, not one peasant delegate even mentioned the commune. The S.-R. bill received support from only a few of the right-wing peasants. However, Lenin felt that the S.-R. call for nationalization and for "unfencing" the land was progressive, and that under their "quasi-socialist phraseology" of "universal, equalised land tenure," they were really talking about "the creation of free and equal farming on free land" (p. 403). In other words, they thought they were talking about socialism ["socialization"], but they really were talking about capitalism. And, therefore, their confused political rhetoric disguised the objective fact that, economically, they were not that far removed from the S.-D.s.

Despite Lenin's draft speech for the S.-D. delegates, many of the speakers promoted the Menshevik municipalization scheme or, as Lenin called it, "municipal socialism" that was really "municipal capitalism." Lenin called it: "introducing quasi-socialist reformism into the programme of the bourgeois revolution" (pp. 361, 366). "Municipalisation is not a slogan of the peasant revolu-

tion, but an artificial plan of petty-bourgeois reformism added on from outside in a backwater of the revolution" (p. 413). The Mensheviks continued to cry, "You mustn't touch the allotment lands!" Lenin scornfully retorted that even Stolypin realized that the commune and allotment property had to be destroyed, even if he did it in the Black-Hundred way. The Mensheviks' municipalization scheme in the bourgeois revolution was a reactionary measure because it hindered the economically necessary and inevitable process of abolishing medieval property relations. It was playing into the government's schemes, making a "deal" with them, since the division of land into private property now would preserve the obsolete allotment tenure. Lenin stated: "The combination of private ownership of allotment land (i.e., of inferior land owned by inferior proprietors) with public ownership of the remaining (superior) part of the land becomes an absurdity in any at all developed and free capitalist state. It is nothing more or less than agrarian bimetallism" (p. 170).

Significantly, the only other adherents of municipalization were the border nationalities which wanted to secede and the ethnic and religious "national-autonomist regionalists," such as the Cossacks and Muslims. This made it clearer that municipalization was just not a theoretical absurdity and economic illusion, but a dangerous bourgeois, even counter-revolutionary, scheme: "What the 'municipalisation' idea did in fact was only to promote the nationalist tendencies of various groups of the bourgeoisie" (p. 412). Lenin stated: Municipalization or "regionalism" was "a guarantee against revolution...a reactionary slogan, which idealises the medieval isolation of the regions, and dulls the peasantry's consciousness of the need for a centralised agrarian revolution" (p. 336).

Coming from both the left and the right, this *Duma* ran head-to-head with Stolypin on his agrarian reforms, his political terrorism, and his budget. The constituency could not agree on any agrarian program, although led by the new radical forces, it was moving toward obligatory expropriation of private land. Its final stand was merely an irrational and bull-headed opposition to Stolypin: it opposed the breakup of the commune and the establishment of an independent, landowning peasantry.

Lenin was very dissatisfied with the speeches of most of the S-.D. deputies. He characterized the program they presented as one that "slip[ped] into Cadetism, betraying failure to understand the economic and political conditions of the peasant revolution" (Vol. 13, "Agrarian Programme," p. 420). Lenin's previous misgivings were now verified.

The Social-Democrats resolutely championed the cause of the peasant revolution and ex-

plained the class character of the present state power, but they were unable to lead the peasant revolution consistently owing to the erroneous character of the Party's agrarian programme (p. 421).

In what was called the "Coup d'etat of June 3," the tsar not only also dissolved this Duma but enforced the ban on political parties. Quite illegally, the S.-D deputies were arrested for desiring "to increase sedition and to further the disintegration of the state," i.e., preparing for a new revolution. Official "evidence" was purely police fabrication. The S.-D.s were disenfranchised, imprisoned, and some were sent into exile in Siberia. Lenin called this "a turning-point in the history of our revolution, the beginning of a kind of special period or zigzag in its development" (Vol. 15, "On The Straight Road," p. 17).

What Lenin was referring to was not only the reaction itself, but its effects on the S.-D. Party, which struggled with increasing dissension and disintegration. Lenin called the S.-D. representatives in the first two *Dumas* "non-party Social-Democrats rather than real members of the Party" (p. 19). They were mainly the "legalists" or parliamentarians of the "legal" Party organization, rather than the true revolutionaries of the "illegal" Party organization. During the period of the Third *Duma* (1907-1912), the S.-D. Party underwent a crucial clarification and sorting out of various positions within it. Under the conditions of reaction, many intellectuals had just plain fled the Party; others detoured into mysticism, i.e., the "God-builders." It also became apparent that there was a serious liquidationist movement.

There were two main factions among the "non-party" liquidationists: 1) those Mensheviks who wanted to dissolve the illegal organization, and who called upon the workers to give up the struggle against tsarism and establish a "Labor Congress," i.e., a broad labor party which would engage only inlegally-permitted activities; and 2) the ultra-revolutionary Bolsheviks (Ozovists or "recallers" and "Ultimatists" or boycottists) who demanded the recall of the S.-D. Duma deputies and rejected work in trade unions or other mass legal and semi-legal organizations. In addition, there were the pro-Party Mensheviks, i.e., Plekanov, and finally, there were the "Conciliators," i.e., Trotsky and followers who, by maintaining that the anti-party Mensheviks and Bolsheviks could unite, were really another form of liquidationist. At the end of 1911, Plekanov broke with the Bolsheviks, and at the Prague Conference, January, 1912, the liquidationists were expelled from the Party.

The Third Duma (Octobrist Duma) convened in Oc-

tober, 1907. In the meantime, the tsar had violated the constitution again and decreed an even more repressive electoral law which ensured that its composition would support the government (almost 70% of the delegates). It guaranteed the complete supremacy of the reactionary bloc of the landlords and big bourgeoisie in both the Third and Fourth Dumas: the "savage landlords and the robber capitalists" (Vol. 13, "The Third Duma," p. 127). Numerically, the Octobrists controlled this Duma; the composition of workers and peasants, as well as that of the S.-D.s and other radical parties, was greatly reduced. The Cadets had totally lost their liberal coloring, and had formed a bloc with the Octobrists. It was now clear that "what the liberals are actually seeking is not abolition of the privileges...of the old society, but their division between...the landlords and the bourgeoisie" (Vol. 18, "Results of the Elections" p. 505). Not surprisingly, this Duma totally supported the Stolypin Reforms and voted its final package into legislation in 1910.

The Bolsheviks again participated in this Duma, although the S.-R.s boycotted both the Third and Fourth Dumas. It was impossible for the S.D.s to introduce legislative bills, even as propaganda, because of the small number of S.-D.s and their allies, the Trudoviks. At any rate, Lenin stated that because of the obvious co-option by the rightists, "peaceful legislative work..would not only be inadvisable...but a downright betrayal of proletarian interests" (p. 130). Therefore, the S.-D. struggle in the Duma was to be subordinated to the growing struggle outside the Duma. The main aim of Social Democracy was to "strive with all its might for hegemony over the democratic masses and for developing revolutionary energy among them" (p. 128). In light of the violation of electoral rights, Lenin expressed the S.-D.'s need for explaining

to the broad masses the utter failure of the Third Duma to meet the interests and demands of the people, and consequently for wide and vigorous propaganda of the idea of a constituent assembly with full power based on universal, direct, and equal suffrage by secret ballot (p. 130).

As this *Duma* wore on, it became clear that "the revolution has bound up the victory of the landlords' interests with the victory of private property in land in general; the victory of peasant interests with the abolition of private property in land in general, both landlords' and peasants' property" (Vol. 15, "The Agrarian Debates in the Third *Duma*," pp. 306-07). Lenin regarded the peasants to be acting as a "single political tendency," the

differences between the right-wing peasants, the *Trudoviks*, and the simple or non-aligned peasants being only a "distinction of shadings" (p. 303). All called for some form of nationalization of the land.

After the assassination of Stolypin in 1911, the government intensified its repression of the workers and peasants. The anti-semites increased their vicious pogroms. A "filthy cesspool," a "court camarilla" ran the government composed of the "antediluvian predator," The Council of the United Nobility, the "effete, depraved, and degenerate" Black Hundreds, and the evil charlatan, Rasputin. The tsar dissolved this Duma after five years, in June, 1912.

The Fourth Duma (Black-Hundred Duma) convened in November, 1912. It was characterized by blatant and vicious Russian chauvinism, controlled by the Black Hundreds, who were propped up by a coterie of reactionary priests. They even began to turn on their former allies, the big capitalists. The strike movement, which had been escalating since late 1910, again posed a serious threat to the regime, and one might say that the Revolution began to be carried from the streets into the Duma. imperative that the Bolsheviks promote their revolutionary program. The Bolshevik deputies had attempted to form a united S.-D. bloc with the Menshevik deputies, but it was hopeless. Therefore, the two factions formed independent Duma groups: the Bolshevik worker-delegates formed a 6-member group, the Mensheviks had 7 delegates. (28) This marked the irrevocable break between the two factions. The Bolsheviks determined that their main task was to organize the workers, and to use the Duma for this purpose and to propagate socialist class propaganda and their minimum revolutionary program: a democratic republic, the 8-hour day, and confiscation of all landed estates. The Menshevik platform became even more watered down: instead of a democratic republic, they demanded the "sovereignty of the people's representatives"; instead of confiscation of landlords' estates, they asked merely for a "revision of the agrarian legislation." This was totally a Cadet position.

The Bolsheviks and other democrats submitted one "interpellation" after another, protesting against the government's breaking of its own laws, its savage repression of the workers, and the inhumane conditions in the factories. At one point all the S.-D.s and *Trudoviks*, were expelled by armed force for 15 sessions for speaking out, again clearly a legal violation. The "progressives" (29) and Cadets tacitly condoned this. Lenin stated that this finally "killed the remnants of constitutional and legalistic illusions" (Vol. 20, "More About the Political Crisis," p. 275). The government responded to S-.D. protests against

this by shutting down *Pravda* and arresting its editors, as well as arresting all the Central Committee and exiling them to Siberia. The *Duma* deputies then became the center for Bolshevik organizing.

The autocracy made one last-gasp attempt to save the feudal privilege of the landlord nobility. It put forth the final step of its Reforms: a new draft-bill which limited the division of farmsteads. This meant that the small peasant could not sell off or purchase parts of allotments which had to be transferred whole. Favorable loans were promised to purchasers, i.e., the new *kulak* class. What this signified was an attempt to halt the "mobilization" (buying and selling) of small-peasant land, which the autocracy hoped would retard capitalist development, and "create privileged landed properties protected against capitalism for the peasant bourgeoisie" (Vol. 19, "New Land 'Reform' Measures," p. 337).

After 1914, the war took precedence over all other reform matters, including agrarian reform. This *Duma* is noted for its passing of the tsar's war credit bill, with the abstention of only the five Bolshevik delegates who conducted bold agitation against the war and the autocracy. The government once again violated their *Duma* immunity, arrested them on grounds of "sedition," and exiled them to Siberia. The *Duma* officials made a mere formalistic protest. The *Trudoviks* offered some support; the Mensheviks were silent.

While this *Duma* was characterized by bitter factionalism, in the end, however, there was a unity of outrage expressed against the government's inept handling of the war. The *Duma* sent pitiful petitions to the tsar and then to his successor to step down. The tsar disbanded the last *Duma* during the February Revolution. A section of the *Duma* continued to meet illegally and, as its last act, announced the Provisional Revolutionary Government on March 1, 1917.

Part III will conclude in the next issue.

NOTES:

- Vol. 21, "The National Pride of the Great Russians,"
 p. 103.
- (2) The All-Russia Peasant Union was founded during the Revolution of 1905. A revolutionary-democratic organization, it demanded political freedom and a Constituent Assembly. It advocated transference of state and church lands to the peasants without compensation, but agreed to partial compensation to private landlords. Hounded by

police reprisals from its inception, it had ceased to exist by the end of 1906.

- (3) Vol. 9, "Socialism and the Peasantry," p. 315.
- (4) The "cut-off lands" measure was relegated to the program commentary. At this time, it was still seen as a possibility that peasant demands might go no further.
- (5) Provisions regarding agricultural laborers were included in the workers' section of the program.
- (6) Vol. 15, "The Agrarian Question in Russia," p. 141.
- (7) As petty-bourgeois democrats, the *Trudoviks* (trud = labour) advocated abolition of all restrictions based on social-estates and nationality, democratization of the *Zemstvos* and other self-governing bodies, and universal suffrage in *Duma* elections, in addition to their Narodnik agrarian program [See section, "The Fight in the Duma"]. In 1917, they merged with the Popular Socialist Party which supported the petty-bourgeois Provisional government [see note 26]. After the October Revolution, they sided with the counter-revolution.
- (8) Vol. 13, "The Agrarian Programme of Social-Democracy," p. 334...
- (9) Vol. 10, "Report on the Unity Congress of the R.S.L.P.," p. 348.
- (10) For Lenin's distinction between "absolute rent" and "differential rent," see Vol. 13, "The Agrarian Programme of Social-Democracy," pp. 297-99 and 311-13.
- (11) Lenin agreed that "confiscated" should really be changed to seized." "Confiscation" was merely the legal recognition of "seizure." The seizure of land by the peasantry would be recognized, legalized by a national Constituent Assembly which would pass a law transforming "seizure" into "confiscation" (CW, Vol. 10, "Report on the Unity Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.," p. 330).
- (12) At the "Unity Congress," there was actually division in both factions. Some Mensheviks were not for municipalization, while the Bolsheviks were divided along the lines of division of the land and nationalization.
- (13) Vol. 13, "The Agrarian Programme of Social-Democracy," p. 331.

- (15) As in the case of the 1861 Emancipation Reform, the new Land Reform was not a single act but a series of acts over a span of years. In 1899, joint responsibility for taxes in hereditary communes was abolished; in 1903, joint responsibility for both taxes and redemption dues was abolished in repartitional communes. In 1904, corporal punishment by the volost (district) courts was abolished, and a large part of peasant arrears in taxes and redemption dues were written off. 1905 began with gradual, and then complete cancellation of the redemption debt. [The payments were due to end in Jan. 1907, instead of 1932 as originally decreed.] In 1906, Land-Organization Commissions were established, certain restrictions upon the personal rights of the peasants were abolished, and changes were made in the terms of tenure and reallocation of peasant allotment-lands. In 1910 the Stolypin ukaz (decree) of 9 November 1906 was extended to all peasants; in 1911 regulations governing the allocation of lands were further amplified; and in 1912 the jurisdiction of the volost courts was greatly reduced (Robinson, p. 209). In 1913, the government proposed a bill to "limit the fragmentation" of homesteads. The full text of The Agrarian Law of November 9, 1906 can be found in Zenkovsky, pp. 121-28.
- (16) Stolypin was head of the counter-revolutionary government from 1906-11. He had been formerly the Minister of the Interior, a Marshall of the Nobility, and Chairman of the Council of Ministers. He was a huge landowner and responsible for brutal reprisals against the peasants and Jews, organizing Black Hundred gangs and pogroms. He was universally hated -- by the left and the liberals (Cadets), as well as by the extreme right [for his supposed "reforms"] -- and only protected by the royal family. The target of repeated assassination attempts, he was killed by an S.-R. in 1911.
- (17) Lenin had in mind both the breaking up of the Southern plantation system, and the Homestead Act which enabled the settlement of the West. See Vol. 22, "Capitalism and Agriculture in the United States of America." "That country, indeed, is in many respects the model for our bourgeois civilization and is its ideal" (p. 17). "The American Republic has implemented in a capitalist way the 'Narodnik' idea of distributing unoccupied land to all applicants" (p. 21). "America provides the most graphic confirmation of the truth emphasized by Marx in Capital, Vol. III, that capitalism in agriculture does not depend on the form of land ownership or land tenure" (p. 22).

- (18) The Council of the United Nobility was a counterrevolutionary organization of reactionary landlords founded in May, 1906. Its sole purpose was to defend the autocratic regime and the privileges of the nobility. Many of its members sat on the Council of State and held key positions in Black-Hundred organizations. It existed up to the October Revolution.
- (19) It was calculated that approximately 3/5s of the factory workers took part in revolutionary actions, while only about 1/5 to 1/4 of the peasants participated (Vol. 16, "The Lessons of the Revolution," p. 302).
- (20) Robinson, pp. 191-92.
- (21) One of the first Bolshevik decrees after the Revolution banned the manufacture of vodka and icons.
- (22) This does not consider the emigration between 1907 and 1913 of between 40,000 to 200,000/yr. to Eastern Europe, made up mostly of Jewish townspeople escaping from the Pale of Settlement and the increasing pogroms and persecutions of the Black Hundreds.
- (23) i.e., The Union of the Russian People, an extremely reactionary organization of monarchists founded in October, 1905 to fight the revolution. It was a union of reactionary landlords, big houseowners, merchants, police officials, clergymen, middle-class townspeople, kulaks and declassed and criminal elements. It defended the autocracy, semi-feudal landlordism and the privileges of the nobility. Its slogan was: "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationhood." After the dissolution of the Second Duma, the union split off into the League of Michael the Archangel, which openly used the Third Duma for counterrevolutionary purposes and the Union per se which continued anti-Jewish pogroms and terrorist activities against the nationalities and all radicals and democrats. Both organizations were abolished after the February Revolution, but continued counter-revolutionary plots and insurrections against the Soviet government.
- (24) Technically, all political parties were banned, but the government was forced to ignore its own edict in order that the *Duma* could operate. Party delegates had to enter through one of the mandated *curias*.
- (25) The "labour standard" was the old Narodnik idea of "equalitarian" land distribution. It meant the allotment to each peasant household of the maximum amount of land

its members could farm without employing hired labor. It was, however, higher than the standard applied in the 1861 Reform.

- (26) In 1905-06, the S.-R.s split into three groups. The Left, the "Maximalists" were semi-anarchists who advocated immediate socialization of urban industry as well as of the land. They disintegrated. The Center comprised the S.-R.s of the old type with Victor Chernov as head. The Right S.-R.s or "Legalists" ("Toilers' Popular Socialists) were a petty-bourgeois Trudovik group. They stood for partial nationalization of the land on a redemption basis and the distribution of land according to the "labour standard." They favored a bloc with the Cadets. After the February Revolution, they merged with the *Trudovik* representation in the PRG. After the October Revolution, this faction turned counter-revolutionary and disappeared during the Civil War. Also, after the February Revolution, the Center spit into Left and Right S.-R.s. Chernov, a "moderate left" split with the Left S.-R.s and became rightist. The Left S.-R.s entered into a brief coalition with the Bolsheviks, and then they too turned counter-revolutionary.
- (27) The "subsistence standard" was lower than the "labour standard." It was based on the minimum amount of land that would feed the peasant and his family.

- (28) The Bolsheviks lost one member when Malinovsky, the *agent provocateur*, resigned. The Mensheviks had one additional supporter.
- (29) The Progressists were liberal-monarchist party. Lenin called them a cross between the Octobrists and the Cadets.

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Economic Backdrop to the Cuban Revolution

by Sarah

This is the first in a series of articles exploring issues of the Cuban revolution. The hope is to demystify this revolution and to explore its lessons. The first article in this series will explore the economic backdrop to the Cuban revolution.

Marxists hold that class struggle is the motive force of history. Class development is dependent on the level of development of the productive forces. To understand the Cuban revolution one should understand how the level of development of the productive forces affected class development and how the class forces operated in Cuba. The second article will explore how the 26th of July movement came to power during the Cuban revolution.

The Story of Sugar

The sugar industry was the key factor in class development in Cuba. In 1789 the uprising in Haiti destroyed French rule. One result of this revolution was a major sugar shortage and rising prices. The Spanish colonialists stepped into the breech and Cuba became a major sugar producer. In the 1870's beet production in Europe forced sugar prices down. Even then, only large, competitive producers survived. Large capitalist producers dominated the Cuban economy. There was a large influx of American capital into Cuba after the defeat of Spanish colonialism in 1898. By the first quarter of the 20th century, Cuba's economy was dependent on the U.S. sugar quota.

Cheap sugar demanded low production costs. Slavery was the form of achieving cheap labor until the 1880's. With the ending of slavery, most of the former slaves became seasonal laborers under atrocious conditions. The sugar owners also imported cheap labor from the Caribbean, China and Mexico. Low wages, terrible living conditions and chronic unemployment marked sugar agriculture until the time of the 1959 revolution.

Cuba's unique feature was the dominance of sugar in the economy. Because of the particular features of sugar, its ownership by foreign capital, its connection to the world market, there was a high level of class development and polarization. Sugar promoted the development of a large proletariat. By the first quarter of the 20th century, most of the rural population were agricultural laborers. There were very few peasants. By 1907 about 40% of wage workers were farm workers. Sugar also promoted the development of an urban proletariat in processing and

shipping. In 1953 53% of the population was urban. By that time, more people had jobs in urban processing, packing, and shipping of sugar than in its cultivation. The development of the sugar industry also meant monopolization of capital and the disintegration of the rural petty bourgeoisie. Thousands of independent tobacco and sugar growers lost their farms during the economic crisis of the late 1920's and 1930's. Large administrator-operator plantations replaced the rural petty bourgeoisie who became dependant tenants and sharecroppers. As well, at the time of the 1959 revolution there was no traditional landed elite. There was no class of landed patricians like in Mexico or Peru.

Sugar also meant that Cuba had a lopsided agricultural economy. In the 1920's lands reserved for cane monopolized more than one half the tillable surface. Land held in reserve for sugar nearly equaled that planted to cane. Land planted in reserve sugar was a tremendous source of economic waste. Further, sugar barons extended few credits to farmers who produced food. Cuba had potentially rich agriculture and yet imported most of its food.

Sugar defined Cuba's dependence. Each year the U.S. Congress set the sugar quota and this determined the fate of Cuba's economy. A world glut in sugar in the 1930's further compelled Cuba to depend on the American quota. Only large sugar mills survived at that time due to the smaller U.S. quota. Mills were unable to operate at full capacity. The length of time to harvest sugar was cut in half and there were fewer jobs. This did not change in the period leading up to the 1959 revolution. Since the Cuba economy remained dominated by the export of sugar to the U.S., it could not expand production. There was almost no change in productive capacity from 1925 to 1959. The U.S. bought 80% of Cuba's total exports, mainly sugar, between 1902 and 1945. The U.S. bought 69% in 1959. To make any change in the Cuban economy would have been difficult without antagonizing the U.S.

The specific organization of the sugar economy also constrained the development of the productive forces. Organized groups in rural Cuba formed a system of corporatist economy, a system of controlled relations between the various classes and economic groups. This economy perpetuated rural underdevelopment and economic stagnation. It promoted policies that systematically underutilized and misused investments, labor and land.

How did it work? The key economic organizations were the Mill Owners' Association, the Colonos Association and the Sugar Stabilization Institute. An official cartel organized sugar. The 1937 Law of Sugar Coordination set important production restrictions. According to the law, a presidential decree on the eve of the annual harvest set the All-Cuba quota for sugar. This quota depended on the International Sugar Agreement and the U.S. Congress. Based on the 1937 law, each cane grower was entitled to have his share in the total grinding of a specific mill. Based on the All-Cuba quota, each grower had a production quota. Each mill had two export quotas, one for the U.S. and one for the world market. There was a local consumption quota and a quota for special reserves. Each colono received 48% of the value of the cane delivered to the mill. The colono had to fulfill his quota as a condition of permanent tenure. When the market was bad, many high-cost growers nevertheless produced at a loss in order not to lose their quotas and permanent tenancy.

This quota system inhibited production and technical change. It artificially discriminated against low cost growers and discouraged new investment. There was no incentive for technological improvement and no incentive for a trained labor force. There were no incentives to raise yields per hectare. Compared with other sugar producing countries, yields per hectare were low. For example, yields in 1959 were less than half that of Indonesia and Hawaii. Further, this structure of sugar production meant that there were few incentives to cultivate other cash crops, even when the market for sugar was weak. The Cuban economy had a very skewed, dependent character due to its dependence on the U.S. sugar market and its internal structure.

Class Development

At the time of the 1959 revolution there was, however, a development of the Cuban bourgeoisie. There was very little native industry until 1927. At that time, some protective laws were passed, such as tariff laws which encouraged local manufacturers. There was some Cubanization of capital. During the economic crisis of the late 1920's, Cuban businessmen began to purchase sugar farms and mills. The percentage of sugar produced in U.S. mills fell from 66% in 1939 to 36% in 1958. The amount of foreignowned cane land fell from 1.7 million hectares in 1946 to 1.2 million in 1958. During the 30 years from 1927 to 1959, the economy did begin to accumulate capital in branches of production other than sugar. This affected the perception in many sectors of society that something had

to be done about the domination of the economy by sugar.

Cuba's economy was integrated into the structure of large U.S. corporations and U.S. economy as a whole. The features of this meant that the rate of capital expansion was very uneven and the productivity of investments was unusually low. Trade and commerce in consumer goods, especially luxury items and commercial and public construction, took a large share of the total. Still, by the 1950's there was a small but growing number of Cuban businessmen.

The monopolization of the economy by sugar and the class polarization had an effect on class consciousness. The concentration of capital in sugar farming meant workers were hired in large units. Because unemployment was a chronic evil, the sugar question was a constant topic among workers. The Cuban supply always exceeded the American quota, and this was another constant topic. Cuban workers had sense of a strong class consciousness and class loyalty. Part of this was a result of the specific features of the Cuban economy and part how the class struggle developed. The second article of this series will discuss the development of the class consciousness of the Cuban working class at more length.

In the 1950's, the end of the Korean war produced a crisis in sugar. The attempts of the Batista government to deal with this crisis failed. The Agriculture and Industrial Development Bank (BANFAIC) was organized in 1951 to provide cheap credit to farmers and new industries. Until then, low cost credits were available only to producers for export. From 1953-56 BANFAIC's portfolio increased from 5 to over 14 million dollars. Combined rural and public credit association loans were nearly 7 million dollars in 1952. In 1956 they were nearly 212 million dollars. This raised the expectations of the rural masses. The Batista government clearly had hopes that abundant cheap credit would stimulate the rural economy.

However, the program was a failure. Export diversification did not happen. In 1958 sugar still made up 80% of total export sales. The development of the internal market continued to be linked to the ups and downs of sugar. Food imports remained roughly the same between 1952-58 although food imports did fall as a percentage of total imports. A large portion of Cuba's cultivated land continued to be held in reserve in case of changes in the U.S. sugar quota. The wasteful quota system inhibited diversification. Batista's policies failed to come to grips with the question of land reform, rural monopoly in its varied forms, and political relations with the U.S. Further, under Batista, the politics on the island became even more corrupt and the regime was extremely repressive.

Although everyone realized that the Cuban economy's

dependence on the United States was unhealthy, Batista's policies were actually intended to increase Cuba's dependence on U.S. imperialism and to push agriculture to a deeper dependence on sugar. Meanwhile the consumer sector of the Cuban economy was geared toward luxury goods for the wealthy, drawing off a surplus that should have been reinvested in the local economy

About to Explode

On the eve of the 1959 revolution, Cuba was full of contradictions. Compared to the rest of Latin America. Cuba was a highly developed capitalist country, but it was also a dependant one. Cuba was the most heavily capitalized of the countries of Latin America on a per capita basis. On some levels, Cuba was one of most prosperous countries in Latin America. Cuba ranked second in gold reserves and foreign trade. Only Mexico, Brazil and Chile outranked Cuba in the value of industrial production. It had modern railways and ports. Over two thirds of the population could read and write. Only the European countries of South America (such as Argentina, Chile) surpassed this. Despite the low level of skill in the agricultural (sugar) labor force, one in five laborers was skilled. Cuba ranked third in the number of physicians. Cubans had more cars, TV's, and appliances per capita than any other Latin American country. The percentage of workers in organized labor was one of the largest in the world. Wages and salaries in some branches of production approached Western Europe and Canadian standards. Cuba was also a hell. Most of the population was extremely

poor. The sugar economy was backward. The government was highly corrupt and extremely repressive.

One could describe the Cuban economy in 1959 as at a high level of stagnation. Since the 1920's, many circles recognized this. After the depression in 1929, critics decided to transform this structure. However, the defeat of the 1933 revolt and its aftereffects did not change Cuba's dependent and lopsided economy. Cuba's almost complete reliance on industrialized nations, especially the U.S., was left intact.

There was a widespread recognition that something had to be done about the Cuban economy and that mild reforms were insufficient. The Great Depression, the war and postwar speculative booms and busts in sugar, and the economic stagnation of the 1950's revealed to everyone that development and prosperity required that the sugar economy must undergo basic structural changes. Nearly everyone wanted to move off dead center. However, the interplay of political forces rendered this impossible.

Thus, in 1959 Cuba was ripe for a revolution. By 1959, many sectors of society realized that something had to be done about the domination of king sugar. Most sectors of Cuban society had a sense that the Cuban economy and the Cuban government could not go on in the same old way. Tinkering with the economy had been tried and had failed. Only profound changes would resolve Cuba's crisis. The stage, thus, was set for the Cuban Revolution.

Future articles in this series will describe the features of the Cuban revolution and discuss its development.

Debates, Continued from page 41

[Earl writing to Neil]

In a message dated 97-06-25, Neil writes:

<< But you were wrong to demand "action from local presidents' etc. These AFL forces are Benedict Arnolds in the workers fights against capital. This does not 'expose" the fakirs as you think but only gives them a "left' cover and sows illusions in their more militant posturing section.

Neil,

I'm glad that we agree on so much and look forward to hearing more news of L.A. and your work there.

Regarding our disagreement: Bringing our fellow workers together around what needs to be done is what drives demanding those "action(s) from local presidents". This way, the first step is being part of figuring out what's

going on and what needs to be done. The second step is organizing support for that — and one part of that is demanding that our elected officers carry out what we, the members, want and need. Then, if those officers do not carry out what we've already decided we need, we have every right to take the leadership. If you /anyone doesn't put them to that public, political test, then how can we hope to see who's who and what's what? What's your alternative, Neil? And please give an example, ok?

Yes, in Detroit it was extraordinarily difficult, maybe impossible, but how could a fighting minority hope to win the support of the majority of strikers without putting their strategy forward and gathering support for it and insisting that the leaders do it? Bypass the leaders as if the majority had already abandoned their faith or hopes in those leaders who they'd elected? I don't see the alternative.

Best wishes, Earl

Introducing the Working Peoples' Action and Education Network

By Jack Hill

The following article introduces the Working Peoples' Action and Education Network. Chicago Workers' Voice does not endorse this organization although two of its supporters participate in it. The views in this article represent those of the author.

The Working People's Action and Education Network is a new organization formed by some of the activists who had been involved in the Staley solidarity work in the Chicago area and by other activists in working class struggles, mainly in the Midwest. Our goal, in general terms, is to develop an organization to help push forward the various practical fights of the working class. We want an organization which is not restricted by what is acceptable to the labor bureaucrats or other political forces that usually limit the working class struggle. We want an organization which can unite with activists and militants who came up in particular struggles. My conception of the organization has always been of a coalition of militant activists which could do some useful work in building a unified movement of the working class, independent of the trade union hacks and politicians. Since WPAEN is a loose organization with people of varying views, not everybody in the organization would formulate its goals the same way.

A difficult situation faces political activists who want to be active in the political, economic and social struggles of the working class in this country, but who recognize the need to oppose and struggle against the strangulation of these struggles by the labor bureaucrats and the posturing "left wing" of the Democratic Party. The coalitions which are built to participate in particular struggles invariably refuse to deal with such issues. In recent years workers have lost a number of important fights such as the Staley struggle, the Detroit newspaper workers, the Firestone workers and Caterpillar. In the Staley and the Detroit struggles coalitions of activists were built to support these struggles. Activists outside of the Firestone workers and Caterpillar workers also participated in supporting those struggles. All of these struggles were hamstrung by the labor aristocracy. In all of them the workers directly involved and the activists who supported these workers could not bring themselves to directly confront and oppose this sabotage. In many cases they tried to work around the obstacles, but they were not willing to get into direct and open conflict with the sold out trade union officials.

WPAEN is one attempt to build an organization willing to do this.

A lot of the impetus for this organization came out of our experience in the Chicago Staley Workers' Solidarity Committee. We liked the way the committee was able to bring together activists from a variety of political backgrounds into very sustained and useful practical work in support of that struggle. We didn't like the fact that the majority on the committee was always opposed to taking a sharp stand against local or national trade union leadership when these leaders did things which harmed the struggle. In particular in the Staley committee we were unable to go very far in criticizing the mistakes or reluctance to move the struggle forward on the part of the leadership of the Staley local. The Staley committee considered itself de facto in opposition to the national leadership of the UPIU which was trying to strangle the Staley struggle behind the scenes. But even there the Staley committee did not want to attack publicly the UPIU leadership until the Staley workers themselves did it which, unfortunately, was after the struggle had been smashed. (Issue no. 10 of the CWVTJ has two articles on the Staley struggle for those who want more information.)

A large section of the political and trade union activists in this country take it as a given that you cannot, under almost any circumstances, directly oppose the official leadership of local or national trade union bodies. They are willing sometimes to work around these leaders and take up different policies and tactics. They are willing to discuss among other activists the shortcomings or worse of these leaders. But they are not willing to come right out and wage an open political battle with these leaders, even when these leaders are undermining particular struggles. These activists believe, as far as I can make out, that you are weakening the union if you directly attack its official leaders, or, at least, they seem to think that rank and file workers may think you are attacking the union itself if you attack the leaders.

Further experience leading up to forming this organization came through a caucus that a number of us participated in during the months before the Labor Party founding convention in June of 1996. This caucus waged a fight inside the Chicago chapter of LPA for a more militant program for the Labor Party and for the Labor Party to run candidates in the upcoming elections against the Democratic Party. (I thought it was useful to oppose the right

wing social democrats who control the Labor Party, although I am not enthusiastic about running candidates in elections. See my article on the Labor Party in issue no. 11 of the CWVTJ.) We consistently lost these battles in Chicago and nationally. After the Labor Party convention some of the activists in this caucus still wanted to make the major focus of their work the fight inside the Labor Party. Others of us felt that, while it might not be wrong to wage some fight inside the Labor Party, we really needed to build an organization independent from the Labor Party as well as independent of the Democratic Party and the trade union leadership, if we wanted to contribute to building a serious working class movement in this country. So the two groups from this caucus went their separate ways.

Thus a major point of practical unity for those of us who have gone on to form WPAEN is that we agree on the need to take a public stand against trade union leaders who are undermining particular struggles or otherwise hurting the working class movement. We consider it important to oppose the influence of the Democratic Party over the working class. The politicians who try to pose as friends of the workers and the poor and oppressed must be opposed and exposed. We want to build an independent and militant working class movement. The Labor Party is not doing this.

We who wanted a new organization contacted other activists who had similar views and started to meet in the fall of 1996. We spent months working on general statements of political and economic program and of tactics and strategy. This process did enable us to get to know each others' political viewpoints better. The compromise documents have many good points. [See pp. 32-34 for two of these documents.] They take a strong stand against all the types of discrimination and division which plague the working class in this country. They call for mass struggle to achieve such partial goals as jobs for all with a living wage, public housing, universal, free health care, and equal rights for immigrants. They say, "Make the Rich Pay!" And they point out how the taxes on the rich have been steadily going down. The program does not call for socialist revolution, nor does it explicitly call for socialism. I don't myself consider such calls necessary for the type of organization WPAEN is trying to be. In my opinion the organization will become better known by the practical struggles it takes up and how it intervenes in them, than by its theoretical stands on paper. If WPAEN can help to build independence from and opposition to the trade union bureaucracy and the posturing Democratic Party politicians in building the practical movement of the working class, it will serve an important role.

The activists who participate in WPAEN come from

a variety of backgrounds. Some of us come from various trends which consider themselves Marxist, there are other activists who have not identified themselves with any ideological trends, there are activists who got their political experience in the Staley struggle, and we are now getting some new people interested in the struggle against welfare "reform".

The first campaign we decided to take up was on this issue. The attack was serious, it affected large numbers of people, it raised important political issues of uniting the various sections of the working class, and there seems to be some level of mass motion against the welfare cuts. Some of us went to public hearings in February and March on the proposed new rules for TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, the new program replacing AFDC and other welfare programs) for Illinois to learn and to see what people were saying. We organized a public meeting in April to discuss how to build the fight. Out of the public meeting we had enough people interested to organize a demonstration against the welfare cuts which we held at the State of Illinois building in May. The flyer for this demonstration is reprinted here on pp. 30-31.

A number of WPAEN members went to Detroit for the AFL-CIO sponsored march in support of the newspaper workers. WPAEN put out a flyer attacking the sabotage of that struggle by the trade union leadership. The final version of the flyer is pretty strong and specific about what was done and not done by the trade union leadership. This flyer is also reprinted here (pp. 35-36).

The Chicago Workers' Voice put out its own flyer for this action (see pp. 37-38). We weren't sure how the final version of the WPAEN flyer would turn out but regardless of what WPAEN did, we had some particular points we wanted to raise. For example, we are uncomfortable simply asserting that the strike could have been won. Generally we prefer to say that the tactics of the trade union leadership were wrong and stifled the struggle. We would have preferred different tactics, however, it's hard to guarantee that workers will win even if they give it the best fight possible. Our enemy is very strong, and our movement is not nearly as strong as it needs to be. There are strong objective reasons why workers' struggles generally are not able to break through the stifling misleadership of the trade union bureaucracy.

The WPAEN is still in formation. Ithink it is a hopeful attempt to develop some practical intervention in working class struggles. Many of the activists in WPAEN are experienced, dedicated and not defenders of any section of the trade union bureaucracy. We have united on a basis of the necessity to oppose and expose those who sabotage and undermine the working class struggle.

At the same time I can not say for sure how this organization will shake out. Not all the membership is equally firm in opposing the labor bureaucrats and the posturing politicians. Some members have soft spots in their hearts for one or another bureaucrat. Some members don't want to use terms such as "capitalist" in our public propaganda. Others in WPAEN are not interested in pushing for the use of such terms even though they use such terms themselves. In fact WPAEN is still straddling two positions — is it a socialist organization at least broadly dedicated to the Marxist principles of socialist revolution or is it a broader organization of all who want to fight to advance the practical immediate of the working

class? Personally I am more interested in building unity on the basis of opposing the labor bureaucrats and the politicians who posture as friends of labor, the minorities and the poor, than I am in building unity on the basis of a general call for socialism at this time.

Another problem we are still working out is how to work with other organizations which are taking up the same fights as we are. One small organization based mainly in one city is not going to be able to change the whole course of the working class movement in the U.S. However, at this point I think it is worth the effort to build it

For your reference, we have included on the following pages:

A comment by Jake

A welfare rights leaflet by WPAEN

Two programatic statements from WPAEN

WPAEN's leaflet on the Detroit News Strike and rally

CWV's leaflet on the Detroit News Strike

Message threads from the internet regarding the Detroit Strike, the Labor Party, and trade union leaders/misleaders.

A comment by Jake, *Chicago Workers* Voice

Dear Jack,

I don't share your enthusiasm for WPAEN. Though I wish them the best of luck and great success in fighting the bourgeoisie, I don't expect much from this formation. From what I have seen so far, they are very similar to other left social-democratic coalitions (or "centrist" organizations) that have come and gone in Chicago through the last 15 years.

I say this not to condemn WPAEN but for the sake of revolutionary science and realistic expectations. In the present political climate WPAEN may look very progressive and very oppositional compared to other existing activist organizations, and they are. But there are some forces within WPAEN that still hold illusions in some segements or elements of the labor bureaucracy. Perhaps such illusions will be shed if mass motion develops and WPAEN stays close to it. I hope so. But many of the

activists in WPAEN have been around for a long time and have held these same views all the while.

While I don't fault them for trying, I do feel that their politics are similar to the best of the militant trade unionists that we seen in this period. The problem is that in order to advance, our class must go beyond trade union militancy to class struggle. I can't see this class struggle developing without revolutionary consciousness and revolutionary organization to lead it.

Perhaps WPAEN will grow and evolve in that direction. Certainly, Marxist-Leninist activists that participate in it should work for revolutionary class consciousness and socialism. However considering that WPAEN is not revolutionary, does not clearly see the class basis for the labor bureaucrats treachery and the limitations of trade union militancy (pretty hard to do that without Marxism) and can not agree to advocate socialism, I remain skeptical.

-- Best Regards, Jake, CWV



Fight the Welfare Cuts!

These cuts are aimed at us all!

Join the fight for:

Living-Wage Jobs!

Affordable Housing!

Healthcare & Childcare For All!

Equal Pay, Benefits & Civil Rights For ALL Immigrants!

4 pm. Friday, May 23rd State of IL Bldg. Randolph & Clark

Make Your Voice Heard Reach Out to Working Pauple Downtown Send the Governor a Message- before it's too late

The politicians all cry "Budget Cuts". We say:

Make the Rich Pay!

Working people create all the wealth, but the rich have all the money. (See the other side for facts.)



The Facts About the Welfare Reform

In Illinois, about 60 thousand people will have their food stamps completely cut off by the end of this year

Over 22 thousand elderly and disabled legal immigrants will lose their SSI benefits in Illinois.

The new law will force tens of thousands to work for welfare — that means some of us will have to work below minimum wage with no workers' rights ... in competition with our fellow workers. That's slave labor for the bosses, unemployment and starvation wages for us.

Full-time work at minimum wage is already far below the official poverty rate.

There are already 6 people applying for every job at \$6 an hour.

The Welfare Reform provides no money to create new jobs.

The new law provides no additional funding for childcare, although parents can't go to work without it.

The Welfare Cuts Attack All Working People

Make the Rich Pay!

In the U.S., the richest 10 percent of the population own ...
70% of the total wealth
83% of all financial assets
90% of all corporate and business assets

A corporate boss in the U S eams 85 times more than the average worker, and he owns 1000 times more wealth ... but he pays lower tax rates!

During the 1950's, corporate profits were taxed at a rate of 46% and the maximum income tax rate for the richest individuals was 70% ... now they're paying less than half these rates!

If we made them pay what they were paying before, it would provide at least \$500 billion. That money could pay for

Jobs for All at a Living Wage Affordable Housing Healthcare and Childcare for All Free Higher Education

Working People's Action and Education Network

Working People's Action and Education Network

Box 578427, Chicago IL 60657-8427 email: red1pearl@sol.com

We propose this Program to bring together different parts of the working class under the same roofto join our separate fights into one.

Layoffs. Welfare cuts. Poverty wages. Police brutality. Union-busting. Immigrant-bashing. Poor schools. 12-hr. days. Unsafe workplaces. Inadequate childcare. Declining healthcare. Discrimination. Pollution. Privatizing public services.

The corporate class is attacking the working class while making record profits. Democrats and Republicans only differ over how to help corporate greed. The leaders of most unions, civil rights groups and community organizations talk the talk but they don't walk the walk. The corporate class won't give us anything for free. Working class people have to fight to provide for our needs and get a better life for our kids. Small groups of isolated workers can't do this alone against such powerful enemies. We have to join forces in our fight for justice—with a good program and strategy and tactics to win.

A common program can be a basis for working-class unity - on the job and in our communities - to win what we <u>all</u> need. Without a common program to unify us, we'll remain isolated, against the united power of the corporate enemy. With such a common program, we'll begin to build the solidarity that can turn our potential into real power.

Program - what we fight for now

- 1. EVERYONE OUT OF POVERTY!

 JOBS WITH A LIVING WAGE FOR ALL WHO CAN WORK!

 A DECENT INCOME FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T!
 - * SHORTER WORK DAY WITH NO LOSS IN PAY. Make the bosses pay. In the '30s, working people in the U.S. won the shorter work day with no loss in pay. This made the bosses hire more workers to get the same work done. In the '80s, workers in Germany won the 35 hour week with the same results. It has been done, and we can do it.
 - * FOR A LIVABLE MINIMUM WAGE AND A GUARANTEED ANNUAL INCOME. Clinton and the Republicans agreed to a \$5.25 minimum wage. Big deal. Who can live on \$200 a week? Wouldn't all young people and adults living on less than \$10 an hour support the fight for a decent minimum wage? Shouldn't people raising their kids at home, the disabled and retired have a livable income?
 - * PUBLIC WORKS FOR HUMAN NEEDS, NOT CORPORATE WELFARE. The government subsidizes big business every day while they cut programs for us. Don't millions of us need services like day care centers, health clinics and women's shelters? Quality, affordable housing and mass transit? Couldn't we organize a fight for public works with union wages and apprenticeships?
 - * BUILD SOLIDARITY! FIGHT DISCRIMINATION! AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL! Jobs and services are cut by greedy corporations and politicians, not people fighting discrimination. Who should we blame for our problems? Accepting discrimination divides and weakens our fight for a better life. We need solidarity and affirmative action to win JOBS FOR ALL AT A LIVING WAGE!

7/28/97

A DECENT LIFE FOR ALL!

- 2. QUALITY PUBLIC EDUCATION! Working class and poor children deserve an education equal to the best, including vocational schools and college. The minimum starting point is equal funding for all schools.
- 3. UNIVERSAL CHILD CARE. Pre-school age children need high-quality attention to grow into their full potential. Working people must have high-quality, corporate-funded workplace daycare and government-subsidized neighborhood childcare centers.
- 4. GUARANTEED HEALTH CARE. Take all profits out of health care. Our health must not be a hostage to their money-making. Ending for-profit health insurance alone will pay for 30 million working people now without coverage. Quality health care for all. Government-funded. Run for our well-being by patients, health care workers and professionals, our unions and community groups.
- 5. DEFEND OUR SAFETY- AT WORK AND WHERE WE LIVE!. Corporate profits go up when they spend less on workers' safety and health protections. Corporate criminals injure and kill us on the job. They poison our air, water and environment. To help them, their politicians cut health and safety standards and enforcement budgets for government agencies like the EPA and OSHA. Corporate criminals get a slap on the wrist while workers suffer and pay the real price. Couldn't we organize to enforce safety standards based on our health needs?
- 6. DEFEND OUR JOBS, WAGES AND CONDITIONS. JOB SECURITY AGAINST LAYOFFS. Employers are always looking for ways to use new technology. They up their profits and wipe out our jobs. They replace us with machines and leave most of us with less-skilled, lower-paying jobs. Let's make the employers pay. We need job retraining with full wages for laid-off workers. When the bosses don't pay up, we say: Stop the closings! Occupy the workplace! Fight for laws that guarantee wages, benefits and training!
- 7. REPEAL ALL ANTI-WORKER LAWS. End restrictions on our right to organize strong, democratic unions, like the Taft-Hartley Act. Repeal laws that benefit the multinational corporations at the expense of working people in all countries, like NAFTA and GATT. End criminalization of immigrants; equal wages, benefits and civil rights for all immigrants. Fight racist treatment by cops, courts and laws. Oppose slave-labor prison industries.

CAN WE AFFORD THESE THINGS? ABSOLUTELY! HOW? MAKE THE RICH PAY!

8. RETURN CORPORATE AND PERSONAL TAXES TO 1950 LEVELS. This will bring in an extra \$250 Billion a year from the top 500 corporations and the richest 5%. That's about \$700 Million a day! In 1950, they find 2/3 and we paid 1/3 of the taxes with far fewer unemployed! Now they pay 1/3 and we pay 2/3! We can turn this around. How? Massive workers' struggles won these gains in the 1930s and '40s. And that's what it'll take today

9. CUT CORPORATE WELFARE HERE AND AROUND THE WORLD!

- * In the U.S., the government spends \$50 Billion in corporate giveaways and special breaks to the rich
- * Outside the U.S., the government spends another \$25 Billion to support oppressive governments to keep workers' labor cheap. This includes countries like Mexico, Guatemala, South Korea and the Philippines with U.S. military bases, training, loans, aid and CIA drug-running and subversion. Cut all U.S. aid to corporate runaway shops.
- 10. WORKING CLASS POWER. The corporate class has been able to take away so much because they control the economy and the government too. All major parties put corporate greed first. We need our own organizations to fight for working peoples' needs and political power. If we don't, the rich will only use the government to keep attacking us. With political power, we can keep our gains and build for our future.

Working People's Action and Education Network

Box 578427, Chicago IL 60657-8427 email: red1peart@aol.com

WHERE WE STAND: CREATING UNITY AND WORKING-CLASS POWER

Ever since the early '70s, the corporate class has made life harder for most working class people here in the U.S. and around the world. They're out to increase profits and drive us down. Growing hardships and fears breed frustration and anger. We can direct our anger against each other or we can organize to fight the common corporate enemy. But many divisions hinder our ability to defend ourselves and the people we love. The following principles can help working-class people discover our common aspirations for a better life and mobilize our power to win them:

- 1. For Working-Class Fightback Not Labor-Management Cooperation. Management everywhere tells us that we win when they win. We say that working people and the corporate class have no basic interests in common. The 1980's showed this: the more we gave, the more they took. They fire workers while making record profits. No more union-management deals at our expense! Organize to take back our unions! Let's work as a team for <u>our</u> needs, not for corporate greed. Not at work; not in our communities. Not in this country, and not for their New World Order.
- 2. For Global Working-Class Cooperation Not Immigrant-Bashing and Nationalistic Hatred. Their corporate class is multinational; so is our working class. They compete with each other to make money, but work together to keep us down and divided. Nationalist hatred and immigrant-scapegoating divide our forces. Their New World Order means a race to the top for them; it means a race to the bottom for us. Cross-border practical solidarity and defending immigrants' needs can be our tools. From this defensive fight, we can create the basis for a better future. We stand for a new global economy run democratically by and for working people.
- 3. For Racial Equality Against Racist Discrimination. The corporate class remains profoundly racist, despite opening a few doors for minorities in the middle class. Racism is the everyday reality for millions of us from corporate discrimination to unequal schools and public services and police brutality on our streets. Corporate politicians and the media portray Black people, especially poor men, as a social danger while they're building prisons and police-state measures aimed at us all. They blame African-Americans and immigrants for taking jobs and education from whites. But the real enemy of all working people is the class that lays off millions of us, moves our jobs to low-pay locations, busts our unions, and injures and kills workers on the job in their race for profits. They play divide and rule. We must all stand up to these racist attacks. "An Injury to One is An Injury to All."
- 4. For Women's Equality Against Sexual Harassment and Abuse. The corporate class cannot provide a decent life for working-class and poor women. Their capitalist system makes women and children increasingly synonymous with poverty. Conservatives want to take away women's hard-won gains just as the corporate class undermines gains workers have won in the past. All workers should promote women's needs, including: full equality on the job, freedom from discrimination, sexual harassment, and abuse; protection against domestic violence, the ability to raise kids with good childcare, schools, and healthcare; as well as birth control and the right to choose free, safe abortions
- 5. For Gay and Lesbian Equality Against Homophobia. The ever-growing attack on gay and lesbian rights is a key part of the corporate assault on workers and our movements for equality and civil rights. To control our lives, many states even had laws regulating sex between married heterosexual partners. Shouldn't we all be entitled to express our sexuality with consenting peers? Let's fight all discrimination based on sexual orientation.
- 6. For Working People's Political Power Against Corporate Greed. We live under a corporate dictatorship with a democratic appearance. The richest 2% of the U.S. population control 90% of corporate wealth. They fund and control both the Democrats and Republicans. The police and military protect corporate property and profits first not us, the working-class majority. We need political power to fulfill our human aspirations. Towards this end, we need a working-class political party independent of the rich that we control, that is our voice, that unifies us behind a program of our demands, that we use to fight for our common needs and working-class power in society.

The Strike Is Over, But The Fight Goes On!

Leaflet by Working People's Action and Education Network distributed at the June 21, 1997 March and Rally supporting the newspaper strike in Detroit.

We're all in Detroit today to honor the strikers and help them win back their jobs and a contract. The strikers could have won, but the bitter fact is that the local and International union leaders turned victory into defeat: they opposed the strikers' calls to shut down production, organize a general strike, and a national march in Detroit. Instead they pushed the losing boycott and delayed this March until long after they had ordered the strikers back. Now, we're all faced with the job of helping them under very tough circumstances.

This loss in Detroit, our unions' stronghold, will hurt us all as employers everywhere watch and learn. We, as workers, must look and learn too. Only then can we go forward. We are a group of working people, activists who mainly came together around the Staley fight. This flier is to help figure out how to beat corporate greed.

The Strike Could Have Won

After thousands of strikers and other workers shut down the only production plant around Labor Day 1995, Gannett and Knight-Ridder ran to their judges and got an injunction. The Metro Newspaper Council union presidents, backed up by the internationals, refused to keep production shut down. Instead, they promoted boycotts and sticking it out one day longer. Up against megacorporations with deep pockets, with owners who'd planned this union-busting for years, that boycott strategy was DOA, even though it did cost the paper owners maybe \$250 million in losses. For the owners, this was an investment in future profits. For our side, it was a loser. Boycotts and customer campaigns were no substitute for what the strikers demanded: Shut It Down!

Within a month of the injunction and the union leaders' backing down, both strike activist groups (the AFL-sponsored Labor/Community/Religious Coalition and the strikers' Unity-Victory Caucus) called for:

- 1. Mass picketing to win the strike
- 2. A general strike in Detroit.
- 3. A National Labor Solidarity March

A mass meeting of strikers from all unions, called by the Council, voted for mass picketing and defying the judge. How did the union presidents respond? They rejected the Coalitions "recommendation", baited the Unity-Victory Caucus as a "splinter group", and said that the strikers' meeting, which they'd called, had no authority over them as local union presidents. Either the strikers would take and expand the fight or the "Lords of Labor" would choke the fight to death.

Our greatest weakness? No leaders came forward to implement the strikers' vote. This would have meant:

- 1. Organize workers to demand action from the local presidents and International unions. To expose and replace those who wouldn't do what needed to be done.
- 2. A strike leadership elected to run the strike on their strategy, not giving up the fight to shut production down.
- 3. Build strong ties with the mainly Black Detroit working class community. The mainly white workforce reflected the papers' racist hiring practices. The companies hired mainly Black scabs to promote division. To overcome this division and create the massive, militant solidarity needed to shut down production, the strikers had to stand shoulder to shoulder with Black Detroit against corporate and police racism: To fight for hiring more Black workers at the papers. To publicly denounce and march against the police killers of Malice Green.
- 4. Win workers and local unions to shut offall services to the papers' production and offices. Phone, electric, mail.

Tough? Very tough, but we need new politics to win! From that time forward, the strikers' courageous stand weakened, day after day. Despite strikers' bold actions and great persistence, the union leaders-"progressives" like Carey and Sweeney and Old Guard like Hoffa and Bahr all choked off the fight. For example:

- *Sweeney/Trumpka/Chavez refused the strikers' call for a Solidarity March on Labor Day '96. Instead, they got arrested in a token sit-in. Why? They didn't want to put candidate Clinton on the spot. They, like most of our union leaders, refuse to organize a separate party for the working class. Instead, they sacrificed the strikers for their deals at the top.
- * The striking Teamsters were 1,400 of the 2,000 strikers. Their local IBT presidents are part of the Hoffa forces; they strongly opposed mass picketing.
- * Strong pressure generated by the strikers for a National AFL-CIO Solidarity March forced the union

leaders' hands. The New Faces joined the Old Guard and ordered the return to work. Then, and only then, did they join hands to call this March.

Even so.

This March Shows What Could Have Been Done to Win.

This shows that thousands of workers will come out in solidarity. Many people here today will go home and help the locked out brothers and sisters. But, if we're to help,

We need a fighting workers' movement. When we take actions against these companies at home, let's expose the real role of the union leaders to our fellow activists. Sweeney brags that ordering the strikers back is a "bold, new strategy". ?!? New? Bold? Duh.

"The 10J Injunction will win the day."

Our union leaders hope that the NLRB will avert a total defeat by winning a "10J" injunction to return the strikers to the jobs remaining. What is the truth? Even if the NLRB decides to pursue the 10J, it has to go to Federal Court, which it hasn't done as of today (6/19/97). And even if the judge issues it, the companies can appeal that decision. This could take 5 years. And even if the NLRB does get the injunction, it still leaves out at least 1/3 of the workers, including the 181 fired for picket line duty and the 600 already outsourced.

They turn victory into defeat. Why? Was this a fluke? Or is this behavior typical of our union leadership? And, if it is, what accounts for it? And what can we do to turn this around? Well, take a look at PATCO, P-9 Hormel, the rail workers, Staley, Caterpillar and Bridgestone-Firestone. Did our Internationals mobilize our power and fight? Even with good local leadership in some cases, the internationals caved in or sabotaged these fights. But why would they? Don't they at least want our dues?

Ever since the start of the Cold War against communism, militant fighters and radicals were hounded out or isolated in our unions. The conservative leaders got a corporate lifestyle and social acceptance by the 'top dogs' in return for keeping us, the working class, in the deal.

That meant getting better pay and benefits for most workers in exchange for giving the companies control over production. When workers' fought the companies over production issues, the union leaders acted smother that fight. Look at auto. That was the tradeoff behind the "American Dream". Union leaders functioned as brokers, making deals and controlling us. Not as leaders.

That deal "worked" up to the '70s when the post-WW2 deal broke down. Profit rates were down. Workers' militancy was up. U.S. corporations now had competition. The corporate answer? Smash the new militancy. Close plants. Break strikes with scabs. Step up competitive "whipsawing" between workers here and overseas. Speed up production. Introduce union-management "teams" to use our brains against us.

Ever since then, the conservatives running our unions haven't delivered better pay and benefits with their deals. Instead, they used the carrot and the whip to get workers to accept speed-up, longer hours, worse conditions, downsizing, outsourcing, etc. The union leaders became mainly the enforcers- cops for the bosses.

What's in it for them? They make good money, get acceptance by the big shots, live and think like corporate 'shirts', not workers facing one-sided class war.

Corporate Profits or Workers Needs?

Most union leaders and many workers accept the idea that corporations' profit needs must come first. They don't see any alternative to helping the company make profits. They can't imagine us, the working class, winning the power and running society for our benefit, so they make their peace with the dictators of corporate greed and their politicians.

They try to make the losses not so bad, the cuts not so painful. But they end up trying to strangle our fights, like Detroit. They know that working class struggle like Detroit will force them to confront injunctions and jail.. They don't want to risk the union treasuries, their salaries, their freedom. But isn't that exactly what's needed to mobilize our power, as a class? Isn't that exactly what it cost even to build our unions?

Workers who want to fight and win must face these issues. The working class needs such workers, activists and groups. We need people who've seen and cut those mental chains. Until we reject them, we're trapped. Until we put working class needs, power, and the fight for justice first, we can't see and organize the working class strength that's out there. Like it was in Detroit.

Unless and until we get that straight, we'll keep depending on the same set (or "New Faces but the same old AFL") to come and bail us out. Did they win Detroit?

Most workers have a hard time believing that the union leaders would rather let us get beat and lose our dues than lead a fight. But isn't that exactly what the last 25 years shows? The "let's make a deal" days are gone. Let's bury them with a new, fighting workers' movement.

The Detroit newspaper strike: Heroism, Sacrifice and Betrayal!

From the start of the strike, July 13, 1995, the Detroit newspaper workers knew they were in for a very tough fight. Other newspaper worker struggles in recent years have not turned out well for workers. Gannett and Knight-Ridder have a lot of financial resources and a hard-nosed attitude against workers. But the newspaper workers felt they had no alternative. The concessions being demanded by the companies were just too much to swallow.

The rank and file workers could see that they were in for a very tough fight, one that could easily cost them their jobs. Scabs were in the plants. Management told the strikers to cross the picket lines or be fired. So it is not surprising that workers were ready to take serious measures. On Labor Day weekend and the following weekend in 1995 thousands of rank and file workers (newspaper strikers and auto workers and rank and file workers from many industries) blocked the plant gates. They did not settle for the symbolic passive resistance planned by their so-called leaders. They repelled the police charges and stopped the Sunday papers. They did this in spite of the plans of the union leadership to have just a symbolic protest and let the scab paper get out.

These struggles at the plant gates were the high point of the strike. Unfortunately the strikers were not able to keep up this level of struggle when their leaders told them to give it up. When the newspaper owners got an injunction, the union misleaders told the workers they had to quit blocking the gates. Ever since then the strike has been sliding downhill.

The whole history of this struggle has been of the national and local union leadership undercutting and stopping any militant forms of struggle. The misleaders are more interested in keeping the struggle from "getting out of hand," than in winning it. Against this sabotage, the rank and file were not able to organize effectively.

Strikers who wanted more militant tactics organized the Unity-Victory Caucus. This caucus was hampered by vicious attacks by the union leadership. It was also hampered by its own reluctance to make an open break with the sellout strategy of the union leadership. The Detroit newspaper strike is not the only struggle where militant worker activists saw what was wrong with the tactics of the trade union leadership. However, in this case also the activists were very reluctant to get into an open

confrontation with the "official" trade union leadership. The same sort of thing happened in the solidarity work for the Staley workers.

In the teeth of the local and national trade union leadership's opposition to plant gate confrontation, and hampered by their desire not to get into a pitched battle with these sellouts, the militants were not able to organize to keep this level of struggle going.

As long as Gannett and Knight-Ridder could keep production going with scabs, the strikers had very little leverage. The active strikers were mobilized to pressure advertisers and to promote a boycott of the papers. These boycott activities had no chance of winning the strike by themselves, and they just gradually wore down the morale of the strikers.

One of the alternative strategies that the militant strikers and their supporters decided to focus on was to demand that the national leadership of the AFL-CIO should call a national march in Detroit in solidarity with the strikers. Activists began organizing pressure on the AFL-CIO to call such a march early in 1996. However, the national AFL-CIO stonewalled this call for a year and a half, until Clinton was re-elected and until the strikers were seriously demoralized. Then to be even more sure that no serious mass struggle would break out, the national leaderships of all six unions on strike ordered an unconditional return to work. Now, when it's all over except the legal battles, the AFL-CIO misleaders are willing to lend their name to a national march of solidarity. Notice also that the Labor Party proved again that it is no alternative to the Democrats by not pushing the fight for this march in 1996. The Labor Party passed a resolution in their founding convention in June of 1996 to call on the AFL-CIO to organize a national march in Detroit. However, the Labor Party leadership didn't want to embarass the Democrats any more than the AFL-CIO did, so no serious pressure was applied.

The conclusion can not be avoided or papered over: the Detroit newspaper strike has been lost. The labor misleaders have stifled it, in spite of the fact that there are militant newspaper workers who want to continue the struggle. The courts and the NLRB are not going to give workers what they couldn't win on the picket lines. The fired newspaper workers and those being forced back to work under company-imposed conditions deserve all the

help and support we can give them. But further, we need to understand what has happened here and fight to change conditions in the working class movement to help us win these fights.

So what should we do?

What the Detroit newspaper strikers needed and didn't get and what all the other workers in struggle for their survival around the country need is a serious, fighting labor movement which can wage a real fight against the growing attacks workers are facing. We need a movement of workers in this country which is independent of all the sellouts and collaborators. We need a movement which is ready to fight in massive numbers whenever and wherever workers are being attacked.

To build such a movement we have to expose how the labor misleaders are undercutting our struggle. Sweeney and Carey and Trumpka may call themselves the "New Voices", but they are selling us out just like the old Kirkland crew was. If workers look to those characters for leadership in their fights, we will never have a chance. At the same time as we are exposing the sellout activities of the top union bureaucrats, we have to help workers develop forms to organize themselves. We can't wait for the sellouts to decide to organize our fight; we have to do it ourselves. We have to continue to demand that they do what is necessary, but we also have to do what we feel is needed ourselves regardless of whether we get "official" endorsement.

As one example, consider how this national labor march in Detroit was organized. The activists who concluded that such an event was necessary either did not want to or felt incapable of organizing such a march on their own initiative. All the energy was expended in enticing, cajoling, pleading, and pressuring the national AFL-CIO leadership to call for such a march. The result has been that these hacks first killed the strike and then called a march at least a year and a half late. Why shouldn't the people who see the need for action try to organize it the best they can, with or without the blessing of the labor "leaders?"

The Chicago Workers' Voice, a local organization of Marxist-Leninists in Chicago, is committed to building the militant, independent movement of the working class. Building such a movement of the workers and poor is a vital part of the process of getting rid of the source of our oppression, the capitalist system. We publish leaflets such as this one and we publish The Chicago Workers' Voice Theoretical Journal to try to develop more in depth discussion of the theoretical and analytical issues in the revolutionary struggle.

Members of the CWV also participate in a new organization in the Midwest, the Working Peoples' Action and Education Network. This organization brings together activists from a variety of viewpoints who want to build the working class movement. We encourage like minded activists to contact us to find common ways to build a real workers' movement.

Discussions and debates from the internet on: the Detroit Strike, the Labor Party and trade union misleaders

[The text below is taken from email debates that some WPAEN activists and others have been participating in. Please not that I selected this material on a somewhat arbitrary basis. I make no claims to giving comprehensive coverage to these debates. I merely want our readers to have a good idea of what people are arguing for.

Who's who: Earl Silbar is a leading activist in WPAEN. Andy, Daymon, Carol T and Dave W. are Labor Party supporters. Neil is well known to readers of this journal, he is our friend from Los Angeles Workers' Voice. I don't know John R, but I think he is a WPAEN activist.

-- Jake, for CWVTJ]

Earl vs. Andy and Daymon

In a message dated 97-05-27, Earl Silbar writes:

<Quoting a well-known strike leader is no substitute for facing the facts: the AFL leadership refused to act last Fall, 6 months before the strikers were ordered back and just after the Democratic convention. The LP leadership just plain ducked: their ducks are Sweeney and Co., not workers under attack. We need to be in the fight, with ideas and resources- however limited. Not covering up for the miserable, continuing, capitulation and class-collaboration of our 'progressive' AFL leaders and those who put them at the top of their political lists.>>

In a message dated 5/28/97, Andy English <aenglish@crl.com> wrote:

<< Zarembka is unable to find a statement from a Detroit striker to back up his slander against the LP that it did not support the Detroit strike, so he quotes someone with similar ultraleftist views who just happens to live in Detroit. I find Daymon's opinion that a public attack on Sweeney last summer by the Labor Party over the issue of the march being counter-productive a lot more persuasive. Daymon's statement made it clear that the LP has taken its lead from the strike activists, which is the responsible thing to do, and given them our full support.

For us to have tried to exploit the strike as part of some half-baked ultraleft political strategy of our own (without such a request from the strikers themselves for that kind of action attacking Sweeney) would have been irresponsible.>>

Daymon replied:

<< Good response...i am itching to get into this but feel that it wouldn't be prudent until after the march.....knowhattamean?...i would love to go after Silber....he and the others are nothing but splitters and wreckers....left to their devices the labor party would be 10 others like themselves sitting in a circle holding hands looking at each other rather then an organization of thousands and millions we are going to have to build in order to effect real change in this country....>>

In a message dated 5/29/97 Earl Silbar replied:

Calling me and "the others" (ooh, the bogeyman (person(s)?) are here) "splitters and wreckers" reminds me of when I, as a young, earnest left-wing Stalinist used to bash "the Trots" (verbally and otherwise) in place of responding to their ideas. It's doubly ironic since I just finished a long conversation with two friends, explaining why I wasn't a Trotskyist.

Andy English and Daymon Hartley duck the issue as I see it:

"How could the active fighters have rallied the militant workers and local union leaders in Detroit (and surroundings) to shut the plants down?" The AFL's role is key, the fact's mentioned in my post below aren't answered, but the question remains, How are we going to win? and "What can we learn from this brave, even heroic fight?"

Since the local leaders chose to let the courts keep the plants open, this necessarily meant developing a strategy and tactics to challenge the local union leaders (and their international backers). Everything I've learned shows that Daymon, despite his very real strengths and major contributions to the fight, chose NOT to do that. His strategy was to develop militant pressure on the AFL IN PLACE OF developing the workers' forces to confront the local leaders and fight for a militant resolution, with wider backing. This traded off the verbal/written support of the local AFL council and UAW for the nasty, necessary fight against them to rally workers and shut it down!

This is not a new strategy; it's the left-appearing pressure tactic that avoids the critical issue- the fight at home. The fact is that this strategy lost. It also just happens

to allow the conservative union leadership, both in Detroit and nationally, off the hook. Maybe the fact that Paul Z., I and 'others' rip that cover generates this name-calling and heat.

This losing strategy did 'win' the AFL's half-hearted, after-the-sellout fact of Feb.'s order to return. Slandering and slamming those who disagree, Andy and Daymon do a disservice to a serious question: "How are we going to break through the sellouts?"

Sellouts like Staley and Detroit discourage workers and the unemployed who face the corporate axe. These sellouts encourage the ruling class to bolder and more vicious attacks. After all, they've basically won in Detroit, unionism's home town.

And yes, I do encourage people to go to the March on 6/21; helping our wounded and cutting our losses is honorable and calls for active solidarity.>>

From: Neil <74742.1651@CompuServe.COM> Reply to Carol T. & Dave W.

First, reply to Carol T,

You say "the LP DOES NOT exist to criticize or reform or democratize the AFL-CIO. It is a political party. We are attempting to build that party."

Now if this be true, please explain the following;

1) If the LP is sincere about really breaking the workers from the Democrats/republicans, how could it possibly go about doing this without the political work of criticizing, reforming or "democratizing" the AFL, as the AFL/CIO is still a bulwark of the support for the Democrats and serves inside the working class as a strong DP conduit to keep workers tied to the illusion of capitalism's Democrats as a "friend of labor and minorities" and other such malarky?

Carol, you can't have your political cake and eat it too. A bonafide LP will have to take on the AFL/CIOs procapitalism politically and industrially to show workers they are serious about fighting the vicious capitalist/corporate offensive. Also I might add their is no Chinese wall politically between the LP and the AFL as the LPS founding convention was financed about 90% by AFL-CIO locals money!

You also aver that critics of the AFL should "work within the labor movement, not within the LP."

2) Pardon me, but does not the LP consider itself part of the "labor movement"? Your muddle here seems out of the old Gompersite or Meany watchword, "NO politics in the union!" By this they REALLY mean NO class struggle socialist politics in the union but all out support for the wages system of exploitation. Reply to Dave W.,

Try as you may, you cannot separate politics and economics either. When the AFL apparatus knifes valorous workers struggles and sacrifice a la Detroit News, Staley, Caterpillar, Bridgestone/Firestone, etc. this industrial strategy/tactic is integrally tied to political strategy/tactic, and that is the reality of negotiating the price of human labor power on the capitalist labor market, and keeping US national capital "competitive" even if this means US and other workers by the hundreds of thousands have been and will be, thrown on the market systems industrial scrap heap, and other millions pauperized more.

Yes Dave, workers do have varying views on the Detroit. News strike. But part of the tasks of a bonafide labor party would be to clarify the differing views on the strike and other workers struggles. Not just to their membership, but to RANK and FILEworkers as well, union and non-union, and advocate for a return to real labor solidarity built in practice but also with needed socialist political ideas/organization to help guide the growth of a reborn independent mass movement of the working class—hostile to, and organized against capital.

I think all forces who fight for the workers cause should turn out and support all building of mass actions where concerned and angry workers can congregate. e.g. the march in Detroit on June 21. But not just to listen to the pap from the bourgeois liberal pols on the stage or the failed methods of the labor lieutenants there but to meet, talk to, pass out information, and discuss with ordinary concerned rank and file workers, union or non-union how workers can defend their class interests.

But I will say that this phony Detroit "lockout" tactic strategy of the AFL apparatus will probably bomb. The NLRB has already issued some shameless pro-corporate decisions in the DETROIT NEWS strike. The NLRB will probably say that at the beginning, the workers walked (in July '95) and were not locked out. Even if the NLRB ruled for the workers to be re-hired, it will be on the bosses terms, and 300 workers have permanently been fired (the best militants-many of them). In any case basing the fate of workers livelihoods, families, and futures on favorable NLRB decisions and not on mass actions is a loser, as the bosses can tie up any unfavorable ruling in their courts for years.

In any case, I am glad when any workers' motion where the class can see its potential strength begins to come together. But real workers parties have a bounden duty to tell the workers the truth, even when part of that truth is not a pretty picture, and also urge the class to unite and fight based on workers not just being a class in itself—but for itself. This means a bonafide labor party will have

to expose the betrayals of the AFL apparatus as a key part of its work.

From: Neil <74742.1651@CompuServe.COM>

Dear friends,

D. Walters, A. English & co. think of nothing else than tailing behind the views of one Detroit News, striker's post who thinks it is wrong to attack (expose) the AFL apparatus for deserting the newspaper strikers, crippling the strike with outmoded craft union tactics, under the table deals with bosses, etc.

I'm sure if you hung out at the U-Haul shops around Detroit, you could find a number of ex-news workers who would have plenty of expletives to describe the AFL union apparatus.

Question. When may we have the opportunity to criticize, expose the AFL labor lieutenants a la Sweeney & co.? You know it's not as if they just a bunch of maidens here. Quite the contrary, they have helped the bosses and worked with the state to smash up one strike after another. Remember Staley, Caterpillar, Bridgestone/Firestone, just to mention the last year and a half of their Trojan horse antics? Sweeney even helped out Giuliani's regime in NY derail the strike of SEIU 32B, his old feifdom. The workers had 2-tier and benefit cuts rammed down their throats.

It is not the so called "ultra lefts" here who deal in secular religious mantras for leader worship. On the contrary, it is those tailists and apologists for the AFL proconcessions/downsizing machinery that do.

Date: 97-06-02 19:39:52 EDT

From: Wolf911

Earl,

I'm sorry but I'm only just now getting around to reading your leaflet. I hope it's not too late to offer some comments, which I hope can be shared with the list.

With one or two exceptions, I agree with you analysis. However, I think that some of the tone and approach you take does a disservice. I feel a bit handicapped in commenting since I am not there and have not been there so I don' [t really know the mood nor who will be there, etc. But I would suspect that the best people there will be wanting to hear a discussion about how something can be salvaged from this situation. Then, if we can link an analysis of the past mistakes to this, they might be open to considering it. My feeling is that to just blast away with both barrels against the "enemies" (as you put it) in our own ranks may not open up many people to what we have to say.

Would there be an argument for starting with the question, how can the striking workers get their jobs back and explain how this can be done? Then, linked with this, we could make the point that we would not be in this situation in the first place, if the leadership had organized along these lines from the start. And go on to explain what they should have done.

The point in your analysis where I disagree is where you compare the union leaders to the Democrats. (fourth par. from the end). However rotten they may be, they still base themselves on working class organizations (the unions) and this makes them fundamentally different. The fact that their policies may often be little different, or no different at all, is not the point.

Quite frankly, it seems to me that you don't really believe this either, because in the very next paragraph you accept that we should make demands on the union leaders. Presumably, you are talking about demands on how they should lead a strike. I completely agree with this, but in no way should we be calling on the Democrats to lead any workers' struggle. This, in itself, shows that there is a fundamental difference between the two.

Anyway, that is my reaction to the leaflet. Of course, I would be interested in any comments you might have.

-- John R.

[Earl replies]

John, thanks for the comments. No, it isn't too late. I started this so that everyone could have a week or two and we could get the best possible effort.

- 1. Could we start with the question: What can be done to win the jobs back? The major difficulty I see is that this takes place in dreamland, that is, we'd be setting up a scenario with no basis in today's fact. The fact is that most strikers are not involved and our forces are in dissarray and retreat. yet just the opposite is needed. Still, you're the third person to raise this approach, so what do others think?
- 2. You're right. I/we wouldn't call on the Democrats to lead a workers' fight. And we do here as a means of showing in practice both what should be done and that the leadership won't. One danger is just what the U-V did-rely on this pressure to 'make them do the right thing'. Still, you continue to point to a parallel I make that doesn't quite hold up. So, thanks.

Best wishes, Earl

Continued on page 26, see Debates

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MAY 1st 1997 in Mexico City and the July 6th Elections

by Anita Jones Sandoval

Author's Note: Over the past three years there have been significant developments in the mass movement and political movements in Mexico; these developments are reflected in a concentrated way in the capital city. This article will discuss some of those developments, including the May Day events and the July 6th mayoral election and the challenges which these events present to the revolutionary movement. It is important to note that these recent events take place within a framework in Mexico of increasing militarization and repression. Information is based on discussion with activists from the organizations of CNOSI (Coordinadora Nacional de Organizaciones Sociales Independentes) and observations made from April 22 - May 3, 1997 in Mexico City; from more recent discussion with CLETA and El Machete, and from various news sources including La Jornada newspaper and Processo magazine from Mexico. Opinions are those of the author.

May Day 1997

Mexico City is an important center for organized mass

movement and its political organizations in the country. A city of some 28 million inhabitants, there are an average of 4 major protest marches a day, and innumerable smaller actions. Mass marches and delegations from other parts of the country (such as the recent massive presence of teachers from Oaxaca) arrive regularly to present demands, set up long term protest encampments in the governmental plaza or Zocolo (called planteons in Mexico) and to protest government actions and inactions. This year marked the third year in a row in which the ruling party (PRI) and its trade union center (CTM) did not sponsor a May 1st march in Mexico City. May 1st in Mexico City has become the territory of the independents....the independent social-political organizations, independent campesinos organizations from the southern and central regions of the country, the independent trade unions, and the left. Prior to 1995, each May 1st saw a gigantic official march with a rally in the Zocolo in front of the Government Palace, and an address by the President of Mexico from one of the balconies. The independent organizations always organized their own march and usually found themselves in confrontations



May 1st 1997, The Zocalo -- Mexico City



with the official march, sometimes violent confrontations, as police and PRI goons tried to stop the independent organizations from marching.

However, in 1995, the PRI and the ruling party trade union center, the CTM, showing the true depths of their internal crises and their fear of the radicalized mass movements, gave up May 1st in Mexico City. They now only organize cocktail parties and auditorium assemblies for a few invited workers and functionaries.

In 1995, the mass movement was in an upsurge, and as many as a million workers, campesinos, students, street venders and others marched in Mexico City on May 1st. Last year and this year, the numbers were smaller, but still large -- more than 250,000 and perhaps as many as 500,000. The independent march and rally are organized by the May 1st Inter-Union Coordinator which is a coalition of organizations. The march was led by a contingent of 3 thousand teachers from the National Coordinator of Education Workers (CNTE) a center of the independent teachers movement. Another contingent of 2,500 teachers who had marched 580 km from the state of Oaxaca joined the march. Thousands of members of the SUTAUR-RUTA 100 union and the MPI (Movimiento Proletario Independiente) and at least 10,000 member of the Francisco Villa Popular Front participated. There was also a contingent from the PRD including that party's leaders, Cuauhtemoc Cardenas and Manuel Lopez Obrador, although the PRD leaders did not speak at the rally. The main podium (some of organizations had their own podiums), saw a range of speakers from the participating organizations, including Gabino Camacho (SUTAURRUTA 100) and Benito Miron of the FAC-MLN. The speakers and the participating contingents raised a wide variety of demands: for the liberty of the political prisoners such as Eli Homero Aguilar of the Franciso Villa Front, for wage increases to keep up with the rising cost of living, for an end to the militarization and repression, for international working class solidarity and for socialism.

Of note is the fact that the EPR sent a message of solidarity to the march/rally and that message was read from the podium, despite the fact that the EPR is an illegal organization. Also of note is the fact that the EZLN did not send a message to the event, although the day before subcommandante Marcos did send, via the communication media, a letter to Fidel Velasquez, the leader of the CTM. This communique was an open letter commemorating May 1st and denouncing the CTM and the PRI for causing such extreme misery and degradation for the Mexican workers.

This year's May 1st also highlighted just how deep the political crises of the PRI is in the workers' movement and trade unions. Last year, the second year of no official May first march, one of the largest trade unions affiliated with, but not actually a part of the CTM, the electrical workers

union (SNTE) openly expressed dissension with the CTM and announced that it would march on May 1st. The CTM issued a statement asserting that none of its affiliates would be allowed to march. The SNTE marched anyway. although it left a gap between its contingent and the rest of the march. During the course of 1996 and early 1997this split with the official union movement widened and a trade union grouping called El Foro (the Foristas) was formed by the SNTE and 8 other trade unions with some degree of past affiliation to or past alliance with the CTM, (the Telephone Workers Union, the Pilots' Union, the National University Workers' Union, the Social Security Employees' Union, and others). This grouping has significant political differences with the May 1st Inter-Union Coordinador based on the member unions' history of affiliation to the PRI, but as they have split from the PRI union front, they have sought some accommodation with the independent unions and social organizations. For May 1st of this year, the Forista unions reached an agreement with the May 1st Inter-Union Coordinadora and marched in force via a separate route to the Zocolo, where they had their own podium and speakers. From their podium the For oleaders announced the formation of a new trade union center in Mexico in June of this year. Thus, concurrent with the death of the charro of all charros (corrupted trade union bosses), the president of the CTM, Fidel Velasquez, comes the death of the CTM as the dominant trade union center.

The formation of a new "non-PRI" trade union center presents a new challenge to the independent organizations and trade unions. The formation of the Forista trade union center shows the depth of the crises of the PRI. It is a positive development in that it further weakens the PRI and helps to further break the stranglehold of the CTM on most of the country's unions. Thus, it aids in clearing some of the obstacles for the development of a broader, more militant class struggle over the long run. However, politically the Forista trade union center is centrist at best. It remains to be seen how much of a break with the PRI, especially the "reform faction" has occurred. Furthermore, as stated by the leader of the Telephone Workers Union at the May Day rally, the Foro differs from the independent Inter-union Coordinator and other independent organizations because it is only interested in the trade union struggle, not in politics, not in party politics and not the mass movement per se. The independent union and social movement exerts influence and pressure on the Foro unions, but the Foro also exert a pressure on the left wing of the independent trade unions to move towards the center.

The July 6th Elections

The July 6th mayoral elections in Mexico City have drawn international attention to the Federal District. The PRD's candidate. Cuahtemoc Cardenas won the first ever such election held in that city, defeating the PRI and PAN candidates easily. Cardenas's win had been predicted, but the margin of victory was greater than expected by most. Cardenas won more than 48% of the vote for mayor; the PAN candidate won 16%; the PRI candidate only 26%. In the elections for assembly (similar to city council), the PRD won approximately 45% of the votes, the PRI 24% and the PAN 19%. In both elections, another 5 parties shared the remaining votes. At the national level, less publicized elections for senators and deputies showed the PRI with 38% of the total votes, the PAN with about 27%. and the PRD with 26-28% of the total votes. (Election results source: the Federal Electoral Institute of Mexico via SPIN Internet). The PRI has tried to turn the defeat in Mexico City to its own advantage by claiming it as proof of the "new" Mexican system of true democracy. However, the "new system" managed to be just as corrupt and violent as ever before in the elections in the rest of Mexico. In Chiapas, voting installations were built by the military camps to allow the thousands of soldiers occupying the state to vote (while intimidating the communities). The indigenous communities in the southern states issued a "don't vote" call and it was reported that Zapatistas burned down some of the new voting stations. It was also reported that in some other areas the local PRI groupings burned down voting stations to keep PRD supporters from voting. In the state of Tabasco the PRD forces have accused the PRI of major fraud and massive mobilizations in protest of the elections have occurred during most of July.

Of particular interest is the communique issued by the EZLN (Marcos) just prior to the July 6 election. This communique was called a "Don't vote" communique by much of the media in Mexico; however, the communique does not call for people across Mexico to vote or not to vote. It does publish and support the decision of the indigenous communities across the states of Chiapas, Oaxaca, Hildalgo and parts of Guerrero to not vote. It also expresses considerable frustration with the PRD and other political parties for their pressure on the EZLN to "keep quiet", and their rejection of or ignoring of the demands of the indigenous communities. The main content of the communique is an explanation of the EZLN view of the need to build a "non-party" or independent social movement. The communique states that the EZLN is "not antiparty nor pro-party, not pro-elections nor anti-elections

but is against the state party system, presidentialism, and for democracy, liberty, justice, is leftist, inclusive and anti-neoliberal". It gives the view that democracy does not mean broadening the elite nor replacing one elite with another but means turning politics upside down. It appears with this communique that the EZLN is looking past the elections and coinciding with the viewpoint of much of the independent mass organizations and the left in Mexico. What is not yet clear is whether this is another maneuver of the EZLN between the reformist forces and the left or if it represents some political development.

Now What?

These developments over the past three months are increasing the challenge facing the independent social and political organizations and the left organizations. If at one time "independence" was defined by some organizations as being against the PRI and for mass organization, the breaking up of the PRI dominance in the trade union movement and in the larger political/electoral arena, sharpens the question of what is the "independent movement"? The question becomes how does an independent movement of the working class, and of the poor working masses define itself? What are its immediate demands, and what is its long range vision? The differences in the trends in the mass movement are continuing to sharpen, as are the contradictions within the PRI. For example, right before the elections, it was reported that some of the planteons in Mexico City set up by indigenous organizations from Chiapas posted banners calling for "no vote" and were attacked by PRD groups. This process of differentiation and struggle is likely to continue even further after Cardenas takes office December 1, 1997 as the mayor of Mexico City.

What are the likely consequences of the election? Raised expectations on the part of the masses, including and especially on the part of the of the most activist section of the mass base of the PRD in Mexico City, and in other areas of the country where the PRD is more militant and active (Guerrero, Michiocan, and Chiapas). These expectations are not likely to be met even if Cardenas were to decide to take a more "left" stance of trying to fulfill some of the demands of the toilers. Mexico City is feeling the full brunt of Mexico's economic crises. The mayor's office has limited powers; it is not in charge of the police, for example. At the same time, the PRD program itself does not challenge the basic economic policy of Mexico -- the

EZLN criticizes it for only trying to dull the sharpest edges of neoliberalism. It certainly does not challenge the basic neoliberal premises of capitalism, much less call for anything more radical, or for socialism. Cardenas is looking towards the presidency of Mexico always...he will be under pressure from all sides. Given these pressures we can expect that the factionalization inside the PRD may also deepen.

Cardenas will be under attack from the right by the PAN, and the PRI. In some smaller towns in which the PRD has won elections, by the time they were inaugurated the offices, files, equipment, money, etc., had all disappeared. Furthermore, the extremely violent repression against PRD activists has continued in many regions of the country. All of this will mean pressure on the masses, and especially on the organized independent organizations and left wing of the movement to support Cardenas, or worse, to give up their actions, and demands.

However it is also true that there will be increased pressure on the PRI — if raised expectations lead to a larger mass movement, increasing demands against the PRI government. Given these challenges, there is a greater urgency than ever that the revolutionary movement take seriously its tasks.

Tasks for the Revolutionary Movement

Unity is needed at various levels to remedy the fragmentation in the mass movement and in particular of the left wing of the movement and its mass struggles. There is a need for unity of action around the immediate demands and battles of the masses, and for the development of a united front of mass organizations and organizations fighting against oppression.

There is also a need for unity of political organizations and revolutionary activists. In order to build this kind of unity there must be more ideological, theoretical and political definition, and the revolutionary organizations must be able to show the maturity to undertake debate and struggle over these definitions without falling into sectarianism. There are organizations which are working in this direction. Their work should be supported. Out of this process, over time, a revolutionary party, the political organization of the toilers, can be formed which will be capable of developing a program and organizing for socialist revolution. Without this work, the working class and poor peasants and other working people in Mexico will not be able to break the chains of oppression and exploitation. \Diamond