

Chicago Workers' Voice

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EDITORIAL GUIDE TO THIS SPECIAL ISSUE ON THE POLEMICS OF THE "MINORITY" OF THE FORMER MLP: DOCUMENTS FROM NOV. 25, 1994 THROUGH FEB. 26, 1995.

This is a special edition of the *CWVTJ*, an extra issue as it were. It covers a rather acrimonious debate that is taking place between comrades in various cities who have referred to themselves as the "minority" of the former Marxist-Leninist Party.

Please note that this issue will not count as one of the six issues purchased with a subscription and that it has a limited distribution. Thus subscribers who normally receive multiple copies will only receive one copy of this issue.

The ex-MLP "minority" includes Chicago Workers' Voice (which produces this journal), the Detroit Marxist-Leninist Study Group (which produces Detroit Workers' Voice), Los Angeles Workers' Voice, a study group in Seattle as well as supporters in New Jersey and other places. We all consider ourselves to be anti-revisionist Marxist-Leninists.

We were united in the struggle to refute the liquidationist majority of the MLP and we have been working together on various theoretical projects. For the past 13 months *CWVTJ* has carried this debate and served as an informal platform for the minority of the MLP that wanted to pursue ideological struggle and theoretical work on issues arising from the death of the MLP. There have always been disagreements among us, but, by a sort of tacit agreement, none of us pushed these issues in the first period after the dissolution of the MLP. We all wanted to bring out to public view and discussion the ideological, theoretical differences which lead to the dissolution of the MLP.

Recently, however, a series of sharp debates have developed among us, and we felt it necessary to bring our readers up-to-date. We are printing all of the debate documents that we have from Nov. 25 to Feb. 26, 1995. We have excerpted only a few comments on personal matters and discussion of issues not directly related to the issues in debate.

We beg your forgiveness for presenting such a large amount of material in undigested form. We realize that it will be difficult to sort out the issues of principle but we want to give interested readers the opportunity to see for themselves what's going on.

Our internal fight opened sharply when issue #5 of the *CWVTJ* presented an announcement about *El Machete*, a left-wing Mexican newspaper. This announcement was strongly opposed by Joseph and other Detroit comrades.

When we informed comrades outside of Chicago of our plans for issue #6 of the *CWVTJ*, Joseph insisted that his letter of 12-21-94 had to be in that issue. This became the line drawn in the sand -- whether issue #6 **OR** #7 of *CWVTJ* would publish that letter.

CWV preferred to postpone this discussion to issue #7. The letters included in this special issue give the various views and justifications for all sides. The editorial guide for issue #6 stated: "Please note that the next issue of *CWVTJ* will continue our coverage of Mexico including some topics of controversy with the ranks of our own supporters. In *CWVTJ*#5 we carried an announcement that *El Machete*, a left-wing Mexican newspaper was available through CWV. This ad was not meant as an endorsement of *El Machete* as a Marxist-Leninist organization.

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

After the first line was drawn by Joseph over when to publish this controversy, issues which had existed since the dissolution of the MLP heated up. These include differing summations of lessons of the MLP, differing assessments of what it means to be anti-revisionist and what is necessary to carry forward anti-revisionism, differences about whether it is advisable to form a new national Marxist-Leninist organization at this point, and differences over the importance of and role of practical work in the mass movements.

Thus we are printing these materials to let you, our readers, start evaluating what these disputes are about. Please note that this is only a snapshot of a polemic that is still going strong. *CWVTJ* will continue to cover the debate with the "majority" and will cover the debate among the "minority" as we consider it to be of significance to activists and the political movement. We shall also continue to report on the ongoing theoretical work.

Comrades from Detroit have said they intend to publish a journal. We expect they will publish quite a bit of the material from this continuing controversy. We hope they will do it in a manner which aids activists in understanding what issues of principle are at stake in this debate. In our opinion to force this discussion in the heated manner it was done was inopportune. Nevertheless, there are some issues of significance for activists mixed in with the acrimony.

If you have some opinion after reading this material, please send us your comments. We will definitely print any short comments (say a page or two), unless you don't want them printed, and we will try to print longer statements as well.

To help in keeping track of who is who in this discussion, we will list comrades who have letters or articles included in this issue by cities. From Chicago there are letters from Julie, Jake and Oleg. From Detroit there are letters from Joseph, Mark, Tim and Pete. From NJ, Gary has two letters. From Los Angeles, NC has a number of letters (and he mentions the views of other comrades in LA). Everyone is, of course, presenting his/her own views unless they themselves note otherwise. However, the astute reader will notice a fairly sharp difference between the views of comrades from Chicago and Detroit.

As we mentioned above, we are not counting this special issue against your subscription, but if you appreciate us sending you this material, please send us a contribution (maybe add \$3 to your renewal) And again, send us your comments. <

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

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To: Joseph
From: Julie

November 25, 1994

Dear Joseph,

Thank you for sending the notes on the minority meeting. It's nice to have fairly complete rendition of the discussion and not have to rely on memory or on rather poor notes. My notes drop off in spots. At his point, I don't have anything to add. Perhaps if I get another chance to go through them this weekend. As well, I appreciate getting the letters between you and June.

It looks as if Rene has broken from the CWV group. The immediate issue. He told me everything was done on the CWV layout except an ad for El Machete. Actually we had never discussed an ad for El Machete. In addition, Oleg, Rene and Anita have read them. I've read a couple of articles and looked through the paper. Jake and B. have not. In any case, he was not at the meeting that weekend. It turned out that his daughter had the last of the water polo games in the Pan American games at that time. Jake, B. and I discussed that an article explaining what is significant about this paper would be fine. We did not think an ad with no explanation was the right thing to do. Actually we did not know what he had in mind but know his general aversion to writing. After Jake talked to him, he told Oleg that he did not like it that we did not trust him, that he did not like everything in the journal and that he should have as much right to write in it as anyone (true as far as that goes) - that he was not going to do anymore on the layout and not do anymore with the bookstore. Anita worried that there might be some "ulterior motives" behind this. As of yet she has not stated a withdrawal - although I expect this will happen.

Now, it seems a little incongruous to withdraw on the issue of an ad versus an article. Except that we know that it is precipitated by his general mood and politics. After the minority meeting I figured it was just a matter of time and the first excuse as he clearly did not like the direction of things.

Since the dissolution of the Party he has generally lost all faith in anything in the American movement, and has generally lost faith in trying to pursue building something that is anti-revisionist in theory and method and deepening that.

Rene was someone whom the "solidarity" honchos hated to see come into the meetings when we were developing the criticism of the Salvadoran movement. He thought not enough advantage was taken of the youth camp in Nicaragua to explain our differences with the MAP leadership to the membership. But today if you say that trotskyism profited by the collapse of the MLP and give the examples of New Zealand and Portugal as examples, then we are trying to tell everybody what to do and acting like the Pope.

How things will shake out I don't know. There will probably end up being some sort of relation to him and more likely to her.

For example, they, Jake and Colleen were over for Thanksgiving. The main discussion at the dinner table was Prop. 187 and the elections- the Contract with America, etc. There are already some proposals being floated in Illinois similar to 187. A demonstration is planned against this on Dec. 10 on 26th St. We had already decided at the last meeting to do an article on the elections and Oleg is in the final editing of an article on 187. It has been passed around for comments. He and Jake spent some time after dinner discussing it again. Anita had suggestions for agitating on the elections, wanted to see the drafts, etc. Rene actually didn't have much to say. J. saw the draft for the article on 187 and was willing to translate. We'll see. The point of this rather involved story is that it looks like there would be some cooperation in regards to the demo, the CWV at least with her and maybe with him - I could be wrong.

By the way, B. sent out about 50 letters to various left, liberal and feminist journals asking if they would be willing to review the book. We heard back from the Nation and a Soviet history journal saying that they would. (This might be an argument for books.)

I hope within the next few days to sit down and write some comments on the minority meeting. But I also know that I have to crack the whip this weekend and write something on the elections. I also agreed to write something for the ECDC newsletter. Same research. But the articles need to be at least somewhat different.

B. and I got together and had some discussion how to proceed with the materials on Trotsky. These were some of the issues that came up, his non-recognition of state capitalism, the dangers of that, etc. his very factional conception of the struggle in the Party and in Soviet society in general, his discussion of socialism is very economic and almost never discusses what's necessary for class rule, the approach to the Soviet leaders should be similar to the approach to the sd trade union leaders and no conception of independent class movement.

=====

To: the minority

From: Mark

Date: November 29, 1994

Report on Detroit ML Study Group Meeting of November 13, 1994

First a note. The study group met on October 30, but no report was prepared because of the press of time and because most

of the content of the meeting was issues that would be raised in the minority meeting in Chicago on November 5-6. Some of these issues had been raised in prior communications to the minority. And the notes on the meeting recently sent out by Joseph will give some idea of our views and those of others.

The DMLSG's Nov. 13 meeting centered on a review of the minority meeting.

In our study group, a comrade raised that at the minority meeting, there was a "serious contradiction" with Rene from Chicago. Rene sees no future role for the minority. But others such as Jake, Julie and Oleg do. Jake said we should take a stand on whether we're an organization. The comrade felt that despite Rene, the meeting showed enthusiasm for the theoretical projects and that we are capable of doing something worthwhile here, despite what the majority may think.

Another comrade said Rene's position was liquidationist. In details it is different than the majority stand but it shares the slighting of the notion of anti-revisionism. Rene echoes the majority critique of MLP history. We were Maoists and Hoxhaists. True, but we rejected these trends. Rene's views went over to a certain degree with some others in Chicago in the first part of the meeting. For example, in the first session, Jake seemed to support Rene evidently because he had certain grievances about Joseph's role at the 4th Congress of the MLP.

The Detroit comrade also mentioned an article he recently saw done by Oleg. The article attempts to refute Michael's views which downplay the role of US imperialism in Haiti. Unfortunately, the article attempts to find Michael's divergences mainly through looking at past WA article which Oleg acknowledges are basically good.

Another comrade recounted some lunchtime discussion with Jake and Gary.

This comrade and Gary argued that although there were differences on certain historical questions, and although some are likely to remain for a time, Rene was using this to oppose the actual fruitful unity that was developing. The Detroit comrade was glad Jake declared himself for a statement declaring an organization.

This comrade felt that the views expressed in the meeting by Rene and Anita were both liquidationist. Anita, for example, raised that she doesn't see the point of a struggle between trends and was generally reinforcing Rene's comments that the problem with the old MLP was that it was like the Pope, always thinking it was right and everyone else wrong.

Another comrade stated that Mark's organizational statement would force Chicago to deal with some of the differences among themselves. It might mean that they have to work out some arrangement if they want Rene to be in CWV and joining the minority group would be by individual. Another comrade agreed that joining the minority group must be by individual. How can Rene have a voice in the journal if he is not part of the minority group? In Chicago, where is the common work? Rene doesn't bring Spanish-speaking contacts around to the group as a whole and he doesn't show the contacts the polemic with the majority.

The comrade went on to speak further on Rene's views. He noted that he challenged Rene to show where anti-revisionist views were coming out of Mexico. Rene refused, saying he's not about to translate these articles. A comrade noted that Rene echoed Fred on whether there's a science of the working class (ie, some definite working class political trend). Previously, Anita had distanced herself from Rene's theories while having her similar grievances. This time she agrees in theory.

Another comrade noted that the description of the work given by a Chicago comrade showed that on various fronts, "everyone is doing their own thing". Evidently, the effort to get out the book further hurt their efforts to organize common work.

This comrade also raised questions about one of the reasons that were given in the meeting for why a statement of the trend is not necessary. The reason was that everyone knows they're a trend in Chicago. But it turns out that since the dissolution of the MLP, Chicago has never defined themselves.

Another person agreed. Whether they are known or not is not the real issue. It is dealing with the ideological-political differences that have been going on for a couple of years there.

A comrade stated that Frank made some good contributions to the meeting and it seemed the meeting would give him a better picture of our trend and the difficulties we face. Other comrades mentioned that his request to Rene to write down his differences was good and that he was enthusiastic to push forward the ideological work by developing our research today.

On the question of consultation on the journal. A comrade noted that it was recognized that a better job of consultation was necessary. Also there tended to be a jumbling of the practical problems of what should be in the journal with the overall necessity of carrying out the polemic. Perhaps with consultation, thumbnail sketches of longer articles can be made. He noted that the journal could carry things that reflect the local work such as the LA leaflet on the Bell Curve.

 Other issues dealt with in the study group meeting. ... [discussion of local practical work omitted, CWV]

To: Julie
 From: Joseph
 December 14, 1994

Dear Julie,

As I was just correcting typos in this note and thinking about some things about it raised by Mark, about to make some final revisions and send it, I received the CWV TJ #5. I was happy to see it and was enjoying giving it the first browse through, when I came upon the last page. I was astonished. I thought you had written me that CWV TJ would not carry an ad for El Machete but would only carry a signed article from Rene with his views and analysis about El Machete and its importance. And that Rene had refused to write that article. Unfortunately, in my recent disorganization, I had misplaced your letter, and I couldn't find it despite several attempts. But an odd phrase in your letter had struck me at the time--when you said how could Rene split over the mere difference between an ad and a signed article? I had thought that the process you had described with Rene was done correctly, but there was indeed a big difference between an ad and a signed article, as I try to explain somewhere below. It hadn't occurred to me that you meant that the CWV TJ would simply have someone put their name to an ad.

True, the ad is signed by Oleg. Formally speaking, therefore, it is a signed article. But in content it is really an ad. It is labeled as an announcement and not critiqued in the editorial guide. Oleg speaks in the article for the CWV as a whole, writes of what "we" think, and announces the availability of El Machete from CWV, the publisher of CWV TJ. He says that "The CWV is distributing El Machete because it gives a more left-wing revolutionary perspective than any other paper we have seen from Mexico." This is preserving the form of a signed article but really writing an ad.

Also, the article is signed by Oleg, when I had thought it was really Rene who was pushing for the endorsement of El Machete, according to your letter. I don't see why Oleg should have to be put into that type of position.

Moreover, it seems to me that CWV still doesn't know much about El Machete's trend. So instead the article speaks about its graphic on the masthead, and that it publishes important news about Mexico such as statements from the EZLN. Such statements and news, if they are important, should be translated into English and carried in CWV TJ, rather than CWV TJ endorsing El Machete. Moreover, since we are not simply supporters of EZLN (are we?), how can we endorse people the main thing we know about them is that they support EZLN and its maneuverings?

One mistaken ad won't kill us, nor a public discussion in the journal on whether to support El Machete or not. But I think we (the minority as a whole) had better think over who we are and what we endorse. I think the El Machete ad reinforces the need for us to be a bit clearer on who we are at present, and not simply be blown around by any demand. The ad is like jumping off a high platform with a bungee cord around one's waist--on Rene's assurance that El Machete will tie the other end of the cord to a post, they really will, trust Rene on this. And the difference between Rene or Oleg signing the article is the difference between Rene jumping with the suspect bungee cord or Oleg doing it. I sympathize with Oleg and don't want to see other people put in this position.

I am not going to change the part of the letter below which speaks to the issue of El Machete, I'm not angry at CWV, and I still welcome the appearance of the journal, but I wanted to add these remarks because I think the issue is important.

I would also appreciate it if you could send various back issues of El Machete to Detroit. Since we are now linked with El Machete in the press, I guess I'd better see who they are if I can get some time. I don't really read Spanish, but I'll have to do my best. Also, could you or Oleg could send a Spanish-English translation program? I know Oleg pointed out that you have tried them and they are seriously flawed--which I can well believe--but flawed or not, they are probably better than nothing. Or, at least, I'll have to learn from sad experience whether they are of any help--some things one just has to learn for oneself from the school of hard knocks. So if you haven't thrown these programs out, please send a copy.

Another last minute point:

One unfortunate inaccuracy got into the final report on the Detroit study group of Nov. 27. I don't think the CC voted against Jim's report on state capitalism being circulated. Rather, it was suggested (agreed, I think--I'll have to check the CC minutes) that Jim supplement his report with additional material. Jim however never got around to doing this--surprise, surprise! So it was never circulated formally. Instead he circulated his report informally--that way he got maximum mileage from it while snooks like me were waiting for it to be circulated formally before writing up and circulating our comments and reservations on it. (True, my comments back then would have been much more charitable than how I would but it today, because I thought it was just a research report about work in progress.) Circulation without criticism of any sort--the majority ideal. He also evaded having to explain the relationship of the state capitalism issue to the views of Marx and Engels, which was one of the things he was supposed to add to the report.

* * * * *

Thanks for your last note. Until I get certain computer questions settled, I'm still a bit disorganized from moving, so I'm afraid it's taken me some time to get back to you.

Thinking over the last meeting of the minority and the subsequent events, I have become more convinced of the value of the minority to declaring itself. As the debate with the majority fades, and as our own work develops, it's less and less an issue of minority versus majority. It's more an issue of who stands for a certain program of continuing work. True, the minority is a loose

grouping. The fragmentation of the MLP trend affected the whole former trend, majority and minority. The minority has done better at keeping a certain coherence, but I have no desire to exaggerate that coherence.

Nevertheless, it is more and more clear that a certain banner and the CWV TJ has been, and should be, a rallying point for those with certain basic beliefs. Some in the minority are passive. Rene is in the minority too, but he no longer supports various activities. So the issue today isn't just the minority, but those who support carrying forward various work. These comrades have differences among themselves, but we do all support a certain program of work in a general sense. And it would be useful to declare that, and it would be in accord with how political groups should behave.

As I was writing the review of the year, I became more convinced of this. The minority had a reasonably good year--I listed accomplishments in part two of the review of the year. There are also some things that aren't so glorious--there is a big passive fringe around the minority and we are down to a core, we were unable to dislodge a number of people who wanted activity from the grip of the majority, we are wandering about a bit with respect to deciding where to go. Nevertheless it was overall a good year because we didn't fade away, organized work developed, and fragmentation didn't reign supreme. But despite a good year, whether we continue depends on whether we are agreed not just on discrediting the majority (which was Rene's interest, and with that interest, why should one proceed more than a year?), but on a positive program. A broad positive program, with various comrades interested in various parts of it, but nevertheless a positive program. Even the first minority meeting talked of its points in common. And it's time that the (organized) minority had its banner.

As far as Rene, I think you and the others did well not to give in on the question of the ad for El Machete. Rene of course could have written an article on the struggle in Mexico or on El Machete or on whatever. This would have been fine. So I believe you were very right on offering this [i.e. that Rene could submit an article]. And I think it would have been good if articles on Mexico had appeared--both for information and to see what approach is being taken to the Mexican struggle. (In general, for that matter, I think it would be good to have more materials in CWV TJ from different areas, from the CWV, etc.) But he wanted an ad--that is, for the journal to endorse El Machete. He wanted endorsement, and this endorsement had its ideological component. It also meant endorsing--to a certain extent--his conception of what work today is. Given the role the journal plays, I think that Chicago comrades, and not just the Chicago comrades, should have had information and the time necessary to consider El Machete and the issue.

Moreover, he wanted the ad endorsed on his say so. It's not a political matter for all to judge--but he's clear on it, so what's left to say? This in my mind corresponds to his views on MLP history, where he says he is suppressed if people disagree with him. After all, if people just really listened to him, and didn't misunderstand him, they would agree, no?

I can well believe, as you point out, that various opportunist circles were upset when he entered a meeting. But when Sparts enter a meeting, people get upset too. I'm not saying that Rene didn't do good work at his best, and I assume I have seen Rene at his worse. And I suppose that Rene has suffered over time from comrades allowing him to run roughshod over anything.

I have been wondering for years about the role of intolerant people like Hardial, or more recently about Jim, Michael, etc. Is it that the revolution never should have people like that? Is it that we simply had people who time has shown are no good? But I think rather that it is necessary to construct an organization in a way that can utilize such people. Hardial was charismatic, and in any large revolutionary movement there will be people like him, and they will attract numbers of other people to the movement. So long as the Hardials respect the overall movement, something besides themselves, some framework, they can do a service to the movement. But the movement has to have its norms and its ways of preventing such people from running roughshod over the movement. I think Rene has been allowed to run roughshod over normal norms for too long--and it hurt him as well as those around him.

As far as the CWV TJ, I have just seen the announcement of issue #5. I'm happy it's finally out, and eager to see it. It's notable that each issue has its own character, which is nice. The plans for this one seemed to show it had much current material and marked a departure in that way. The Haiti material looked like it would come out when Haiti was a burning issue in the press and in the left. And the Palestine material is current--as Palestine keeps coming back in the news. (And you almost had a Bell Curve article.)

This one should be good, but the long birth process has taken its toll. The Haiti material is important, but the journal missed the wave of burning daily excitement and heated polemic on it. True, something might break out on Haiti and bring it back into the forefront of everyone's mind. But it would take place in a different situation--with Aristide president--and the situation in which the polemics was written is a bit changed.

Oddly enough, the timing isn't so crucial for the Palestine material. It's not such burning material as the Haiti material was originally, but on the other hand, it won't fade rapidly. This material was in general on the mini-state issue, rather than on the particular events of the moment in the mini-drama. Thus it looks even better with the current flareups and news about Palestine.

Of course, the delay of the journal might perhaps be because you and others have taken time to sort out internal issues. And this is important, and more so than a bit of a splash for a particular issue. But it does raise the question of timing and of the character of the journal, as do various comments in the minority meeting.

I think the journal has a number of interrelated but not identical purposes which various comrades want to see in it.

****Coverage of the debate among the former MLP circles.**

****Discussing issues of importance for the scientific basis of communism today, irrespective of how the debate in former MLP circles goes.**

****Attracting attention of various activists.**

****Covering preliminary discussions among ourselves and serving as a vehicle of discussion.**

****Dealing with topical political issues.**

****Reflecting what's going on in the different minority areas (it doesn't now, but it could, and it would be interesting if it did).**

****Replacing e-mail eventually.**

****Carrying material from people vaguely around us or just sort of commenting on us.**

These are not all the same. There is the issue of whether the journal can cover all of these things, or whether other means will have to be found to do so.

For example, when Journal #4 carried the socialism in one country material, this meant bringing a preliminary discussion among us into the open. I was surprised by this, but as I thought about it, I got excited. I thought that you and others were on to something. And it would help transform the journal into one which carries not just the completed theoretical views, but works in progress, scaffolding and all. In my comments on the LA-Frank controversy, if I remember, I pointed to the significance of the journal carrying this material.

But once the journal starts to carry preliminary material like this, it takes on an obligation. It has to carry though with the exchange about socialism. And since this takes space, it reduces the flexibility to deal with other purposes.

I hadn't realized you were going to carry my letter about Phil's article. But I think this was useful because of the issue of whether the legacy of Soviet revisionist society is a settled issue. Among other things, it seems to me that this is relevant to, for example, similar issues on present-day Cuban society. Should our agitation be to "defend the gains of the revolution" and oh, by the way, Castroism isn't our ideal model of socialism, or do we support the reorganization of the Cuban toilers against both the savagery of U.S. imperialism and the tyranny of the Cuban revisionist ruling class? Of course I am not quite sure how Phil intended the question of legacy, as he puts Soviet revisionist society in the framework of "imperialist power-politics", but whatever he meant, his article raises such issues.

Or take another issue, which will be upon on us soon. General e-mail is dying. It may be dead. The majority isn't that interested (although I may be wrong--the majority may in fact be putting most of what it has on e-mail--it just doesn't have much). It's also a clumsy tool for consultation in the minority. (When I'm set up properly again on computers, it will be a little less clumsy for me than it is now.) Some minority people don't check e-mail very frequently at all. Many still aren't quite on e-mail, or don't know the universal language (WordStar 4), or aren't into coding, etc. It's monstrously timeconsuming to help someone go on e-mail if they are not already computer literate, and I wouldn't feel right pressuring people to spend a lot of time to get the computer stuff right, so I don't. And the more people who are on e-mail, the more expensive it gets. Eventually I think e-mail will turn into mainly really e-MAIL--another form of mail, very useful for various consultations among people working on common projects, but a form of mail

This raises that something will have to take the place of the old e-mail network. The main theoretical and other discussion should go in a publication. I sort of thought in the past that gradually CWV TJ would in fact take up this role. When issue #4 brought out discussion among itself into the open, I thought this was also a step to supplanting e-mail.

Using a journal rather than e-mail may even include not just discussion of differences on theoretical issues, but on where the minority is going. Prior to the 5th congress, differences among us on this were actually discussed on general e-mail (there was not minority then, of course). Afterwards, no. But perhaps our different perspectives on where things are going could go into a journal.

Publication in a journal has a different significance than e-mail. E-mail is like a telephone call or letter, here today and gone. A publication allows wider circulation, and it makes it easy to refer back to past articles. Does anyone have a good file of all past e-mail and telephone calls and letters? But a journal makes it easy to keep track of things, and to draw others into discussion (if they have the interest).

But if the CWV TJ is to supplant e-mail, it has to have a certain frequency and it has to be able to print material in a timely way, and not delay it for months. Exchange of ideas on ongoing theoretical work has to take place with a certain tempo.

Well, below are some possibilities.

One is that the CWV TJ will be for wider circulation and attracting people around us. But some other form will have to replace e-mail.

ONE POSSIBILITY

For example, every month--regularly--a small publication could be put out of most comments, articles, research materials, etc. that were circulated on e-mail more-or-less to the minority as a whole, excluding things that are just individual exchanges. And probably a good deal of the comments on where the minority is going and of ideas on current research--ideas that sometimes are and sometimes aren't circulated to the minority as a whole--probably should be included, and not be restricted to personal exchanges. It will take some thought to figure out what to circulate this way, but in general I think it will be a very broad category.

This small publication will be public and advertised but circulated only to those who definitely subscribed to it (plus a few foreign friends, libraries, etc.). If it's just 20-30 copies, good. I have no problem with that. It is laid out simply and quickly. It is laser-printed or xeroxed. (I won't go into details, but I have thought about them.)

It thus takes on the load of allowing ongoing discussion. It allows comrades to have their views considered by others who are doing research etc. It means that e-mail becomes for immediate consultation, but the publication provides a record and brings the consultation much wider.

This frees the CWV TJ from being OBLIGATED to carry all this material. The CWV TJ should carry a REVIEW of ALL the material in the other journal--thumbnail sketches or "editorial guides" of everything. If anyone is interested in any of the articles that are so described, they would know where to find it. But the CWV TJ can itself be selective in carrying full articles or long articles--and not worry that what isn't printed is buried. It can spend effort on trying to present the discussions in ways of interest to other activists. It can concentrate individual issues on a theme. It can spend more time on having a bit of flair, without interfering with the needs of carrying certain material regularly. It would allow it to develop further in the direction it has been feeling its way towards, without being held back by a million conflicting space demands. I think you and other Chicago comrades have ideas about this, and I would like to see them be able to develop further

THEN AGAIN

I tend to think that something like the above will be necessary. But it is, in a sense, a two-journal conception (the WA/WAS all over, in a way--the WAS was also intended to prevent the WA from being torn apart from the conflicting needs. But this time the CWV TJ is a theoretical journal, and the other thing is really just a compilation of materials.)

Another possibility, however, is a one-journal solution. But then the one journal has to come out, say, monthly--if it is to be able to replace e-mail. And to do so, it has to be modest, not as elaborated with flourishes as the present CWV TJ, as these flourishes apparently take a lot of time. And it has to be modest in order to be financially feasible.

In this case, the one-journal is obligated to carry about everything. It would be simple and unassuming. But when it has articles of interest to various circles or activities, it can be circulated among them. And by being monthly, it would allow certain articles to be more timely.

There may be other possibilities. But I think, in any case, we have both to have the minority carry a specific positive program and not just be a minority of the old, and some thought has to be devoted to where the journal is going. It can't simply juggle different needs from month to month by seeing what space is available. It has to be able to declare that it is going to serve certain needs regularly, and it has to have the staying power to experiment with various new features on more than an issue-to-issue basis.

So much for now
Best regards,
Joseph

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To: Julie
From: Joseph
December 16, 1994

Dear Julie,

In looking over the announcement of the availability of El Machete, it struck me that perhaps this announcement was regarded as a sort of analysis of El Machete's stands. I think it's just an ad, but perhaps it was regarded as an article. If so, then it doesn't reassure me. It seems to me that one of the worse aspects of endorsing El Machete in this way is that it covers over looking more closely at the situation in Mexico. I fear it means that analysis becomes simply putting the Zapatistas in a good light, glorifying relatively minor maneuvers among the left, and explaining away the Zapatista class nature rather than emphasizing it.

The Chiapas revolt naturally encourages, not just the Mexican left, but people around the world. It means that the most

oppressed masses in Mexico are not going to let themselves be pushed into the dirt. And it shows that struggle is possible even now. It would have been interesting and important to carry materials on this. Statements and articles from the Zapatistas or various analysis in the Mexican left could be translated and printed, if they were of value. And especially articles of analysis by comrades on the situation would be important. They still would be. But in fact at the last meeting Rene, I believe, said we shouldn't expect translations from him. And you don't mention anyone else volunteering translations or articles. It's notable that it's Rene and company who shout loudest about the Zapatistas who are responsible for not providing any serious material on them.

I think the way El Machete is approached in the CWV ad ratifies this lack of serious attention to the situation in Mexico. It's like Rene's approach of just trailing after what's big and looks militant. It really struck me hard that if one argues by the symbol on the masthead, one probably doesn't have much else to analyze. As well, the talk about the convention didn't really say much either. It's as if American politics were judged by who revolves around the Panthers. For Rene, the convention was the real anti-revisionist struggle. For the ad, it's the criterion of who is revolutionary.

In any case, I don't think one can tell what is really revolutionary and advances the situation in Mexico, just by which side has some spirit at the leftist convention called by the Zapatistas. This reduces politics to chasing the Zapatistas, fighting off other groups who are also doing it, etc.

In order to illustrate why I think there has to be a deeper analysis, let me present a possible outline of what's going on in Mexico with the Zapatistas. It will undoubtedly be wrong on many individual points because I don't have any documents to refer back to as I write this, and I wasn't following the situation closely because I thought others were. And the CWV TJ has not carried even basic materials on this struggle--nor have they been circulated in other ways. But if I wait until articles appear, it will mean waiting forever. And if I wait until I have my own study, that might be a long time too. But the issue has been forced now. So I'll stick my neck out. I hope that these speculations may at least manage to hit one or two sore points and encourage thinking over what is lacking in the present discussion, thus encouraging articles and analysis to appear.

So here's one possible scenario for what's going on with the Zapatistas and the convention of the left. It's not based on the individual militant words and fancy phrases which groups dress themselves in, but on thinking about the general trend of strategy that appears to emerge from Zapatista and left action.

* * * * *

The Zapatistas have existed for some time, based on resistance to the Mexican bourgeoisie marginalizing and crushing the Indians and peasants of the South. They also realize that they couldn't by themselves achieve their demands, much less overthrow the Mexican government and ruling class, and they have been looking around for something that could.

They are not attracted to a proletarian revolution and organization of the workers (whatever their rhetoric is), because they don't see the proletariat as the force that could sweep aside PRI's monopolistic tyranny. The Mexican proletariat has not in the main freed itself from PRI unionism. It has not established its own powerful class party. It faces reorganization--not just a crisis of numbers, but of orientation. And no amount of repetition of the old revolutionary phrases can substitute for some force actually advancing independent organization based on the proletariat, finding a way to arouse the proletariat, and linking it with a class criticism of both PRI and the traditional left opposition to the PRI. The Zapatistas are not the type of force that would take upon itself to push the reorganization of the Mexican workers movement by themselves. If the proletarian movement were strong, they would be attracted--among other things, they may perhaps have many rural and village proletarians among them. But if it is weak, they won't take up the strengthening of it by themselves--because it is not in the nature of their class basis to do so. This is a case where the difference between "toilers" and urban workers is important.

The Zapatistas also realized that the traditional left (the traditional left opposition to PRI) wasn't going to transform Mexico either. It doesn't matter how many revolutionary words or threats are issued: they have been issued too many times for serious thinkers (and the Zapatistas have some serious and sophisticated leaders) to take them seriously.

However, prior to the last elections, the Zapatistas saw the possibility of the PRI breaking up, and they hoped this would bring a democratization of Mexico. While this did not happen, it was reasonable to realize that the system was shaking. Struggle is not undertaken with a guarantee. And the Zapatista actions deepened the shaking of the system. Perhaps their actions were timed precisely in respect to this national strategy.

The Zapatistas didn't realize, however, what the outcome of their plan for democratization would likely have been, if it had occurred. All Mexico is not like the south. The break-up of the old PRI system would not just strengthen popular or left forces, as it would in Chiapas, but PAN as well. The likely outcome would be some sort of coalition between PAN and friends on one side (including PRI fractions) and other PRI fractions and PRD and various reformists on the other. If there was no coalition with PAN--and PAN maintained support but was frozen out of power--there might well be a generalized civil war between two basically bourgeois coalitions.

This means that the democratization of the last election, even if it had taken place, might not have had the outcome the Zapatistas expected, either politically or economically. This doesn't mean that one should accept PRI tyranny or shrink from change or that their struggle would have gone for naught. But such a prospect underlines the result of a lack of proletarian organization, and shows that a big national crisis can't substitute for it. (But such a crisis could provide an impetus and opening for such organization.) And the Zapatistas do not have the perspective of long-range organizing for such a proletarian movement.

(I do not have their statements in front of me. But my suspicion is that, whatever they say, their actions are clearly aimed somewhere else.)

In any case, PRI, and its domination of Mexico, survived the election--although cracks remain and perhaps are deepening.

This brings up to the convention. Unfortunately, even basic facts about the convention have not been described. In the absence of this, it would appear that the Zapatistas wanted a convention of the left for a number of reasons, including the particular political trend of their leaders. But it wasn't with the idea that an independent proletarian left will sweep through Mexico. They need whatever popular support they can garner from other forces, and this is vitally necessary for them as they face the possibility of the Mexican government refusing to concede anything to them and coming down violently on them. But they also have their longer-range goals, and they still have in back of their mind that there may eventually be deals with large forces in Mexico when the crack-up begins. From this point of view, the presence of pro-Cardenas forces is no accident. To take advantage of a crack-up in Mexico, in the way they have been calculating on, requires keeping an eye open not just towards Cardenas, but towards other splits in the PRI. It's not an error in an otherwise revolutionary strategy--it's at, and has been at, the heart of their calculations concerning the nationwide political crisis.

Some parts of the left may urge them to oppose the PRD etc. And rank-and-file activists may be sincere in this. But in fact the traditional left cannot offer a powerful alternative--mainly the left would like to ride the Zapatistas, rather than being able to offer the Zapatistas a horse to ride. Far from being able to offer a powerful new force to the Zapatistas, they look on the Zapatistas as the powerful force. The Zapatistas are quite aware of the objective motives of the left (of course El Machete may be very sincere etc., I don't at this point have any information on which to judge, but there's still the question of what objectively the left is doing). Moreover, splits in PRI would throw the left into crisis: much of the left had its "united front work" with Cardenas and would have it with future PRI splits and would squabble over which split to support, etc. Differences over this aren't always between revolution and reform, but may be differences between those who want to merge to the right, and those who feel that one has to stay somewhat distinct in order to have some capital to use in deal-making. However, such differences will be expressed in heated revolutionary language. (And the left trotskysts, who can issue the most left-sounding denunciations of various reformists, can unite with them at any time without blinking an eye so long as they say it's not a "popular front" but part of their efforts at a "united front" or a "labor party" or is "military but not political" support, or whatever.) Meanwhile the key fact overriding everything, is that the left has not found a way to promote a reorganization of the Mexican proletariat. And so whatever their desires, they simply can't offer the Zapatistas something that would really attract them to proletarian revolution. And whatever the desires of certain leftists, the left will be disorganized and split as soon as more serious PRI splits develop, or whenever Cardenas maneuvers left.

Of course the Zapatistas aren't going to simply wheel and deal with PRI factions, because the appropriate splits aren't there yet. They can't simply forge an alliance with Cardenas, because (a) they are too militant for the PRD, and (b) they don't necessarily think PRD is the last word in PRI splits either. They can't agree to simply lay down their militancy, at a time when they are faced with the ultimatum of capitulate or be annihilated, or else they are done and over with. The government isn't offering them anything, but is putting a knife to their throats.

Thus for them, the presence of both "reformist" and "militant" sections of the left is not an accident, but reflects something of their strategy. The thought that one can simply correct the Zapatistas by advocating that they go against the reformists is naive. And the idea that the Zapatistas will carry out the heroic armed struggle, extending it over Mexico, is phrasemonging which is going to attract the Zapatistas least of all. And if the same idea is expressed more vaguely, leaving out the tactics, but throwing in lots of words about revolution, it is not any better. The Zapatistas have their own class nature which has to be taken seriously. They are a toilers movement, which the working class should seek to build as many links with as possible, but they are not going to solve the issue of proletarian reorganization.

In this situation, judging revolutionary credentials by the fights at the convention seems odd indeed. It's like judging American politics of old by who revolves around the Panthers. The emergence of the Panthers was an important event that galvanized huge numbers of youth and activists. But communist support for the black proletariat could not consist of simply trailing the Panthers, RCP-style. The decisive debates in the left weren't the maneuvers at Panther-called left grand coalition gatherings (they had some left conventions themselves, no?, or am I confusing this with something else). You couldn't judge who had the "most revolutionary" line by who looked left and fought the revisionists, on some issue or other, at one of the Panther anti-fascist coalition meetings. A truly communist line had to be based on its independent idea of how to organize a proletarian movement--not simply relying on the popularity of the Panthers.

A revolutionary stand in Mexico would deal with the Zapatista-called convention, but it won't center on it. It would not seek to put a wonderful left caot over the significance of the convention or present the squabbles at the convention as the big fight of the decade. If it did so, it would raise the suspicion that it didn't have its own politics and was instead trying to ride the Zapatista movement because of its lack of belief in its own work. A truly left stand (i.e. one that organizes the revolutionary proletariat) won't simply be left phrases at the convention. Reprinting Zapatista statements and giving them a revolutionary commentary may sound revolutionary. But reprinting and posting FLQ statements at the height of the War Measures Act and advocating the national liberation of Quebec was a spirited stand by CPC(ML)--yet it didn't make their stand towards FLQ and the tasks of

Canadian revolution correct. Their petty-bourgeois nationalism often had a decidedly militant and revolutionary ring to it.

In this situation, the centering of attention on the convention itself seems suspect to me. Oh horrible, the real left might get frozen out. The revisionists might kiss up to Zapatista "united front" work like they did with the Panthers. But what is the left being frozen out of? It means centering one's strategy on the maneuvers of the Zapatistas. And it means this even though one may have various reservations or criticisms of how the Zapatistas carry out their plans.

Of course, perhaps El Machete, while dealing with the Zapatistas and their convention, does pursue its own strategy. Until materials from and about El Machete are prepared, I can't judge this group in itself. And simply being at the convention or talking about the convention doesn't mean being submerged by it, and such a convention can give a picture of what the left is and what the Zapatista leaders are hoping for. But the account in the ad and from Rene is centered on the convention. I doubt that's totally an accident. Moreover the characterization of El Machete suggests the perspective of a fight within the convention--if El Machete isn't focused on that, the comments on El Machete are.

Well, what did El Machete say about proletarian reorganization? What did it say about influencing the Zapatistas? Did it simply repeat the traditional phrases of the left, although it opposed Cardenas and supported continued militancy and struggle by the Zapatistas? Did it put forward particularly proletarian stands at the convention? And this doesn't mean simply redefining the Zapatista struggle as objectively more revolutionary than they know and correcting their statements. Instead one must be able to face the difficult road the proletariat will go through in the coming years, partially because it is not organized in face of increasing destitution on one hand and the growing political crisis on the other. The proletariat should be inspired by the Chiapas revolt, but it can't get carried away with the particular forms of struggle--which don't generalize across all of Mexico--and it isn't revolutionary to predict great things unrelated to what the next steps of proletarian organization actually are because these predictions sound so militant and revolutionary.

If El Machete in fact put forward a proletarian alternative, why doesn't the ad describe it? (Simply saying they are more revolutionary than others is no description.) If the revolutionary stand amounted to simply opposing PRD's pacifism and give-up-the-struggle-ism, well, those things are fine, but they're not sufficient to be endorsed as the proletarian alternative in Mexico. And they're not sufficient to define El Machete's trend. Yet as the first new international endorsement by the minority, the El Machete announcement takes on a certain significance.

And if we are going to restrict our appeal concerning Mexico to this, then what happened to the anti-revisionist tasks we are taking up? What happened to our determination that the proletariat should once again build up its class parties? Are we to be carried away by the first mass force or mass rebellion which appears, and drop everything, and say--oh my, how revolutionary?

I hope not.

Revolutionary work isn't determined by how "revolutionary" one sounds. It depends on the direction of one's work. And especially at a time of reorientation and reconsideration, vague feelings about what sounds revolutionary--based on the old alignments in the left--are useless.

In 1976 the New York Branch objected to various articles in the WA that were developing a more consistent stand towards economic agitation and commentary than CPC(ML). One New York comrade (Alan perhaps, as characterized fairly or not by Manny) held that he couldn't say what was the correct stand on the issues we were writing on, but that the New York comrades could "smell" opportunism when they look at an article. My reply was that you can't smell opportunism. What you can smell is whether an article has the same general feel as what you are used to. You can smell that the article is different. But whether that difference is good or bad, requires analysis.

I don't think one can "smell" whether El Machete has the correct trend or not. I don't think sounding revolutionary, having a fist in the air, even opposing the right-wing at the convention, proves much. The point is, what are the tasks for Mexican proletarian revolutionaries to take up, and what is El Machete doing about it. Moreover, the point is what do we think the situation in Mexico is and what should be done about it, and how do we act as part of an international movement.

Finally, perhaps what I say about the Zapatistas doesn't sound very glorious. I am not trying to degrade the Chiapas revolt, and I think it is correct to be inspired by it. But I should hope that this inspiration doesn't require overlooking what their plans and strategies and political thinking are, or downplaying it as mere narrowness. I hope that such inspiration inspires us to take up our independent tasks, despite the obstacles against us, just as the Chiapas toilers did when they had to go into action so that they wouldn't be smashed into the ground. I think that our task is not just to eulogize the Zapatistas, but is especially to show people that the Chiapas revolt has to inspire them not to imitation, but to rebuilding proletarian organization. It no more helps the Chiapas toilers or the Mexican movement (or the American one for that matter) to simply fall in with Zapatista worship than it helped black activists to simply fall in with Panther worship. Recognizing the importance of the Zapatistas and the Panthers means something else entirely. If we are to provide any real proletarian solidarity for the Zapatistas and the Mexican left, we have to provide an independent standpoint.

I welcome any corrections from you to this speculation on the Zapatistas and the left. But I hope that, despite what must be many mistakes in description, it shows that a broader perspective is needed with respect to assessing Mexico and Mexican political forces, and more detailed and accurate information.

So much for now,
highest regards and season's greetings

Joseph

To: Minority
From: Joseph Green
December 21, 1994

Dear comrades,

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

Since the **CWV TJ** reflects real ongoing life, it's natural that it would reflect different conceptions of things as well. In this case, I want to point to the announcement on the back page concerning distribution of the Mexican journal **El Machete**. This is in effect the first international endorsement by our trend, and it also is relevant to an ongoing mass struggle--the ongoing revolt in Chiapas, which is again flaring up. It is worthwhile to pay some attention to this endorsement. Who we endorse, and why, and on what basis, is important.

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

The first thing that strikes the eye is how little the announcement says about **El Machete**. It talks about the graphic on the masthead, and the slogan, and that **El Machete** is fighting against Cardenas' reformist PRD inside the Democratic National Convention (Convencion Nacional Democratica) created at the call of the Zapatistas (EZLN). I do not know whether this means that **El Machete** wants to expel the PRD, or to work with it on a "united front" basis, or to win it to armed struggle, or simply to oppose individual stands of the PRD (such as its desire to gag or expel the "ultras"). The article doesn't say. As well, it says that **El Machete** carries news of the struggle and of various organizations in Mexico. The article concludes that "The CWV is distributing **El Machete** because it gives a more left-wing revolutionary perspective than any other paper we have seen from Mexico."

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

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

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

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

I have not been doing the research about Mexico. I assumed that others--excited and doing agitation about Chiapas--were doing it, and I had confidence that they would present material on it. I now have some doubt that this research is being done. And it looks doubtful whether it will be done unless questions are raised which show that analysis is needed, and that it is not sufficient to just say that something just sort of looks revolutionary. So I am going to stick my neck out, despite my lack of detailed work on Mexico, and suggest one possibility about what the situation with the Zapatistas and the Democratic National Convention might be. This possibility would suggest that there are serious reasons why not to endorse an organization without knowing its trend. Our proletarian internationalist duty to the Mexico workers and toilers is not the same as that of an ordinary solidarity group or a left columnist in some journal. It requires our supporting proletarian reorganization: in Mexico as well as elsewhere. Indeed, if anti-revisionist communism is not desirable or needed in Mexico for the revolution, if left-wing EZLNism is really what is needed, then anti-revisionism is not needed elsewhere either.

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

But what happens if we can't endorse many parts of the strategy and views of the EZLN leaders? Does facing this openly mean undermining this heroic struggle? The Chiapas revolt was and is inspiring to progressive people around the world. It justly has the support of Mexican activists. But in my view such support doesn't preclude a realistic assessment of the forces in this revolt, their strategy and views, and of their class basis. In fact, in my view, real support for the Chiapas toilers requires such a critical standpoint. They don't need honeyed words--they need class allies who have an independent idea of what is needed in their own struggle.

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

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

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

I doubt that they see the Mexican radical left (referring here to the organizations to the left of PRI and outside Cardenas' reformist PRD) as able to overthrow the establishment either. And in fact, this left has been unable to arouse the proletariat and itself faces a severe crisis, just as the left elsewhere does.

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

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

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

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

Meanwhile the radical left which is critical of the PRD is not strong enough to offer the EZLN an alternative for transforming Mexico. Rather, most of them probably want to gain strength from the EZLN. In effect, they want to ride EZLN rather than offering EZLN a horse. (Moreover, I suspect that the reality is a bit different from the sounds of the revolutionary rhetoric in the radical left. The Mexican left was put in crisis by the issue of how to deal with PRD. And the trotskyist framework is such that groups can denounce reformism in the most militant phrases in one breath and unite in the next, if only it's not a "popular front" but a "united front" or some variant of their idea of "military but not political support".)

It's hard not to believe that thoughtful EZLN leaders aren't well aware of the general position of the radical left. They also need support for their armed struggle and militant tactics, and the pro-PRD forces aren't going to give it to them. So the present dual nature of the Democratic National Convention.

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

The article on **El Machete** concentrates on the Democratic National Convention. Naturally this convention is important for seeing what the EZLN is and what the left is. But the task of revolutionary communists is not to get submerged in EZLN maneuvers. If one's viewpoint centers on the convention and its internal fights, it leads nowhere. The proletarian revolutionary stand in Mexico, a stand which doesn't rely on phrasemongering about revolution but actually prepares the way for revolution, requires finding the ways of bringing the proletariat to political life. This means, in part, being willing to go against traditional phrasemongering and looking honestly and openly at what various forces in Mexico represent. It means taking inspiration from the Chiapas revolt--not in imitation of EZLN maneuvers, but to stand up for rebuilding a proletarian movement. Without that, solidarity ends up meaning little. I was at a meeting in Detroit on Nov. 18, when Alexander Cockburn spoke on "From Chiapas to Haiti: a hemisphere in crisis" I warrant everyone from Cockburn to the audience thought highly of the EZLN. But the audience and Cockburn was bogged down in the most incredible pessimism, and talking about this pessimism, and apologizing for talking about what's going on, because it sounded so pessimistic. It sounded like a rally of our own moribund "majority", if such could be conceived. They couldn't simply imitate Chiapas, and so it ultimately didn't inspire them. One has to be inspired to the tasks of proletarian reorganization to convert the desire for solidarity into action. One has to see something growing at the present--not in phrases, but in reality.

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

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

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

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

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

But Rene posed the issue of our overall orientation at the last minority meeting. And I think this question deserves to be taken seriously, and answered directly. Rene believed that the struggle in the Democratic National Convention was the big anti-revisionist struggle, and presumably we could learn what was needed about anti-revisionism by following **El Machete**. Such views are connected to Rene's attitude towards the CWV TJ, his demand for a no-questions-asked endorsement of **El Machete**, and his withdrawal of support from the CWV TJ. I think this issue of the relation of anti-revisionism to the support of the Chiapas revolt has to be answered consciously and not evaded. And the implications of endorsing **El Machete** as the clearest revolutionary voice in Mexico also have to be considered. Rene's way of handling these issues seems to me to raise some big questions:

If we are going to restrict our appeal concerning Mexico to mainly the maneuvering of various groups around the EZLN, then what happened to the anti-revisionist tasks we are taking up? What happened to our determination that the proletariat should once again build up its class parties? Is anti-revisionism just a phrase which can be used to cover over any movement or political trend that happens to grow big and militant? Are we to be carried away by the first mass force or mass rebellion which appears, and drop our insistence on critical analysis and independent proletarian action, and simply say--"oh, my, how revolutionary! And so many people are involved!"?

I hope not.

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

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

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To: Oleg
From: Joseph
Dec. 23, 1994

Dear Oleg,

We received the two copies of **El Machete**. Thanks. At this point, I can read enough of an article to know I'm interested to see what it says, but not enough to actually see what it says. Very frustrating. C. however is interested in translating some of this material.

As to the translation program, don't worry about it. I just thought I would check before buying something. If you already had one for translating into English and could just send a copy without inconvenience, it would be one thing. But you don't. So we'll look into it here.

I am also passing on a note I received from NC. I don't think he'll mind. I thought that the parts about **El Machete** and what J. had to say about **El Machete** would be of particular interest at this moment. Maybe he's already written to you about J.'s visit, but in any case, it doesn't hurt to pass it on. On the other hand, I'm not sure he sees the full extent of the political basis behind Rene's ultimatum.

I think you did as well as anyone could have in writing the announcement on **El Machete**. The problem is that the political issues have to be dealt with rather than thinking there is a way of endorsing **El Machete** but not too much.

Highest regards, and may the new year be a good one for you,

Joseph

Date: 22-Dec-94 00:37 EST
From: NC

Subj: On El Machete & CWVTJ#5

Dear cde. Joseph,

We in LA were happy that CWVTJ#5 dealt with more practical issues at hand. This is NOT because we have any scorn for theory and ideological struggle. On the contrary LAWV feeds off of it with a zeal!! The problem is in the left trends that are existant are not very deep theoretically/ideologically and this is a BIG weakness in the actual motion here and is in fact crippling to the peoples movements.

But since we do have to deal at first with the motion where people are at, we do need to DEVELOP ways to write (and speak) on popular issues and burning issues and in a way that both gets the adrenalin going and is comprehensible. Personally, the cdes here have no problem learning and developing through the philosophical and ideological struggles waged in earlier issues of CWVTJ. It has strengthened our resolve to continue the fight and press forward! So as I argued with cde. Frank before, we have to try to get closer to those honest forces ready to struggle and then be principled enough to dispel liberal, social democrat and revisionist illusions that are promoted in the 'united front' coalitions that spring forward. We can give body and backbone to the future organizing to fight back this way and we won't have such a big Rodney Dangerfield complex either. We do get a little respect!!

As concerns CWV and Rene, I thought I would pass on a bit of info. to you. While J., a close friend of Rene's visited LA a couple of weeks ago, we had some serious discussions about the politics of Mexico and of course, the different leftist /workers groups and trends came up. I brought up a recent CWV statement about the El Machete group which was quite favorable to them. J. had a sample copy of El Machetes and brought it out, reading and interpreting an article or two on the current post-election situation. He himself stated quite clearly that while El Machete reportage was informative on the class and social turmoil He stated clear[ly] that it LACKED BOTH the WORKING CLASS and PARTY SPIRIT that one would want from a serious Marxist and Leninist formation--even a 'pre-party' one!! If I remember correctly he was very critical about a certain lack of working class partisanship and a kind of tailing behind both the organized or spontaneous motion that spurts up amongst impoverished sectors of the Mexican and Indigenous toilers. He complained a bout a lack of giving the movements a sharp sense of tactical or political direction!! Cdes. here, (SP reads more Spanish than CV or myself) will study the El Machete copy CWV sent us recently and we could get more verification on what J. told us for you if you want! We see El Machete supporters at demos at the Mexican Consolate here in LA sometimes, we talk briefly with them, exchange lit. etc. but I get no feeling that they are crazy about our politics here.

Frankly it kind of bothers me a bit if Rene puts the Chicago cdes. in a kind of bind of 'support this or I'm leaving' attitude To me its infantile, like when we were kids and told our friends ' if you don't let me win, I'll take all my marbles and go home' Comradeship means more respect and honesty to each other than that!

I admit I have a bad temper and have gone ballistic on cdes. here in the past years. I try to be more level headed now and try to understand the political/ personal contradictions that cause us problems and then we try to solve them in a fair way, not a one-way method. I think in politics that the collective class interests must in the end take precedence, even if individuals, good ones, need to know they cannot always have their way.

I too think that a clearer understanding of the theory and practice of the El Machete group needs to be tendered. Some groups on the left sometimes do very positive things but we don't go Ga-Ga and give them un-critical support or 'merge' with them all, do we?

Sincerely,
nc/LAWV

! Con El Machete tenemos muchas problemas!

From: NC

To: Oleg and Julie

To: Joseph

Dear cdes of CWV,

I am studying the EL Machete (EM) of 11/23 and we see that these "Marxists" have some big problems.

Usually nationalists have a smattering of knowledge about the geographic areas they wish to create nations out of. A am not sure the EM group really understands much about the class and social developement of the US southwest at least since the Mexican War of 1846-8 and probably even before that date as well.

To try to deal with the struggle against racist and national oppression in the south west areas without any comprehension

of the change and developments in the combined social/ economic & political environment is like trying to maneuver the atlantic ocean in a tug-boat without knowlege of the stars or a compass!

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

The El Machete article on fighting #187 racism was not dealing honestly even with the reality of the formal vote on #187 (albeit much hysteria stirred up by a huge corporate led mass media offensive of vicious chauvinism for 2 years or so at least). Caucasians voted 63-37 For -- Blacks were 52-48 against, latinos were 75-25 against and asians about 50-50 even split. I don't have a class breakdown yet but will try to get one. But also it should be remembered that LESS than 50% of those elegeible to vote even voted --and of these, the vast majority were workers of ALL nationalities.

The class interests and consciousness (or lack of it) is not even taken into account by the so-called Marxists of El Machete. Their analysis of the tactics border (no pun) on the suicidal, not much different that the lumpenloving- line one gets from MIM Notes or kindred groups.

The Mexicanos and Chicanos here definitely have major class stratifications along the line and history of capitalist industrial developement here in last century and a half. Machete writers should visit areas like Azusa, Cerritos, Arcadia, Costa Mesa, Altadena, Whittier etc. here. They will find a quite numerous petty bourgeois and even bourgeois sectors of native latinos who have been and are most loyal, as 'loyal' as many a 'gringo' politically and ideologically to US capitalism and the flag it stands for! To imply the same interest and struggle to the latinos in these areas, say compared to say Bell, Hungtington Park, East LA, Pico Union, etc which have a near majority de-facto impoverished and super-exploited workers is a cruel joke.

Finally, I am trying to study more on this history and struggle. I am finding out already that when the US capitalists stole the Mexican territory here via warfare in 1846-8, They were even before this and during, cutting deals with the 'hacendados' and 'latifundistas', the latino elite here to pave the way for the eventual US trake over, and further accelerated plunder of the workers and poor with racist super-exploitation an added component, with some 'priveliges' thrown down to the 'loyal' landowners and businesspeople. Of course, native americans, indians, were considered near 'fair game'.

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

Best regards,
nc/LA

To: the minority
From: Mark
Date:

Report on the DMLSG meeting of Jan. 1, 1995

The first issue we discussed was the carrying of an ad for the Mexican newspaper *El Machete*. Comrades here were unanimously unhappy with the carrying of the ad. Someone raised that there was no presentation of what the stand of the newspaper was. Carrying the ad was bowing to spontaneity in a fashion similar to Rene on the grounds that a lot was happening there. But Rene was unwilling to make analysis. It looks like other comrades were pressured into endorsing *El Machete* sight unseen. The comrade thought that the ad was wrong in saying you can see the stand of this group by the fact that they say "Workers of all countries, unite!" as many groups carry stuff like this. The comrade compared this to various Chicago comrades raising that the word "socialism" must appear "x" amount of times. Both represent a "formalistic" approach.

Another comrade noted that much of the ad focused the fact that the newspaper covered the Zapitista convention. He thought that there was an inordinate focus on the convention and referred approvingly to the points brought out in Joseph's article to the minority on the matter. The comrade recalled how there was a romanticizing of the Zapitistas in last year's Chicago May Day meeting. There were disclaimers that the EZLN was not organized the national proletarian revolution. But the fact that EZLN did not consider itself a "vanguard" party was promoted, which is factually correct, but does not deal with the issue of whether a vanguard party is needed. As well, the fact that EZLN wanted united fronts with other forces was talked about as if it was a great new discovery. As well, there were comments in the meeting that promoted that the Zapitistas were superior to the Maoist Shining Path in Peru because they based themselves on the masses. But Shining Path, despite its wrong-headed politics, was a bigger mass force than the Zapitistas and was more of a military threat to overturn the government, at one time anyway, than the Zapitistas.

Someone else said he was under the impression that Chicago comrades did not have much info on *El Machete*. But there is a question of whether various comrades realized they had little information. The comrade stated that it might be useful to carry some interesting article from *El Machete*.

A couple of comrades also were under the impression that various comrades in Chicago were excited about distributing the paper. They asked why it should be distributed prior to knowing what the paper was about.

There was also some discussion of views on this issue from other cities that we had received via e-mail. It was noted that both Seattle and LA had been supportive of Joseph's comments against the ad. A comrade said that one of the LA comrades initially focused on Rene's uncomradely behavior in issuing an ultimatum on the ad while crediting Rene with raising the issue of a softening attitude toward imperialism in the CC in 1990. Later communications acknowledged that the content of Rene's criticism was lacking. The comrade thought that the amount of importance given to the controversies in the minority and the ex-MLP comrades varied among LA comrades. It was good that they were collectively focusing on some of the controversies on contemporary issues. **(I left out the comments on SP for diplomatic reasons. Is that advisable?)**

Our second topic was continuing our study of Cliff's book, *State capitalism in Russia*. We planned to study chapters 2-5, but only made it through 2 and 3. Some of the issues were:

[This section omitted since the Detroit comrades had previously said they would prefer not to print the discussion on Cliff in this form, CWV]

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 To: Oleg
 From: Joseph
 Jan 3, 1995

I hope you've had a good holiday season, and return refreshed and invigorated to the tasks of the new year!

Thanks for the stuff from Internet. The Haiti stuff is fragmentary, but it's good to get any information at all. The only news I remembers from the paper's here recently was Aristide appointing a new military chief to replace Duperval. Meanwhile Kim Moody's article on economics was fascinating. He tries to connect the breakup of the old forms of organizing to the changes in the economy. He however ends up seeing the new forms of organizing where they aren't.

I appreciate receiving the news about Mexico as well. And Mexico will be heating up with the devaluation and big increase in the course of living.

Meanwhile it seems to me that the El Machete issue is going to bring forward an issue of political trends. I think that you face in Chicago differences with Rene on political framework, and the El Machete issue suggests that this has come to a head. I don't know what the outcome will be, but it has to be consciously dealt with. As I wrote in my attempt to summarize the year, the minority had a good deal of accomplishments. But we faces issues of assessment. Without that, we won't survive very long in the new year

We in the minority have written over and over that ideological differences in the old MLP shouldn't have been papered over but openly faced. Very well, can the ideological differences among the minority over the value of anti-revisionism be swept under the rug? Or regarded as simply someone being subjective (when have I heard that slogan before)?

On another subject, when I wrote you on Nov. 10 about my views on your article on Haiti (that appeared subsequently in CWV TJ #5), I said I still had to look back on the earlier WA articles on Haiti that you contrasted to the later ones. I then read them, but intended to do more to study them in comparison to other articles. But it's clear I'm not going to get to that. So I'll just tell you my general impressions, if that's OK.

The articles seemed fine, and spirited on U.S. imperialism. There were, it's true, this or that issue. For instance, with respect to Namphy taking power, one article described how and why U.S. imperialism worked with the military forces in Haiti. Another--a brief one--summarized it as simply the U.S. installing Namphy, which I don't think is quite the same thing. But this is a relatively minor weakness.

The main thing I found is that I couldn't separate my reading of these articles from the questions I have from working on the DWV leaflet on Haiti. Many background questions arose in the discussions that led to that leaflet, and in writing it. I want to know what the class forces in Haiti are: what does the working class consist of in Haiti? What does the rural population consist of? How much are the toilers workers, how much small impoverished producers in the countryside, how much rural proletarians? What does the economy look like? What is the bourgeoisie in Haiti? Is there a minority section that dissents on the military dictatorship (and provides soil for some wealthy Aristide supporters)--and if so, what is it? What does the popular movement in Haiti look like on one hand, and what was the organization of the prominent figures who backed Aristide on the other.

These articles didn't provide any help on such issues.

In some ways, they resembled how we wrote about Nicaragua prior to our meeting MAP(ML). We denounced imperialism's efforts to strangle the revolution. But with respect to the Sandinistas, we could only disassociate ourselves from them in a very general way. It was after we started talking to MAP (ML) that we could start describing the internal situation in the Nicaraguan movement, and give concrete criticism of the Sandinistas and raise detailed issues of how the popular movement was faring in Nicaragua. We might still not have had all the answers, but we were asking more profound questions about the class alignments.

The later Haiti articles, the subject of your criticism, also did not answer the question I now want dealt with. They only give a general view of what Aristide represented.

Nevertheless, for me, the best part of what was otherwise a painful last few years, was gradually asking more profound questions about how revolution proceeds. We are raising deeper issues. From this point of view, I have no desire to go backward to the old articles of 86-88, satisfactory as they may have been for their purpose at the time. Nor do I wish to stay at the level of the last few articles in the WA on Haiti. More attention has to be focused on how the class forces in Haiti work. Without this, anti-imperialism becomes empty and unable to maintain itself. Nor can we fulfill our obligations to the Haitian toilers in particular.

No doubt you agree with this and would also welcome a more detailed class analysis. But your article in CWV TJ #5 doesn't raise the issue quite in this way. It still keeps it at the level of how the matter was debated a few years ago--a question of how much the history of imperialist domination was repeated in these articles. But just as our advance in coverage of Nicaragua did not consist of simply reiterating its history of U.S. domination but of learning more about the class forces in Nicaragua and their relationships among themselves and to imperialism, so too further advance with respect to Haiti would have to proceed in that direction.

I also spent a bit more time thinking about your remark "I don't think we would have achieved anything if we had pushed it, since we were never able to convince any MLP members outside of Chicago of the validity of any of our criticisms of any WA articles." I worry that you still have a picture that anything said by Chicago comrades was just disregarded, and that's the main problem with how the struggle proceeded.

Well, Jim said that what Chicago comrades said had no influence on WA, but that's was Jim's lie and a reflection of his intolerance in general. Slim, for example, followed closely what CWV said, and what was said at regional meetings, on the issues he wrote on in the WA. The WA group discussed such views. When, for example, we denounced the Mexican bourgeoisie more, it was due to seeing CWV do so--we thought we were lagging in what the CWV expected us to do, and we tried to figure out how to strengthen our agitation on Mexico.

But moreover, there are other issues on why the various comrades who would form the minority didn't find a common standpoint.

Let me get there by a somewhat roundabout route.

The Fourth Congress of the MLP had a resolution on the party crisis, authored by Slim. This resolution called for many fine things, but it was a dead letter upon passage. For example, it called for more research--and "everyone" was for this--yet after the congress research from the CC majority came to a dead stop.

But what alternative to this resolution was put forward?

The forces that would later become the minority were disunited, it seems to me, by a lack of any concrete alternative to this resolution.

What alternative did I put forward? What alternative did you or other Chicago comrades put forward? I don't believe there was any satisfactory alternative put forward by anyone at that time.

I was quite worried by the latter part of 1990, when it first began to appear to me that the MLP might not survive. By 1991 I put forward that the MLP might fragment. And I wrote an article in an IB saying that the issue of the assessment of communism and social-democracy was coming up. Today of course there is no question that the issue of social-democracy was coming up.

But I didn't have an idea what to do about the decay of the MLP in the case that all my worries were correct. I wanted discussion, and hoped I would learn from the reaction and views of others. I was profoundly skeptical of the CC majority stand, and of their declarations that they were willing to continue with the struggle while investigation continued. But I didn't have a platform for what should be done.

Prior to the Fourth Congress, I considered the proposed resolution on the party crisis on the 4th Congress as insufficient by itself to show whether the CC majority really supported the resolution, as it claimed to, rather than just paying it lip-service. So I pushed the revision of the General Rules, which the CC otherwise wanted dropped from the Fourth Congress agenda. There was a big "blowout", as Joe calls it, on this. In the course of this, I mentioned that I was considering not running for reelection to the CC, and Jim bitterly denounced me for my supposed "blackmail". For Jim, the only reason to insist on the revision of the General Rules was a plot to throw him out of the party. (But, I admit, I can't claim credit for any such plot.)

However, the discussion on the revision of the General Rules was, ultimately, a failure:

a) the discussion just died out after the Fourth Congress; b) the proposed revision had some nice features to it, which would have been useful if the party had been continuing work, but it did not speak to the type of complete shift in our organizational

work that would be necessary in the event of the major breakup that we faced; and

c) the proposed revision did not bring to the fore the neo-conservative offensive and its dramatic effects on the party, that is, the ideological background to the shift in our work that was needed, etc.

It thus could not and did not serve as an alternative plan.

Some, not all, Chicago comrades put forward a resolution on the party's Persian Gulf war agitation to the congress. This was the major alternative resolution at the Congress. I think this resolution's characterization of the WA's agitation was mistaken, but that isn't relevant to the point I want to make now. The point is that this resolution also didn't contemplate the type of alternative that was needed.

It wasn't a question that we were facing correcting some shortcomings in articles or agitation. We were facing a major crisis and fragmentation of the party. If, say, I am wrong and the WA really had been much worse than I believed and then the resolution itself said and if the WA was just a cover for the CC majority, then it would only underline this. That would just underline that one couldn't just say, for example, have the WA write better articles or the party call better conferences. One would then be facing replacing the entire central staff as well as the CC--which under the circumstances meant essentially not having a central staff or a CC--and completely reorienting the work. It meant putting forward a perspective for what anti-revisionist work meant in the coming harsh period--ideologically as well as organizationally--and how it was to be carried out.

What plan was set forward for this?

No plan. No more than the proposed revision of the General Rules did.

Perhaps there is the idea that if one criticized WA etc., that would inspire discussion. And then from that discussion, one would learn things, develop a plan etc. Well, in a way, I had followed a similar idea too, with articles against Fred (Seattle), with the General Rules revision, etc. It didn't work.

Until the future minority had something of a positive program, and not just doubts about various things, it remained scattered and at odds among itself.

The discussions just prior to the 5th Congress among the comrades who would soon form the minority began to provide a perspective. None of the proposals for organization were adopted, but a perspective for common struggle began to develop. And the proposal for a temporary journal, the actual publication of the CWV TJ, and the participation in the debate provided the core of a common positive program.

This point of view reinforces my belief that it is important for the minority to consciously uphold its own general perspective and to declare itself today, if it is to survive. After a year of work, it can no longer be just a minority. It has to unite those who stand for something.

The momentum around having our say in the debate isn't sufficient anymore. Today we are proceeding on the basis of our own work and momentum. Even the remaining part of the debate centers on what interests we have, and what topics we want to clarify.

I do not mean that we need a tight organization now, which is something you worry about. It's not possible to have a tight organization today; it doesn't correspond to the nature of our grouping (we are not a party now); and I don't advocate our having one. When I took part in the discussion between Frank and the LA comrades on our prospects, I did not argue for an tight organization, quite the contrary, and I stand by what I said. But we have been discussing points of unity since the first meeting of the minority. At this point, we can no longer be just a minority--or we will dissolve away as the majority has dissolved. We must be people with a positive program. We must look towards what we want to accomplish in the future. If we believe in the value of working to establish anti-revisionism on a firm basis, if we believe that only this can help the reorganization of the proletariat and the revival of communism, then we can proceed. And if we do have such a program, it will be important to declare it.

So much for now.

Highest regards,

Joseph

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To: the minority

From: Oleg

Jan. 4, 1994

Dear comrades,

Joseph has objected strongly to the announcement on the back page of the latest Theoretical Journal about *El Machete*. He considers that this is in effect an endorsement and he strongly questions the politics of this paper. Since I am the one who wrote and signed that article, I will try to give some reply to Joseph's comments.

First of all, from a purely formal angle, I believe that the announcement can be easily defended. For one thing the

Chicago Workers' Voice has had policy for some time of making available all sorts of left newspapers that we receive to anyone who asks us for them. We have a special section of the bookstore where we display newspapers from U.S. left groups, all of which we have serious disagreements with, as well as all the international periodicals that come in to us. So *El Machete* is not the only left wing political newspaper we distribute that is not directly "our trend". Secondly we made a decision several months ago in the Chicago Workers' Voice to ask for and distribute *El Machete* in Chicago. This decision may be questioned as having been taken too lightly and without enough information, but it was discussed and taken at least a couple of times several months ago. Nothing really happened on this for a while because Rene couldn't get them to send us any quantity until two bundles arrived about the time we held the minority meeting early in Nov. We did, however, run a short article from *El Machete* entitled "Errors of the PRD" in the *Voz Obrera* that we put out for Mexican Independence Day in Sept. The introduction to that article did make clear that we have no particular connection to *El Machete*. When the issue came up of putting an ad for *El Machete* into the Journal (raised by Rene), there was a decision of those who participated in the next CWV meeting (which Rene and I both missed, for different reasons) not to run just a straight ad but to try to get an article explaining the significance of *El Machete*.

Therefore from a strictly formal point of view the announcement that CWV was distributing *El Machete* was perfectly correct. Did I word everything perfectly in the article? No, of course not. In particular the last line overstates the reasons we are suggesting people might want to read *El Machete*.

Joseph considers the announcement to be tantamount to an endorsement of *El Machete*. In the broad sense that Joseph is using the term endorsement, I disagree. The intent of the announcement was to let those who are interested in news of the struggles in Mexico know that we have available an alternative resource which has a generally more left-wing stand than any other paper which we have found from Mexico. The main intent in getting *El Machete* in the first place was to provide it to activists and workers in the Mexican community who were hungry for news of the struggles in Mexico and particularly relating to the Zapatistas. It seemed to me that there might also be some readers of the Journal who might want an alternative source of news on Mexico. So, why not let them know we have this paper? *Workers' Advocate* is no longer in existence. We in Chicago can not produce timely articles on developments in Mexico. At least if one combines *El Machete* with social democratic and bourgeois sources, an activist might be able to keep up with events there.

Thus, I am trying to explain that the "endorsement" of *El Machete* in the Journal, if you can call it that, was as an alternative, more left wing, in broad terms, source of news about struggles in Mexico. I did not and do not endorse *El Machete* as the revolutionary alternative for the working class in Mexico. I did not say that they are the Marxist-Leninists of Mexico. I don't know of any group which is. I don't think it is fair to read that kind of endorsement into this article. I certainly did not recommend *El Machete* as a source of discussion and analysis of issues of Marxist-Leninist theory. I couldn't because they don't even carry such articles. In fact, I have not seen any statement in *El Machete* that it is a Marxist-Leninist publication.

The announcement does not endorse *El Machete's* political analysis. I considered including an explicit statement trying to make clear that CWV and *El Machete* are separate political organizations with no particular ties and that each is responsible for its own views and statements. My wording was fuzzy, Julie didn't like what I wrote and I gave up. I was not that worried that readers would jump to the conclusion that CWV and *El Machete* were in some way politically united.

I stand by my "endorsement" of *El Machete* as an alternative and left-wing, in the broad sense, source of news about the struggles in Mexico. I can see by the comments from Joseph that this point needs to be further clarified in subsequent issues of the Journal.

Julie has been pushing me that we need to write some more analytical article about the situation in Mexico both for the Journal and for agitation at events which are coming up in the next month in Chicago. I agree in theory. We have quite a bit of material. I'm going to give it a try, but I can't give any guarantees.

Joseph raises a number of other points in his letter of Dec. 21. I can't respond in detail to them right now. For one thing he claims that there was bad relationship between Rene and the "A" unit, that Rene bullied the unit, etc. At first sight I don't agree with that assessment. I am going to take some more time before I discuss that issue which I consider to be somewhat separate from the issue of what stand we should take to *El Machete* or to the Zapatistas or to the Mexican political movement. The issue of Rene is less urgent since he has ceased all political cooperation with Chicago Workers' Voice. I think I can take some time and think about this more at my leisure.

Joseph also suggests a political analysis of the Zapatistas. Many of his points seem to be close to or on the mark. I don't have time to comment in detail on them. I do think he has a point that there is some tendency for those political activists who are involved in or close to the Mexican nationality political movement to get carried away in their enthusiasm for the militancy and successes of the Zapatistas. We do need to understand that this is a peasant movement which is different from a proletarian movement. We do need to make our own assessment of the Zapatista strategy. I think Joseph is right that the Zapatistas know full well what rotten opportunists the PRD are and decided for strategic reasons that they needed to try to use them.

In relation to this last point I strongly recommend that any comrades who can stumble through the Spanish read the article on page 2 of No. 54 and the editorial on page 3. I'm sorry but I am still working on the Spanish translation of our election article and I won't have time to translate them anytime soon. *El Machete* makes sort of oblique complaints about the Zapatistas endorsing opportunists to run the CND.

Anyway I appreciate Joseph's comments on the Zapatistas. They will be of use if I can get to write an article on the struggle in Mexico. (Anyone else who wants to write on Mexico, feel free!) I did notice two more or less factual points that I think Joseph may not have quite right. One point is that the CND is not just a convention that is called periodically by the Zapatistas. It is a definite coalition type body that has continuing political activity. *El Machete* is complaining about some of this. Joseph also says that the Mexican working class has not broken through the PRI-dominated trade union leadership. To a large extent this is true, but it is my impression that there is some independent trade union activity outside of the PRI-dominated unions. There is an organization called FAT (Frente Auténtico de los Trabajadores, I think) which is an independent trade union center, not necessarily independent of all trade unionist narrowness or bourgeois politics, but independent of the CNT. I believe that unions such as the UE and ACTWU in the U.S. are working with the FAT unions to some extent. Every year there is an alternative trade unionist march (usually militant and with large numbers) on May First opposing the PRI-sponsored march. Certainly the Mexican working class as a whole has not built an independent movement in the way we see as necessary. However, there are definitely some oppositional currents within the Mexican working class; I think probably more so than in the U.S. Of course they also face greater repression than we do here in the U.S.

Enough on analysis of Mexico for now. I do think we need to work a lot more on this analysis. It has a lot of significance for effective participation in the political movement in Chicago and Los Angeles at least.

There are some points on the actual content of *El Machete* that I should mention at least in passing. I have found a couple of articles in *El Machete* that I definitely disagree with. I would bet that other comrades in the minority would also disagree with them. NC found one of the most serious; their article on the struggle against prop. 187 is very bad. It gives a totally nationalist line, never even raising the issue that attacks on the Mexican nationality divide the working class and harm the working class movement. Another bad article is their statement on Cuba where they call for solidarity with Cuba not just on a humanitarian basis but on the basis of support for socialism. That's not why I oppose the U.S. blockade on Cuba. There was also some little, relatively innocuous report from L.A. by their "brother paper" the *People's Tribune*!

I still think that *El Machete* is worth reading and circulating to some extent because it is an alternative source on the movement in Mexico. I certainly am not going to tell anyone that *El Machete* is the anti-revisionist Marxist-Leninist center in Mexico. (Of course, I never did.) I'm not sure whether it is worthwhile to carry on polemics with *El Machete*, but knowing their stands on 187 and Cuba makes me want to look harder at what they say about other issues that I know less about. Julie is probably right that it's more important to develop our analysis of Mexican politics than to get in a polemical battle with *El Machete* (Besides the point that I doubt if they care what we say about them.)

Joseph also accuses the announcement and "some CWV agitation" of not going "beyond purified EZLNism". Frankly I don't quite get his point.

Anyway, to hit my main point once again from a slightly different angle, I do not agree that the announcement was a broad political endorsement of *El Machete*, and especially not an endorsement of them as the anti-revisionists of Mexico. I do "endorse" *El Machete* as an alternative and useful source of news about struggles in Mexico. I believe there exist, outside of our direct circles, numbers of activists and workers who are struggling to keep informed about struggles in Mexico and particularly about the Zapatista-led struggles and who are trying to analyze these struggles. I think it is proper and natural to offer to share with anyone who is interested the sources of information that I have. It's not that easy for many people in Chicago, for example, to locate the actual statements of the Zapatistas. Nor are there other readily available sources outside of *El Machete* which give a more intimate look at the political maneuvering around the Zapatistas. Both types of information are important for anyone to have who wants to try to understand more about the Zapatista-led struggle than comes from the bourgeois media or the social democrats. Along with providing these resources, if we can provide some of our own analysis, so much the better. But our ability to do this is limited. I think it is a useful service to activists and interested workers to provide them with this material even if we can't give them our own analysis.

I will try to return to these topics later, but this is all I can manage to write for now.

Bright red greetings,
Oleg

To: Minority comrades
From: Oleg (Chicago)
Jan. 9, 1995

Comrades,

Here is just a little bit of additional information about one article in *El Machete* that I criticized in my recent letter. The article on prop 187 is a signed article and the person who signed it is known to Anita. He is an activist with the MLN in Los

Angeles. The article gives their screwy, nationalist line. You LA comrades may know this man, Guillermo. He is apparently very active. J. spent a good bit of time running around with him when he was in LA, although J. does not agree with him.

Anita has observed a least two categories of articles in *El Machete*. There are unsigned articles and editorials which appear to give the views of the people who put out the paper and there are signed articles reflecting a variety of views, sometimes contradictory. Also we should note that the article on 187 was on a page facing a letter to *El Machete* from MLN complaining that the Mexican left was not picking up on their dogmas about the struggles of Mexicans in "Occupied Mexico".

So does this change my criticism of the article? Not really. I don't think it would be that clear to most casual readers of the paper that this was not the view of *El Machete*, if indeed it is not. I just think knowing where the article came from helps a little more in understanding what this paper is.

One other unrelated fact that I forgot to mention earlier, the newspaper from India, *Proletarian Emancipation*, has begun serializing Mark's article on cartels. I keep forgetting to make a copy to send to Detroit. If anyone else wants a copy, please let me know.

Keep up the struggle,
Oleg

To: Pete
From: Oleg
Jan. 10, 1995

Pete,

I don't have a huge amount of info on the MLN (Movimiento para Liberacion Nacional, National Liberation Movement). If they have their own paper I haven't seen it. According to the report I got indirectly from J., they have a handful of people in LA. Some of them have started distributing *El Machete*. I think they go back a couple of decades, very militant but very nationalist. The line they are pushing in *El Machete* is for a united socialist Mexico which includes all the present Southwest of the U.S. They are complaining that most of the left in Mexico seems not to have much enthusiasm for this project. I bet the LA comrades have run into them, and I'll also bet that MLN's nationalist line didn't allow much serious communication. In Chicago it's been years since I ran into anyone claiming to be MLN. The only time I remember is in connection with political actions in the Puerto Rican neighborhood. The MLN was somewhat hostile to white Marxist-Leninists coming onto their turf.

Hope this helps a little,

Oleg

To: minority
From: Julie
Jan. 9, 1995

The Chicago Workers' Voice group is preparing to put out another Theoretical Journal. We request that anyone who has submissions please make them by Jan. 21.

We had initial discussion about the contents of the next journal.

These are the various possibilities

1. The One Year since the dissolution of the Party articles. These deal with some assessment of the history of the Party, the reasons for the dissolution, the state of the "majority" and "minority". We plan to carry at least part one and probably parts 1 and 2.

2. Continuing the discussion on Haiti and Palestine. We discussed carrying Jason's letter on Haiti and Joseph's response and Jason's latest letter on Palestine and Neil's response. However, it's possible we will only carry one or the other as the both issues cover similar ground.

3. The continuing work on the character of the working class. We have 3 book reports from Pete. We would probably carry two of them.

4. The discussion on Cliff and the ISO trend. Coming out of some discussion at the last meeting of the minority on the importance of exposing this trend, we are thinking to carry the report from the Detroit Study group on Cliff and the two reports from LA.

5. further on the discussion of socialism in one country- the report from the Detroit study group on the discussion of Dave's

article.

6. reprints of the leaflets on postal struggles from Detroit.

7. from Ben - we received a request from him to print the section of his "polemic" entitled cooperative socialism and the section on Stalinism sections 64-68. Since the one on "cooperative socialism" tends to give a view on something and not just abuse - we will probably print at least this and probably both requested sections

8. there was discussion on whether to print the discussion on El Machete but no determination was made yet.

9. We received a call from Alan Stout saying he wanted to make a submission and wanting to know the deadline. We don't what the submission is and whether we will actually receive it for this journal.

10. We received a letter from Red Orange with a request to print the letter announcing their publication.

11. Possible some of the exchange on Ben's "substanceless abuse".

I hope this information is of use to you.

There is a demonstration against prop 187 planned for Feb 7 here. We are currently working on a flyer on the Mexican economic crisis which we are trying to have ready for this event.

Regards,
Julie

To: CWV TJ
CC: Minority
From: Joseph
January 11, 1995

Dear comrades,

Thanks for the notice of the CWV TJ. I am happy to see that the planning for the next issue of the journal is rolling along. I am sure we will be discussing it in our study group here. For now, I want to tell you the first thoughts that occur to me on the proposed contents.

I strongly recommend AGAINST including the Detroit study group reports. We will see later what other study group members here say. So far I have only talked briefly to Mark on this.

Perhaps there is some misunderstanding as to what these reports are intended to be. The reports are rough summaries of the discussion, prepared painfully by Mark with some input from Pete and myself. They wander around, as they reflect the discussion. They don't contain the advances that take place from thinking over the discussion, or even correct things that are one-sided, because the reports are supposed to reflect the discussion. They are preliminary working reports, would be hard for others to deal with, and would especially not appeal to people who are still under the influence of Cliff.

I could perhaps see using a rough report in a special case where it deals with some burning idea needed right away in an ongoing discussion, and there is no other way to get it out fast. Or perhaps when it is useful supplementary or documentary material. But that doesn't apply to these reports at this time.

My intention remains to work on a Cliff article, although I don't have a timetable and can't say that the first one will be before Jan. 21. Given that you and I are both working further on Trotskyism, I don't think it necessary or desirable to print the rough, preliminary material of the study group reports. Given the lack of space afflicting CWV TJ, printing such material would also mitigate against printing later worked-out articles that cover much of the same ground, although in a more comprehensible and more developed manner. It's like printing the unit discussion that decides on a leaflet, rather than going on to actually write the leaflet.

I would however be most interested to know your views on the discussion from LA and Detroit, what points you thought important, what points incomprehensible, what was good, what was not so good. This would help in research and preparing an article on Cliff.

In general, I think that, while we will start publishing on Cliff soon, we (the minority as a whole) should realize that solid work that makes a difference will take some time. We will be working on various aspects of trotskyism and state capitalism for some time, along the way publishing articles dealing with this or that aspect. We may also end up discussing some differences among ourselves, just as we are in the SIOC discussion. It may well be quite a bit of time before it starts to all come together as an overall powerful critique that has the possibility of changing the situation in the left and that can be put in a major work that will circulate and last. It might be said that CPNZ has gone over to Cliff NOW, and there's OCPO to worry about NOW, but to forestall this, we needed work several years ago. As a matter of fact, there WAS work several years ago in the Supplement, and it hit on a number of sore points of Cliff's views. The groups gravitating to Cliff wouldn't deal with it, because Cliff gave them a way to associate with a "big" trend (and we couldn't offer that) and to put forward pat--if wrong--answers on a series of

the troubling issues (and we couldn't offer them that either). So today, our work doesn't simply fill in a yawning gap that the old MLP never addressed at all. Our work has to prepare a deeper and fuller critique of Cliff and trotskyism that will last beyond the needs of the moment, and we should prepare ourselves for a big battle on it.

Similarly, I think the LA material on Cliff would do better worked out a bit more more, or at least put next to more worked out material. It also seems to be part of a preliminary survey of the material, and I think we can wait to let it be fleshed out. It's precisely because this material is of value that it would be helpful to have developed somewhat further. Left as it is, it might be mystifying to most readers.

I also recommend AGAINST printing the Detroit study group report on Dave's article. Again, it was not designed as an article, and I think--I'll have to go recheck--it recovers some of the ground of the printed discussion in CWV TJ. What are the reasons you want to include it, and what points in particular do you see as needed to make? What suggestions do you have as to where this discussion should go? True, it would nice to have more material on the SIOC issue, but this depends on developing more work on it. It seems to me that some thought has to be given to how to continue the discussion on SIOC, rather than just reprinting this report.

I did point out in consultation on an earlier CWV TJ that part of my "notes on theory" from prior to the 5th Congress dealt with how the issue of the socialist program comes up in the party. As well, there is the report of the New York study group which shows that doubts were coming up among them concerning SIOC not just in small, backward, undeveloped countries, but in the United States. Whether this material makes any sense in this coming issue of the TJ is another question, however. The minority discussion on socialism has slowed down, and it's hard for the CWV TJ not to reflect this.

I like the idea of the book reports from Pete on the working class.

You might consider printing LA's The Bell Curve. Not as timely as carrying it last time, but it is still current.

Do you have CWV material to print? Agitation on Mexico for example? Will your material on the Mexican economic crisis be available in time? Would delaying the TJ another week or so allow time for you to finish your material on that? Are there earlier materials of interest?

Who is Red Orange? Can you transmit a copy of their letter to you and of their announcement? (I am trying to remember whether Oleg already sent some material some time ago on Red Orange as part of Internet stuff, but I can't find it for now.) I assume you are thinking of simply carrying their letter as correspondence???

On the other hand, so far you haven't carried the letter from the Philippines or announcements about what other groups are doing as correspondence (such as the Indians reprinting the article on cartels, or the New Zealanders abandoning their communist name to join the Cliff trend). Are you thinking of starting to carry a correspondence and news column, which might be interesting indeed, and isn't there then a bit of back correspondence that could be carried? If not, why is Red Orange special? And in any case, why is Red Orange of special interest to TJ readers and the cause of building up the anti-revisionist critique?

What's up with Frank's report on APEC? I realize he is busy with pressing personal things, but have you checked with him? Can you encourage him to have it for this issue of the journal? Or if not this time, the next time at the very very latest. I think it would be important to carry this. It shows serious investigation of imperialism, it's useful now as an encouragement to other research on imperialism, and although preliminary, it's done carefully. I am a bit antsy that this material hasn't yet appeared.

On the "one year since" articles I think it makes sense to provide a survey of what's happened since the party dissolved. This will be of interest to any comrade still vaguely between the two camps and trying to figure out what happened, as well as to interested people outside the party circles. It is perhaps the last major objective event between the two camps. With the majority fading away, next year's summation will center on something else. And this year there may still be people who are sort of interested in what's happened around the country--and I don't think the majority provided them with overall news of other areas.

As far as the cutting down the series' size goes, in case not all part one and two is carried, I think it is important to keep the discussion of the needs of the "minority" for the coming year that comprises the latter half of part two: this is where there is the claim that the minority needs its own banner and of the claim that despite the accomplishments of the last year, the minority will not necessarily continue unless it looks at its perspective. Not everyone may agree with these points. But this "year after" series expresses my viewpoint, and these claims are a key part of that viewpoint concerning the coming year.

I of course would also like to see the point against the majority--where is your journal?--and at least part of the review of what happened to the party circles in general. (I think that this discussion in the CWV TJ will circulate a bit, while the e-mail series will hardly have been seen by anyone in the majority.) But not at the expense of the discussion of what is the perspective for the minority.

And, will the CWV staff have its own "after one year" statement? It's the time for it. At least a paragraph or two near the editorial guide to the journal?

Mark is working on a reply to Jason which I think should be done in a few days at worst. This recent exchange with Jason has interest because, among other things, it brings up judging the polemics on the basis of what has actually happened in the mini-state over the last year. It continues a polemic on an issue that is going to be in the news week after week.

And it also shows more clearly how the glorification of state-building and economy-building is coming up with Jason. These

stands of Jason actually reflect general stands in society and the left.

I think that the Palestine polemic (Jason, LA, Mark) is quite important and is of higher priority than the latest round of the Haiti polemic. One issue is that the Haiti situation has changed now. Aside from Oleg thoughtfully sending some material from the Internet and from a few little articles in the local press--I have little information on what is going on under the Aristide restoration. It shows. The last exchange between Jason and I doesn't deal with the experience of the new phase. If it did, it too would be quite important to print. Since it doesn't, it is only one of many things.

I am working on something on Ben's neo-conservatism--a reply to his recent stuff--which also should be done soon, I hope. This exchange has interest because Ben hits on the question of anarchy of production, of what future society is, etc. and puts forward neo-conservatism. He pictures the future as the market forever, although unlike Fred he won't say that, but pictures it as the techno-anarchist, Jeffersonian small proprietor dream--"cooperative anarchy". This brings up what socialism is, and what the current conservative mood is. Ben wants to fight on this, and so we have again managed to direct him to some point of content. So I think carrying something from Ben's challenge on anarchy of production, from the material that inspired this challenge, and from the reply--if it turns out good--that will soon be available, will be useful.

I strongly think that you should print the discussion on El Machete. El Machete is controversial in our ranks; and it concerns not a paper picked at random, but one which is being used in an important part of the work in Chicago. CWV TJ, to be the journal of a grouping, should reflect the thought about this in that grouping.

As well, it gives some possible analysis on the issue of what's going on in Mexico. Given the amount of minority work and attention that has been devoted to the Zapatistas, some general analysis should be in the journal. I would rather see articles on Mexico prepared on the basis of more study and thought than the speculative views I put forward. But in any case, by now, something should be said. And this exchange at least raises some issues for people to think about in making the analysis of Mexico. And it may spur some further articles.

Departing for a bit from suggestions on the content of the next CWV TJ, I think that, in general, on El Machete, and on Oleg's recent comments, there is too much emphasis on formalities and not enough on the content of the matter.

With respect to Rene, it is just raised that he has severed all political cooperation with the CWV. That's the formal aspect. But what the CWV thinks about the politics of that break has not yet been discussed. Yet Rene aggressively put forward his stand at every minority meeting he attended, and aggressively denounced some other stands. The question naturally arises of how his views relate to his breaking off work to build an anti-revisionist movement. And after all, Rene himself connected his attitude to minority work to his assessment of El Machete. The minority has stressed that the majority wanted to cover over ideological disagreements of importance within the MLP, so we should take our own advice and assess important ideological agreements that come up around us. And, it can be noted, dropping out of CWV still leaves Rene as a major political voice in the circles around the CWV.

As for El Machete, the fine points of how the endorsement of El Machete is phrased are gone into by Oleg. But in my opinion, that I also wrote privately to Oleg, I don't think he messed up the endorsement--I think he did as well as possible with that task. And in his subsequent reports on El Machete he does as well as possible in trying to describe its contents. While disagreeing with various things he said, I highly appreciate his conscientious approach to putting forward his reasoning as clearly as he can and to reviewing material as accurately as he can. It's the endorsement itself, and what it reflects, not how it was written, that is at stake. And because it appears we have different frameworks in how to discuss the question, it may take up some time to find common ground on it.

I think Oleg's presentation however tended to narrow the issue to the formal aspect, rather than looking into the issue of what precisely is El Machete's trend and what precisely do we think is important with respect to Mexico. As far as I can see, mainly from Oleg's description rather than his conclusions, El Machete is not mainly a source of news, but a crusader for its politics. It doesn't describe debates about revisionism in the Mexican movement, but militantly proclaims that Cuba is socialist and should be supported on that basis. It doesn't seem to put EZLN's attitude to the PRD into a class context, but according to Oleg it had oblique complaints about EZLN. But I haven't been able to read the El Machete articles referred to by Oleg. Perhaps there is a possibility of getting a commercial translation of El Machete, or of paying some activist to do it? It is not a very big paper--and part of it is literary, rather than directly political, and wouldn't have to be translated--so the price might not be too high.

El Machete--like other left papers--is part of or is trying to organize its own trend, not just in Mexico, but in the U.S. There is a group in LA for example. And in Chicago Rene for one is excited about its stand, and withdrew from CWV partially on that basis. Redefine El Machete as one likes, regard it just as a source of information, it doesn't make the slightest bit of difference to the fact that El Machete is part of a trend, and one that is apparently hostile to "minority" politics in both LA and Chicago.

Digressing even further, I would also add that I was taken back when, in replying on the question of the El Machete endorsement, Oleg said that he thought I "was right that the Zapatistas knew full well what rotten opportunists the PRD are and decided for strategic reasons that they needed to try to use them". I wouldn't put it this way. But perhaps I misunderstand what Oleg means here, and he is just criticizing the EZLN strategy and encouraging further looking into it.

But how can you separate the EZLN's strategic conceptions from its understanding of the nature of the PRD? After all, doesn't

one have against the PRD ITS strategic conceptions? I suggested that EZLN's attitude to PRD might not be "just a side point of an otherwise revolutionary strategy, but a central feature of their views." I suggested that the EZLN strategy was mistaken about what democratization meant--and this means, I think, shared illusions with the PRD. It seems to me to retranslate this attempt at a class analysis of why the EZLN is looking towards the PRD or PRI splits as the major forces that MIGHT TRANSFORM MEXICO, into the EZLN knowing exactly what the PRD is, and just using it, is turning the analysis upside-down. It's one thing for the EZLN to shove aside capitulationist demands of the PRD, it's another for them to be clear about the nature of the PRD. Or would one describe the certain distance that the EZLN keeps from the radical left as proof that the EZLN, which had decided to try to use the radical left, was fully aware of the rotten theories that comprise revisionism, trotskyism, etc.? I suggested there was a class basis to the gravitation of the Zapatistas towards the PRD (as well as to their keeping a certain distance) and that we might well see them act in the same way towards PRI splits to the right of the PRD, if such develop.

I think these issues are important to the question of how to develop solidarity with the Chiapas struggle, as well as to the issue of what anti-revisionism means for Mexico and how Mexican activists can be shown its value.

So much for now,
Highest regards,
and good luck on the next issue of the CWV TJ!

On CWVTJ#6 + LA motion, etc.

From: NC

To: Joseph

To: Oleg and Julie

I read Cde. Josephs 'Suggestions' document of Jan 11th with interest. Joseph is accurate in that it the notes and discussions on Cliffism are preliminary at best and need a lot more fleshing out before a series of articles on that trotskyist trend are published for distribution.

CWV has recognized the priority of dealing with this brand of trotskyism and state capitalism and the SIOC analysis. Of course we have a still very weak political 'flank' exposed here and the gaps we should try to fill with all deliberate speed!

If CWV has more articles and researched ideas on the Mexican crisis (incl. the basis of the "Peso' crisis) and its effect on workers on both sides of the Rio Grande, this would be a great piece indeed!!

Joseph's summing up of the year of polemical struggles and work in the class stirrings by the minority and our perspectives for the coming period would was sobering and might also get a few ears as well. Perhaps it may need a little condensing for publication.

Cde CV and the rest of us here would be happy with publication of the LA Bell Curve article though it is somewhat superficial. We think it was a decent start on the rising ideological war against the schemes being pushed by big capital and middle class reaction to justify social service cuts/layoffs and further dividing working people. Bell Curve--ISM should not be ignored.

The Palestine debate is still at a furious tempo. The minority articles on this are topical and of interest to other left-progressive forces and are reasonably well thought out (I am sure cde. Mark will also soon add the coup de grace to Jason and co. views). These items would make interesting reading.

Joseph has hit on something with exposure of the class nature of the political-economy of Bens & Fred and Co. constant embellishment of the 'market system', etc. on key issues. If he does more explaining on actual laws of motion of capital, it would also help strenghten our views on contemporary capitalism + imperialism.

If Chicago can send us copies of El Machete, I might be able to get a Latina or two fluent in spanish at my work to translate a few articles for us. I do not see the El Machete as much more than a more 'left' info. source of news. They still carry a ton of state capitalist, reformist, and nationalist baggage of the old revisionist movement and I do not see them seriously trying to solve any of the contradictions that doomed that movement.

I think our trend (as if we don't have enough things to deal with!) needs to see the big problems nationalism and separatist cultural/political trends foster to exacerbate the weakening of the class motion and struggle. Sure its true we are not in Bosnia, or Palestine, Hungary, Sri Lanka, etc. But as cde. Steve G. in the Bay Area warned us a couple years back, along with the rotting national capitalist economic basis and little opposing socialist organization-- in comes the neo-fascist right wing with racist 'ethnic cleansing' 'final solutions' to fill the social vacuum and prop up the ruling elite.

As concerns LA work, are the riots, fires, earthquakes and floodings a portent of the big social storms yet to come? Possibly. The Orange Cty. financial disaster will hit not only workers there hard but also the weakening of the California bond markets and higher rates, etc. will mean the capitalists will want more deeper austerity budgets in other parts of the state to prop

things up and I think the capitalist press and TV here is trying to conceal this. They want to attack piecemeal so workers will be mystified and won't see the connections and class character of the problems.

I think on the 'left' here you should take note of the increased visibility of 'Labor Party Advocates'(LPA). This LPA union bureaucrat outfit is now joined by more of the social democrat, revisionist and margarine trotskyist 'left'. LPA is holding more regular forums and meetings and they are sending speakers and recruiters to leftist and community meetings posing as the left '3rd Party' Labor alternative. Reformist/centrist Political crisis considered, they are signing up many new recruits. Of course, they hide their capitulationist background and real tactics and goals from the audiences. If you need more info. on their line/work at present, please request and I shall send it snail-mail.

Prop 187 is already adversely affecting LA schools, at least 3000 have dropped out since Nov. '94. At mid year 're-norming period --end of January to March, probably about 100-150 teachers and aides will get the boot and more overcrowding will result. On Jan. 23 ,SCAN, and independent concerned teachers and aides and parents will hold a protest picket outside the School Board. I am sending one of the organizing leaflets in English and Spanish to you via snail -mail.

The union hacks and the bosses are already trying to put the kibosh on any mass picket . UTLA hacks put out a flyer to all chapter chairs saying the layoffs will 'be no more than 25-30.' This is a flat out lie! SCAN activists took a survey of just a half dozen High Schools and the planned layoffs exceed the union bureaucracy figure for the whole district! So even though 187 is 'in the courts' for a year or two, its effects are already being felt and a lot of latino working families are getting hurt! I don't think the picket will draw huge numbers but those that build and come will be the best , concerned, advanced forces organizing around fighting anti-immigrant racist attacks.

Fraternally,
nc/LA

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Addendum: Proposed CWVTJ#6

From. NC
To: Joseph
To: Oleg and Julie
To: SG

Yesterday, I had lunch and discussed the CWVTJ#6 proposals with the other LAWV cdes I gave them copies of the Chicago and Detroit views. This is their feedback:

CV and SP think we give the majorityites too much room in the journal. They say it should be obvious to all that both by what the majority says and does and refuses to say and do that they are outside the pale of Marxism and the workers cause.

1) They sound more like advisors to the IMF and the Brookings Foundation. 2) Their 'critique' of the status quo is one of trying to smooth over smoldering class oppression and settle for bourgeois democracy and let the capitalist labor market determine the fate of the wage workers. 3) By opposing working class revolutionary political organization, they want to guarantee the rich stay on top. 4) The majority has degenerated QUALITATIVELY from any serious anti-capitalist stand and they think bourgeois property relations (state and private) are the highest humankind can aspire to(at least in this epoch).

The cdes. think polemics are great but that we should draw the CLASS line politically. If we hit the bourgeois or petty bourgeois programmes, that the majority should just be considered its 'left' wing.

The cdes. are antsey and want to see more polemics and/or researched articles on SIOC, state capitalism, class composition, trotskyism (esp. on Cliffist styles) as well as on the degeneration of the old revisionist movement and the negative effects on revisionist groups and ideology in the class today

Cdes. liked Chicago article on Contract on America and think this should be widely circulated.

Cdes. felt we should do more on the working class history whose struggles are a treasure which is fast being lost on the activist class consciousness. It is not for nothing that the rich can pose today as philanthropic job creators and basic social services can be attacked and ripped to pieces as 'waste' or 'pork'. That this criminality of the rich can go on with such little resistance shows the general psyche of large sections of working people has been changed in a backward direction and the role of the mass media, cultural life-styles, new mass information technologies, etc. must be analysed. This de-politicization has causes that we need to understand much better than at present.

We remain determined to carry on work in spite of the odds against us. The alternative, majority style capitulation, would be the greatest disaster of all!

Fraternally,
nc/LAWV

To: Minority
 From: Gary, NJ
 Date: 1/17/95
 Subject: More on class composition

To follow up on the first article on class composition, I have compiled a data sheet on the make-up of the "managerial/professional" strata and the "technical/administrative support" strata. (See end) In trying to do a class analysis of these stratas I have come up against a lack of a clear definition of working class. Putting aside productive and non-productive labor questions, which are of secondary use here, wage earners in relation to capital, and especially social capital, run the gamut from CEOs to clerks. In trying to pin down who are workers, who forms a middle strata (and on what basis) and who are managers is difficult.

In particular, I would like input from comrades on the question of wage earners employed by social capital. The two largest groups under "professional" are teachers (non-college) and nurses. A class analysis of these two would go a long way in breaking down this strata. LA comrades have experience here, and I would like their experience and input.

To explain the data: it looks more confusing than it is - each line has groupings of three numbers. The first is the year/the second is in millions/the third is a % of the total workforce that year. So, for example, under "Managers", the third line down is "public" sector managers: the first group of numbers is 1992, there were .62 million of them, which was .53% of the workforce; the second group is for 1986, there were .47 million, which was .43%, etc. This enables me to look at any category historically. The data for 1970 and 1960 is grouped differently than later years, and so there may not be data for these years under certain categories.

There are other stratas which I'm not dealing with yet: service, precision production, operators/fabricators/laborers, and farming/forestry/fishing. These strata and predominantly working class, and except for extracting the managers and supervisors, and police, it doesn't present as major a theoretical problem as the first two.

Things to note in the data.

1. Engineers in "professional" have not risen in numbers in proportion to the workforce, which challenges some of the schemes for the death of the working class, being replaced by a professional strata.
2. "Other" under "managers" contains selfemployed
3. One of the biggest increases is in "Others" "technicians". Are these workers?
- 4 The rise in "managers" is across the board
- 5 "professional" totals have risen 3.5% since 83, most of which are in 4 categories: writers/artists, health, math/computers and lawyers. How does this significantly replace the working class?

Please send impressions, critiques, input, analysis, experience and other sources.

Data Sheet on class composition

Source: Statistical Abstract of the US, 1975(table 589), 1988(table 627), 1993(table 644)
 (year/millions/% of workforce)

A. Managers (executives, administrative, managerial including self employed)

total -	92/14.77/12.56	86/12.64/11.53	83/10.77/10.68	70/6.47/8.10	60/5.7/8.4
public -	92/62/.53	86/47/.43	83/42/.42	70/34/.43	60/28/.41
education -	93/61/.52	86/50/.46	83/42/.42	70/21/.26	60/09/.13
finance -	92/52/.44	86/41/.37	83/36/.36		
personnel -	92/10/.09	86/11/.10	83/11/.11		
purchasing -	92/11/.09	86/10/.10	83/08/.08		
marketing -	92/52/.44	86/44/.40	83/40/.40		
health -	92/36/.31	86/13/.12	83/09/.09		
real estate -	92/44/.37	86/36/.33	83/31/.31		
other -	92/2.60/2.21	86/2.19/2.00	83/1.86/1.84		

Professional

total -	92/17.76/15.10	86/15.17/13.84	83/13.92/13.81	70/9.32/11.67	60/5.57/8.19
CPAs -	92/1.37/1.16	86/1.26/1.15	83/1.11/1.10	70/72/.90	60/49/.72
architects -	92/14/.12	86/13/.12	83/10/.10	70/06/.08	60/04/.06
engineers -	92/1.75/1.49	86/1.75/1.60	83/1.57/1.56	70/1.21/1.52	60/86/1.26
matn computer sci-	92/94/.80	86/63/.57	83/46/.46	70/27/.34	

natural sci - 92/46/39 86/38/35 83/36/36 70/21/26 60/16/23
 Drs & dentist - 92/91/77 86/73/67 83/74/73 70/49/61 60/44/65
 health - 92/2.52/2.14 86/2.03/1.85 83/1.9/1.89 70/1.16/1.45 60/79/1.16
 teachers(college) 92/74/63 86/64/58 83/61/61 70/49/61 60/20/29
 teachers (rest) 92/4.22/3.58 86/3.56/3.24 83/3.37/3.34 70/2.77/3.47 60/1.80/2.64
 counselors - 92/23/2 86/17/16 83/18/18
 librarians 92/21/18 86/21/19 83/21/21 70/10/13 60/07/10
 Soc Sci, psych 92/39/33 86/31/28 83/26/26 70/11/14 60/04/06
 social workers 92/1.07/91 86/91/83 83/83/83 70/50/63 60/35/51
 lawyers, judges 92/79/67 86/65/59 83/65/64 70/26/33 60/21/31
 writers, artists 92/2.02/1.71 86/1.78/1.62 83/1.54/1.53 70/79/1.0 60/53/78

B. Technical, sales, administrative support

Technicians

total - 92/4.25/3.61 86/3.36/3.07 83/3.05/3.03 70/1.25/1.57 60/83/1.22
 health 92/1.52/1.29 86/1.12/1.02 83/1.11/1.10 70/26/33 60/13/19
 engineering 92/92/78 86/94/86 83/82/81 70/83/1.04* 60/62/91*
 * 70 & 60 combine eng & sci
 science 92/24/20 86/21/19 83/20/20
 others 92/1.58/1.34 86/1.10/1.00 83/92/91 70/16/2 60/08/12

Sales

total 92/13.92/11.82 86/13.25/12.09 83/11.82/11 73 70/5.63/7.06 60/4.80/7.06
 supervisors 92/3.89/3.30 86/3.49/3.18 83/2.96/2.94
 sales reps 92/3.82/3.24 86/3.77/3.43 83/3.29/3.28 70/1 78/2.2 60/1.5/2.21
 clerks,cashrs 92/6.14/5.21 86/5.99/5.47 83/5.56/5.52 70/3.01/3.77 60/2.84/4.18

Administrative support

total 92/18.37/15.59 86/17.75/16.20 83/16.4/16.27 70/14.21/17.81 60/9.43/13.87
 supervisors 92/76/65 86/73/67 83/68/67
 secret,typist 92/4.32/3.67 86/4.94/4 51 83/4.86/4.82 70/3.78/4.74 60/2.23/3.28
 info clerks 92/1.65/1.40 86/1.33/1.21 83/1.17/1.16 70/30/38 60/15/22
 financial 92/2.34/1.99 86/2.47/2.25 83/2.46/2.44
 clerks,not fin 92/92/78 86/85/78 83/87/86
 communications 92/23/20 86/23/21 83/26/26
 postal 92/90/76 86/90/82 83/80/79 70/52/65 60/44/65
 material 92/1.85/1.57 86/1.64/1.50 83/1.56/1.55
 adjustors,etc 92/1.30/1.10 86/82/75 83/68/67
 misc 92/3.64/3.09 86/2.90/2.65 83/2.40/2.38

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 To: CWVTJ
 CC: Minority
 From: Detroit Marxist-Leninist Study Group
 January 17, 1995
 RE: CWVTJ #6

Dear comrades,

We all look forward to the next issue of the CWVTJ and we discussed the its proposed contents at our last discussion meeting. We are all AGAINST printing the Detroit study group reports on Cliff (and Dave's article), as these reports are preliminary material.

We are in favor of printing the summation of the past year, at least parts one and two. (Tim would like all three parts to be printed.)

We are in favor of printing the material on the **El Machete** controversy (presumably Joseph's objection, Oleg's reply, and LA comments).

We support the printing of Pete's book reports.

We think the printing of the postal leaflet is OK if you wish to do it (or for that matter, DWV #3 on Prop. 187)-- we don't have a strong opinion one way or the other on whether it's useful to do so.

We are think the Haiti polemic has less priority than the other polemical material (except Mark, who is not sure on this point).

Regards,
Joseph for DMLSG

PS: By the way, Mark has found that **Socialist Action** has material on the Zapatistas, their relations with PRD, the Democratic National Convention, etc. The context they put their information into isn't right, nor do I know how accurate they are in reporting facts. But they describe various of the maneuvers of the PRD, PRI, etc. They are also conspicuously silent about various things.

PPS: I just received a message from Neil, who really likes Mark's current Palestine polemic and would like to see it in the CWVTJ. <>

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Jan. 21, 1995, 4:40 pm

To: Julie, Oleg

From: Joseph

Dear comrades,

I'm trying to get a reply to Ben's cooperative anarchy polemic in time for your consideration for use in CWVTJ Today's the deadline for CWV, if I remember right, and I'm not going to make it. Is today still the final deadline or can I stretch it a couple of days?

The article is titled something like "Left-wing neo-conservatives: the reflection of neo-conservatism in social-democratic thinking" [or maybe the last phrase should be, "in socialist thinking", because it tries to make the point that this is a general phenomenon in the left] It's a multi-part article of which I hoped the first part might be suitable for consideration for use in this CWVTJ.

First let me briefly describe Ben's article and then describe what I have written for part one (still in rough form, or else I would send part one rather than sending this request upon the time limit). Ben's article has a number of different aspects.

Red-baiting (via Stalin-baiting);

Reporting on that the majority of members RSSG have given up on communism or even talk of a future socialist society or think that money will always make the world go round (it's right there in Ben's own words, hidden away amid the abuse and phrasemongering so that the casual reader would h-a-r-d-l-y notice it);

His defense of "cooperative anarchy" among "production units"--where he tries and fails to show how this new, improved anarchy is cooperative, unlike bad old anarchy of production.

His anarchism (any centralism or any authority in mass organizations is Stalinist tyranny--unfortunately his oh-so-pure democracy, purified to the point of anarchism, also ends up unable to solve any problem and forced to rely on the iron fist--only as an exception, Ben repeatedly assures us)

Various descriptions that end up to describe capitalist society (for example, socialism is described as a society with a private sector, a state sector, and a communist sector in competition--translated: a private sector, a state sector that charges for its products, and a state sector which gives its products free, for example, education--i.e. his "socialism" is any developed liberal capitalist order).

Various other views of his on future society:

for example, wealth is forever

for example, politics and political divisions are forever

etc.

In the first part, I wanted to set the theme that Ben and Fred and Jason etc. have a viewpoint that leads them to pose problems in a way that doesn't get beyond capitalism. This is the reflection of the dominant neo-conservative ideology today: marketplace, nationalism, religion, and anti-communism gets reflected as marketplace (cooperative anarchy), small-group ideal, spiritualism (from religion to Ben's universal "consciousness" which will provide the cooperation in the formula "cooperative anarchy"--unless you read Ben's article very closely, you probably think I'm making this all up, but I'm not) and Stalin-baiting. In general, the current dominant liquidationism in the left reflects various neo-conservative themes, and so does Ben and the RSSG. (By the way, this isn't just some idea I've invented to pillory Ben. It has really caught my attention for some time that views put forward by Fred and some others echoed themes I had read for years in the columns of the late Warren Brookes, economic columnist for the very conservative Detroit News. That's to say nothing of the bows to neo-conservatism that one now hears from the liberal

politicians.)

And I would point to various issues of glorification of the marketplace, (for example, how Fred and Ben would solve the environmental problem).

I would refer in passing to his red-baiting but mainly leave it for another time.

I would go into some detail into how his cooperative anarchy really is the anarchy of production (thus taking up his challenge). Here one has to trace him through a number of paragraphs of evasion.

I might mention how he universalizes "competition" (but for length I might omit this for now).

And I would cite Marx on how it isn't that various ideologues are themselves shopkeepers, but that their mental framework does not get them beyond the framework that practical issues set before the shopkeepers.

In later parts of the article, but not part one, I would take up various particular points in detail:

his talk of parallel action (parallel action is no new discovery. But if it is taken in and of itself, as Ben does, it can even be the basis of despotism, as in Marx's famous description of the Indian village and its relation to Indian despotism.);

his method (eternal general principles; no historical study; what he promises with one hand he takes back with the other, etc.)--some of his method is typical of the way capitalist economics is promoted in schools and elsewhere as eternal;

a number of issues on economics and socialism (the nature of value; the relationship of large-scale production and freedom; is classless society a politically-divided society; diversity and competition, etc.);

possibly some issues on party organization and history (the parallel action issue--actually the MLP was built on "parallel action" but not in and of itself).

Here there are a number of issues which are of value in themselves, and not just to refute Ben. They are connected to issues of socialist agitation (in fact, a number of these points are carry-overs from things I wanted to write as part of articles on socialist agitation).

But these things are for later.

For the time being, I was trying to get part one for the CWV TJ. Am I too late? Or despite your original intentions, you don't have space anyway for half of what you intended to carry? Or you are already pretty skeptical from this description about how worthy this article will turn out to be?

I realize that you might not check your e-mail right at this precise moment. So if I don't hear from you on e-mail by late tonight I'll probably give you a telephone call. My apology for my all-too-habitual time problems. I have been working on the reply to Ben for some time, but I had trouble figuring out which of the millions of absurdities he raises should be dealt with, and what the general theme should be. Now I think I have it.

Regards,
Joseph

From: Joseph
To: Julie
Jan. 23, 1995

Dear Julie,

Thanks for putting up with my last minute questions on the deadline for CWV TJ, as I hurried to get a reply to Ben's "cooperative anarchy" nonsense. I had wanted to reply to Ben on e-mail much earlier, but it just didn't happen. I actually am a bit surprised you will carry the material. From your description of the space crunch in this issue, it would have seemed plausible to postpone all of the "cooperative anarchy" stuff till next time. But since you want to go ahead, I thank you for your helpfulness on the issue of deadline.

But now that I have had a good night of sleep, I am quite worried by some of the decisions that have been made for the next CWV. I really wonder if you and the other comrades have pondered what they mean.

The CWV TJ you plan is indeed nice in some ways, and I always look forward to it. I like not being an editor and instead seeing how other comrades deal with issues, and what innovations they make that I wouldn't have thought of.

But the minority needs a number of different things in a journal. One of them, in my opinion, is to reflect discussion of orientation, differences, etc. Prior to the 5th Congress, there was discussion in e-mail, in front of a hostile majority, of differences in orientation among comrades who would later be part of the minority. After the 5th Congress, this discussion became internal. It can be considered whether we should actually return to a more open discussion of some of these issues. And when the CWV TJ opened the discussion on "socialism in one country" issues among minority members, and did it in public, it seemed we were moving back to a wider idea of public discussion. Otherwise, why not discuss these things a bit more between ourselves first?

BUT THE DECISION FOR WHAT IS PUBLISHED IN THE CWV TJ #6 MEANS THAT THE CWV TJ #6 WILL NOT

BE AN ORGAN FOR DISCUSSION OF DIFFERING ORIENTATIONS AND OTHER MINORITY MATTERS. And it implies that in general the CWV TJ does not intend to be such an organ. It will remain a fine organ for some things, but not for that. This decision for CWV TJ #6 is NOT a space decision, as there are things that could be cut to make room for discussion of the orientations. For example, all the material on "cooperative anarchy", both Ben's and mine.

Before going into this, I feel like apologizing for the fact that in our two phone calls, I was tired (even the first time) and absorbed with the problem of finishing the reply to Ben. It had been difficult for me to figure out from what angle to write it, and finally it reached a point where I had to concentrate completely on it, and nothing else, in order to get it done. I really was in the midst of it and calling just to check on the deadlines, and didn't really want to get drawn too much into other things. So I was quite passive in the discussions. As well, I thought I had had my say with the comments I had sent you and the minority about contents for CWV TJ#6, and I had also sent in the Detroit study group comments. But nevertheless I guess I should have instead, before the first call, pondered much more the e-mail you sent me. It seems to me that for the last few months, somehow our communications don't go that well. Even on Red Orange the discussion makes me uneasy, because we talk past each other. Perhaps I should call more often--I'll probably get better with practice. (Or perhaps, after you read this, you may simply prefer that I tire myself out doing other things. But I really wish to try to deal with the framework behind certain decisions.)

On the other hand, it also is often hard to consult with CWV. The CWV group is among those who have said the least--outside minority meetings--about their views on orientation for the CWV TJ and the minority. When the CWV consults others, it often just mentions the practical aspect of whether to carry this or that, the space problem, and one is left wondering what is their assessment of the content of issues, how they think discussion should go, and what they think on this or that. This time you sent around a list of possible articles. I sent in comments, but really they're not dealt with.

But back to the question of whether the CWV TJ is going to reflect the discussions among the minority. If it is going to reflect ongoing discussion and concerns, on any matter, then it has to print articles in a timely way, when they come in. If people are discussing back and forth, then if a contribution is put off for another issue--that means another 2 or 2 1/2 months at least--then that contribution really isn't part of the discussion. It becomes a historical document, or a reference piece, and it may still have value, but it is no longer part of an ONGOING discussion.

Yet on El Machete you said that one idea from one of the CWV meetings was to wait before printing the material until more things came in on e-mail. So it would be take three or more months between when some things were written and when they were printed. And then the whole discussion is printed at once, in one indigestible clump. Even if an issue of the Journal had space for this, it wouldn't be carrying out a discussion, but printing reference materials. And the same goes for discussions on other issues.

Is the idea that CWV TJ readers are not expected to take part in the discussion? Such gaps would, I think, actively discourage them from trying to participate--because they won't even read the matter at hand until the discussion is mostly over.

Then again on El Machete, a more recent reasoning from CWV is that more research should be done before publishing. I would be 100% sympathetic to this point of view--except that the discussion has already opened. The CWV TJ already printed a statement from Oleg in the name of the entire CWV. (And besides that, in practice El Machete had become a certain part of the work of the minority.) Once the discussion is opened, how can one say--wait. Suppose a reader from outside our circles wrote in with a comment on El Machete, whether support or criticism, would that also be held up for three or more months? And if so, would you consider that a way to encourage participation from the readers?

Another possible idea of CWV seems to be that the e-mail discussion suffices for now.

So the question arises--does the CWV see the CWVTJ as having a role in ONGOING discussion of issues? How does CWV see fostering a discussion? Are the ongoing discussions really only supposed to be on e-mail?

And is the main thing CWV discussed on El Machete simply technical points, and it doesn't have a view on whether this is a useful discussion, or a mountain is being made out of a molehill, or the discussion has this or that role?

Take the question of the articles on the New Year. Part two says the minority has to face serious issues of orientation or it wouldn't be around much longer. I may be wrong in my assessment both of the situation and of that article. But when it's simply said, without comment, that it will be carried next time, not now, what can one make of it? An article says there's something we have to do NOW. NOW, or we won't be around too many more months. And the reply is, fine, carry the article in a few months--after the issues raised in the article are decided. Don't you see the point I'm raising? It's not just about whether this particular article is published. But what possible assessment is being used? How does CWV assess these things?

Since the Nov. minority meeting, there are at least two major issues that have been discussed stemming from it:

Should the minority form as an organization?

And the El Machete controversy.

On both these issues, there is material for the CWV TJ#6. On both these issues, the decision is to postpone carrying material. This material is not to be carried--which basically means, it shouldn't be carried while the active consideration of these issues proceeds.

Yet some comrades, not only myself, are very concerned on some of these issues. Shouldn't the CWV TJ be a journal to deal

with these issues?

Some of the discussion may indeed be painful, before it involves differences among ourselves. On the other hand, once one adjusts to the situation, there are also positive features. An ongoing discussion has its own excitement; it might--perhaps, maybe, eventually --draw in some views from others; it might establish a certain electrically-charged atmosphere in the CWV TJ; and after we get used to public discussion it might not even be so painful anymore. The CWV TJ might become more of center of attention. I have to admit that I am disappointed by the decisions for this CWV TJ #6 because it means that this excitement--the positive side at least to controversy--won't be there. **IT ALSO MEANS THAT THE CWV TJ WILL TAKE ON SOME OF THE FEATURES THAT KILLED THE WORKERS ADVOCATE--i.e. look for things of interest to the struggle, and even say some real good things, but don't carry the things that are of burning concern and debate to your own activists, the things that are eating you alive (in the case of the MLP--I hope this won't happen to us, but we're not immune).**

The Supplement was a much better theoretical paper than is sometimes said. But since the WA and WAS didn't carry the basic things that were eating away at people--and when it occasionally it, it didn't press the issue sufficiently hard-- people forget the other work it really did. That can happen to the CWV TJ also.

Back to the two issues since the Nov. meeting.

Take the issue of should the minority form as an organization. I'm not sure how controversial this is. Maybe everyone agrees. Maybe. But we did postpone deciding to the next meeting in order to have people consider it. Part two of the review of 1994 is relevant to this issue. Yet printing this is to be postponed until the next CWV TJ, which means until after the next minority meeting. The meeting which is to decide this issue. Does that make sense? By the next CWV TJ either we will be announcing an organization, or explaining why we can't form one, or maybe putting flowers at the headstone marking the place where our hopes for the continued existence of the minority are buried. It's possible that the article may still be worthwhile. But the main thing for the CWV TJ after the next meeting should be to deal with the concerns springing from that meeting.

If you or others disagreed with my assessments, or agreed with them and wanted to raise your own reasons why, or had other points to raise, or just thought I wrote badly, or whatever, it would have been lively if you had written brief comments for publication. **NOT JUST ON THIS, BUT ON THE WHOLE SPHERE OF THINGS IN THE CWV TJ.** (Why do you think I like the editorial guide--at least when it's sharp and expresses some views. It's not only a technical matter that it will be nice for other people to see what's inside the CWV TJ. But I can see what the person who wrote it thought of an article, whether they got it or they didn't or what they got. It helps make the journal come alive.)

So say someone else wrote on the organizational issue addressed in the year's review. For example: "This is what I think. I think that too much can be made of centralized organization, so I'm skeptical." Boy, that would rub me the wrong way, especially as what is at stake is a loose form. But it would be a good thing if we carried such articles and stuck a needle into complacency. Maybe more discussion on orientation would get into the CWV TJ. And maybe also then I would get concerned enough that I would finally write on the evolution of communist organization (I have an outline on it) and on MLP history. And maybe there would be other people to read such articles.

Instead it's just: someone says something has to be done NOW. Oh well. It should be printed. Later I am beginning to wonder if the problem is that most of those who read article thought it was just routine, and next time I should take my own advice and bring the controversial more to the fore.

On the El Machete issue, it is being postponed for more research on what El Machete is. Well then, should this have been done on "socialism in one country" also? Is it what should be done in general on controversial issues? Or is it really thought that this issue will go away now that some research on it is being done? If so, why? In any case, it seems to me that it is precisely the controversy on El Machete that has encouraged more research.

It is not that the presently available documents on the El Machete controversy are necessarily the absolutely ideal way to air the issue. I didn't write my letter to the minority with the idea of it being in CWVTJ, or else I would have written the first part more gently. But I was upset; CWV views on Mexico had now definitely gotten my attention with this article; I was now willing to take the effort to work some things through myself. I thought the El Machete issue might well end up in CWVTJ, but hadn't yet considered how, and didn't even know what the response to my concerns would be among CWV members. But life has its own way. Oleg replied to my letter on El Machete; no one suggested any other way to put the issue in CWV TJ; we all have limited time; and probably the only feasible way to discuss the issue is simply to publish Oleg's and my remarks and maybe some LA remarks. And this at least has the very strong advantage that these documents raise points of analysis about Mexico. So life is moving forward, I thought.

I can understand that the airing of differences publicly can cause frictions even among close friends, and I pointed to this danger concerning the "SIOC" discussion. I was going to say more about this, but in rereading your comments I realize that you don't say that this was an issue with the decisions on CWV TJ. So I'll just say that if this is the issue, it should be raised and looked at straightforwardly. We do have serious differences, and it is a real question whether we can discuss them while remaining united. It will probably show whether we really are a trend, that survives despite the inevitable diversity of a political trend, or whether we are a random grouping, which will shatter at the discussion of differences. But there's no way around this.

On the content of the El Machete issue, I don't think it's going to go away. You have pointed out to me that it looks, from what you presently know, that El Machete may be a lively paper springing from a spirited probably youthful group that wants to go right at the powers that be, etc. I don't quite grasp what that you think follows from that as far as the differences on El Machete. Do you think that this research in itself will resolve the issues among us on El Machete and that's why we should wait in publishing things? In any case, your description intrigued me. I hope they really do turn out to be a group that is alive, because the world needs a multitude of groups that are alive--in Mexico, in the U.S, all over the globe. And I think how to deal with such groups is important. When a group of rebellious youth come up and boldly put forward their views in a no-holds-barred fashion, our task toward them is, in an equally lively, bold, and no-holds-barred fashion, to tell these comrades the truth. We'd better have zeal, because they probably are aware that if they accept our views, they are going to be in the fight of their lives against most other trends. If they don't want to hear our views, then they are not ready yet, and we should simply keep note of who they are and how they evolve and of what theoretical issues their evolution places upon ourself. If they do listen, then we have a dialogue. But I don't think the announcement on El Machete in CWV TJ #5 was in this spirit.

One additional thing about the El Machete controversy. In the past, the CWV TJ has publicly stated that it was postponing this or that article for space reasons or whatever. You may already be planning to do this on the El Machete issue as well. BUT IN ANY CASE, I VERY MUCH REQUEST THE CWV PUT IN THE CWV TJ #6 SUCH A STATEMENT THIS TIME. For example, something or other to the general effect that "several supporters of the CWV TJ strongly oppose any endorsement of El Machete and disagree with Oleg's announcement in the last issue. Joseph Green has written his concerns on this, and Oleg has replied. This is being discussed among the minority We are postponing material on this until next time because" and it goes on into why CWV TJ isn't carrying the material now. Which, from what you say, I gather is not simply or mainly a question of space. Such an announcement would not change the fact that CWV TJ #6 is not discussing the differences. But it would put on record that there are differences and not everyone supports the assessment of trends in Mexico in the El Machete announcement.

But back to the general point. What appears in the CWV TJ #6 will say a lot about how the minority is going to proceed. It seems to me that the present plan says that the CWV TJ will not be the place for discussion of issues of perspective among the minority, or timely discussion of controversies.

Is that what the CWV group really wants for the CWV TJ? Does that correspond to what we should have learned from the demise of the MLP and its publications? It's true that I am worried over the decisions for CWV TJ #6. I think they throw away an opportunity and will increase tensions within the minority. But I'll live. I hope that, if you or others do reconsider anything as a result of this letter, that it's the general issues first and foremost.

I also think you should at least include a note in CWV TJ #6 on the material on El Machete which is being left for next time. And probably you already intended to do so.

Let's not let the anti-revisionist trend slip away out of failure to deal with the issues that are on our minds. Not again

Highest regards,
Joseph

To: the minority
From: Mark
Date: 1-24-95
Subject: Socialist Action on EZLN

Dear comrades.

I wanted to pass on some information on the maneuvers of the EZLN that I came across in the January 95 issue of *Socialist Action*. This Cliffite paper has carried such articles in the past as well.

The paper has certain criticisms of Zapatista politics. But generally they glorify their every maneuver. Sometimes this leads to directly contradictory stances. For example, the EZLN tactics in the recent Mexican elections meant that "the protest movement inevitably became tied to the PRD" but also that "this gives the Zapatistas a chance to get the struggle out of the framework of bourgeois electoral politics." And this is from the same author. But my main interest here is not what Socialist Action thinks, but to relay some information they carry so as to get a better grip on the nature of EZLN.

From what the paper says, Commandante Marcos was banking on PRD carrying out a big campaign against election fraud. They quote a communique from Marcos stating that the PRD stopped a proposal that the CND should carry out a campaign of civil insurgency and that EZLN did not oppose it, trusting the PRD would wage a struggle. The quote: the "proposal that the PRD people stopped was that the CND should carry out a program of civil insurgency. They stopped it. It was not appropriate. It could get out of control. We did not say anything. We naively thought that the PRD had a plan for civil resistance after the election. But we have realized now that it did not. And if it does, now is the time...." The quote goes on to declare that EZLN

won't be the PRD's card vs. PRI. However, the statements against the PRD evidently do not apply to Cardenas. In a Dec. 19 communique, the EZLN declares, "The social forces rallied around Cuauhtemoc Cardenas and the National Democratic Convention are recognized as an honest, civic, peace opposition." The statement avoids a mention of the PRD. So why does EZLN distinguish between the Cardenas and PRD? SA says Cardenas was part of a tiny minority of the PRD that was against getting coopted into PRI governments. The majority of the PRD, the "dialoguistas", was excited about wheeling and dealing with the PRI. For example, in Chiapas, the elected PRI governor (fraudulently or not), Robledo, appointed a PRD politician named Zepeda as his secretary of the interior. Zepeda used his power over the police to repress demos.

Robledo, by the official count, defeated the PRD candidate for governor of Chiapas, Amado Avendano. Avendano had a rep as a EZLN supporter. What Avendano's political history is, SA doesn't say. After Robledo takes power, the EZLN seizes the central towns of 39 counties in Chiapas. It was a peaceful seizure, designed to avoid conflict with government troops. When troops arrive in a city, EZLN leaves, but the government doesn't enter many cities. In these cities, EZLN helps set up parallel state government's which pledge to carry out the social demands of the Zapatistas and write a new people's constitution, etc. These "people's government's," however, are led by and loyal to, Amado Avendano, the PRD candidate.

What the parallel governments actually do, or are supposed to do, is not reported. For instance, is the declaration of supporting the Zapatista social reforms just a declaration, or do these new governments intend to carry out some measures, bypassing the authorities? But SA treats it as mainly an attempt by EZLN to show they're still a big force, PRI is not all-popular, and to make it hard for the army to nail them (50,000 troops are in the area according to SA).

SA also reports how the former leaders of the now dissolved Mexican CP, Pablo Gomez, (the "Stalinists" in SA trot lingo) fought in the CND as part of the right wing of the PRD, ie, those for for making a deal with the PRI.

I thought this information shows that EZLN is searching for a big force within Mexican bourgeois politics that can allow it to achieve its goals. They invited the PRD into the CND for that purpose. The PRD majority was interested in reconciling with the PRI, and the EZLN wasn't going for this. The EZLN then turns to the Cardenas PRD minority and backs the PRD minority candidate's parallel government. On the other hand, EZLN does not give up its arms and is interested in mass mobilizations. So it has resisted simply merging into the Cardenas camp.

The Zapatistas show the limitations of being a regional peasant movement, even one with arms. They cannot achieve their bigger demands without attaching themselves to some big national force. The proletarian movement is in ebb, so they look for some split among the bourgeois political parties to latch onto. When the EZLN leaders say they're not interested in taking power, I believe this not only shows they are not after the spoils of government, but reflects their view that some other force must rule. This is "natural," but it is hardly a path for transforming Mexican society. A PRD minority "people's government" could indeed grant certain reforms in Chiapas. That is not beyond the bounds of Cardenas reformism. But that's about as far as Zapatista politics can take things. It is not a politics that can provide a perspective for the liberation of the vast Mexican working class and other toilers as a whole. Indeed, one of the features of the EZLN is that they are more upfront than some other toilers' movements in recognizing this.

Given this, I think it is misleading to present EZLN politics as better than that of other toilers' movements of the past. For all their tactical maneuvering skills, they have not found a new revolutionary path. Reliance on the big forces of the present has forced them to paint up Cardenas as part of the liberation forces. And placing hopes in a reformist section of the bourgeoisie is typical of the past radical movements of the oppressed.

The Zapatista movement has aroused the downtrodden of Chiapas to stand up. It has inspired other sections of the masses. This deserves our admiration and support. As well, it could help create a climate where the big questions of the Mexican revolution are discussed. But without the reorganizing of the proletariat of Mexico, how is revolution possible there? The EZLN does not provide such an orientation (and doesn't claim to.) But the liberation of not only the workers, but the suffering peasantry of Mexico, demands that this task be brought to the fore.

Just a note on the Palestinian movement. The other day, ... , I came across some literature from the Palestinian Aid Society, which I think is pro-PLO. It had no shortage of criticisms of Arafat's deal. (A section of the Palestinian bourgeoisie has failed to take Jason's advice that there's no point criticizing the deal!) One criticism was by an expert in international law who exposed various details of the Accords and concluded that they meant that Israel was no longer legally an occupying force but could still occupy the mini-state. Another person criticized Arafat's deal on the grounds that it did not measure up to the platitudes of the Camp David accords and basically implored Arafat to negotiate for more concessions from Israel. The PLO opposition to Arafat is based on visions of a wonderful deal coming from Camp David. Jason can only bounce between these two poles of the Palestinian bourgeoisie.

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To: Joseph and other interested Detroit comrades
From: Oleg

1-25-95

Dear Joseph,

In regard to your appeal to print the debate on *El Machete* in this issue of the Journal, I have several points.

The first one is that you need to address your comments particularly to Jake. If you can convince him, I will probably go along. (And Julie probably will too.)

The second point is that whenever this material is printed, and I am sure it will be eventually, I am strongly in favor of omitting the discussion of the good or bad points of Rene. I don't think it adds anything to the political points under discussion. I don't want to engage in a lot of public name calling.

A third point is on the general political value of this discussion as it has developed so far. One of the main reasons I agreed that it was not necessary to print this debate right now is that I don't think much of general political worth has come out of it yet. The main general point that I think there is disagreement on concerns how we should relate to political groups and trends that are not part of our immediate circle. Julie says she is going to write on this as well as making some assessment of *El Machete* and other points. Maybe I will too.

There is some feeling in CWV that you reacted so sharply against the *El Machete* announcement because of your personal antagonism to Rene (which he reciprocates). It looks to me that there is some justification for that charge. Why are you so anxious to have printed an article in which you oppose a newspaper you haven't read and give extensive analysis about political struggles that you admit you have little information about? Is the point to prove that whatever Rene associates with is shit? I'm not interested in having that kind of debate in the Journal.

I do think there are some actual political questions exposed by this disagreement and they should be discussed in the Journal. Prime among them is the question of what our relation should be to other left wing activists and trends. These questions have not been brought out clearly and I see no urgency to print the materials we have in this issue of the Journal. I would just as soon wait until some articles are written going into this. Those of us in Chicago take longer to write that you do in Detroit. I think it makes sense to wait one issue. If time for the next issue rolls around and we have nothing new, we will just have to go with what we've got.

Another point is that you strongly urge that the Journal be used to publish the differing and unfinished views among the minority. However, you don't want the discussions on Cliff that have been reported on from Detroit to be published. You want to polish up this material. I don't care. You are probably right that the material could use some polishing. However, I think there is some inconsistency in your stand on these two batches of material.

On a different subject, you advocate publishing your second one year article because it advocates that the minority debate and try to decide its orientation. I don't think there would be a big deal about printing the second article and holding off on the first one. Our main point was just to try to control the size of this issue. You're also welcome to try to condense the first and second article together to an article of size of number one or two. Given the other work you are doing I doubt that this is realistic. However, the actual layout of the Journal probably won't start until Sunday at the earliest. I'm going to have to do it and first I have to finish my article on the Mexican financial crisis and layout and print a new CWV for use at a big rally here on Saturday.

A minor point on Mark's notes on the *Socialist Action* reports on Mexico, why do you call them Cliffites? I thought ISO was the main Cliffite group. SA is definitely and annoyingly Trotskyite, but I hadn't heard them described as Cliffite before.

Unrelated news that we probably didn't mention before-- we are going to have to close the bookstore. Since Rene doesn't want to staff it, we can't really find any combination of comrades who could regularly keep it open even just on Saturdays. There is no point in spending all that money on a store which is not going to be open regularly and which gets few visitors anyway. I am very unhappy about this, but I really can't honestly argue against closing it. We will be moving the stuff out over the next month. We are still going to offer Marxist classics through the mail as well as our current and past publications, so technically Marxist-Leninist Books and Periodicals will continue to exist as a business entity, but just mail order. We haven't completely agreed as to how much of the library to save, but we will probably save a good bit. Let us know if there are some books in particular that you want us to save for you.

So, on the *El Machete* debate, 1) if you can get Jake to agree to a compromise, I will go along. 2) I don't think there is much political principle or value in the materials that we have now, so I don't see the harm in postponing publication of this debate. There is some heat, but not much light. 3) I suspect that subjectivism against Rene is behind some of your vehemance on this and I don't agree with you. 4) I think a profitable discussion would focus on how we should relate to left-wing activists and political trends. I'm sure we have some disagreement on this issue, and this issue has a lot to do with what kind of program any future organization we form might take up.

By the way,... [personal info deleted, CWV]

I hate to disagree with comrades, but sometimes I have to.

Oleg

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 To: the minority
 From: Mark
 Date: 1-27-95

Report on the DMLSG meeting of January 15, 1995

[discussion of local work omitted, CWV] ...

In our first issue on our formal agenda we dealt with was further discussion on the exchange of views on the "El Machete" ad.

One comrade, commenting on Oleg's defense of the "El Machete" ad in the CWVTJ, thought Oleg was treating "El Machete" just as a news source and not dealing with the fact that it represented a different political trend. The trend is against our trend. For example, Rene in Chicago is opposed to our politics. The formal side (of carrying the ad) is not the important issue. Rene was interested in not keeping the differences well defined. He didn't write his views. He just made verbal accusations.

Another person noted that in Oleg's reply to Joseph, he mentions that he tried to write some more, but it came out bad. The basic problem Oleg faced was that it's difficult to write something that's both an ad for "El Machete" and doesn't support "El Machete".

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

The comrade expressed concern about what role the circulation of "El Machete" was playing in the Chicago work in the solidarity movement. If the comrades were giving their own independent analysis, then making use of "El Machete" with a disclaimer might be OK. But without developing our own analysis, a disclaimer on "El Machete" wouldn't mean much.

Oleg says that on whether "El Machete" carries articles that are signed or unsigned, it doesn't matter (Oleg thinks "El Machete" is wrong to promote these articles). But on the Zapatistas, Oleg takes Joseph's analysis that they vacillate toward the PRD and converts it into the Zapatistas are just using the PRD, although they're rotten. Joseph's article says it's not just some maneuver, it's a basic part of Zapatista strategy.

Someone else mentioned some articles he had seen in "Socialist Action" which say that the EZLN was promoting Cardenas and expected the PRD to carry out big actions against the elections.

A comrade raised that, according to Oleg, Julie is not sure if it's worthwhile to carry on polemics against "El Machete", that it's more important to carry out our own analysis. Besides, "El Machete" won't reply. The comrade felt this was not the main issue though. The main issue is to have some analysis of the group if we are going to endorse them.

Oleg also raised that, well, we don't have WA, so we don't have anything that can fill the gaps left by its demise, so "El Machete" can fill the gap. This reduces our trend's role to merely being a service for activists. Another comrade added that the demise of WA does leave gaps. But circulating "El Machete" doesn't solve the problem. We must build up our own trend's analysis.

Our next meeting topic was what contents should be in the upcoming CWVTJ. It was decided to send a note to Chicago summarizing our views. All comrades thought it was important to print the exchange on "El Machete". A number of people spoke in favor of carrying at least the first two parts of Joseph's New Year's review, and one comrade wanted all three parts. All comrades were against printing the study group reports. A number of reasons were given for this including: 1) the study notes might work as a supplement to an initial more developed article, but on their own would be a problem, 2) not only are the remarks very preliminary, but they are not even preliminary statements-attributable to individuals (because the accuracy of each statement is not approved by the individuals, or the DMLSG as a whole, and 3) we have not yet finished reading Cliff's book and ourselves are only speculating on various conclusions that Cliff will reach. The study group thought Palestine articles should have precedence over Haitian articles because Palestine was a more hot issue now. A comrade also raised that the Palestinian articles compare what's happened since the Accords to what theories were put forward but the Haitian articles that were available don't really do that and tend to be out of date. There was support for Pete's book reports. A comrade was worried that Red Orange be investigated and not just endorsed.

 Our final topic was Ben and Jason's diatribes. This was a long discussion. Much of the discussion was by authors of the replies to Ben and Jason and the articles have (or will soon be) sent out and the discussion was not controversial among our group. So I won't attempt to reproduce it all here. We may send this discussion out later. And I can supply more details if comrades so request.

We intended to discuss Cliff, but ran out of time.

 P.S.: I thank the two comrades (Neil, Oleg) for pointing out the error I made in calling "Socialist Action" a typical Cliffite group in my recent release on SA's reportage on the EZLN.

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To: Oleg, Julie
 CC: Jake, Mark, Pete
 From: Joseph
 January 26, 1995

Dear Oleg,

Thanks for the letter. In this letter, you put forward a bit of the reasoning from CWV, and I appreciate that. If we are going to try to build a trend, if we are going to continue working together, we have to discuss the actual issues. It wasn't just that certain articles for CWV TJ were just "postponed" for some technical reasons, but there are political reasons and assessments and viewpoints behind this. I only wish you had gone into things more. And I am disturbed by the way that you, and presumably the CWV, are discussing issues.

In your letter I learn that I want to prove that El Machete is shit. Would you kindly tell me where and when I have tried to do so? Is that what the discussion by me and others of the EZLN, the Mexican left, Mexican crisis, and the tasks of proletarian reorganization has been regarded as?

In your letter I learn that I have a personal antagonism to Rene. Is that how CWV deals with the political differences that have existed between Rene and myself for years? How does it differ from the way the majority says that there are no differences with the minority, but it's just the minority is subjective?

In your letter I learn that you regard my suggestions concerning the analysis of Mexican politics are frivolous. Is that how CWV discussed the matter? And if so, why didn't you say so to the rest of the minority? In the past, I have been impressed by the fact that even when you disagreed with an article, you tried to be fairminded in your characterizations of it. And in your letter of Jan. 4 to the minority you said there was a point to my comments on Mexican politics. But suddenly that assessment has changed--without explanation.

The impression I get is that you are holding back from looking into the political issues, or at least, you don't want to discuss them with me and the rest of the outsiders.

*The minority is once again going through a period where serious questions of orientation have to be discussed until a certain decision is reached. My opinion is that the very existence of the minority is at stake (and I said so in my review of the year since the party dissolved). The issue of orientation came up at the last minority meeting, and I have pondered the issue since this meeting. As a result I stressed the question of orientation in part two of the year's year and I stressed it in my note that you are replying to. But when you refer to my review of the year, you say nothing about what you think about this.

*You mention repeatedly that there is a difference with me on how to relate to political groups and trends. Well, finally, we all agree that the issue of the El Machete ad isn't simply a technical matter of providing some information to people, but reflects a political difference. But you don't say what the difference is.

*You apparently don't see any issue with the analysis of Mexican politics, reducing everything instead to the issue of how to relate to political activists.

*The CWV must be going through a period which underlines the need to consider what you want to accomplish and where you are going. Your forces are down; as Julie and you informed me, the bookstore is going to close; your really no longer just the Chicago branch carrying on. Instead you will be going through the same painful consideration of "what next" as faced Detroit and other areas with the dissolution of the party. Continued activity in this situation depends strongly on the belief in anti-revisionism (which is presumably related to the issue of approach to other groups you mention). But you don't talk about this issue of orientation. Yet, until now, a good part of the minority used to discuss these matters among itself.

*And by the way, Rene withdrawing support from CWVTJ is no mystery. It follows from the views he expressed clearly and openly at the minority meeting. Whether you take these political views seriously or not, they'll still have their consequences.

**You don't speak real directly to the general perspective for CWVTJ, which I think is an issue now. The old impetus for

the journal is over, and we have to consider where it is going.

And I find some aspects of your discussion of the journal's contents puzzling. For example, if the El Machete debate really has little value, it doesn't follow that it should be postponed, but that it should be discarded.

For me, I get excited thinking about the possibilities of the journal. Frank's article has come in, Tim's article has come up, CWV will have a Mexico article, the El Machete debate--whatever political problems it posed--pushed forward the analysis of Mexico and spurred further research. You have the possibility of an issue which sizzles a bit on Mexico (even has a controversy) and while Mexico is on people's mind; it has Palestine material while Palestine is in the news, etc. But unless the CWV is excited about this, the possibilities won't be realized even if you have the articles. You have to put forward your material with the flair you have sometimes shown, and which I look forward to.

(But wait, you'll have Red Orange. A few notes back on the CWV TJ #6 I asked to see the Red Orange material, but I haven't seen it yet.)

In any case, as to CWV TJ #6:

On consulting with Jake. I accidentally sent you and others the wrong draft of my last note on the contents of the CWV TJ #6. The final version (it will now languish in my files) listed who the note was being sent to: you, Julie, Jake, Mark, and Pete. So I did send it to Jake.

On condensing parts 1 & 2 of the new year's review. I'll probably do that Saturday. For this issue, I'll probably leave out some big issues that can be dealt with later: the material on Trotskyism, and proletarian reorganization. But I will keep most material most directly relevant to the next minority meeting.

I'll probably send out the cooperative anarchy stuff tomorrow, if not, I'll do it on Saturday.

As to El Machete: in my opinion, as I mentioned before, the CWV TJ is honor bound to carry at least a brief notice that some comrades disagree with the endorsement of El Machete, that material exists, and you'll carry it later (if that is what CWV TJ is doing). In your note, you don't say whether CWV TJ will or won't. I presume you don't mention it because it was taken for granted that this will be done, as the CWV TJ has done for other material.

As to the bulk of El Machete material, you talk of a compromise if Jake agrees to it, but don't quite specify it. I guess this is what you will consider among yourselves. Or perhaps you will consult the minority as a whole. What I mainly would like to lobby for is that CWV should look into the general issues involved, not just whether to carry an a particular article. But if it takes a bit longer for the CWV TJ to come out, the result however may be to ensure that the CWV TJ keeps coming out. CWV TJ aside, the minority will have to discuss issues of orientation to prepare for the next minority meeting.

On the books: it would be easiest for comrades from the minority could select what they want from the excess books when they come for the minority meeting. But I guess that will be too late??

... [personal discussion omitted, CWV]

Best regards,
Joseph

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Recent Problems, CWVTJ#6, etc.

From NC

To: Joseph

To: Oleg and Julie

1-29-95

Dear Cdes. of CWV & DWV,

After reading your recent exchange of letters, I hope cooler heads will prevail. I don't think there is a qualitative difference at stake here. Quantitative ones--well--yes of course!

On questions of tactical orientations, prioritizing work, etc. we will always have some disagreements. We need not see eye to eye on every aspect in these problems. They need not become antagonistic contradictions at each juncture. We need to be more flexible here.

We are not dealing with antagonistic political struggle here. Don't burn your bridges behind you!!

You might think me a bit cavalier for commenting on this. This is a tough period. Internal crises are related to externals and vice versa. CWV had its deadlines. I think Cde. Oleg tried to do his best. I guess he felt we need not delay the new issue of the journal.

I understand some of Cde. Joseph's anxiety about the El Machete issue. As concerns CWVTJ#6, the horse is out of the barn, down the road. Cde. Joseph might want a researched piece on Mexico and its current crisis for issue #7. We just got a 'Solidarity' 'soft' trot pamphlet on Mexico, the politics are rancid here and there, but the pamphlet is chock full of recent info. of the pol.-economy of Mexico. Do you want copies sent?

I think the cdes. in Chicago have been under much pressure, especially having to face problems with regular jobs and

political work--cutback attacks all around!! I think when considering work schedules, we need to look at the daunting realities we have to face up to. Many times it's not a pretty picture. The Chicago piece on the Mexican Peso crisis was good. If things percolate here, we will get it translated into spanish. A good effort.

Detroit cdes. are back in the trenches armed with DWVs again. This should strengthen our work. Please send us all copies!

Today, SP talked me into going to a 'leftist' forum on facing 'Contract on America' attacks. A lot of pacifist, social democrats and revisionists dominated. When we spoke on the importance of strengthening the struggles/mass actions against immigrant bashing and cut backs/layoffs, developing new militant tactics, etc, I could see it was foreign (no pun) to 90% of these parliamentary-pragmatist cretins. Talk about 'dead forces'! The next movements of struggle people construct will have to wage a political war to the knife against many of these pettifoggers as well as the rich ruling class!!

Mass Pro-immigrant march and rally being built for Feb 18th in downtown LA.

Love the E-mail!
nc/LAWV

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To: Minority
From: Pete, Detroit
RE: Upcoming meeting
Date: February 6, 1995

Dear comrades:

Following are some thoughts on the upcoming minority meeting.

It's time to declare an organization

First item on the agenda should be to reconsider Mark's statement and idea of declaring an organization, left over from the November meeting. At that time some comrades felt they wanted more time to consider the proposal. Since then there has not been any discussion on the proposal per se, though there has been some discussion about direction of CWVTJ and policies regarding it (the ad for El Machete, etc.). What I conclude from this discussion so far is: a) there may be some different ideas about how to approach the left, how to deal with the mass movements, etc., but b) there don't seem to be any major differences among comrades about the basic idea of supporting and defending Marxism-Leninism. From these points I conclude we should go ahead and form an organization. Having one organization will strengthen our common commitment in support of Marxism. And as to differences: being in one organization will I think help to discuss and sort out those differences. It won't (and cannot) settle differences by organizational fiat. But it can provide a certain framework, and a certain focus for discussion of issues.

There are obvious advantages to having a national organization. It helps maintain a wide perspective among comrades in the organization. And it provides a certain name for us among the left. But I'm mainly interested in this idea of providing a focus, and framework, for discussion of differences. I think this is crucial for developing our trend, to provide for internal development of ideas.

It's clear that individuals and groups in different cities (and also sometimes in the same city) have some different ideas about tactics. I'm concerned that if we remain at the level of strictly local circles, there's a tendency to let discussion of those differences lapse, and to take the attitude, "Well, every group has the right to do their own thing." Forming an organization encourages instead the idea that we're all working together to build up this trend, and it's important to share experiences and ideas with one another.

As to timing: I think the mandate for "the minority" as a post-MLP project has just about run out. CWVTJ did a good job of providing a forum for post-MLP discussions (Majority vs. Minority). But the Majority has just about died, and comrades feel pressured to define ourselves relative to other left groups, not just to ex-MLPers. I think we're all agreed that we don't want to simply join, or submerge ourselves in, the general left milieu (Trotskyite, social-democratic, neo-revisionist, or whatever). But as isolated individuals or local circles, it's difficult to maintain one's balance and independence. If we want to build up a genuine alternative to bourgeois and bourgeois-influenced politics, it's going to take a lot of co-operative effort.

We need a central organ

Groups and individuals of the Minority were united around supporting the CWVTJ. And Chicago comrades have done a good job in putting out a journal and maintaining a public forum for discussion of Marxist politics. But if we go ahead and form a national organization, then the issue comes up of having a central organ that represents a national, agreed-upon editorial policy. I would propose converting the CWVTJ into such a journal. Having an inter-city editorial board (Julie and Joseph as editors is a possibility) would ensure ongoing discussion of policy and, hopefully, sorting out different tactical ideas. Financing the journal

would then become the responsibility of the organization's members, nationwide.

We need to sum up work so far

For the March meeting we should sum up our work since the November meeting. This includes inter-city theoretical projects and local activities. Comrades in different cities should put out summations on e-mail beforehand to shorten and/or sharpen the discussion at the meeting.<END>

To: the minority
From: Mark
Date: 2-8-95

Dear comrades,

I'd like to put forward some views on the upcoming minority meeting.

In my view, this meeting should establish the minority as a formal organization. We no longer can define ourselves as the "minority" of the former the MLP trend but must declare the general political-ideological features that unite us as a distinct trend. We must decide what inspires us to carry on after it has become apparent that the "majority" has, in general, withdrawn from the fray.

In preparation for the last meeting, I prepared a draft statement announcing our group. The statement included what I consider to be the most essential ideological features of our trend. Our first order of business should be to continue the discussion on a statement of unity and take a decision on it. I plan some revisions on my original statement and will circulate the new edition as soon as possible. But the basics are in the statement circulated before the November meeting. Suggestions and comments on either version will be greatly appreciated.

The statement raises that we are an anti-revisionist trend and emphasizes our rejection of revisionist, trotskyite and social-democratic "Marxism" as well as anarchism. The idea of anti-revisionism was a controversial matter at the last meeting, however. Views were given mocking the idea we should declare ourselves an anti-revisionist trend. There was also a question raised near the end of the last meeting over how to define anti-revisionism but the meeting ended without the question being elaborated.

I think that the desire to build an anti-revisionist trend must inspire our work. We are not just "movement" activists, nor are we simply more militant than others, though we support the militant mass movements. Nor are we just any sort of leftist. We are Marxist-Leninists. And we have had, and should continue to develop, politics that are distinct from the opportunist "Marxists." Nor can there be a thorough stand against the heroes of the "majority" without anti-revisionism. The main value of the fight against majority-style liquidationism was not showing that this or that individual had abandoned revolutionary work, but defending and further developing an anti-revisionist politics. If there are other forces that are taking up anti-revisionist work, we should consider ourselves part of the same trend and seek unity with them. But such a force does not exist. Therefore we must direct our efforts to building our own organization.

The mass of activists can only benefit from our building an anti-revisionist trend, and we should do what we can to attract them to the cause. But I don't think that the decision to build our particular trend should rest on whether we will be able to attract a section of activists as consistent supporters of our trend in the near future. I consider such a development highly unlikely based on the problems of recruiting of the MLP and the left as a whole in the U.S. (Of course, if I am wrong, it would be wonderful.) But I think we should steel ourselves for a period when we will not have many people stepping forward to join our group and when the forms of participation of the activists with us will have many limits. I think the same situation will apply to the financing of the journal. It will largely have to be financed by our present forces. This was the case with the WA, too. And the WA had more articles tailored for the broadest section of workers and activists than the journal will probably have.

The heroes of the CC majority were not wrong because they noted the limits to the MLP's ability to recruit or attract close adherents in this period. They were wrong because they could see no purpose in continuing revolutionary, anti-revisionist work in such a situation. Detroit Michael leapt from the fact that we weren't recruiting into the MLP to disparaging the actual ties and influence we had achieved in this difficult period. The limits to party influence inherent in the present situation blinded him to the significance of carrying through the anti-revisionist critique and having a force, however small, that would stand up for such politics among the masses. In the post-party discussion, Michael tried to clean up some of his more blatant disparaging of anti-revisionist work but maintained the same attitude. For example, even when he claimed to be for a post-party journal, he was already calling for its demise in a year if there was not what he considered to be a big enough audience for it.

To me, this was just an effort for Michael to "save face," to look revolutionary while preparing to exit the arena of anti-revisionist politics. In fact, Michael made it clear that his hopes no longer lay in anti-revisionist politics but in the politics

of being "essentially Marxist." Jason has captured the essence of the attitudes of Michael and others in the majority. His lectures denouncing fighting for communist politics because they aren't tops in the popularity polls are just a more naked expression of the stand of Michael and other former MLP luminaries.

I think the second topic we should consider is the role of the journal.

One issue is making it formally the journal of the whole grouping. In my original unity statement I talk about the CWV group editing the journal of the new organization. This created an odd situation of having a journal proclaiming itself the journal of our organization, but the organization having no formal authority over the journal. I hoped that such a situation would not remain permanent, however. The recent disagreements over the contents of the journal emphasize the need for having the direction of the journal taken up and decided by the whole organization.

There is the question of whether the CWV group as a group will agree with the journal being the journal of a new anti-revisionist organization. If there is disagreement on this within the Chicago group, then this group should not have editorial power over the journal. Some other editorial group would have to be formed. Who should be in the editorial group is a separate question and the organization would have the task of creating a new editorial group.

As well, there are a number of issues of how the journal should develop. If the journal is a journal of the organization, we must all look into basic policy matters. Some issues that come to mind are: 1) what sort of editorial group should exist, 2) what types of materials should be carried, 3) how should internal debates be reflected in the journal, 4) financing/dues. I'm sure this list could be improved upon. But the basic thing is that it is up to the organization to decide such matters. This will further the discussion of how to develop the journal among the membership.

On the question of the editorial group, I think that the organization should support an editorial board composed of Julie from Chicago and Joseph from Detroit. Julie has been one of the driving forces of the journal. She would be directly involved in the technical apparatus in Chicago. Joseph has been an important writer for the journal and has been active in considering the journal's policy and making suggestions to the Chicago comrades. His presence would strengthen the discussion of editorial issues on the board. Whatever the arrangement of the editorial board, it should be re-evaluated periodically by the membership and subject to change.

If we form an organization, we need to establish a formal membership status. To be a member, one must agree to help build up our particular political trend and pay dues. While each local membership will decide who should be admitted, the organization should be kept informed of the existence of new members. A central roster should be kept. While all the members of the present local groups may choose to join the new organization, and while the present local groups may decide that support for the new organization is a requirement of their local groups' membership, members should join as individuals.

Dues should go to finance the journal. The present system relies too much on a few comrades. Comrades should give as much as they wish. But the dues should be set so as to cover the journal costs without relying on very large amounts from a few people ... [further discussion deleted, CWV]

Another issue that merits discussion at the next meeting is the research groups. A number of comrades have expressed concerns over how this work is proceeding. I'm glad Pete (Feb. 7 message) has raised the issue over e-mail and hopefully others will contribute to this discussion before the meeting.

Pete has also raised the issue of doing pre-meeting reports on local work. This is a good idea. And I would prefer that this topic not absorb a good deal of time at the next meeting.

There is also the issue of the "El Machete" controversy. At the meeting, I think some of these issues may come up in the context of the organization discussion. But I don't think that discussion of forming an organization should be confined to the "El Machete" controversy. It is likely to come up under a discussion of the journal. If there is a need for further discussion on this, it could be a separate agenda point.

Some comrades in Chicago have raised that the "El Machete" controversy is connected to the general question of how our group should deal with other left groups. I hope to see this issue elaborated before the meeting by these comrades. Likewise, if comrades think that there should be a new conception of what anti-revisionism entails, it is important to write on this.

In summation, I would suggest the following agenda points in order of priority: 1) declaring an organization, 2) issues regarding the journal, 3) research groups, 4) El Machete (if necessary) and 5) reports on local work.

<END>

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 To minority:
 From Julie
 February 10, 1995

I wanted to comment on the controversies which came up over the announcement on El Machete and the contents of CWVTJ no. 6.

The CWVTJ #6 will print an announcement that there is controversy over printing the announcement re: the availability of El

Machete through us. There is controversy over the relative merits or demerits of printing an announcement for a publication which comes out of a different trend and experience than us, what is the significance of the trend this newspaper represents, assessment of the Zapatista revolt and undoubtedly other issues. We will leave it for the following issue how to present the material

I will note that I was one of those who raised in earlier discussions the possibility of printing the discussion as it was up to that time. At the time of those discussions this included Joseph's letter to the minority, Oleg's response and a letter from NC. The later materials from the Detroit study group and Mark's article assessing a Socialist Action article and the Zapatistas had not yet come in. I had my misgivings about printing this discussion at such an early stage. But I did raise it for discussion.

Why did I raise it for discussion?

1. I have been in general in favor of the idea that we can print discussions in progress. Thus, I would not have a problem printing the initial discussions on Cliff. I was in favor of printing the discussion on SOIC. That doesn't mean that I think discussions in progress should always be printed.

2. I think the issues have significance.

But I also had misgivings about printing the initial views without some time for further discussion to take place and time for the comrades involved to think about how they want the issues presented. For one thing, the discussions were quite obviously initial. Joseph's letter, for instance, says that he had not read El Machete. And he states that his comments on Mexico were based on little investigation. I should note that I personally don't have objection to discussions starting in that way. I assume that his points are made on the basis of years of political experience. And I think his discussion of the issues makes some serious points. Nevertheless, I don't think a discussion at this stage would be taken so seriously by those outside of our direct circles. I'm not accustomed to seeing debate in other press where it is admittedly based on not having read some of the material at issue. If I thought that this would be all there is, that the comrades would not work on the matter further, then I would say that there would be no other choice. But I don't believe this to be the case.

I generally consider the discussion at this stage as putting some issues on the table, delineating better what the issues are, and giving some initial views. So, therefore, I did not and do not consider it a matter of principle whether the material on this debate is covered in this issue or the next issue. In fact, I think it would be useful for the next minority meeting to discuss this debate, what issues are involved and how to present it in the CWVTJ.

As to getting other comrades some translations of El Machete I have no ready solution. Most comrades here can read Spanish but doing a formal translation would be painful. I don't know if it would be possible to get a cassette and read some rough translations in - or if that would be that useful

However, I was a bit shocked to see what I considered to be a line drawn in the sand over whether to print the materials now or in the next issue. I was shocked at the accusations that if the CWVTJ does not print these materials in this issue as opposed to the next issues then "IT ALSO MEANS THAT THE CWV TJ WILL TAKE ON SOME OF THE FEATURES THAT KILLED THE WORKERS' ADVOCATE" or that "THE DECISION FOR WHAT IS PUBLISHED IN THE CWV TJ #6 MEANS THAT THE CWV TJ #6 WILL NOT BE AN ORGAN FOR DISCUSSION OF DIFFERENG ORIENTATIONS AND OTHER MINORITY MATTERS. And it implies that in general the CWV TJ does not intend to be such an organ." I believe I made it clear in a phone call prior to this letter that the idea was to print materials on this debate in the next issue. (Admittedly our phone call was rather brief. Joseph stated that he was tired. I was as well.)

I continue to think that it is important to allow people a chance to discuss this controversy - including those not directly in our circles and not on e-mail. You raise that this might be presenting material 3-4 months down the road in one indigestible clump. I, for one, worry that the material at present (without some digestion by the parties involved) is indigestible. And I also think that it is a measure of the times that discussions do indeed take months.

Also, I wondered what is the issue of principle: why this discussion in progress and not others? Why this discussion and not further discussion on Oleg's article -- his thoughts about the old debate, or the discussion that is going on on Cliff? Perhaps I'm missing something here. These have also been active discussions among the minority. El Machete is not the only discussion going on among the minority. I, for one, have been very interested in reading the materials on Cliff. But Joseph and other comrades did not want these materials covered. They were initial and the comrades are doing further work which should better present the issues. I accept that. But I think there are similar issues with the El Machete material.

Following this I was even more astonished at the recent proposals from Pete and Mark re: establishing a national organization and establishing an editorial board for CWVTJ of Joseph and myself. Pete raises that he doesn't mean by this to resolve issues by "organizational fiat." But it seems to me to be exactly what is being proposed.

I would note that Jake, Oleg, B. and Anita are all currently involved in the editorial decisions on CWV. I don't think any of them want to be removed from its editorial board. But that is what is being proposed. It almost seemed to me that this would be the main first task of the proposed national organization. It seems to me that there are better, less administrative methods of dealing with the controversies that came up between some comrades in Detroit and comrades in Chicago over how to present the discussion on El Machete. I would note that I personally would not join this national organization under such conditions.

It also seems to me that there is an underlying assumption in some of the material that comrades in Chicago oppose or don't value the anti-revisionist struggle. Is this why it is thought to administratively remove most comrades in Chicago from the editorial

decisions of CWVTJ? If so, it still seems to me to be an administrative measure. If so, it should be discussed outright.

I do think that the debate with the majority is winding down and that we have to continue the discussion of where to go from here. Also, it seems to me that without that discussion and some progress in whatever path we decide that there is no basis for a national organization. It seems to me to be putting the horse before the cart.

Up to now I think that the main way we have discussed to move forward is to push forward the work on such issues as APEC, other issues of how the world economy is operating, the question of the role of the working class, Trotskyism, Cliff, etc. We have made some modest progress in this work. As well, world events have focused our attention on such issues as the Israeli- Palestine accords, Proposition 187, the Contract on America and the Mexican financial crisis. I think modest but important progress has been made on these issues.

I think the next minority meeting should discuss a summation of this work and how to proceed. I also think it should discuss what it thinks the present controversies among us represent, how to develop the discussion on them and how to present that discussion to our readers. Further, I think that discussion of a national organization should not be the first point on the agenda. It should take place after these discussions. []

Regards,
Julie

To: Minority
From: Joseph
Feb. 11, 1995

On Julie's letter of Feb. 10

Julie's letter of Feb. 10 concerns me quite a bit. She avoids the issues of perspective for our work, but is upset that there is questioning of the actions of CWV. That's not a good basis for preparing for the minority meeting.

Julie focuses on the issue of CWV TJ. After a year of work, a large number of issues are coming up. For example, the last minority meeting showed that the old agreement in CWV to continue CWVTJ was only for a year. So what should CWVTJ be now?

But Julie's letter has the tone that the coming minority meeting is like other meetings, and we will just continue with CWVTJ as in the past. Yes, we'll discuss some controversies and "how to develop discussion on them and how to present that discussion to our readers", but "up to now the main way we have discussed to move forward is to push forward the work on such issues as APEC, other issues of how the world economy is operating, the question of the role of the working class, Trotskyism, Cliff, etc."

So presumably the idea is basically that the meeting is to discuss that and how to prepare articles for the CWV TJ. There is no recognition that we are at a critical point, or even discussion of why CWV doesn't agree with the view that we are at a critical point. As far as the main issues raised by others, she either doesn't mention them or is shocked.

For example, Julie was shocked over my concern over what the CWV TJ should contain. Imagine that. Joseph said that CWVTJ had some of the features that killed the WA/WAS. How horrible.

I always thought the WA/WAS was an excellent paper. In comparing CWVTJ to WA/WAS I thought I was putting CWVTJ in good company. I thought that even at the end, the MLP did some innovative work in the WA/WAS on, for example, socialist agitation. But that work went for naught. And when I try to pass on experience as to what killed the paper I was on the editorial board of, a paper which we all in the MLP poured our life into in one way or another, well, this is regarded as an insult.

Moreover, I was also careful to point out that it was--until CWV TJ #6--by general tacit agreement that the CWV TJ didn't carry the discussion on the perspective of the minority. I recalled that we had discussed these issues earlier in front of everyone; after the 5th Congress we stopped doing so, and we should begin again. So I didn't try to pin anything on the CWV but concentrated on what our tasks had to be, and on how the CWVTJ had to evolve to deal with our tasks.

Nevertheless the attitude of the CWV is simply to be upset over the concern being expressed. Is this the proper attitude for an editorial board? Is this helpful for developing joint work? Shouldn't the editorial board at least like the fact that other members of the "minority" have identified strongly with the CWVTJ and regard it not only as CWV's paper, but as their own paper as well, whose future they want to guarantee? Are we only to have a right to applaud and not a right to help determine the future?

Julie also said she was astonished at proposals to reconstitute the editorial board, and she insists on an endorsement of all CWV members as editors as a precondition for unity. This is all she comments on in the proposals from Mark and Pete. That's it. And the discussion of the editorial board is taken as a personal slur against various CWV comrades and as removing them from work they care about.

That's not a good sign about how CWV sees itself in relation to others. I thought--and others thought--that the CWV TJ was serving as the "minority" paper, even if informally. If there really is some concept of a grouping that unites us, why is it treason to discuss what the most useful editorial board would be? And if some comrades are dissatisfied with some of the performance

of the CWV in editing the CWVTJ or the perfunctory nature of consultation, why is this an improper and illegitimate issue?

I myself think that the crucial issue is seeing what the CWVTJ--or whatever publication(s) the "minority" decides to put out--should now be. Julie does not express a view one way or the other on the issues I raised about this in my December 14 letter. I also think that, to fulfill these needs, a CWVTJ every 2 and 1/2 months is not sufficient--it either must be more frequent or there must be another, much more modest journal to take up the slack. Julie also does not express a view on that. I think we are faced with deciding what we need and then seeing who wants to do the work. Once we set our perspectives, I would have confidence in any editorial board that was enthusiastic for these goals and that had some ability to reflect the concerns of all. In my letter of December 14 I raised my idea of where the CWV TJ should go, and of what journal(s) we now needed, and not about who composed the editorial board. (And by the way, these ideas predated the El Machete controversy.) Julie and Oleg have since circulated that letter of mine to the entire minority. But they haven't yet discussed the issues raised there of what faces "minority" publications. Only such issues as the composition of the editorial board, when that was raised by Mark and Pete, moved Julie to comment. And then she made her ultimatum.

And on the face of it, Julie's ultimatum also raises the issue: Does CWV believe that if you aren't on the editorial board, you can't really be involved in the contents of the paper, or that you have been removed from work for the paper? I hope not.

It seems to me that CWV has a tendency to get upset at those who have raised concerns. Oleg pointed out that there was some sentiment that the controversy on El Machete was simply that I wanted to prove that anything associated with Rene was shit. And now it is suggested that others are just wildly inconsistent or out to persecute CWV. And this is not altogether new. Last year, the CWV was split on whether to have Detroit comrades come to support their May Day meeting. As well, CWV comrades have discussed repeatedly whether they have confidence in such and such an individual outside CWV. And now, when issues about where the "minority" is going are raised, it's all looked at sideways.

As a result, many issues are brushed over. Aside from who is on the editorial board, what does Julie think about the role of CWVTJ in the future? What does it aim at? Julie doesn't address this.

At the last minority meeting, Rene pointed out that the agreement of CWV to publish CWVTJ was only for a year or so. Other comrades agreed that this had been the case. Subsequent to the meeting, I also came to the view that the original impetus for publishing the CWVTJ was about exhausted. There would thus seem pretty wide agreement that the original decisions can't carry us through the next year, although there are big differences on what the perspective should be: Rene dropped out of CWV, I became more convinced of the need for the "minority" have its own banner, as Mark proposed; and CWV continues to put out the CWVTJ but it hasn't said anything on what the current perspective is.

But is it really advisable to sweep the issue under the rug and hope for the best?

Look back at the CWV TJ #1-5. #1 states that its purpose is to provide an open forum for the Marxist-Leninist trend, and for the ongoing debate.

CWV TJ #2 also emphasized editorially the debate with the majority.

CWV TJ #3-5 do not have new general statements on where the CWV TJ is going, and I haven't seen #6 yet.

So what is the CWVTJ's orientation now that CWV says the debate is winding down?

Well, Julie says in her letter that "we have to continue the discussion of where to go from here". OK. But that's where we were in November. The CWV hasn't spoken to the issues on this raised, for several months now, by other comrades. And Julie mainly just lists various of the research and political topics (APEC, world economy, working class statistics, Contract on America, Prop. 187 etc.).

Julie does comment that I'm wrong to say that the CWVTJ hasn't been dealing with issues of differing orientation etc. But it's clear that we put such issues into private, minority-only e-mail

And differences came up on CWV TJ #6 because there was a good deal of possible material that meant raising issues of orientation. I think that's clear too.

But in the discussion on El Machete material there is just one excuse after another. There's this and that and the kitchen sink.

For example, it's said that we don't have sufficient knowledge yet to publish anything on the El Machete controversy. This is hard to take seriously from an editorial board that already endorsed El Machete several months earlier in CWV TJ #5. And as far as I can tell, it is maintaining that endorsement, not suspending it pending investigation. CWV is sure, but when others ask to speak, CWV says the facts aren't in yet. One reason seems to be that CWV wants to prepare another article, besides Oleg's reply, before publishing the controversy.

And now Julie proposes that we discuss in the upcoming meeting how to present the El Machete controversy in the CWVTJ. I don't quite understand what type plans it is being proposed to discuss, and it would be useful to see a proposal from her on this before the meeting.

Julie also raises other issues of things to publish. Great. But why dump all this on as a grievance over the El Machete controversy, to which these things are not even vaguely connected? Instead, let the CWV put forward what it sees as needed to be published. I and others would welcome this. And we have tried to accommodate CWV on this.

It says something about how the discussion has been going, and how it must be changed in the future if we are to work together better, that CWV agrees or disagrees without much comment, and then it comes out as a grievance on an unrelated issue.

What we needed in consultation was not just a list of articles, and not the remark that this and that decision is just for space reasons, but CWV's idea of where the journal is going, what it thought of the articles, etc.

Moreover, I had raised in December the issue of whether we should have a way of printing just about all our present e-mail materials. I think that the vitality of e-mail is fading away, except as a technical tool. We need something to replace it, whether a more frequent CWV TJ or another means. If we did so, then the Detroit reports on Cliff, and I would think, just about all study group minutes would be printed one way or another.

So much for now. I hope Julie reconsiders her ultimatum and that the CWV discusses the concerns raised by other comrades. But as far as I can see, there is no way that the old arrangements are simply going to continue. A decision is going to have to be taken. There may be a national organization (but then CWV will not have special status). Or there may be a simple technical coordination between politically separate groups. Or the minority may break up altogether. But I think that, one way or another, the old informal grouping to fight the majority is just about gone. Its old perspectives do not inspire anymore and are longer sufficient to be the basis of a grouping. Whether the result is a breakup or an advance in our work, that is up to us to decide. <

Yours of 0210, etc.

From: NC

To: Oleg and Julie

Dear cdes.,

Thank you for resending your 0210 note in simple text.

I will write more about the views of LA cdes. soon but we need more discussions here.

I can say accurately that the first priority of the other cdes. is to keep our revolutionary bearings at this conjuncture. Cdes. have some good contacts in the rising motion against 187 and a few with those activists coming up in the fight against Contract ON America. I have been busy with them on this + it looks like there will be a very reactionary attempt again to break up the LA Unified School district, voucher schemes, union busting and privatization. The political difference now is the rich and their 'market system' are more in crisis and the liberals see more eye to eye with the conservatives that social welfare programs, health and education 'must' be more drastically cut back than under Reagan. All this to pave the way for yet more capitalist vice, looting and profiteering. Millions will suffer very harshly!

You may have read in the LA press about the Latino 'tagger' shot dead by a possible vigilante. The vigilante may get off scot-free claiming another tagger pulled a screwdriver out and scared him. The vigilante makes no bones about his contempt for 'Mexican skinheads' etc. The DA not only may not prosecute the vigilante Mr. Masters for shooting the 'tagger' Mr. Arce, but Masters may not even be charged with a concealed weapons violation!! DA Garcetti and the rich he serves would come down like a ton of bricks had it been a Mexican american shooting a white middle class racist hothead--you can bet your sweet bippy on that!! Actions and protests are coming up on this. The LA Times hid that fact that 3 High Schools have had mass meetings and protests over the shooting. 2 Small pickets have already been held. Middle Class Latino lawyers are also getting involved in the protests.

Back to your letter I agree that forcing the issue of 'national organization' may be premature at this point. Maybe after things develop and more joint work in theory and practice is carried out, then things may solidify us more. If actions pick up, this would test our mettle, would it not? Maybe problems of orientation, etc., could be solved better, with the test of practice in tandem with our study.

Fraternaly,

nc/LA

To: Minority

From: Pete

Date: February 11, 1995

RE: Julie's statement on organization, editorial board, etc.

Dear comrades:

In reply to Julie, who says she is astonished at my proposal for establishing a national organization, I want to clarify one thing. Julie raises the fearful bogey of "administrative measures" as one reason to oppose establishing a national organization. She's afraid that what is being proposed is that the "main first task of the proposed national organization" would be to remove Jake, Oleg, B.,

and Anita from editorial decisions on CWV.

Yes, my proposal is to form a new editorial board for the journal. I think this would be a main first task of a national organization -- to establish its national journal and the journal's editorship.

As to this being an "administrative measure" -- it would be a decision of the organization. I don't know if that's an executive (administrative), legislative, or judicial decision. It's a decision in which each member of the organization -- Julie as well as myself -- would have their say and vote. But to make things go more smoothly in such an organization, I thought it would be a good idea to raise now what I would advocate at a future time, after the organization's founding.

As to other Chicago comrades being removed from editorial decisions: at the time of my proposal I didn't know who was on the CWVTJ editorial board, so I couldn't very well propose their "removal." For that matter, it's still unclear to me -- Julie says the other comrades are "involved" but doesn't say that this is a formal board. That may work well for a local group whose comrades see each other often and know what all their views are. But for a national organization I think it's important to have definite people appointed (elected; judiciously selected; administratively settled upon), who will be responsible for editorial decisions -- responsible to the entire national organization. My thinking was: the group should be small, but also should be inter-city, to promote collaboration. Chicago and Detroit are the two largest circles of people, so I thought of having one person from each group -- Julie and Joseph. Another possibility, perhaps, would be Jake and Mark. I'm interested in hearing of other possibilities. But the first thing we have to get over in discussing this is the fear that someone may be getting "put down" by reconstituting the journal's editorial board. The idea is not to put down anyone, but to settle on a small working group that will be representative of the organization as a whole.

Would forming such a board then remove other Chicago comrades from editorial decisions? Formally and directly, yes. But they would still have the same say as anyone else -- e.g., someone in Seattle or Los Angeles or New Jersey -- on general policy and review of the editors' decisions. So let's not get sidetracked by the bogey of "administrative measures." The question is, do we want to move forward to a national organization or remain at the level we were in November, and possibly slide backward?

Another fear by Julie is that the idea of an editorial board is an attempt to settle the El Machete controversy by administrative fiat. I don't see how setting up a new board just by itself would settle that debate. But my **hope** is that it would help organize the debate and help clarify the issues at stake. A new board, for example, might organize research on El Machete and Mexican politics, including translation of El Machete articles. A new board might encourage comrades to write, and promise publication of, articles on "how we approach other left groups" and "what anti-revisionism means today." Such articles and the discussion they generate would help us advance from a trend to a definite national organization. <END>

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 To: minority
 From: Julie
 2-12-95

Dear comrades,

I wish to thank Joseph for his comments of 2/11

I wished to make a few other comments on the present situation.

Up to now, while I realised that there were differences over such questions as the history of the MLP, what led to its demise, assessment of the anti-revisionist movement, and probably various questions of tactics towards the mass movement within the minority, I thought that these differences were not the main thing and that discussion could take place over a period of time. Thus, while I have spoken at the different minority meetings on my views, I have not written much.

I have spent the time I have had available in putting out the CWV TJ, working on the material on Trotsky, reading the e-mail and writing some of the local agitation, and involvement in various mass activities here, mostly the pro-choice movement and more recently the ant-187 activities and protests against the current repression in Mexico.

I had already noted to some comrades (whether in a letter or phone call I don't remember) that I had dropped the work on article about Trotsky's false dichotomy between the Soviet revolution being socialist or democratic in order to write some on the current controversy around the El Machete article and other issues. Due to having to take 3 exams this week and being involved in some mass actions I don't expect this to be completed until early March.

However, the current controversy leads me to believe that the above-mentioned disagreements are more important than I thought. I cannot see forming a national organisation until such disagreements are more formulated and worked on.

Thus I think that the CWV TJ will have to take up printing such materials as there are which help to bring out the different views on these questions and others that may exist. I would hope that there would also be continued work on projects that had been agreed upon at earlier minority meetings such as the work on APEC, Cliff, Trotsky etc.

I don't see how the coming minority meeting can declare a national organisation. Rather I think it should concentrate its efforts on trying to get at what the disagreements are, elaboration of them and discussion how they can best be presented.

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Subject: Orientation controversy
 Date: 12-Feb-95 at 18:23
 From: NC
 TO: Joseph
 CC: S
 Julie and Oleg

Dear cde. Joseph,

I think your critique of Julie's letter dtd. 0210 raises some important points that need sorting out soon. But I have my doubts as to an immediate resolution that will be entirely satisfactory to all parties concerned.

Most of us see now that our exposure of the petty bourgeois and social democrat nature of 'majorityite' views has run its course. The majorityites have either dropped out of political life or have sought a separate peace and conciliation with the existant order. so we have the current problem of focus and orientation for our trend and CWVTJ at issue, like the new \$64,000 question.

From the recent exchange, this may take some time to sort out. We should debate this. Problem is this may take some months to resolve. No one group will 'win' by fiat at this time.

Differering assessors of the period seem to be hunkering down. I too hope CWV cdes. did not take it as insult to have CWVTJ put in the same category with the quality of political stands of the late WA/WAS. But I would say from their reaction that at the least, we should be careful with using analogies (I include myself in this criticism as well!) to make points.

With the outstanding problems to sort out here, how in the heck do you think a new 'national organization' can be formed out of the March meeting? Isn't this putting the cart before the the horse? Do not these questions of El Machete and related problems of orientation need to to be fleshed out first? What about renewed efforts on APEC, state-capitalism, world economy, Contract On America, #187. Does a national organization have to be declared to solidify advances in the research projects?

I was relieved that you took a 'fall-back' position e.g. 'the simple technical coordination' of our groupings rather than an 'either-or' (victory vs. doomsday) position because based on our own self confessed problems , forming a national organization now would be a longshot.

On your Part 2 " year in review", I think in all fairness to you that CWVTJ should publish it As-is ,and if they don't agree with the assessments than they should put forward their own differing views on this question.

We would also like to see a CWVTJ come out more often but I doubt that the existing forces have the where-with-al to accomplish this at this time. Looks like they have done very well getting out 5 issues in less than a year!

Have to get Spanish CWV article edited down and printed for agitation at Anti-187 mass march/rally next weekend.
 Look forward to your critique!

Fraternally
 nc/LAWV

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 To: NC
 From. Joseph
 CC: Minority
 Feb. 12, 1995

Dear Neil,

I just received your comments (appended below), and I'm inspired to write back. And if I don't do it now, I won't ever.

I perfectly agree with you that we must avoid action by fiat. This is essential if we are to make progress. The endorsement of El Machete in CWV TJ #5 was done by fiat, without consultation with the rest of the "minority", and done hurriedly, being raised in CWV only after all the rest of CWV TJ #5 was laid out. (See Julie's Nov. 25 letter)

How are we to avoid such fiats in the future? And why hasn't this fiat be reversed by those who claim that the information isn't there, even today, to make an assessment of El Machete?

The refusal of CWV to publish the El Machete controversy in CWV TJ #6, although the CWV TJ is an announced open forum, was done by fiat. How are we to avoid such fiats in the future? And how are we to discuss the problem of the original fiat if subsequent fiats restrict our right to put forward our views on the original fiat?

As to being careful with using analogies, I have no intention whatsoever to stop using analogies. The "minority" is composed of grown-ups. If anyone wants to take offence, there's a political reason.

As to an entirely satisfactory outcome to the present controversies, many of us do not consider the status quo entirely satisfactory.

And if anyone is calling the proposal to form a national organization a fiat, shame on them. This proposal was discussed prior to and at the last minority meeting. It was done properly, and no one dared call it a fiat back then. How much less can it be called one now, after months more time to consider the matter? Back then much of CWV was pretty much about to go along, with varying levels of agreement or reluctance. I was influential in swinging the meeting to postpone the matter till the next meeting so that especially CWV could think things over and we could hopefully have comrades who agreed zealously and not on a so-so basis. The matter has been under discussion for months, while the old basis of the "minority" grouping is pretty much gone.

As far as more discussion, so far all one has from CWV is Julie's assertion that CWV has to be editors or else she's out. A lot has been put forward in the last few months. But not from CWV. CWV has met the points with silence. I don't particularly care to go through too many more months of that and call it discussion. If there was a vigorous discussion raising many exciting points, it could be judged whether more time was needed or whether forming an organization would actually encourage the discussion. But more time for sullen silence, or for ten thousand more irrelevant excuses about why the El Machete controversy couldn't be published, isn't my idea of how to resolve things. It will simply wear the "minority" down.

You are right to look forward to more research on imperialism, state-capitalism, etc. So do I. But in order to have that, we need a resolution of the situation one way or the other. A period of discussion, if it is meant seriously and not just as a way of trying to kill a proposal by tabling it, means serious work at discussion. It means taking time, a lot of time, away from the research. Which is better, for the next year to be full of more proposals and more silence, or for us to decide what we are doing and then do it?

I am glad you find my "fall-back" suggestion encouraging. Of course, I am also open to considering any other suggestion that is put forward as well. But let me describe the "fall-back" suggestion some more so you can judge of it clearly. The "fall-back" isn't the status quo. The status quo is just about dead. The "fall-back" solution refers to the situation where the "minority" loses its cohesion and falls into separate groups. If the "minority" group begins to fall apart because it can't take up in common what it has to do this year, then various sections will take up what they think necessary; and then as a whole, the old "minority" grouping will only have limited cooperation in common. It is unlikely in this case that there will be more general meetings to plan work in common. Limited cooperation neither requires general meetings, nor can it inspire comrades to come long distances.

The status quo was based on pursuing the debate with the majority and uniting around a journal which was an open forum, without restrictions. If the debate with the majority is about over, and if the El Machete controversy shows that the "open forum" only applies when it is a controversy that doesn't involve CWV, then the old grouping is just about over. Something has to take its place.

If the next minority meeting just pretends that things can go on as before, what will happen? Well, it will take a lot of nice decisions, and then we'll all go home and see everything fall apart. The MLP Fourth Congress resolution on the party crisis was a very nice decision, so carefully crafted, with all the right tasks specified. (Sorry, another analogy, but I'm unrepentant.) And in a year, the party was dead.

The Fourth Congress shouldn't have shuffled the controversy under the rug. It shuffled it under the rug not by saying that controversy didn't exist. Oh no. It was careful to give the controversy much more time for resolution. It said that the MLP must **"find the way to restore internal cohesion"** etc. and that **"These tasks, in turn require that we gradually carry out certain essential theoretical work to help settle controversial issues among us, deepen the fight against revisionism and opportunism, and orient the party in the new conditions that we face."** But what was needed was not this careful, mature, well-balanced decision that everyone could agree to and anyone who wished to could ignore, but to specify what the issues were, and this had to be done so sharply, so concretely, SO IRRITATINGLY (if need be), that the issues couldn't be brushed under the rug. The Fourth Congress resolution did everything except what had to be done.

The next minority meeting must not do this. (I.e. not do everything except what is needed. I don't mean that we should write the resolution the Fourth Congress should have, but that we must confront the issue of perspective. We must write the resolution that fits our problems, and highlight those problems and their solution. Such a perspective could provide something inspiring, something to rally around during the year.)

I welcome CWV TJ, or whatever publication(s) the "minority" will reorganize or establish, as a place for different views. (And I and others have been pushing for comrades from Chicago to translate and publish El Machete articles along with the comrades' views. It was the endorsement of El Machete's communist and revolutionary qualities, etc., the identification of our trend with El Machete, that we objected to. Let CWV comrades write all their views, on whatever subject. We will write on what we wish too. It will be exciting. It will spur research, as our objections to the El Machete endorsement did.) But we must have an orientation for the coming year. Hopefully we have enough of a perspective in common to proceed in common. Otherwise we will proceed separately (either with technical coordination on some matters or without, whatever). But one way or another, many of us don't want to see the "minority" drift into oblivion. We will accomplish something if we can, and fail if we can't, but let it be with some energetic flair, not a pathetic whimper.

As to the winding down of the debate with the majority, the only correct meaning of that is that the old basis of the grouping

of the "minority" around CWV TJ, including the old basis of CWV putting out CWV TJ, is winding down. (Many of the ideas involved are still an issue.) Either a new perspective has to be agreed on in common, and this perspective will inspire the former "minority" grouping and spur our work, or the cohesion of this grouping is all but gone, gone, gone. Not because I raised this point, but because this is what is happening objectively, in the real world. Let anyone who wishes recognize the fact or let them close their eyes, but this is what is happening. We can take a conscious attitude or an unconscious attitude towards it, but the fact won't go away. And if we take a conscious attitude, then we have the chance to do something about it.

I appreciate your concern on these matters, and I look forward to your additional comments.

Best regards,
Joseph

To: Minority
From: Joseph Green
Feb. 13, 1995
RE: Upcoming "minority" meeting

Yet another solution

I hear that the issue is being raised that we can't change the frequency of a "minority" journal. How could one ask more of CWV than a journal once every 2 1/2 months? They are doing their best.

But the issue is for us to assess our perspective and our tasks for the coming period. Who are we and what are we trying to build? This will determine what we need in a journal. Then we can see how the journal can be done, how the work for it should be distributed and who can do it. We can't start with the idea that the journal should just be produced as in the past. The "minority" wasn't made for the journal, but the journal was supposed to be to serve the "minority".

In my letter of Dec. 14 I gave a list of needs for a "minority" journal. And I suggested two solutions, the one and two journal solutions. Let me now suggest a third solution: the one and one-half journal solution--one journal, two cities.

The Theoretical Journal could be put out alternately in Chicago and Detroit (if both Chicago and Detroit comrades agreed, I haven't consulted with either). First an issue in one city, and the next in the other city. It could come out once a month, or at slowest, once every one and one-half months. Thus neither city will be faced with more than a journal every two months, or a journal every three months, depending on the schedule decided on.

This procedure would require that the schedule be kept rigidly (which has not happened up to now), partially because a change in one city affects the other. And it requires that in general there is an overall agreement among both sets of comrades putting out the paper (both of whom should be subordinate to the organization as a whole), and especially that discussions or series of articles started in one issue are continued when the journal is in the other city. Of course if there isn't a common organization this solution might be an organizational-political nightmare, and it is certainly impossible without a common perspective on what we are aiming at. Moreover the journal should have a general name (not a local one) to facilitate its use nationally.

This solution has both possibilities and problems. It might not be the right solution. I put it forward to underline the fact that we have possibilities. We don't simply have to lie down before our problems but we can confront them. Don't say it's technically impossible to do anything but what we are doing. That's just not true. And in fact, the situation has changed. The CWV TJ can't just continue as in the past if it is to satisfy all the conflicting demands of the coming period, including:

****Coverage of the debate among the former MLP circles (which is still continuing with Ben and maybe Jason);**

****Coverage of our differences, especially as a number of comrades are saying they are so deep they preclude a common perspective and forming an organizational network;**

****Discussing our research projects on imperialism and other issues of importance for the scientific basis of communism today. The journal should give an impetus to this work: if the journal is run with enthusiasm for the work, and with a long-term attitude towards it--not shifting and turning in order to run after this or that circle but maintaining an overall orientation towards the themes we know are important in the long-run and of interest in general.**

****Possibly attracting the attention of some activists, or allowing them to get a picture of the concerns of our grouping.**

****Dealing with some topical political issues, insofar as "minority" agitation brings them forward.**

****Providing a place for correspondence, carrying material from people vaguely around us or just sort of commenting on us, and providing some possibility for people in isolated areas to make a contribution.**

****Replacing e-mail for most general communications, so e-mail just becomes a private channel. This would mean bringing a lot of what is now internal discussion into public light, so it is a political decision. And also, this would require the journal being a reliable, regular, and timely channel, preferably monthly. But this would allow the journal to serve the following purposes, now partially covered by e-mail:**

****Covering preliminary discussions among ourselves, study group discussions, reports, and serving as a vehicle of discussion.**

****Reflecting what's going on in the different minority areas.**

To accomplish these conflicting tasks, it would have to be large and frequent enough to have a bit of room and a bit of flexibility. If such a journal were put out with a bit of flair, with a bit of political and theoretical insight, with a firm conviction in the value of our anti-revisionist tasks, and with a general declaration to the world of our purpose, it might arouse the enthusiasm not just of our own activists but of some friends or contacts around us. It could also allow ongoing discussion back and forth in the journal, which really isn't possible as a living thing in a journal that comes out every 2 1/2 months. It could provide a picture of discussion and thought in various areas.

Request for a summation of the CWV TJ

Finally, in preparation for the minority meeting, it would be useful to get a summation from CWV of the CWV TJ and the work on it. What has CWV been trying to do with the journal--both with respect to circulation and content--and what are the results? How have they coordinated with research groups? How do they see the political role the journal has played in the past year? And also, among other things, how many copies do they produce, distributed (in very broad categories) to whom? For example, does it circulate among the left a bit?

Also useful would be a summation of their experience in editing--how long does it take and why and what relation has this had to their ability to do Marxist study, other study, etc. And why has the process gone way beyond the original timeframes CWV thought it would.

To be of value in planning, the summation of the journal would have to be circulated prior to the next minority meeting, so comrades could mull it over, consider any questions they have on the report, and consider how it relates to their plans. An oral report at the meeting would come too late to be of much use. <>

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Another solution'

From. NC (2-14-95)

To: Joseph, Oleg and Julie, phil and frank,

Dear cde. Joseph,

Your latest proposal to help break the impasse we may reach soon has some merit and deserves consideration. However a big qualifier is reassuring CWV that their concerns are attended to. In the end, they are the pivot for the implementation of your 'one journal -2 cities' solution.

Setting up a 'common (national?) organization' may also be problematic for the time being. As you say we must advance to the point where we have 'common perspective on what we are aiming at' Then at what level will the new organization be based? Federative? Autonomous? Centralized?

I don't like to rule out anything and I think CWV-DWV practical work on the journal in tandem would determine whether more firmed up organizational unity will be built--through advancing theoretical work as well as modest gains thru social practice. Give it a shot!

The situation is changing to be sure! Though I see some differences in assessment. I think we may want to solve 'all conflicting demands' but at this stage, if we got 50% of Joseph's list positively accomplished --I would question my rejection of belief in miracles!! but I like the cde's optimism! I like some of the new features being promoted, esp. those that will appeal to other radicals, revolutionaries, and even the nominal left-progressives. Also this format of the journal could help make it a revolutionary organizer as well as educator. It will have some wider appeal!

Sure, there is always the danger that in intervening in real life motion that we err in 'running after this or that circle' but this always is a problem for those marxists participating in live activity in the class struggles. But the fact that each day arising/washing and dressing may be our last does not stop us from doing it either. We just try to keep our (political-nc) wits about us.

I have a slight problem about open printing of preliminary discussion type documents of our trend. E.g., I know mine may be a bit slipshod, sarcastic, bombastic, etc and maybe need 'cleaning up' before publishing them.

The idea of 8-12 journals a year sounds about right for now. Even this will entail great efforts of a number of comrades.

On the 'Summation' of CWV request. I worry a bit that this may degenerate into 'dumping on' the efforts of the CWVTJ group. Yes, they have made a few mistakes and the blundering on El Machete question. But we need open comradely correctives to deal with this and not drives for 'summary' courts martial for the CWV editors. Look at all the countervailing forces they had to cope with! E.g. the primadonnas, renegades, and charlatans of the old MLP majority. They had this almost thankless shit detail to cope with! One cannot sail the good ship CWVT- Journal forward very far while still having to deal with the piles of this rancid baggage still on board! I'm sure the CWVTJ will have a well needed breather and can enliven the

journal once this baggage is deep-sixed once and for all!!

Fraternally,
nc/LA

PS --Editing complete for CWV Spanish leaflet reprint for Saturday's mass action! LA cdes. split the printing bills.

2/14/95

From: Gary, NJ

To: M-L Trend

March Meeting

I don't want to spend the time or money going to another November-type meeting. The only two matters of substance in that meeting were Mark's proposed statement and the theoretical projects. The statement was pushed aside. Chicago said it would take it up amongst themselves, but to date: NOTHING. And as Pete has pointed out, a lack of organization has led to drift and unfulfilled theoretical work. Unless the statement is taken up seriously and a more formal organization is formed, I see no point in travelling to Chicago.

On the work on working class composition, it remains directionless. I have more statistics than we can use. For future reference, 4 sources are all that is needed to form a statistical picture of class composition. the Statistical Abstract of US from the government, American Class Structure by Gilbert & Kahn, State of Working America 1995 from the Economic Policy Institute, and The Dispossessed by Jones. Basically, the poor are getting poorer, this rich richer, the working class gets poorer and more insecure, its educational requirements are increasing (old skilled jobs are now just jobs), old professional jobs are being proletarianized, there are less farmers and more managers, but the working class and underclass are still 2/3 to 3/4 of the population as it has been since WW II

But what is the point of this research? It is detached from any live political struggle. It started from a need to counter the "majority" on its attacks on the working class, but the "majority" is politically dead. Ray expressed interest in pursuing this because some left sections were interested, but where is Ray in this work? My first article received no response from our circles except for Joseph helping me on mistakes I made in the first draft. My recent call for help on theoretical questions on dealing with teachers and the like received no response from Chicago. Theoretical direction is lacking. Except for Pete doing great work on book reports, and responding to my work regularly, the group has not fulfilled its purpose. The reason I believe is lack of organization and a void at the center. If Chicago wants to be responsible for the Journal, it must be responsible for political direction. It has not done this. If the trend is to survive in some form, we cannot remain eclectic.

In the beginning of our "minority" grouping I think any work was a plus. We survived the MLP collapse, we grouped together politically, we put out a lively journal for a year to counter the dead "majority". Any work done in this first period served to mobilize ourselves into finding a way to continue the trend. It is obviously time to move on. Lack of an organization and platform has stunted work. There is no mechanism to deal with internal contradictions. I don't feel this is my Journal, I have little say in its direction.

An agenda for March must be 1. the statement, 2. forming an organization, 3. editorial board and policy of a journal(s), 4. refocusing the theoretical work.

Recent letters from Chicago indicate however that this is not in the cards. However only such an agenda will move us forward. To sit and talk of topics in the news, to rehash stagnating theoretical work, and to rubberstamp the situation is not acceptable, even if Raphael's disruptive ranting has been removed. And if old Party history is somehow the roadblock (as has been hinted at), I don't want to hear it unless it's in writing! All the shit that Raphael wasted our time over, with tacit approval from some Chicago comrades, is bogus unless it is put in writing for us to consider and act on. That is the only honest way to proceed. These questions, if there are any, should be dealt with in a living way by discussing them in the context of our current situation, in relation to the statement and organization formation. Not as an invisible barrier no one can get a handle on.

I don't agree that we must sort out all differences over particular issues (El Machete, etc) to form an organization and make the Journal reflective of the organization. I think these differences will not be sorted out because of a lack of cohesiveness reflected in an unwillingness to agree on the need of the statement and organization. Julie acts surprised that forming an organization is being called for. HELLO! Many of us expected this to be accomplished last November before the actual meeting took place, and we saw that Chicago was not on the same page. We put off dealing with it while Chicago took up the question amongst themselves. Where is the results of that discussion we have been waiting for? I was pissed last November after this was put off, why should I go to Chicago to hear it put off again? A meeting to maintain the status quo at this point is silly. <>

To: NC
 From: Joseph
 Feb. 14, 1995
 CC: Minority

Dear NC,

I am relaying to you a message from Gary. Maybe you already have it. But I wasn't sure if you had -- or if you could deal with its file format. It gives a good reply to the recent exchanges, and deserves to be read carefully and pondered. I presume you already have Pete's material, which is thoughtful and also deserves attention.

I am also appending your latest message to me, so it can be circulated to all. I would suggest that in this period of discussion most everything on the issues relevant to the upcoming minority meeting is sent to everyone in the minority. I sent you the e-mail numbers earlier. If you misplaced them, I can send them again.

Gary's attitude is, as far as I can see, that of anyone who wants to see the anti-revisionists get down to real work. How would you propose keeping comrades like this around the "minority"? By telling them to avoid analogies, stop asking CWV for summations, to walk on eggshells around CWV, and just let CWV exercise "suzerainty", as your last few messages have suggested for me to do? Have you stopped, Neil, and asked yourselves what kind of political grouping would agree to these conditions? Do you really think that this is how communists should relate to each other? Would you agree to have relations like that exist between the comrades inside LA Workers Voice? And who would play the aristocrats and who would play the serfs?

And really, Neil, your talk about disagreements with CWV being fiats and courts-martial is absurd. Oh yes, CWV has nothing against controversy, so long as their stands aren't being examined. Why, they even took the initiative to print the preliminary material on the SIOC controversy, and have other comrades critique each other--while CWV never expressed an opinion in the CWVTJ on this controversy and I still have no idea what their views on it are. It was CWV who took the initiative to have this controversy of others aired, although the sides to this controversy would have been quite content to discuss the matter further among themselves. But when CWV positions are examined, it's another story. It's deja vue. It sounds like we're right back in the debate prior to the 5th Congress. Back then Jim and Joe and others stated talking about "cannibalism" and "ideological blowouts" and what not. Today its "fiats" and "courts-martial" and "administrative measures".

And I don't know what you are talking about when you tell me to "Look at all the countervailing forces they [CWVTJ group] had to cope with! E.g. the primadonnas, renegades, and charlatans of the old MLP majority. They had this almost thankless shit detail to cope with! One cannot sail the good ship CWVT- Journal forward very far while still having to deal with the piles of this rancid baggage still on board!" I didn't know the "majority" was on board the CWVTJ. Or was it the polemics which are "the piles of rancid baggage?" But the point of putting out the CWVTJ was precisely to be a vehicle for such piles of rancid baggage. And if you think the CWVTJ couldn't proceed because of this garbage, boy, it's really going to be bogged down if it tries to clear out the overall left stables of the revisionist and opportunist muck.

But oh joy, the El Machete exchange will appear in CWV TJ #7? The CWV has told you so. And that's supposed to make everything OK, as you suggest in a recent message? But since you raise that, recall that Julie said, just a few days ago, in her letter of Feb. 10 to the minority, that she thinks that "it would be useful for the next minority meeting to discuss this debate,...and how to present...it in the CWVTJ". So it's not so obvious what CWV intends for CWVTJ #7. Here's another subject for thousands upon thousands of equivocations, and petty decisions which will change from day to day. And that's aside from the fact this material should have appeared in CWV TJ #6 as a matter of course.

But down with this petty nonsense. I'm sick of the time wasted on the ten thousands excuses around publishing this material, the talk about fiats and courts-martial, the petty politics. It's wasting valuable time and effort that should have been spent on the things of value for the "minority", and the time which I will spend on it is running out. The old status quo is dead. One way or another, there will be a decision soon on where to go. Either we all take it together, or we will be taking it separately.

Best regards,
 Joseph

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To: Minority comrades
 From: Oleg
 2-15-95

Dear comrades,

Since there are a lot of charges and harsh statements flying around our little email circle, I think I should let everyone

know where I stand. Due to my hectic personal schedule and my difficulty in writing, all I am going to try to do is to let you know where I stand on some of the hot questions. I don't expect to have time to develop and explain my stand in detail. Eventually I will find the time and right words to go into these matters more, but that could be months from now.

The first question is about forming a national organization. It appears to me that Mark is proposing a fairly centralized, maybe party-type, organization with a central committee (the editorial board). As a general principle I firmly believe that the proletariat needs a strong, well organized, centralized Marxist-Leninist party to lead the revolutionary struggle. For 24 years I was member of an organization that tried to do that. I am not ready to join any such organization at this point. I think there were a lot of deficiencies in the way the MLP was organized. I think Joseph and Mark and I, at least, have serious differences in how we analyze the weak points of the MLP. I expect to take some time in discussing and debating this. It is not at the top of my list of things to do, but eventually I expect to come to more conclusions.

For now I do not intend to join the kind of national organization that Mark is proposing. It looks to me that we might be repeating to tragedy of the MLP on a much smaller and more absurd scale.

The question has been raised of what the overall purpose of the CWV Theoretical Journal should be. Unlike Rene I do not recall promising only one year of the Journal. We did promise to put out at least six issues when we asked people for subscriptions. However, my view has always been that we should keep publishing a theoretical journal for an extended period of time. In my view from the start the goal of the Journal was to try to assist future waves of activists by clarifying, to whatever extent we could, some of the vexed questions of Marxism-Leninism which were involved in the breakup of the MLP and which are being debated widely in the left today. We have wanted to let the activists who are going to form the next attempts at a serious revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party have the benefit of whatever summations we could develop from our experience. I think the Journal did pretty well in getting out the details of the theoretical disagreements at the bottom of the dissolution of the MLP. For the last six months or so, comrades in Chicago have been putting forward the view that more material needs to be developed on issues of importance to the broader left outside of the remnants of the MLP. I know we discussed this in the last two general minority meetings. I seem to remember Joseph having a different point of view when this was discussed two meetings ago. In the last meeting (and at previous meetings) some projects were agreed to and some work has been carried out. I don't remember any extravagant promises from Chicago comrades about what they were going to do in the near future. In fact most of us acknowledged that between pressures of work, school (in two cases), family responsibilities, and trying to keep up some presence in the mass movement, there was no chance of rapid progress on the theoretical work.

So I think the broad original purpose of the Journal is still valid. I think there is a lot more theoretical work that we can develop that is of value to those who are now or will later be searching for serious revolutionary theory. In light of this goal, I don't see the point to publicizing petty squabbles which have little theoretical content. I'm sure you have noticed that we have published very little of what Ben has written, and it was mainly for that very reason. When he did come up with something that had some theoretical content, even though the content was a far cry from a proletarian revolutionary stand, we published it.

Another point that I feel strongly on is the necessity to carry out political work among the masses and to participate to some extent at least in the general left movement. There is no way we are going to develop good theory without keeping some live contact with the political life of the country. It takes us a lot of effort to produce agitation and participate in the political events that we do in Chicago. However, I think that if we give that up, for example to concentrate solely on theoretical work, we will end up drifting off on tangents that have no use to anyone. So, even though I have had to postpone writing about theoretical controversies to write agitational articles for CWV, I think this is necessary. I haven't forgotten about the historical and theoretical issues and in the coming months I will get to them.

There are a couple of points on the history of the MLP where I would like to mention that I disagree with Joseph. In one of his letters to me Joseph raises something about that the problems after the Fourth Congress came because an alternative plan was not developed to the compromise resolution of the Fourth Congress. Really I don't think the issue was so much a plan, but just the faltering in the fight against the erroneous views of Michael, Manny, Jim, and Joe. As Joseph has now demonstrated in exhaustive detail, there was sufficient material in print by those worthies by the time of the Fourth Congress to draw out and oppose their theories. We in Chicago didn't do that and neither did Joseph nor anyone else.

Joseph has questioned why I still want to debate about whether the erroneous views on imperialism and the struggle against it ever got into *The Workers' Advocate*. I think it is important because I am convinced that formulations in some articles in *The Workers' Advocate* were changed under the influence of these views. Furthermore it was by detecting problems in certain *Workers' Advocate* articles that we in Chicago first became aware of problems in the Central Committee. The comrade who reported to Chicago on views and programs, etc., of the CC denied the existence of deep divisions in the CC (probably to himself also). If we in Chicago were inventing something that wasn't there, then Joseph and the other Detroit comrades were right in opposing us. In the opposite case, they really missed the boat. Maybe it's pointless to even debate this any more. But I have the feeling that how one evaluates this earlier history affects how you evaluate the present controversies.

Joseph and other comrades in Detroit have raised a number of very harsh criticisms of Rene. I have a lot of mixed feelings about this. On the one hand it is clear that there are many grounds to criticize Rene's political stands and actions. On the other hand I think Rene had a very powerful point in his last outburst against Joseph when he pointed out that at the Fourth

Congress when Jake was under vicious attack for "speculating on differences within the CC", etc., Joseph kept his mouth shut even though he knew better. Furthermore in 1991 Rene proclaimed loudly that there was something rotten right in the heart of the MLP. Joseph certainly didn't tell us anything like that until the party collapsed. Rene has certainly made more than his share of political errors and he has now gone off on a political tangent that I disagree with. But that doesn't negate that certain things that he said were right on the money.

As far as I am concerned this just emphasizes the point that I feel that we don't have a good enough summation of the history of the MLP to avoid screwing up again if we try to form another party right now.

To try to sum up my points:

1. I am not interested in joining the kind of organization that Mark is proposing.
2. I think the original broad purpose for which we started the CWV Theoretical Journal still applies. There is a lot of theoretical work to be done which should be of use to the next generation of revolutionaries.
3. A much deeper look is needed into the lessons of the successes and ultimate failure of the MLP. I don't think we have it yet.

For the ultimate victory of the proletarian revolution,
Oleg

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CWVTJ, Organization, etc.

From: NC

To: Oleg and Julie

2-16-95

Dear Chicago cdes.

Well, I guess things have been tempestuous for you cdes. the past week! I do think some cdes. are going a bit rough on you. I hope they will look at some matters in a more objective way. Yes, our trend has sizeable problems. We need much regular discussion of this and open court debate for marxists. I do not think we can by willpower alone, make our problems disappear

Of course i was not at the Nov '94 meeting which a number of cdes. are disgruntled about. I wish things would go forward faster too! Problems are both objective and subjective though. I, perhaps a bit cavalierly cautioned others against the mechanistic use of analogies. Our Cde. CV hit me with a real haymaker of one last night however. He said " Maybe the cdes. should realize that we are not in the high level organization and solidity as was the COUSML and later the MLP He said something about a our level being maybe something like ACWM! I told him organizationally we are not even on that level now yet. I said the 90s are also light years removed from the period of, say 1965-78 ,which was was a period of relative upsurge while now the workers and progressive movements have imploded or are in pell-mell retreats in most areas. This has deep effects on our own attitudes and moods too!

But the ice may be breaking a bit, we have noticed a part of the workers and sections of the lower middle class are generally peeved , outraged and disgusted with their deteriorating lives and cannot hold back pent-up anger very long. Many workers/lower middle strata who are falling for welfare-GR-AFDC bashing are no doubt thinking now(in the backs of their minds anyway)they themselves might need govt. assisted help soon! Also Sarah mentioned to me on the phone something we had been reading that the CPUSA revisionists and 'recruiting' a number of new forces, young people, poor workers, oppressed nationalities and some intellectuals. They have been boasting of a "new mass communist party' for the USA. now i think this may be premature but I don't just dismiss this phenomena either i read it as a barometer gauge showing that many workers are fed up, damn mad, and groping for some 'new' direction. (See the revisionists 'Political Affairs'--Jan '95).

Even though we are not 'recruiting' much at all lately ourselves, we have noticed that there is more inquisitiveness amongst new people at actions and openness to discuss revolutionary concepts--this among new forces and NOT the old SD-revisionist-trotsky sectors, some of whom look at the current period as a mere re-run of the 20s. But possible higher levels of class/social combativity loom a distinct possibility in the next few years. This may partly explain why the rich and their state are 'battering down the hatches' with more reactionary racism/cuts and cops/prisons! And the capitalist system has glaring hostile contradictions that simmer beneath the surface here in the USA.

We are sending our latest Spanish CWV reprint of LAWV via snail mail. I am just learning to do reformatting-- on my own--so presumably the 3 pager won't be necessary next time!

Let me know what you think of cde. Joseph's latest offer for a solution--One journal-2 cities-- as he calls it. Maybe this can be a bridge? A temporary solution? Maybe we can try it out in practice and see what happens?

We have to realize also that there are foces like Gary who are 'pissed' that things are not developing smoothly and want centralization- !immediatente! I also have my comrades here who are satisfied with mere federalist approaches! So we need

to be careful not to shoot from the hip.

CWVTJ#6 preview reads very well to me but will not satisfy everyone. I think we have to find styles, topics and approaches that will interest others. We do all need the discipline to promote the journal much more! We have to solicit feedback more creatively too! I for one however appreciate your efforts!

Fraternally
nc/LAWV

Setting the Record Straight/Reply to Joseph's 021494

From: NC
To: Joseph
(2-16-95)

Dear Joseph,

Before someone flies off half-cocked again, I wish to set the record straight.

First of all, the rest of us other anti-revisionists have actually been getting down to 'real work'. For many of us the 'real work' has been going on for 2 to 3 decades, give or take a few years. I just don't see that CWV mistakes alone will be our undoing. The period is more complicated than that.

I meant before that one should try to avoid careless analogies in debate, not all analogies. In this regard, I refer to your most recent. The one where you refer to my concern about overkill concerning some confusions in CWV's tactics and orientation. You compare my comments about not using the approach of 'fiat' and summary 'courts martial', etc. to 'deja vu'. "It sounds like we're right back to the debate prior to the 5th Congress. Back then Jim and Joe and others started talking about "cannibalism" and "ideological blowouts" This is like the guy who hits a bullseye on the firing range--unfortunately your 'bullseye' was on someone else's target. Do you really think that our (LAWV) political outlook and trajectory has much of anything in common with the likes of "Jim or Joe" et. al? And you say I am 'absurd'! Think about it.

I don't think I ever said I was against asking CWV for summations, I am FOR honest summations by ALL the anti-revisionist minority forces. In this regard you have a point about redoubling efforts to be more 'up-front' in this regard. Many of your reply correctives (to us) have been brilliant previously. We just believe the approach you employ toward CWV currently creates a real Rodney Dangerfield syndrome. You may end up killing the goose that has laid many a golden egg politically.

As concerns your query about internal relations of cdes. in the LA Worker's Voice. We see eye to eye on most questions but we do have some disagreements. This is especially true of work in the ongoing struggles. But also, we have struggled over the questions, of the role/nature of the current trade unions, spontaneity, the form of the future genuine US Communist Party, etc. Sometimes, yes, comrades want to dummy-up, but through patient, count to 50, respect each other methods, we usually get to nearer the roots of the problems and work out solutions.

I was clear on the fact that I meant that giving near 50% of CWVTJ#s1-5 over to the 'majority' to peddle their crap was where the 'piles of rancid baggage' lay. I partook in this debate myself so obviously I did not think the debate itself was all rancid baggage. Many of the minority exposures of the majority have been proven by recent events to be right on the mark. My point was that the ability to use the CWVTJ and a collective educator and especially ORGANIZER had its serious limitations in part because of the ultra-democratic open court approach used by the comrades.

I reiterate my recent phone call and messages with CWV indicates that your critique of the promotion of EL Machete will be published in CWVTJ#7 which should be out in late April. I fervently hope so and I want to get the CWV summation on this problem too! As concerns your summation of the previous period of the minority trend, my understanding is this this will be printed in THIS new CWVTJ#6 coming out this week!

LAWV cdes. thought Comrade CV's article on the racist 'Bell Curve' should have been published but it was not. But we will not cry in our beer. We will not give the CWVTJ comrades ukases or ultimatims either. The CWV comrades put that article on various on-line services so it reached thousands and put it out as part of one of their agitation leaflets. So we did not get our way exactly this time. The CWV tried for us though. I think they try hard for you too!

If you feel impatient about a more timely publishing of all your articles and polemics. The LA comrades would not mind seeing a Detroit Workers Voice Theoretical Journal-DWVTJ. You have accomplished excellent pathbreaking work in many areas of marxist ideas and theories so we would not mind at all contributing to--and distributing such a Journal!

Fraternally yours
nc/LAWV

To: the minority

From: Mark
Date: 2-16-95

Dear comrades,

Below is a new version of my proposal for a statement of unity for our grouping. Its basic ideas are the same as the previous statement. One change is that it talks of the journal as the journal of the organization, and eliminates the idea that the editorial comments are those of the Chicago Workers' Voice group. The new statement preserves the idea that the journal reflects the diverse views in our grouping. There is some re-writing of the sections describing how we are organized. But the basic ideas of that section remain the same: 1) that we do not consider our present limited unity as an ideal and 2) that we, in fact, do not have the type of centralization of a party-type organization.

The section on the politics of the "majority" leaders was rewritten, adding such notable features as their stand on imperialism, and the role of the working class. As a short description, it cannot encompass the variety of these views, but you can get the general idea, I hope. Also, I added a couple of sentences on international class solidarity as a separate point. The beginning was edited to make it a little more specific to the present situation and to place more emphasis on denouncing U.S. imperialism. Finally, the famous question of "name". Communist Voice and Communist Workers' Voice were my top two candidates, the later winning out because it invokes the same "Workers' Voice" title as the leaflets in the local areas.

Introducing Communist Workers' Voice

Communist Workers' Voice (CWV) is an organization of Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries in the U.S. We stand for a working class alternative to capitalist society. The present social order rests on the exploitation of tens of millions of workers. Year after year, the living standards of the workers and poor deteriorate. Meanwhile, this misery goes hand-in-hand with huge profits for the corporate giants, multi-million dollar bonuses for the CEOs, and the good life for the rich in general. It is a system that has created technological wonders and great productive powers. But in the hands of the capitalists, these great powers are turned against the workers. They mean speedup and layoffs. They mean swelling the army of unemployed workers and the huge "underclass" which lives on the edge of destitution. And while the need for social welfare grows, social programs are being cut to ribbons. This system maintains itself through rampant racism, through hounding immigrant workers, and through the oppression of women. The drive for profit leaves environmental devastation in its wake.

Meanwhile, American capitalism is the world's imperialist superpower. It is the global cop and the largest international exploiter. It heads up a world order of oppression along with the other imperialist powers. It is a system where multinationals corporations exploit labor and plunder resources around the globe. It is a system where the U.S. and other imperialists seek to impose their will around the world through economic pressure, international agencies, and war.

American democracy is democracy for the rich. Its institutions are tools of the rich to keep the downtrodden from threatening the profits of the wealthy elite. The president, the cabinet and Congress are tied to the big corporations by a thousand threads, as are the capitalist political parties.

The workers and poor need a new society. They need a society that abolishes the profit system and thereby use the great productive powers and technological marvels of today to benefit the masses. Such a new society can only be achieved through the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and its replacement by the class rule of the workers. The workers must stepwise learn how to run the new society, convert the economy to social ownership and build up the common productive wealth. Such a society will be able to eliminate the social ills born of capitalism. And it will create the conditions for classless, communist society.

Communist Workers' Voice believes that the working class alternative is not just some future goals. The achievement of these goals is the outgrowth of the development of the class struggle. The struggles of today not only are a necessity for survival, but provide the training ground for the greater battles of tomorrow. We support the day-to-day battles of the workers to defend themselves against the capitalist offensive of unemployment, wage and benefit-cutting, speed-up, etc. We stand with those struggling against imperialism and the war machine, against racism, sexism and anti-gay bigotry.

Communist Workers' Voice holds that for the workers and poor to achieve their immediate and long-term goals, they must be able to express their own class stand. They must get organized independently of the capitalist parties, the Republicans and Democrats. As well, they must fight such vehicles of capitalist influence as the trade union bureaucrats and reformist misleaders in the anti-racist movement, the women's movement, etc. They must rely on mass action, not the establishment.

Communist Workers' Voice considers the struggle of the American working class as part of the international class struggle. We stand in solidarity with the struggle of the workers and peasants around the world. We attach special importance to the development of revolutionary class organizations of the proletariat.

We think that the success of the working class struggle depends on it being guided by revolutionary theory. We believe that theory to be Marxism-Leninism. Communist Workers' Voice does not believe Marxism-Leninism provides some standard recipe for revolution. It provides a basic framework and principles that must be applied to present conditions.

Many have falsely labeled themselves Marxist or Leninist. There are the "Leninists" who back state-capitalist tyrannies such as the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe of yesterday, or the China of today. There are those who hail state-capitalist Cuba as socialism. There are "Marxists" who are banking on the reformists or trade union bureaucrats to move the struggle forward and "socialists" who preach about wonderful new societies that can allegedly come about without overturning the old oppressive social orders. Such "Marxists" have revised Marxism beyond recognition. Communist Workers' Voice thinks that Marxism-Leninism is nothing if not anti-revisionist. We aim to carry through the anti-revisionist critique of such theories and of the tyrannies that posed as "communist." We stand opposed to Soviet revisionism from Stalin to Gorbachev. We also stand opposed to Trotskyism, Chinese revisionism, Castroism, social-democracy and anarchism.

We believe that study of the entirety of the Soviet revolution and its subsequent decay is part of developing socialist theory. This must include examining the period under Lenin's leadership. We do not believe this means rejecting Leninism. We support the Leninist framework and draw a distinction between that framework and the evaluation of particular policies.

Communist Workers' Voice believes that the class struggle requires a revolutionary party to guide and organize it. Such a party should be made up of the most dedicated class conscious workers and activists and be guided by Marxism-Leninism. While Communist Workers' Voice believes the revolutionary proletarian party must be re-established, it does not consider itself such an organization.

We now exist as a network where all have united to produce a journal and to support various revolutionary principles. But there presently does not exist the type of centralization of a party-type organization. Rather, each local membership determines to what extent it participates with and shares the views of others in the organization. The articles in our national journal, the *Communist Workers' Voice Theoretical Journal*, from members, as well as the editorial comments, may reflect the views of many or all the members, but are not official positions of the group. The journal provides a forum for analysis and debate of issues facing revolutionary-minded activists. Various members of the group have also volunteered to work together on various common projects.

Members decide their own program of work for their local areas and local activities may vary a good deal. Even here, however, there are efforts to develop consultation on carrying out this local work, leaflets from one area are used or adapted by another area, etc. The local work includes such things as agitational and organizational activities in work places, in various mass movements, or in the schools. Research projects on questions facing the revolutionary activists have been taken up as well and are another form of cooperation between local areas. We are striving to develop further political and organizational unity.

Communist Workers' Voice developed from a section of members and supporters of the Marxist-Leninist Party, USA, which produced *The Workers' Advocate* newspaper. The MLP dissolved in November 1993. Under the pressure of the extended lull in the mass movements, a number of the MLP's leaders gave up their previous beliefs in anti-revisionism. They turned Lenin's views into cardboard caricatures and then dismissed them. Imperialism was prettified and its ugly features reduced to "flaws" rather than the result of capitalism in its monopoly stage. They no longer saw much point in imbuing the working masses with the perspective of socialism. Indeed, some among them eventually went so far as to put up for grabs even the basic Marxist theses that capitalism would give rise to socialism and that the working class was the vehicle of this revolutionary change. For other ex-MLP members and supporters inspired by this framework, the only thing that was realistic was "free market" development and petty-bourgeois dreams of ever-growing democracy, hand-in-hand with the capitalist and imperialist exploiters. The network that founded Communist Workers' Voice took shape in the struggle against such anti-Marxist views.

Communist Workers' Voice is a small network. But we consider our work important. If you are interested in lending a hand in this work, please step forward and let us know. Contact you local group or get in touch with the editorial group of the CWV Theoretical Journal (Addresses.)

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CWVTJ mailing, etc.
From: NC
To: Oleg and Julie
(2-17-95)

Dear cdes. Julie and Oleg,

Since this new CWVTJ#6 looks extra juicy, please send me 15 or 20 instead of the usual 10 or 12 if you can! ...[personal info omitted, CWV]

Thanks to Julie for calling tonite. I was glad to put forward our continuing support and sympathy for your position on organization forms and methods necessary for the next year or so. We know you are under much pressure from some Detroit cdes. but you are standing fast.

Oleg should be reassured that our handful of LAWVers support 98% of the points he made in his letter of Feb 15th. In 'spirit' we are with you 100%! This is not just me. The other cdes here said they don't want a rigid centralized party type

outfit at this time. either.

We loved the points you made about the balance between theory and practical work!

LAWV also is more interested in the 'hidden history' of the the internal contradictions that led to the crisis and collapse of the old MLP. It's painful but holds many lessons. Let the chips fall where they may!

LAWV uses Spanish translation of CWV article exposing the Contract On America for Feb 18th action. I edited it some. The 3 pager in in the snail-mail today. We will try to get interesting 'left/marxist' literature from trends at the Saturday march and rally. Some mexican trends may actually show up from south of the Rio Grande. We'll see!

Fraternally
nc/LA

To: Minority
From: Tim
2-17-95

LETTER TO THE EDITORS OF CHICAGO WORKERS' VOICE THEORETICAL JOURNAL

Dear Comrades,

I wish to vehemently oppose the characterization of the El Machete controversy in the editorial guide for the sixth issue of CWVTJ, which, unfortunately, has already gone to press. The commentary implies that there is a section of the minority that considers the fact that EM "comes out of a different trend and experience than ours" equally as important as an assessment of EM's politics in judging this group. This paints the objections of Joseph, Mark, and other comrades to the endorsement of EM by CWVTJ in a sectarian light and is highly unfair. The objections of these comrades were never made on the grounds of EM coming from a different trend; this is absurd. It is entirely possible for a group to emerge from another trend and develop politics with which we could agree. Or one could emerge with politics which cause us to have reservations while still recognizing the group as an oppositional trend. And it is also possible, obviously, for one to emerge with politics which we completely oppose. The issue is not the question of emergence from another trend at all, at best, this may be an explanation for the group's politics. The issue is the politics. Unfortunately, many other readers on the left, to which the CWVTJ editors are so attuned, will be quick to read the editorial guide's words as a veritable signboard saying. **BEWARE OF THOSE JOSEPH-PEOPLE SECTARIANS! THEY LISTEN TO NO ONE BUT THEIR OWN LITTLE GROUP!**

It is precisely here that the CWVTJ comrades are practicing an even bigger deception, I hope unwittingly. For it is Joseph and those who agree with him on this issue who have repeatedly asked CWVTJ to translate, and possibly print in the journal, an article from EL Machete illustrating its politics, followed by a commentary assessing their stands. This would be quite the opposite of sectarianism. Joseph and others repeatedly asked Chicago to provide translations of EM articles for all comrades to judge. First we were met by Raphael's arrogant refusal at the November meeting. Now, after his departure, things are handled more diplomatically perhaps, with Julie's statement that making such translations would be "too painful." But the results are the same: still no translations, still no in-depth presentation of EM's politics in their own words or in an analysis, and an endorsement of EM has been imposed on our whole trend by the CWVTJ editorial board. Technically, yes, the CWVTJ board is independent; in fact, as we all know, it has been regarded by us and others as the rallying point of our trend. If the Chicago comrades had wished to act in a comradely way on an issue they knew to be controversial among us, they would have declined (temporarily at least) to exercise their technical right and delayed decision on an EM endorsement until comrades could have read their material and expressed themselves. Instead, they imposed the endorsement on the rest of us as a decision of their small group alone. (Is this not an "organizational fiat"?) And Julie now has the temerity to describe Mark and Pete's suggestion that the whole trend consider (and decide democratically, I might add) a change in the CWVTJ's editorial board as an "organizational fiat". Now, which would you say is or would be an "organizational fiat", the decision of a small group imposed on the whole trend, or a decision of the whole trend, in which the small group had their full say? Please!

And now we have the aspersion of sectarianism cast upon Joseph and others by the editorial guide. Those who have called for study, discussion and democratic decisions are painted as sectarians. Over the years we have all felt the sting of similar unfounded charges at the hands of the opportunist left who have tried to prevent the clarification of issues in the light of Marxism-Leninism. It is painful now to experience such distortions at the hands of old comrades, especially some who have weathered the betrayal by our majorityites. I hope that you will repudiate these statements.

Tim

To: the minority
 From: Mark
 Date: 2-18-95
 Subject: Reply to Oleg's comments of 2-15-95

Oleg has rejected the idea of organizational unity of the minority. The main reason he raises is that he is worried that the organization Mark proposes may repeat what he considers to be the errors of the MLP. However, Oleg never bothers to tell us how the organization Mark suggests is repeating the errors of the MLP. If Oleg did this, perhaps he could correct what he considers to be the deficiencies in my proposal. I do not agree that my proposal creates a party-type organization, nor would it even require anyone to agree on any of the historical issues that Oleg raises. As far as MLP history goes, the proposal attacks the views of the "majority," which I assume Oleg doesn't object to.

But Oleg's attitude is that so long as there are disagreements on what happened to the MLP, we should not declare what principles do unite us, what our common vision is, or take organizational measures that might facilitate our common work. This is using the disagreements that do exist to subvert any organizational progress. It is making the idea of a centralized party into a bogeyman to frighten us from any unity. I propose we go forward on the basis of an anti-revisionist platform and a common journal. Oleg only agrees to unity when we accept a particular critique of MLP history.

Some Chicago comrades have expressed concern about the need to attract new people to our group. Are we to expect them to unite on the basis of a particular view of MLP history?! Why should anyone unite with us, if we can't even proclaim any collective platform of where we stand? Or is the idea that we are attracting people on the basis of CWV's platform which has yet to have been declared either? And what about the Chicago Workers' Voice group themselves? Is a particular analysis of MLP history your basis of unity? Oleg says he's still in the process of reaching conclusions on a number of weighty matters of MLP history. Isn't the CWV unity unprincipled by the very standards laid down by Oleg? By these standards, I assume no one in Detroit would qualify to join the CWV group. That's interesting because after the MLP dissolved, Jake, for one, expressed interest in Joseph moving to Chicago. Jake at one point even floated the idea of Joseph as an editor of the journal. Was Jake breaking CWV discipline by these actions, Oleg?

Oleg says Chicago is pushing for us to deal with the issues facing the broader left. Great, no one has opposed that. (As a matter of fact, I keep writing on Jason mainly because his ideas so perfectly represent the common prejudices of reformism.) But why are we dealing with the rest of the left? Is it to criticize the left from any old angle, or praise the popular prejudices? Or, as I hope, is it to encourage a Marxist-Leninist trend? And if we are all agreed on this, it mystifies me why we should not declare so to ourselves and the world.

Moreover, while Oleg proclaims these differences to be the most important issue when it comes to developing our unity, he doesn't attach any particular priority to telling us what his views are. He'll try to tell us in the coming months, he says. But Oleg, my general views on organization were first raised on September 12. Then my formal proposal was debated at the last minority meeting in November. That meeting ended with ostensible unity in favor of the proposal and a decision to settle the matter in March. Now it is March and you tell us you'll get around to your views on history in a few months and tell us it wasn't much of a priority with you. Well, I know you have personal lives and other political tasks. But when national meetings of our trend are called, do you think it would be too much trouble to make the issues that were agreed to deal with a priority?

Really, there has been discussion of "what went wrong" for a year and a half. It was the number one topic at the first minority meeting. It was discussed much of the second meeting, too. There is obviously not unanimity of views on this. So if and when Oleg ever gets around to giving us a real explanation of his views, I suspect we won't have unanimity, either. Oleg's formula for unity will thus keep the status quo indefinitely.

A pattern has emerged among some Chicago comrades of coming up with one excuse after another to oppose measures that would strengthen our trend. Last May Day, I was informed by Jake that Anita and Oleg were unhappy that comrades in Detroit wanted to attend their public May Day meeting. Five months ago, in preparation for the November minority meeting, I raised the issue of financing Joseph or someone else. Every local area was enthusiastic to contribute to his financing -- but Chicago. This is not merely because they had big local expenses. Julie raised that in Chicago "there are several comrades who have some issue with his (Joseph's -- Mk) role while the Party was still in existence" and a host of other objections (Julie's note of October 24, 1994). Because contributions to Joseph were left voluntary, Chicago wasn't obligated to do anything and their objections waned.

When I first proposed an organization, **with the Chicago comrades as editors**, there were another series of petty objections. Julie offered no criticism of the contents of the statement. But she thought the statement would make no difference and saw no need to deal with the issue one way or another. In the November minority meeting, I and others argued against the objections of some Chicago comrades, and there was apparent agreement in support of the statement although a *final decision* was postponed.

Now there are more objections. During a phone call earlier this month from Julie, I asked her if she had objections to my

organizational proposal. *This was before she was aware of any proposal to alter the present composition of the editorial staff.* She informed me that her hang-up to uniting in an organization was she was afraid "to get burnt again." Back in October, Julie specifically pointed out that my statement was *not* in contradiction with the minority's other tasks. Now she feels the statement *is* a problem because of some unspecified things the MLP did to her. Then when Pete and I dared to suggest that another editorial board was possible for the journal, Julie raised her ultimatum that only if every member of CWV edited the journal could there be an organization. It seems any reasoning will do so long as it preserves the status quo and avoids coming to grips with any problems we face.

But what of Oleg's charge that Mark's proposal sets up a party-type organization? At the end of the November minority meeting, Oleg agreed to "go along" with my organizational proposal. I'm not sure if he thought he was agreeing to a party-type organization or not, but he did agree to the proposal. So what has changed in the proposal since then? Well, I raised the possibility that there could be a change in who is on the editorial board. Now Oleg objects to the editorial board because it allegedly is a CC. But I have proposed no new powers for a new editorial board. It would have the same powers as the present editors. But if the powers of the editorial board are the same, than why does Oleg consider one a central committee and not the other? Evidently, for Oleg, whatever powers the editorial board has are OK only if every CWV member is on it, but if, as I propose, the organization determines who the editors of their organization should be, than those same powers become suspect. And what are these fearful new powers that Oleg imagines? Maybe Oleg objects to Pete's suggestion that an editorial board might do things like help organize research and encourage comrades to write on some controversial issues. Horrors! Is this what things have come down to Oleg? That we must oppose any effort to organize things a little better because you are haunted by the ghost of the MLP?

I think if you want the journal to really represent our trend, then dealing with the issues proposed by its supporters should be a top priority. I have no doubt that comrades in Chicago may have some practical difficulties in getting to deal with the needed tasks. In that case there are two choices. One is going on as is and not dealing with these issues in a timely manner. Another is seeing if some organizational measure can improve the situation. But Julie says she can't be in any organization unless everyone in CWV is editing the journal. And Oleg says everything is basically fine, let's go on as is. Is holding on to the present arrangement more important to Oleg than dealing with the tasks we face? I don't think we can establish a party-type organization. But I think the present issue is this: is developing our trend the top priority or is something else?

Since Oleg is fearful of repeating some aspects of the MLP's past, it would be nice if he could explain what the problems were. In this article, his main point seems to be that Joseph and everyone else failed in the fight against those in the CC who eventually were dubbed the "majority." Is this meant as an explanation of what we are not supposed to repeat? What's the point? Don't trust Joseph? Don't trust anyone else because they failed too? In that case, should the CWV disband because they shouldn't trust each other, either?

Next Oleg says maybe the big problem in the MLP was the WA articles. If this is the case, according to Oleg, he can show Chicago was right and Detroit was wrong. Clearly Oleg is intent of proving that the WA was soft on imperialism. Comrades in Chicago erred in making this their point of attack a few years ago. They admitted as much in their own resolution at the Fourth Congress which, while criticizing WA, admitted that WA agitation was basically OK. But evidently the fact that there were some bad guys on the CC undoes all that. In his CWVTJ article, Oleg reviews the Haiti articles. And what does he find? They were pretty good! I would be more than happy for Oleg to rip apart the erroneous views of Michael, Manny, etc. But instead he wants to make the focus of his investigation of problems the good articles. This doesn't fight Michael and co. but makes them look good.

Finally, Oleg thinks it very important that Rene said there was "something rotten in the heart of the MLP" even though "there are many grounds to criticize Rene's political stands and actions." Oleg neglects to mention that among the political errors of Rene were many of the things he thought showed the MLP was rotten.

He also fails to note that Rene announced at the last minority meeting that Joseph's historical stand was no different than those who became known as the majority. Oleg, in his review of WA Haiti articles in the journal, distinguished between those who were headed in a bad direction on the CC and others, and didn't include Joseph or Slim in the first group. Rene lumps everyone together in a sectarian way. I thought Oleg was right to draw such distinctions because, in fact, Joseph and Slim had quite a different stand from Michael, Manny, etc. Have you changed your mind about this Oleg?

I think a serious evaluation of Rene's (or anyone else's) role in the inner-MLP disputes must rest on their overall stand, not some isolated statement or incident. For instance, I am not impressed by some Trotskyite or Ben or Jim just because they denounce Stalinism. I think the most important thing is the political content of the criticism. From this standpoint, I see nothing glorious in Rene's stand. It was off target politically and conducted in a sectarian manner. If anything, it made it harder to get at the real rottenness.

In contrast, Joseph, whatever you think he should have done, never took up the rotten politics of those who formed the majority. He in fact has provided immense political clarity in the fight against majorityite politics and on political and ideological matters generally. And, whether one agrees with every proposal he has made, I challenge anyone to show me someone who has done more to help deal with the problems facing the minority. Meanwhile, Rene has checked out of our trend.

Oleg never bothers to tell us what the significance is of his highly selective slice of MLP history. If this is meant as an explanation of why the organizational proposal is no good, than I think it only shows how weak Oleg's arguments against the organizational proposal are.

to:minority
from:julie
2-19-95

Dear comrades,

A lot has been discussed in the last week. I want to give my views on the present controversies.

First, my conceptions on some of the history and conceptions behind the Chicago Workers' Voice Theoretical Journal.

At the dissolution of the MLP it was clear to me (as I think it was to everyone in the minority) that various serious ideological and political differences existed in the old MLP - from the analysis of imperialism, to which classes we should attempt to base ourselves on, to whether there is a divide between revisionism and anti-revisionism to whether there is any point to activists work or not and other questions. And these differences had a lot to do with the breakup of the MLP.

I believe that the MLP had a legacy to leave to other activists both present and future. Therefore, as part of this legacy, I deemed it would not be proper to allow the MLP to just go down without an attempt to explain the controversies. And I would note that on some of the controversies - particularly vis a vis the assessment of where the world economy is going, over the questions of neo-conservatism, etc., the controversies in the MLP reflect controversies in the overall left. Even the Sandinistas - an organization far from anti-revisionism and a revolutionary outlook - split between a neo-conservative wing and an orthodox wing.

Because of my own assessment that these differences existed and were a part of the reason for the break up, I supported that there should be a period of time and a means by which comrades could make their views known. Thus I supported Joseph's proposal for a temporary journal, which he made to the 5th Congress. When the temporary journal was voted down I asked Joseph to consider putting it out anyway. He said no. My recollection was that without the support of the Congress he was not willing. I suggested then that comrades in Chicago might consider doing it. (It did seem to me - and Jake and Oleg who were there- that the comrades in Chicago were the only ones at the time who had enough organization and resources to do it.) This proposal was discussed by the comrades from the minority who were there and generally agreed with,

I thought at the time that it might take 1-2 years to accomplish this task. I thought at a minimum this might take 5-6 issues of the journal. (It probably flows from at least Jake and my assessments of the material - from which I at least and I think he proposed 6 issues of a temporary journal at the 5th Congress.) But I also thought it could take more. In any case the CWV TJ promised 6 issues.) And that it had to be done somewhat meticulously. This is the reason why, especially at the beginning, so much material from the majority is printed. It had to be brought out into the light of day what the majority was actually saying. Thus, the first issue had Jim's and Manny's documents, transcripts from the 4th Congress "on the revolutionary struggle in the dependent countries" and published an ad releasing the IB documents from prior to and around the 4th Congress. Thus, later issues printed the entire Bloodbath series and so on. And we printed the majority of the material provided by minority comrades on the dispute with the majority. And, overall, I believe this work showed that indeed these issues were at dispute. And I believe that the work done to refute the majority laid common ground among the minority comrades on these issues. There were a series of internal exchanges a year ago setting out what various comrades thought our common ground was.

One could say that this was a minimum program for the CWV. As well, I always had hopes that the CWV TJ would go beyond this and develop some new work. And I think this was a common hope. I thought that if we wanted to go on and develop anti-revisionist politics, then we had to take on the issues that bedeviled the old MLP - issues such as what do the present turns in the world economy mean for the revolutionary movement, what do these changes mean for the working class and what does this mean for where we should direct our work, what is the character of present day world imperialism, what were the roots of Soviet revisionism. If not then exposing some of the issues which broke apart the old MLP and that indeed there were major differences inside the MLP when it broke apart would be a contribution but not much else would happen. Even if we are able to make some important progress, I think it will be in terms of a legacy to a new effort to build a communist political movement. Hopefully, we would be able to be one of the seeds in that new movement. Or it could take place in an entirely new generation.

In any case, from the 2nd issue on we tried to print materials which reflected work along those lines. So the 2nd issue has the book report from Pete on Nigel Harris and a book report on Noam Chomsky. I think a lot of the debate on Palestine and Haiti - besides reiterating that these differences did indeed exist in the old MLP- helped to outline some what is involved in the current world economy and political situation. There were other articles that while somewhat stemming from the old debate also were moving forward on the issues I considered important such as Joseph's article on Plebian Class Consciousness and Socialist revolution, my article on Marx and Engels on colonialism, the material on socialism in one country, the material on proletarian socialist revolution from Frank, from Mark on cartels, on the working class from Gary, Carl's on the Bell Curve etc. (Note that this article was printed in a CWV agitational leaflet- and this was stuffed in to CWV TJ no. 5 when it was mailed.)

As well, B. and I finished the last articles on the material on Soviet women, the CWV group discussed this, and the book was published.

I believe that the CWV TJ accomplished its first task - that is exposing that there were political differences in the old MLP, that these were indeed issues of primary importance, and that they were involved in the breakup. And it went a far ways towards showing that these were issues of importance to the present movement. And I believe the CWV TJ was able to reflect the modest progress that was made by comrades on going forwards on some of issues I consider important if one is to advance in anti-revisionism.

Yes, I believe that the debate with the majority is largely over. There may continue to be some issues to address. For instance, I would eventually like to print Jim's article on State capitalism and critique it. (It seems pretty clear Boston's journal will never print it). The Detroit study group has made some useful comments on this article.

But I do not think we are at some new critical juncture. I think we are at the juncture we have been at for some time. Both of the last two minority meetings discussed that the debate with the majority was winding down (although this was somewhat controversial) and discussed taking up tasks that would help us move forward. Thus, the last two meetings discussed organizing some theoretical projects - on the working class, on APEC. on Trotskyism, on Cliffism. and that Mark should prepare the material on the Palestine debate with Jason.

Neither meeting discussed too much the issues of strengthening our ties with the mass movements. And I agree with Oleg's points on the "necessity to carry out political work among the masses and to participate to some extent at least in the general left movement. There is no way we are going to develop good theory without keeping some live contact with the political life of the country>" I don't agree with assessments that theoretical work is the only way we are going to make advancements in this period. Nor do I agree with Rene's dichotomies between theoretical work and activism in favor of activism. I think there needs to be more consideration of the living relation between theoretical work and activism. Nevertheless, despite the fact that we did not have much discussion of this issue at the last two meetings - I think some modest progress was made on strengthening our ties to the working class and political movements. The CWV published several agitational leaflets. Comrades here have been active in pro-choice movement, the activities around the Staley lockout, and more recently in the anti-187 movement and the demonstrations against the repression in Mexico DWV has resumed publication. The comrades in LA are active in the anti-187 struggles, the fights over the schools, etc.

And the comrades here tried to reflect this work in the CWV TJ as well. Issue no. 5 was sent out with xeroxes of the DWV leaflet on Haiti and an LA leaflet on 187 so that our readers could see actual copies of these leaflets. The latest CWV TJ carries articles on postal and 187 that are reprinted from LAWV and DWV (One postal article was not but printed by the Detroit ML study group.)

I would like to see more from Joseph on why he considers our present state to be a new critical juncture. For my part, I think we need to push forward on the theoretical projects we have decided on, I think we need to assess how to organize this work better and I think we need to discuss how this work connects to our work in the mass movements more. And I think we need to move forward on discussing issues that there are differences among us. This I think will help us to move forward, give us a better perspective on how to develop anti-revisionism and a struggle for genuine communism.

On the question of whether printing the announcement that CWV had El Machete available and whether this was an organizational fiat. Nowhere in this announcement did it say that the DMLSG or the LAWV or the study group in Seattle have this available or that they agreed with Oleg's analysis. If there could be any doubt, CWV no. 6 states that several comrades including Joseph objected to it.

In fact the CWV from the first stated the standpoint and conclusions of various authors varied. Only where so indicated were the views the views of the CWV itself. And never have we said that other comrades followed all the views of the CWV. Only where so indicated on particular issues and stands has it been discussed that this or that view in the opinion of the author was in common. There has never been an agreement that analysis and background documents had to be presented to everyone in the minority before views could be published.

Even according to the proposed statement of the new organization Mark has sent, it would be perfectly proper for Oleg to write this statement and have it published. "The articles in our national journal. the Communist Workers' Voice Theoretical Journal, from members, as well as the editorial comments, may reflect the views of many or all the members, but are not official positions of the group."

Joseph points out correctly that an article translated from El Machete had been printed previously in an agitational leaflet and that El Machete was available in the bookstore. I myself have shown this journal to other leftists - pointed out that it is a group that opposes bothe the PRI and the PRD, that it seems to be an activist group and that it prints a fair amount of information on the left in Mexico, that while I don't necessarily endorse its particular stands it seems to me worth reading. I know that this is not exactly what Oleg said. It seems to me that it was only honest for Oleg to present why he thought there was any significance to this paper

You can't accuse one set of people for having views and not putting them forward and then turn around and condemn others for being honest and putting forward their views - as much as you might disagree with them. Oleg's letter might not have been

the most well-considered statement. But you can't blame him for putting forward what he thought. And you can't attack him for his honesty in putting it forward publicly rather than let the issue hang around.

And it seemed only proper that he should do this in print as there has not been some other norm among us.

For myself, when I raised that the next minority meeting should take up how to present the debate I was considering questions such as the "the long form or the short form" that is for example, Joseph's letter to the minority, Oleg's reply, the comment from Neil or all the correspondence starting from my first letter and questions such as what Pete raised in his latest letter. At this point I think all the correspondence starting from my first letter should be printed as well as all the latest correspondence re: national organization, El Machete, etc. And this was the universal opinion at the last CWV meeting. As well, I think the transcripts from the last two minority meetings should be printed and possibly our earlier materials from a year ago on national organization, what unites us, etc. And it make take more than one issue to get this out. The El Machete material would have to go in the next issues.

Joseph makes analogies in a letter to NC about our present period and the period between the 4th Congress and the 5th Congress of the MLP. I would note that in that period there were people saying that imperialism didn't exist, that Marxism-Leninism is irrelevant or not valid, that we should base ourselves on the middle strata, that there's no point to revolutionary work among the masses. And, in deed the debate on these questions which had just started to break out around the 4th Congress was stopped and the MLP rotted and could not get over its crisis. I see no such issues of such earth-shaking divide among the minority at present. I worry that making such analogies will lead to squabbling and comrades eating each other up. Even if there are, there needs to be discussion on the issues in a calmer atmosphere than exists at present.

On the question of consultation. I don't think consultation has been perfect - not from anybody. But there has been consultation on CWV. And most suggestions from Detroit have been taken up. As well, most articles from Chicago have been sent to Detroit prior to publication for comment from the editorial on Boston's letter to my article on Marx and Engels to Jake's reply to Michael to the introduction to the book. Joseph - until his most recent article on cooperative anarchy (I'm sorry that because of my shock at his letter re printing the El Machete controversy I did not get around to commenting)- has never sent an article here for comment. I think consultation could be better all around. But I also realise that we are all coming out of the experience of the MLP. There was no norm in the MLP of the WA consulting with the various branches on what should go in. For us in Chicago, there was usually discussion after the fact at regional secretariat meetings (in which Anita and I participated) and those discussions were very useful. But I don't think other regions had nearly the regular meetings that we did. I consider the last period to be a period of growth - where we are finding our way towards new ways of operating- coming out of our own conditions - and finding out what works for us.

On the question of forming a national organization. Before considering this topic I want to see discussion on at least two points. I would like to see discussion on at least two points.

What is anti-revisionism? Various bits and pieces of discussions in the last period lead me to think that among us there exists different opinions. I don't think an anti-revisionist national organization can be set up without some discussion of what anti-revisionism is. At the last CWV meeting Anita and I agreed to take up writing an article on this. We two also may have some different opinions - so it might lead to two articles.

The MLP and its predecessors were consistently among the working class and consistently stood for a working class alternative and socialism. They were consistently opposed to reformism. They were consistently opposed to Soviet revisionism. They were consistently for building an independent political movement. The MLP was the best at the complicated questions of being among the masses, not being sectarian and yet organizing separate from and against the influence of the trade union bureaucrats, the reformists, NOW etc. And I believe that this is because it had a clear idea of what it meant to build up an independent political movement. As well, the MLP in its theoretical stands made a number of important advances. From promoting Mao to Hardial Bains to Enver Hoxha as great anti-revisionist leaders it was able to break with these great leaders and show the essence of much of their politics. It made some advances on getting at the roots of Soviet revisionism itself through its work on the 7th Congress of the Comintern, the Spanish Civil War, etc. and provided some good perspective on how to get at questions in the earlier period. The MLP also had some weaknesses in the theoretical work it developed on anti-revisionism. The MLP was not able to explain a clear stand on Stalin in print. It couldn't explain in print that Albania wasn't socialist until very late (and that only briefly).

I do not believe that the MLP was on the verge of big advances - only to be disrupted by the majority. I believe that it had done much valuable work - which both in its details and perspectives left the possibility for advance -but only with some hard work.

Thus the stands on the MLP against Soviet revisionism, Chinese revisionism, Castroism, trotskyism were a significant part of its anti-revisionism but only a part of it. Obviously it stand on and considerable abilities towards building an independent movement were a part of it.

And I think there are some differences in perspective on this, which a period of discussion will give us a firmer idea of what to do.

There is another question of what tore apart the old MLP and its norms and methods. The MLP was, in my opinion, among the best in its norms and methods. It more than others really believed that the masses do and should determine history. Yet the MLP had definite problems on this front. A certain hierarchy existed. There was a certain culture of stratification around There

was a certain culture of experts and underlings, who questions could be discussed with and who not, and various strange conceptions re what security meant for internal organization. Yes, in some ways, I feel "burnt" by the MLP and how the break-up came down. I think it is not appropriate to form a new national organization without more discussion of what tore apart the old one or willy nilly we make the same mistakes.

Thus, on these points alone I am opposed to rushing into a new national organization.

... [paragraph on other matters omitted, CWV]

I hope that this gives comrades some more clarity as to what my views are on the current questions of controversy.

Julie

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LAWV on preserving trend, etc.

From: NC

To: Minority

(2-21-95)

Dearest cdes,

From reading E-mail and phone talks with cdes, obviously a number of internal contradictions have come more to the fore. The type of cohesive political and organizational unity needed for a new national organization does not exist at present. What should we do about it?

1) since we all seem to want to continue political work on various levels and commitments, this should continue. However it looks like most local groups wish to retain a certain strong local autonomy, for this year anyway. On the problem of our journals, LAWV thinks either both Detroit and Chicago should publish separate journals--the CWVTJ and DCWVTJ or maybe they can arrange rotation for each journal in tandem to be published every 4 to 6 weeks or so as they don't have conflicting publishing dates.

2) LAWV believes that we must find proper balance between theoretical and practical day to day work in the ongoing struggles and also better ways to link up both together.

3) We think, the especially with the systemic internal crisis and corporate/congressional offensive to gut out much of the social programs won thru struggle from the 30s thru the mid 70s, the the potential for sharper social chasms, class eruptions, and new movemnets gaining momentum for longer sustainance, rising combativity of the oppessed, is increasing. To be serious politically we have to intervene in these varied struggles emergent -even though our forces are tiny.

4) LAWV has a view on developing the anti-revisoonist arsenal. We don't think we will see much advance until we carry out:

a) the history of the rise (and fall?) of state capitalism as a world system--bringing to the fore its material basis and LAWS OF MOTION. Why did this type system arise out of formations who claimed to be marxist? Why is this not inevitable, etc.

b) what is the basic social/institutional make-up of socialist society? Explain how its laws of motion are QUALITATIVELY different from western or eastern style capitalisms. What is real socialist planning? How can society be geared for production for use and not sale and profit? How can workers hegemony be socialized? How will backward classes, ideas and actions be phased out? Etc.

c) explain what socialism/communism is NOT--we must reveal the clearest & strongest lines of demarcation between real workers revolutionary strivings, organizing and goals, and the old leftist bourgeois and petty bourgeois conceptions of 'socialism' (This done well will also hit the doltish right wing and liberal lies about what constitutes socialism as well!)

5) We need to attack the bourgeois media, (TV, radio, movies, sports, consumerism, etc) a lot better. Most of the revisionist left fawns before it. The old MLP never did--this was one of our strengths! It's relatively easy to nail the Goebbels style propaganda--it takes a lot more ideological skill to go after ABC, CBS, NBC, Madison Ave, Fox, Paramount, etc. in today's world!

6) In the journals, we need to get more feedback from readers and supporters on our ideas and methods for building real class and social opposition struggles/groups/parties etc. We should solicit for replies and have special 'readers letters/comments columns' and widen the scope of relevant debate.

7) a fair summary of the MLP history needs attending to --this means bringing out both the great strengths and serious flaws of our history. Honest activists will respect us for this.

8) Ex-marxist Jim also needs a 'coup de grace' expose of his fast discredited ideas. In many parts of the world, we see today capitalist economic -and MILITARY/POLITICAL barbarism and despotism RISING. Also the 'civilized' imperialists are having bigger disagreements. A January 'Economist' magazine issue actually stated this clearly and called the shots-- for

more repression, ruthless plundering, re-colonization, stifling of workers democratic rights and more of a (capitalist) militarist spirit to be promoted in (Anglo-american) society (Workers must be prepared to pay the ultimate price!). I think Swami Jim is not alone in the 'left' in promoting these rather bankrupt concepts which still cause confusion and dis-arm the masses.

I know the minority comrades want to continue the fight against exploitation of person by person. We have shown a good spirit and achievement in this over the past year. We are never going to see eye to eye on everything.

We can also use the journals and e-mail to discuss and flesh out our own problems and disagreements as well, also expand theory, good tactics, etc. At this conjuncture, we can do this as a revolutionary trend--with no one group wearing more socialist epaulets, hash marks or 'scrambled eggs' than the other. As concerns that, the progressive masses themselves will decide!

Fraternally,
nc/LA

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To: Minority
From: Oleg
2-21-95

This is just a brief note to try to clarify a few points relative to Mark's comments of 2-18-95.

There are two points of fact where I dispute his statements.

1. Mark is factually in error when he asserts that I was opposed to Joseph or other comrades from Detroit coming to our May Day meeting. The main comrade in Chicago who was opposed was Rene. I don't remember exactly how I may have worded my position, but I certainly didn't say I was against them coming or that I wouldn't welcome them.

2. Mark claims that I agreed to "go along" with his plan for an organization at the Nov. minority meeting. What I remember is expressing reservations and also hoping that further discussion and analysis would overcome those reservations. I was more hopeful then than I am now that we could come to a mutual agreement on organization. I don't believe it is fair to characterize my position then as simply to go along and support his proposal.

Let me try to outline quickly a couple more clarifications. On the question of analyzing what went wrong with the MLP, I believe there is a whole deeper layer of analysis which has to be done beyond the questions of the failures of various individual comrades to wage a proper and timely fight against the social democratic, revisionist, etc., rot that destroyed the MLP. What we had was the majority of the CC giving up on revolutionary theory and practice and the rest of the CC not dealing with this. So why couldn't the rank and file of the party straighten it out? I think that on paper the party structures existed which would have made it possible for the rank and file to straighten out the party. In reality, however, I think that the MLP had an internal culture that made this formal structure just an empty formality when it came to dealing with such a deadly serious problem as the MLP ended up facing.

I don't believe that Mark or Joseph share my views on this. I think they believe that the question of analyzing MLP history is just to analyze which individual comrades in the MLP developed erroneous, non-Marxist, and non-revolutionary views. I think they have rejected the possibility that there was anything seriously wrong with the internal functioning of the party.

I must repeat that I am not prepared to join the organization that Mark is proposing.

Let me try to clarify again what I am saying about analyzing the content of certain previously criticized Workers' Advocate articles. Mark disagrees with my point and screws up how he presents it. My point is NOT that the fundamental or biggest problem with the MLP was political weaknesses in certain Workers' Advocate articles. Rather what I am saying is that these weaknesses (which were not necessarily huge relative to what various opportunist groups were saying) were the main and just about the only symptoms the internal ills of the MLP which were visible to the rank and file of the party. Something was going bad inside the MLP, particularly inside the CC, but neither the CC as a body nor any individual CC member brought this to the attention of the rank and file. We only started to find out about it by raising some objections to some of the content in Workers' Advocate. I think it is absurd to say that two thirds of the CC was losing faith in revolutionary politics and the rest of the CC was not publicly opposing this, but yet and still nothing of this was reflected in the Workers' Advocate.

Once again I would like to advocate that the main contribution those of us who come out of the MLP and have retained our goal of proletarian revolution can do is to develop our summation of the good and the bad in the history of the MLP and to go on and try to clarify some of the serious theoretical issues facing Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries in the current period. This was the goal that the CWV Theoretical Journal started with and I think it is still valid.

... [paragraph on other matters deleted, CWV]

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To: the minority
From: Mark
Date: 2-22-95

I apologize for inadvertently writing that "Anita and Oleg" were opposed to Detroit comrades attending last year's public May Day meeting in Chicago. I meant to say, according to Jake, "Anita and Rene" were opposed. In his correction of me, Oleg states "the main comrade in Chicago who was opposed was Rene." This indicates it was Rene and some other or others were opposed to Detroit attending the meeting. This was blatant sectarianism by Rene and Anita and, if anyone else, them too.

As far as Oleg's claim that he never said he would "go along" with the plan for organization put forward at the November meeting, here's my recollection of what happened. That Oleg had reservations, no one would dispute. In the November meeting, Oleg said he had some reservations, based on some historical issues of the MLP. But he expressed agreement with the basic content of the proposal and, apparently accepting the basic framework, offered the opinion that it would be good to add to it various specific tasks that we were taking up at this time. For example, he thought the proposal should state that we are looking into the MLP history. Thus, though Oleg said he had reservations based on historical matters, he put forward that the organization should list as one of its immediate tasks the question of looking into historical matters. As what I was proposing was an organization that would not require a united opinion on the history of the MLP, but allow discussion and a diversity of views on this, I considered this in line with my thinking. There were some objections raised of whether this unity statement should list all our immediate projects and there was a question of whether we could even say it was a formally agreed to project like the other research projects. But these objections were technical in nature and did not contradict the idea that we should 1) have an organization and 2) those in the organization would continue discussing questions of MLP history.

Overall, my impression was that had we pushed things to a formal vote at that meeting, all three Chicago comrades present at the time (Julie, Jake and Oleg) would have gone along. But since there was some hesitancy, Joseph proposed delaying a final decision until the March meeting. The meeting agreed to this idea. Pete's notes indicate Julie expressed support for having a statement. My recollection is Jake eventually wound up showing some enthusiasm for a statement.

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 To: Minority
 From: Joseph Green
 Feb. 22, 1995

On Complacency

Are there presently serious problems of orientation among the "minority" that should be taken up? In her letter of Feb. 19 Julie raises a number of considerations about this or that. But it seems to me that she smoothes over problems and makes them disappear rather than analyzing them and showing how to solve them.

For example, Julie says she would "like to see more from Joseph on why he considers our present state to be a new critical juncture." Well, at least it's the first assessment from Chicago of what I wrote on Dec. 5 in reviewing the year since the dissolution of the MLP. But I think it's odd to wonder about whether there are questions of perspective now, right in the midst of a discussion of where we are going.

But OK. Let's see. I have been writing for several months that we are now facing issues of perspective. Instead of just repeating points I made earlier, let's take a few scattered things.

A critical juncture?

** We--the "minority"--are supposed to be united around an open forum, but dealing with differences on **El Machete** has been a major problem for us. At one point CWV attributed such differences merely to "personal antagonism" between me and Rene, and later they attribute it to an important political difference on how to treat other trends--and that's how it's treated in their notice in CWVTJ #6. Julie writes that there is no "earth-shaking divide among the minority at present" and that there is danger of "squabbling and comrades eating each other up"--and at the same time she thinks that **El Machete** controversy should really be discussed alongside the rough notes of the last two minority meetings, the latest correspondence about national organization, etc. Maybe I don't get it. But it seems to me that these varying stands suggest that CWV is having a problem in getting a handle on how to deal with controversy.

Back in the days of the MLP crisis, if you had a difference, you could just write it up for the **Information Bulletin**, and sometimes the **Supplement** (depending on the subject). Other material on the subject might be printed along with it if it came soon, but the **Information Bulletin** pretty much printed things as they came in. It didn't matter if the National Executive Committee thought the stuff was ridiculous or profound, whether it made you laugh or if it made you weep. But that was the MLP, and the MLP was a party-type organization, and we are not.

** We are supposed to be united on anti-revisionism--I thought that was one of the main points of our unity against the "majority". As late as Feb. 10, Julie debunked "an underlying assumption in some of the material that comrades in Chicago oppose or don't value the anti-revisionist struggle". But nine days later Julie says that "What is anti-revisionism? Various bits and pieces of discussions in the last period lead me to think that among us there exists different opinions. I don't think an anti-revisionist

national organization can be set up without some discussion of what anti-revisionism is."

** It's hard for us--the minority--to even translate an article in *El Machete*, as Julie pointed out on Feb. 10. So how much time and effort are available to the theoretical work mentioned by Julie in her letter?

** What about the perspective for the **CWVTJ**? Isn't there a crisis here? No, Julie assures us, the CWV isn't having any problem in pondering its perspective for the **CWVTJ**. She says what she thinks, and what other comrades in CWV think, and often it's hard to unravel the two. But the overall picture that comes through is that **CWVTJ** is just proceeding according to plan.

This just doesn't correspond to what we have heard at the last minority meeting. It doesn't correspond to what I have heard in other discussions. It doesn't even correspond to the existence of questions about anti-revisionism that now have to be settled in further discussion. It just isn't convincing to me when Julie gives a nice soothing explanation which, however, just doesn't go into the rough edges that have already appeared.

Will the theoretical work continue?

Take Julie's descriptions of what the **CWVTJ** has done. She lists the various articles and gives them a high valuation. Well yes, a lot of good work has been done. But she doesn't mention the problems. And if we don't look into them, then there is a question of whether the work will continue and move forward.

** For example, she mentions Gary's work on the composition of the working class. This is one of the examples of advance. But she doesn't go into the problems facing this work which Gary raised in his recent letter to the M-L trend of Feb. 14. Yet without considering the issues Gary raised, can we really expect that work will just continue if only we keep on truckin'?

** She refers to the polemics against the majority and gives a generous assessment of their value. She writes that "there were other articles that while somewhat stemming from the old debate also were moving forward on the issues I considered important..."

But I think there is a bit more to say. Everyone agrees the views of the "majority" leaders are no good, and thus applauds the polemics from that angle. But what about the issue Julie raises--of the polemics not just being a reiteration of old views. The polemics really do contain attempts at further analysis, and they differ in some ways from things that have been said previously.

Is this further analysis really agreed to unanimously in its entirety by the "minority"? Does no one really have any objection to anything or want further clarification or desire to put forward some different approach that they think is better? No offense, but I find that hard to believe. I would have more belief in it if Julie or the **CWVTJ**'s editorial guide or whoever had discussed the content of what they thought the advances in these polemics were, and not just said they were advances.

It would seem that rather than simply talking about our advances and saying that we have successfully finished off a stage of work, there are such issues as: when will the theoretical issues concerning these polemics be discussed? What should we do to encourage such discussion?

** She mentions the material on socialism in one country. This was a case where CWV put forward preliminary work by others and sponsored an open discussion of differences in the press--as opposed to first having the comrades see what they could work out together privately. What the results of doing this? No summation has been done yet.

Moreover, there were a number of views put forward, views which differed from one another. I may be forgetting something, but I don't recall the CWV itself ever expressing an opinion about which views were correct. When Julie talks of this material being an advance, does it mean that she thinks some views are correct? All of them? Does she simply mean that getting them out in the open was an advance in preparing the way for further discussion? And if so, what plans are there to advance this work? The next idea on socialism that CWV was interested in for **CWVTJ** was the Cliff material, and this does not continue the former discussion but goes off in a different direction.

Or look at it from a different angle. One of the things printed was the transcript on socialism in one country from the Fourth Congress. Undoubtedly this can be useful reference material for something. But for what? There was no commentary in that issue of the **CWVTJ** on this transcript, nor am I aware of one being planned. It was not directly referred to in the other SIOC material. All the editorial guide says is that it "gives reader a view of some of the thinking (and, or wild speculation)" and of "some of the differences that existed but were never resolved within the MLP." Is it thought that it will be obvious to the reader which is thinking and which is wild speculation?

I could go on. But the point is that problems are piling up in our work, and it has reached something of an impasse. But Julie just gives us a soothing picture of what we have accomplished.

In my review of the year since the dissolution of the party, I reviewed our accomplishments, rather impressive under the circumstances. But I was at pains to point out that this didn't mean anything about whether work would continue unless we looked at our problems. I think it is a Fourth Congress-style error to just review our accomplishments and slide over the problems. The preparations for the Fourth Congress contained some careful reviews of our work, discussion of incremental improvements, etc. The Congress even debated some of the ideological differences. But the resolution on the party crisis mainly slid over the sore points. The results were not good.

A different perspective for the future

Well, Julie does raise one issue of perspective for the future. She backs Oleg's point that what we really have to keep in mind at present is the "necessity to carry out political work among the masses and to participate to some extent at least in the general left movement". She thinks "there needs to be more consideration of the living relation between theoretical work and activism." And she focuses attention on "strengthening our ties to the working class and political movements." And meanwhile she is skeptical of my view of the importance of the theoretical work the MLP was on the verge of taking up.

So Julie too thinks there has to be some change. But the change she suggests is more attention to general work among current movements and the left.

In line with this, in her Feb. 10 letter she suggested that the coming "minority" meeting include discussion on work over the Israeli-Palestine accords, Proposition 187, the Contract on America and the Mexican financial crisis. That would mean a big focus on them as the "minority" meetings are short, with only a few sessions, as the rough notes on them indicate. And I don't think what Julie is referring to here is theoretical views on the Mexican crisis, nor general controversy over the orientation of such practical work, but that we should spend time on the details of participation in the struggles, where they are going, etc.

Is this perspective realistic?

I think this approach is mistaken. A certain work at the workplace and in the left will naturally exist if our other work continues. Anytime our general work advances or someone comes around, the contact with activists and other work among the masses will rebound--especially because at our level of work, simply going to a left meeting or putting out a leaflet or talking to someone at work counts as strengthening links with the masses. Whenever we put out a publication or get an analysis, there will naturally be some circulation of it. Whenever our theoretical clarification advances, the resulting clarity enhances other work. But when at a time of theoretical difficulty and extreme lack of time and forces, the suggested solution is more activist work, it's ludicrous. And when moreover the difficulties facing the activist work are ignored, this advice will actually harm the very practical work it is supposed to advance.

For one thing, I think Julie's account of how this work has been going is one-sided. She refers to certain parts of this work which has tended to rebound, such as **DWV** resuming publication. She doesn't refer to the small-scale of **DWV** work, the problems that the work has faced in Chicago with the loss in forces, nor the problems with connecting work among the Mexican community to the **CWVTJ**, nor the discussion about prospects of work that has gone on between LA and myself, etc. (By the way, I mention Chicago problems in this list not as a snide remark about Chicago work. But I do think Chicago comrades, who came out of the Fifth Congress with relatively large forces, are now facing some of the issues which we in Detroit and those in other areas faced a year ago. I bring this forward in the hope it helps foster a conscious look at this issue.) Yet without considering both sides of the balance-sheet, problems and difficulties as well as successes, there is no way to get a good picture of this work (Pete has circulated has prepared a brief survey of our work here. Reports from Chicago and LA would be helpful as well.)

Nor does Julie go into what we can expect from such work. It's fine and grand and satisfying to talk about resuming publication of **DWV** and links with the masses and work in the political movements. But what are we talking about? Much of it is individual participation by comrades, whether at their workplace or in leafleting or attending left meetings. There is also a bit of participation by several comrades at once sometimes. Moreover, there is a very limited ability to write leaflets. It is a real issue what type of independent alternative can be offered in such circumstances.

So what are we concretely talking about? Influence on the mass struggles? Actually influencing their path as the MLP did in some clinic defenses, movement demonstrations, workplace struggles, strikes, organizing drives, etc.? Just maintaining contact with the life of the masses? Having expectations about various of the reformist coalitions? Just working with whatever is sort of left?

There are actually different views among the "minority" on what to expect. Over the last year there have been some discussion on such issues. Julie says nothing directly on them, but leaves it at that it is important to do work among the movements. I think that leaving it at such generalities will lead to trouble and is a step back from the best of "minority" analysis of these issues.

One important issue, for example, that LA comrades and I started to discuss, is how to ensure that the leafleting and other work isn't just for more militancy or to support the current oppositions, but to help develop independent work among the masses. This requires more than just passing out a leaflet with our independent name, or adding a phrase to an article. It requires considering how to present communist politics in a comprehensible way, how to develop independent contacts, etc.

The path of least resistance

If we don't take up the issue of independent appeals, and if we don't put forward a sharp analysis that cuts against the traditional leftism that is now bankrupt, work among the left will turn into merely floating among the left. It will be done with a lot of good intentions. And there will be a lot of disclaimers that of course we are anti-revisionists or Marxist-Leninists and we know that the coalitions we are supporting or the literature we are handing out is from some other trend, and we have our own opinion, but "the road to hell is paved with good intentions" It's not sufficient to have a disclaimer. It's necessary that we have

sufficient literature of our own, sufficient analysis of our own, sufficient independent action of our own, that it makes a difference. You can't cheat reality with a phrase.

As well, I don't think that all areas and individuals of the "minority" will have a common stand on doing activist work. There was some discussion about this in the exchange between Frank, Neil and myself on such problems. I think that a political trend will naturally show some diversity. And it is wrong to say that all "minority" groups should undertake the same activity, all decide to have practical work or not, etc. I won't repeat here the things I said about what it means to be a trend.

And let's be clear that we are talking about very small forces with individuals who have very little time. Its nonsense to pretend that each area can be a well-rounded unit, like a reasonably-sized party branch.

What is the significance of our anti-revisionist task?

While stressing more work in the general left, Julie raises doubts concerning the significance of our theoretical work. She raises that she does "not believe that the MLP was on the verge of big advances--only to be disrupted by the majority. I believe that it had done much valuable work...but only with some hard work."

Here I believe she is referring to the analysis that I put forward in my review of the year since the MLP's dissolution. I pointed out that the MLP dissolved when it was on the verge of taking up tasks of world importance concerning anti-revisionism. We no longer had our preferred role as foot-soldiers of the revolutionary communist trend, but were faced with setting forward the general plans and theory for this trend. We were faced not just with studying the anti-revisionist views and figuring out how to implement them in our conditions, but with working out the general view ourselves.

Julie takes this to mean that I was talking about fast advances and big breakthroughs just around the corner. This was not my intended meaning. I was referring to the nature of the tasks facing us. We--and any similar friends we can find around the world--are faced with taking up questions of theory which we cannot expect that others will do. We are faced with being the main support of the struggle to build up an anti-revisionist critique, and with no obvious replacement or reinforcement on the horizon. We are faced with being the main force that is critical of traditional and timeworn leftist formulas that have proved empty and impotent. It was at this point, when our role had never been more important, that the CC majority poured fuel on the panic over numbers and suggested we were irrelevant.

Yes, the MLP would have needed hard work to accomplish this. And it will be even harder to accomplish this now without the party. But for precisely this reason, when we review our work, we must deal with the difficulties and not gloss over them. And we must have a realistic attitude about what activist work can accomplish at this time.

This is the meaning of anti-revisionism at this time--are we willing to take upon ourselves the difficult work of rebuilding it as a trend of thought and a political trend. It's not just an issue of having some reservations about other left groups when we go among them. It's not just that we know better than others about whether some regimes were rotten. It's whether we are going to work to rebuild the anti-revisionist critique. This has to be the center of our attention.

Hesitation

Julie puts forward her views on strengthening practical work and avoiding squabbles during an overview of the past year or more of work. It is supposed to flow from the stage we have reached from the successes of our polemics and theoretical work.

Actually, her present views reflect a longer-standing tendency in her perspective. For example, when the debate broke out prior to the dissolution of the party at the Fifth Congress of Nov. 93, Julie was somewhat equivocal at first on its value. She worried if the debate might interfere with the theoretical work she wanted to accomplish, while now she worries that the polemics or the theoretical work might interfere with links with the left or is just being overemphasized.

Julie expressed her views in a thoughtful statement of October 26, 1993 (it was an unnumbered statement, but I think it was "Chicago #2".) She calmly outlined her overall assessment of issues, and this was a correct and useful thing to do. But it does show that her hesitation about the debate that was just starting. Recall that Mark had just broke open the inner-party debate with his statement of October 18 (Detroit #1) which went into the views of Michael (then-Detroit) and Jim (SFBA) by name. Jim was furious and sought to stamp out all questioning of CC majority views in his response of October 20, 1993 (SFBA #1). He bitterly ridiculed upholding Leninism and fighting liquidationism. Here was the debate that the Chicago Branch had supposedly always wanted--not just the issues with being raised, as I had done in the **Information Bulletin** of Sept. 20, 1991, but this time the names of CC members were flying around like mad. But in response to this debate, Julie worried if there was some indeed some problem with a debate against liquidationism, and said the following:

"Mark seems to want the 'continuation of the ideological debate.' I agree with him that various views have not been well brought out, and it seems to me that there has been a hesitancy to do so....But even had views been more spelled out, I don't think this would necessarily have saved us.

"I have thought on this some. And here is one of the problems I find. I disagree with the views expressed by various comrades from Seattle...But I myself am involved in certain theoretical work. And considering that I have limited time, I would rather use

it to pursue this theoretical work that I am doing rather than to pursue a debate (in the IB or wherever) over these issues. This is because in the long run, the theoretical work we are doing I think is of more significance towards developing something that the present and a future mass movement can use than this particular debate. This, I think, cuts against the idea that reestablishing ideological cohesion or unity in our Party is the most important thing.

Second, I don't think the issues that face us are conducive to an ideological debate to root out 'liquidationism' or fight an 'anti-Leninist theory.' If this is what is meant by an ideological debate, then I don't think this context is useful...." "...So a debate in the context of 'upholding Leninism and fighting liquidationism' I don't think would be useful and might just lead to squabbling. However, a debate in the context of exploring issues in the context of our experience, our perspective and our work would be useful. And, in this context, I think an airing of what the views are and what the questions are that exist would be useful. However, I think this process at best will be slow (even if we can maintain and extend it) because many of the issues that are involved are ones of principle, are not easy to get at, require work and are not conducive to quickly writing down views. So any ideas of a relatively quick ideological debate are, I think, wrong."

There are of course many things in Julie's concerns that I can identify with and support--such as the necessity for theoretical work. Her point that theoretical clarification will take time suggests we should not assume that our polemics of the last year have solved all the issues we have taken up. It's premature to just pat ourselves on the back, declare our victory, and think we can go on to something else. But Julie missed the point that the passionate political debate was essential to break open the perspectives for this work, to spur it on, and to unleash the fervor necessary for theoretical work to actually be done. There is a hesitance on controversy. She likes a calm atmosphere, and recoils from the sight of fervent political passion on ideological matters, which I presume she regards as somewhat abusive. But there are times when underlying problems mount up and have to be confronted.

It is also notable that Julie hesitated to support a rank-and-file comrade (Mark) raising issues against a solid wall of abuse from Jim and others. I think this reflects the suspicion that CWV has had for a long time of Detroit comrades and other outsiders.

Back then, Julie and the CWV did however decide that the debate was important, and they put out the **CWVTJ** in conjunction with Detroit comrades and other outsiders. But some issues have remained on how CWV comrades look at theoretical work and controversies, and their suspicions of others have never gone away.

El Machete controversy yet again

Now back to some particular issues.

On the El Machete question, Julie claims I wanted to prevent Oleg from putting forward his views on **El Machete** in the press. She is quite eloquent about this. However the fact is that I and others have called for translations of **El Machete** articles, have welcomed the idea of putting important materials from **El Machete** in the **CWVTJ**, with comrades writing their own commentary on it; etc. When Julie wrote me that CWV had opposed an ad for **El Machete** but would accept an article giving someone's views, I felt this was correct. (See my letter to Julie of December 14.)

But what **CWVTJ** #5 had was not just the views of Oleg, but an endorsement of El Machete, written on behalf of CWV, the publisher of **CWVTJ**. It stated, in part, that "The CWV is distributing El Machete because it gives a more left-wing revolutionary perspective than any other paper we have seen from Mexico."

There is a difference between an ad and an article. Julie herself recognizes such a difference. But I believe she is wrong to think that Oleg's article was not an ad for **El Machete** just because it was signed by Oleg. The difference between an official article or editorial and an opinion piece is not that one is signed and the other isn't. The editorial articles in many papers or journals are signed articles.

Julie says I don't want **El Machete** to be available. Actually we would like **El Machete** and English translations to be more available--to us and to other comrades in our trend and, through publishing translations of any important article in **CWVTJ**, to everyone. If comrades think there is something useful there, let it be shown to all.

Julie says that the announcement of **El Machete** didn't say DMLSG or LAWV or SMLSG endorsed **El Machete**. No. But of course the **CWVTJ** doesn't mention DMLSG or LAWV or SMLSG as having any relation to **CWVTJ**. We not only don't have a national organization, but the **CWVTJ** doesn't usually carry any statement about what grouping is around it. And since there is no statement, there is no explanation that CWV is just one voice in this grouping. The "minority" has instead relied on CWV to show tact in how it presented our grouping. If now its defense is that it formally has the right to do what it pleases, because **CWVTJ** is its journal, then this strains the bonds between it and others.

Julie says that after all **CWVTJ** #6 carried a statement saying there was disagreement. But CWV apparently didn't intend to. CWV didn't respond one way or the other to the Detroit suggestions about the content of **CWVTJ** #6 and our questions about material on the **El Machete** controversy. By accident some additional exchanges on this took place at the last minute, and I urged that **CWVTJ** #6 at least carry a notice of the disagreements. So apparently it was my letter that shocked Julie that led them to carrying this notice. But this notice was written in a way that inspired Tim to write his recent letter to the editor protesting it. This notice of disagreement includes the CWV's latest, up-to-the-minute analysis of what they think is at the heart of the controversy, while the views of others can languish for months.

But, Julie says there never was an idea of pre-publication consultation with the MLP branches on the contents of each WA. Is this a serious idea about how WA could have been written? In any case, the WA was under the discipline of the decisions of a party that included all its branches; it was bound by the decisions of that party and by whatever mechanisms the party chose to enforce those decisions; meanwhile the CWVTJ is only connected to others through informal consultation. But enough of this irrelevant quibbling. The announcement on **El Machete** wasn't just another article; the issue isn't whether every detail of the CWVTJ should be consulted on in advance; nor is the issue whether another source of information should be available to CWVTJ readers. The fact is that the **El Machete** endorsement reflects a bit more about the perspective the CWVTJ is putting forward than just pointing to another source of information, and CWV hasn't shown much enthusiasm to discuss this with others.

Hierarchy

This brings us to CWV's organizational views. Oleg raised the issue of party-type organization, and Julie raises an even more general issue, hierarchy.

Well, hierarchy is hierarchy, whether you have a formal organization or not. Right now, CWV is at the top of the hierarchy because it puts out the central organ for the grouping. An elected editorial board would be no more of a hierarchy--it would merely be an elected one. If we could have a united system without any type of hierarchy, fine, let someone propose what this would look like. So far no one has.

What is needed for unity?

Meanwhile, it's odd, but in some ways Julie seems to insist on a level of unity for a loose network that is higher and stricter than that for a party. She talks about the issues to be discussed about anti-revisionism before there can be unity in an organization. There may be a serious issue about the concept of anti-revisionism. But she also raises issues about assessing whether the MLP was late to denounce Albania as irrevocably capitalist, how long were the articles that talked about this, that the MLP supposedly didn't give a clear stand on Stalin on print (saying that Stalin was the leader of Soviet revisionism wasn't clear?), etc. etc. We really need to have a united assessment on this?

Similarly, it's Oleg who raised again the issue of evaluating **Workers Advocate** articles from 1991. This, he says, may be necessary to look into before deciding on organization, because it bears on MLP history. Really? We need to have unity on assessments of **Workers' Advocate** articles, agreement on what's right and what's wrong in the Chicago polemic against the **Workers' Advocate**, and so on and on and on? I don't think so. Mind you, I support his right to speak up on what's on his mind. I wrote to him about his article in CWVTJ #5 concerning his criticism of a **WA** article on Haiti saying: "As the issue of Haiti is now come sharply into the polemic, and as well your earlier letter in the IB has been brought up in the course of my discussing Michael's reply, it is natural for you to raise views on this subject. This is indeed the time to say what is on your mind on these issues." Although I disagreed with the content of his article, I supported his view being written and published. But I don't think a common assessment of every part of MLP history is a prerequisite for unity.

The status quo is dead

Basically, overall, I don't think Julie's summation of views deals with the problems that are now before us. She sums up the work in a way that makes everything sound fine and able to just continue on into the future. The only change she wants is still more attention to work among mass actions and the left. She doesn't look at the problems that are coming up, and worries that those who do are just squabbling. But the status quo is dead and the "minority" is going to go through changes. We can do it consciously or not, together or not. But Julie's letter just doesn't give you the sense that changes are upon us, or what possible choices we have. <>

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to minority
from Jake
email date February 23, 1995

February 18, 1995

As we are working hard to close the ML Bookstore and print and mail out CWVTJ we are confronted with several serious issues raised by Detroit Workers' Voice comrades and Gary.

I don't have time to reply fully, in fact, I haven't had the time to digest all the email. Here I want to make a few points specifically to the proposals of Pete (Feb 6) and Mark (Feb. 8).

1) I am not in favor of forming a national organization at this time. The basis for a centralized national organization (as Pete and Mark proposed) does not exist at this time.

I was in favor of adopting a statement of principles at our last conference and declaring an organization.

Regarding Mark's draft statement, I would not have endorsed it at the Nov. conference but I think it was and is appropriate to consider what we are and whether we should formalize it. I still think so. I had a particular concern on how we should formulate a definition of anti-revisionism. Since then the El Machete controversy gives me greater concern on the matter of anti-revisionism.

Regarding organization, A loose federation is what we were discussing last time. Everyone else said yes, a federation and each local group doing its own thing. It was further described as basically a formalization of what actually existed. In conversations it was often referred to as "federalism" in contrast to "centralism".

Regarding the organization of the journal, I was and still am in favor of involving more people from out of Chicago in the CWVTJ, not just improving consultation but even in giving people more say on what goes in the journal, even putting on the editorial board comrades from other cities. In particular I am in favor of giving Detroit representation on the CWV editorial board. This was also discussed briefly at our last conference (I'm not sure if it was discussed formally or informally) and it was considered problematic.

But neither the organizational plans presented recently, nor the proposals to restructure the CWV Theoretical Journal resemble what we discussed at any of our conferences.

In particular, I think the proposal for a national organization presented by Mark and Pete would amount to *The MLP Part Deux*.

Pete wrote regarding different ideas about tactics. "I'm concerned that if we remain at the level of local circles, there's a tendency to let discussion of those differences lapse..." Pete proposes that the editorial board would be the ones to "sorting out different tactical ideas".

Mark further advocates that we should have a formal dues-paying membership ... [section omitted, CWV]

So we have a central organ (CWVTJ) and a central committee (it's editorial board) sorting out tactics on a national basis for a national organization. We would also have a formal membership and a full time CC member What have we got? *The MLP Part Deux*!

Such an organization is not appropriate for our situation. We talked about federation, not centralism at the last conference. This plan is quite different and assumes agreement among comrades on a wide range of issues that we have not adequately discussed and in some cases, that we have never discussed.

Further, I have more general questions about what type of organization, what norms and methods are appropriate for working class parties, not just in our situation, but more generally.

2) Why not have another MLP-type organization?

Among all the comrades in Chicago that I have talked to, there is no enthusiasm for joining another MLP. That itself is reason to proceed cautiously but I want comrades to understand why.

There is, as a matter of course following the collapse of an organization we labored nearly our whole adult lives to build, some bitterness and a kind of "burnout" from the MLP's collapse. There is also the matter of summing up what happened to the MLP and assessing it before we establish another party. Doesn't it make sense to solve some of the problems from the old one before we start on a new one?

After the death of the MLP, the CWVTJ embarked on the course of making such an assessment. Debating the majority and refuting their views is only one part of that task. There is a lot more to do if we are to have an assessment of what the MLP was, and hopefully, an assessment of what it should have been.

The MLP's strongest point (highlighted by one of our enemies at In These Times) was that we consistently advocated and organized working people to make as much trouble as they could on their own. Our class stand was not only persistent but it got good results in a wide variety of circumstances. Our tactics toward emerging motion and the existing mass movements were easily the best in the left and I think are still good models.

On theoretical matters we also made advances. I think the book From Baba to Tovaritsch is a good example of this. The MLP fought revisionism in the communist movement and fought reformism and opportunism in the mass movements. It fought for theoretical clarity and a correct vision of the goal of the working class movement.

But the MLP was wrong about a lot of things a lot of the time. For example, we supported Mao, Stalin and Enver Hoxha for a long time. We had wrong conceptions of socialism and the transition to socialism. We promoted as revolutionary Marxist-Leninist parties certain organizations that were corrupt and reformist (or worse).

Which brings us to another one of the MLP's strong points, its ability to correct its mistakes, to grow and to change. We rejected Mao, Stalin and Albanian socialism. We made an important international contribution with our critique of Maoism.

Which brings us to another weak point. The MLP had problems in its critique of revisionism, with Stalin and Albania in particular, and perhaps in its conception of anti-revisionism in general.

Then there is the matter of organization, of organizational form, of relations between people in the organization, of norms,

and so forth.

For a good part of its history, the COUSML-MLP followed a two-tiered system of membership which defined its organizational norms and culture. This two-tiered system was an elitist system, not a proletarian system. Although the two-tiered system was abolished at the Second Congress, some problems created by it remained until the end.

Although on paper we were democratic, the internal structure and culture of the MLP was hierarchical, frequently undemocratic and not unlike some of the corporate structures and cultures that I have encountered as a worker. In particular several of the CC members used the same style of work, the same personnel methods, toward the rank and file of the MLP that so many of my bosses maintained toward their workers.

One example of this was that the Central Committee was a club. It was secretive as all the party bodies were, but to the rank and file it was mysterious. It did not tell you what it was doing (nor for a long time even who was on it), how it operated internally, what problems it had, etc. It seemed to be very tight.

You could not criticize it. The CC was above criticism. Even implied criticism of it was met with hostility. You could not question what was going on inside of it and there was no way to find out. This contrasts with Branch elections in Chicago (I'm not knowledgeable of how elections were carried out in other cities) where we discussed what the dynamics inside the body, what we were doing and thinking and why. Our CC elections were always perfunctory, yet rank and file comrades were routinely dissected in city-wide and unit meetings and even in national meetings in certain cases. Why weren't the same standards applied to all bodies and all comrades?

There was virtually no change in the composition of the MLP's CC. In the COUSML days its members were all co-opted. In the MLP it was first elected by a minority of the activists at the founding congress on Jan 1, 1980.

(A footnote here. One feature of the first CC election was that Congress itself was not informed of the conflict with CPCML. The whole NC of COUSML knew about it and one other comrade who I think was Michael. Michael was the Secretary of the Boston Branch and had been active with CPCML. He was also Manny's protege and was brought onto the CC at the Founding Congress. Someone asked the question from the floor "why aren't there any fraternal parties here?" The answer was that the NC had looked into it and that it wasn't necessary to have fraternal parties at a congress. Later it was raised from the floor why don't we have a special mention of CPCML in one of the resolutions on fraternal parties. Manny gave an impromptu, bombastic speech on fraternal relations in general which gave the impression that the MLP has great relations with CPCML and that's because our relations are based on Marxism-Leninism. Huh? Let me recap this for you: a rank and file comrade asked why don't we say we have an especially close relationship with CPCML. Only the CC knew it but CPCML was demanding a "special relationship" with us that would make us their slave. Manny tried to oppose the idea of special relationship but got lost in his ramblings because the CC had decided to conceal the real problem from the rank and file. He couldn't really explain what was going on without telling the truth and that was not allowed. So Manny blew it and as I listened to the founding congress tapes 2 years ago I realized that his answer turned out to be the the opposite of what he was trying to say.)

Later congresses saw CC members leave but no new ones were elected until the 4th Congress when Julie joined the leadership. Because the MLP dissolved she only attended three CC meetings.

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

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

I am not endorsing any of these practices, I just want to point out that the CC of the MLP was nearly constant, . . . [phrase deleted, CWV] and that it did stagnate. I think we need to sum up the experience of the MLP on how it composed its leadership and how that leadership operated. Remember, it was not until the 4th Congress that the CC gave a report of its activities. This was in many ways a strange report and not any kind of model. I mention this to point out that the CC did not report on itself to the rank and file the way the other bodies were expected to report to the CC. I also think it's useful (if not necessary) to look at the experience of other organizations on this matter.

On ideological questions the two-tiered system resulted in a lack of tolerance, particularly from the higher-ups but also from the rank and file, in discussing ideas in conflict with the party line, or with ideas that it was felt that the organization had a major stake in. Once it was realized that such ideas did not threaten the organization, or once the leadership decided that it was ok to discuss them, then discussion and investigation could proceed. Examples of this include criticism of Stalin and CPC(ML).

This improved over the years but we were left, at the end, with the situation where nearly all the central committee members had given up communism and a large section of the rank and file were led by them right into passivity. How did this happen? Did the organizational structure or culture impact on this? I think it did, although many other factors came into play.

(One of the topics I want to investigate is that there was a general method followed in the MLP of sorting out questions inside the CC and then presenting it to the membership. This worked out somewhat for repudiating CPCML, the Seventh Congress of the

CI and Stalin, but I think it is generally not a model for working class parties to follow.)
 [section deleted, CWV]

3) The most important task for CWVTJ is to help solve some of the vexing theoretical problems facing our class.

I say this because I would like to build a revolutionary party of the working class. In order to do this, we have to push through the theoretical work and solve some of the problems that the MLP and everyone else has failed to solve. Furthermore, we can't solve these problems in the libraries. We must have social practice. That means we must at the very least keep our hands in organizing the working masses for struggle. In Chicago we have persisted in both these things. I believe this work will lay the basis for a new party.

Additionally, I value all the theoretical and practical work that comrades around the CWV are doing. In Detroit, New Jersey, Seattle, LA and SF comrades have kept going in spite of the MLP's demoralizing collapse and carried out important work. I like to think that the Chicago comrades served as an inspiration for others.

My greatest concern is that our present collaborations on theoretical work and practical organizing is about to be ended by a split, and an unprincipled one in my opinion.

Some letters from Detroit are so hostile that they threaten to turn debate away from issues and towards personal attacks. Away from sorting out facts and ideas to petty power struggles. Do Detroit comrades think it is possible to have a national organization without debating the politics of El Machete and the El Machete controversy? Can we establish a national party without summing up the experience of the MLP, including its organizational problems, the debate on the WA's analysis of imperialism, and so forth? Or perhaps when the new party is built, its Central Committee will sort it all out for us?

I think the next issue of CWVTJ will have to give considerable coverage to our present disagreements.

I also that in addition to the other objections that I have made, it is absolutely not the time to form a national organization as they would simply be forming a split. Rather, we have to debate our politics. This is what Julie meant when she talked about "by administrative means." It's what the MLP used to talk about: sort out the politics, don't form organization to curtail debates, don't shuffle everything into the executive committee or the backroom, etc.

If we (or anyone else) is ever to build a party to lead our class into battle against the rich, it must solve some major problems, first of all some major theoretical problems.

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 To: Minority
 From: Joseph Green
 Feb. 23, 1995

Some thoughts on Jake's letter to the minority of Feb. 23

Jake has put forward his view on minority tasks in his letter of Feb. 23. He spends most of his time on issues of history. I do not intend to comment on any of them, although I think he has done a service by writing down what he thinks. But I think that any study of other parties around the world show that such questions will never be fully resolved. For example, the German Communist Party was formed from the left wing of the German Social-Democratic Party which in turn was formed from a fusion of a Lassallean party and the Eisenacher party. The assessment of Lassalleanism views would thus appear to be an extremely important issue, affecting organization, theory, tactics, etc. But party members including theoreticians had different opinions on Lassalle throughout this entire process, lasting decades. The revolutionaries needed agreement on what type of organization they wanted to build, but there was never unanimity on the past.

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Jake raises "Do Detroit comrades think it is possible to have a national organization without debating the politics of El Machete and the El Machete controversy?"

This is an interesting point. But there's a Catch 22. The status quo has retarded a discussion of the issues around the endorsement of El Machete by CWVTJ. It's been two months since I set forward views on the issues of Mexican politics involved, and there has been no response to that other than Oleg's letter of Jan. 4 which comments briefly. (Oleg wrote that he "appreciate(d) my comments on the Zapatistas. They will be of use if I can get to write an article on the struggle in Mexico.") Apparently both Oleg and the CWV no longer agree with that assessment, although I haven't received any political analysis from them on this. And the material on the El Machete controversy will not be published in the CWVTJ--allowing others in on the discussion--for a number of more months. So here's the rub: We can't change the status quo without a discussion of the El Machete controversy, Jake says. But we can only limp along on the El Machete controversy with the present status quo.

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Let's look at the present status quo. Jake gives many criticisms of the MLP. One of the reasons I was not just content, but happy not to be on the editorial board for CWVTJ was that I could now see how others ran things. CWV has all sorts of ideas concerning what's right and wrong about the MLP in the past and about how political organization should be run. The important point, in my view, wasn't to debate yes and no to each point. But rather, let's see how CWV does things and learn something from what it does. Life is interesting, is it not?

Well, the CWV has informally functioned as the center for our grouping, as its journal, the CWVTJ, has been taken as the journal of the "minority". So how did CWV do? And how does it stack up against the principles that CWV upholds in its discussion of MLP history? Did the CWV provide a better consultation for all than the old CC did, for example? Does it take minutes of its meetings and circulate them in order to inform comrades in other cities of all its discussions and shades of opinion and preliminary views, thus showing in practice what it thinks leading bodies in the MLP should have done? How does it take account of the views of others? Is it more tolerant, more open to criticism, more encouraging of discussion, than the old CC, always dealing with the content of what comrades are suggesting or does it get upset at criticism for one reason or another? For example, how does it handle differences like that on the El Machete issue? As well, Jake raises the question of whether the two-tier system had consequences that lingered on in the MLP. Very well. Has CWV eliminated them, or do we now have the two-tier system reincarnated larger than ever--with an unelected editorial board and no one else with any formal rights?

It's been a year. What does this experience show? Perhaps there might be a difference of opinion between CWV members and some others on the answer to this question. But in any case, to me, this is one of the instructive aspects of the discussion of MLP history. What has happened when comrades tried to implement in practice the standards that they apply to MLP history?

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Turning aside from organizational issues to what the "minority" is doing, Jake raises that "the most important task for CWVTJ is to help solve some of the vexing theoretical problems facing our class". But he also says that this work can't be done in a library but requires social practice and organizing the working masses for struggle. This is a very nice formula, rather MLP-ish, or to be much more precise, very 4th Congress-ish. It can satisfy everyone, but it doesn't focus attention on any of the hard facts of our present situation. It ignores the rough edges and pitfalls of what is going on. What I would have to say with regard to Jake's views on theoretical work and activists work is the same as what I had to say with regard to Julie's discussion of the relation of theory and strengthening practical work in her Feb. 19 letter. (See my letter of Feb. 22, "On Complacency").

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Jake worries that "our present collaborations on theoretical work and practical organizing is about to be ended by a split". The collaboration consists largely of exchanging articles and views and making use of each other's work along with a good deal of technical cooperation. This will, I presume, continue. I--and, I'm sure, all the other comrades in Detroit--will strive to cooperate with others. And surely no one would want to apply pressure on us because they don't agree with some of our theoretical and historical and practical views?

But otherwise the status quo is dead. The old informal organization of the "minority" network is dead. It seems that even the small amount of central direction of the work, theoretical or otherwise, that has been envisioned, has had problems. In fact, as Gary pointed out in his letter of Feb. 14, direction has been rather sparse. We will have to build on what actually exists, and on the coordination that has worked and been fruitful. For example, we here have been pondering the problems faced in the joint theoretical projects.

The present reality is that the "minority" is fragmented. And every time Jake or Julie or Oleg raise settling another issue as a prerequisite to unity, it just reinforces the point that the status quo is dead. Very well, when all these issues are settled, our unity may grow by leaps and bounds. In the meantime, while discussion proceeds, we are all also faced with getting on with our work for the coming year. Just as CWV has been taking decisions--on El Machete, on which activist work to do, on what theoretical work to do, on what to publish--so will others. And as well, groups and individuals will voluntarily cooperate on that basis.

We can make changes in common, or everyone will make their own decisions. The proposal for a national organization was one proposal for making a few of the decisions in common. There are so far no other serious proposals for this. And the CWV comrades who have written about the prospects of a "minority" journal seem focused on the issue of who's on the editorial board and have ignored most of the issues I hoped to see addressed on what we need in a journal. Well, Jake and many others think that the common decisions asked for by others should be held off until further discussion and debate and agreement on a number of historical and ideological questions. Perhaps so. But that means that in the meantime, each group will make its own decisions, while keeping friendly relations with others.

This is what Neil called at one point the "fall-back position", when he was discussing one of my proposals. He holds if a national organization isn't possible, a "fall-back" position could preserve our work. Recently, in his letter of Feb. 21 entitled "LAWV on preserving trend, etc.", he pointed out:

"...The type of cohesive political and organizational unity needed for a new national organization does not exist at present. What should we do about it?"

The LAWV apparently recognizes that the past status quo is not possible, although they do not use their phrase. So they sketched out some possible alternatives to an organization embracing the "minority" as follows:

"...it looks like most local groups wish to retain a certain strong local autonomy, for this year anyway. On the problem of our journals, LAWV thinks either both Detroit and Chicago should publish separate journals--the CWVTJ and DWVTJ or maybe they can arrange rotation for each journal in tandem to be published every 4 to 6 weeks or so as they don't have conflicting publishing dates." They also give a number of interesting views on what is needed for the content of our work.

There may indeed be separate journals for the time being. But Jake can rest easy. I'm sure that the DMLSG will be eager to continue to cooperate with the rest of the "minority", including the CWV, to the mutual benefit of all the groups and the class struggle.

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 To: Minority
 From: Tim
 2-23-95

WHICH WAY FOR THE MINORITY?

Dear Comrades,

Now the minority finds itself in crisis.

The period which had as its main focus the polemic against the majority of ex-MLP'ers is coming to an end. Everyone agrees that this is the case. At issue is what comes after and what kind of organizational arrangement is needed to deal with this situation.

There seem to be three positions:

1. Chicago (as I characterize Julie's and Oleg's positions): our work should be A. Theoretical research on topics outlined in November 1994, B Polemics against various left groups, C Work in the general left, D Mass agitation and organizational work in the working class, and E Struggle magazine on the literary front.

Therefore, our organizational nature, according to Chicago, should remain as a very loose federation with Chicago Workers' Voice Theoretical Journal as our representative publication. Its editorial board, however, is independent. Local groups determine local work. This grouping has neither a name nor a set of over-all political and organizational principles beyond a general agreement on the Marxist-Leninist framework.

2. Detroit (as characterized by Mark, Pete and Joseph's proposals): our work should be A. Deepen the anti-revisionist critique to solve questions unsolved by MLP as well as to defend its positive heritage, some of these being topics adopted in November 1994, B Polemics to further this critique and build a new trend, C Mass agitation and organizational work in the working class and D. Struggle magazine on the literary front.

Therefore, our organizational nature, according to Detroit, should change into a somewhat more consolidated, yet still not party, form. It should have a name and the platform outlined by Mark, which goes beyond the basic Marxist-Leninist framework to sketch a few political and organizational guidelines but which still leaves local groups to determine their local work. Focus of the theoretical and polemical work requires a central organ that comes out more frequently and is more responsive to the trend/organization as a whole than CWVTJ has been.

3. LA and Seattle: sympathize with points on both sides but worry about a split. Seattle believes greater organization is not possible without more ideological unity.

I am a wholehearted supporter of the Detroit plan, despite my great respect for the good work the Chicago comrades have done, because I believe the Chicago proposal is a recipe for drift and disintegration. We must carve out our own position, a new anti-revisionist position. This requires a clear organizational identity, a clear focus to our research and polemics and a method of pooling our efforts which maximizes our strength. If we are to create anything truly Marxist, to contribute anything to the next upsurge, we must do this.

How is the Chicago proposal a recipe for drift and disintegration? First, it is itself a product of drift on the front of organizational thinking. No one from Chicago has responded to the organizational proposal made by Mark last November and tabled then for further discussion. Yet during the ensuing period the Chicago comrades have expressed their organizational principles in deeds, with the EL

Machete endorsement, a localist action which has fragmented our trend. So the Chicago proposal arises from drift and disintegration.

But, more importantly, the Chicago proposal will cause further drift and disintegration. It provides no clear focus for developing the most important theoretical controversies; in fact, Chicago comrades sometimes belittle them. For example, Chicago is not interested in debating the theoretical stands of El Machete, yet they can endorse it. This is eclectic thinking. And the Chicago plan places a heavy emphasis on work among the general left. In the absence of a vigorous and consistent anti-revisionist polemic and an organizational identity such work on the left will only lead to confusion and disintegration because it cannot answer the questions that the bourgeoisie and opportunism are posing in such a way that points revolutionary activists towards a genuine alternative. Furthermore, Chicago's stress on localism has resulted in a central organ that is too sluggish to deal with issues in a timely, living manner and which is not responsive enough to the rest of the trend. Without a frequent, flexible, responsive organ, the theoretical controversies which will forge a new anti-revisionism cannot be developed.

The Detroit proposal, in contrast, provides a distinct organizational identity, some development of political and organizational guidelines beyond the basic framework and a concentrated pursuit of anti-revisionism which will generate relatively consistent polemics. Both proposals call for, and both areas are carrying out, work among the workers. And while Detroit's plan does not stress work in the general left, it in fact provides the best basis for it. For what do we want to take to the left but the most consistent and deepest anti-revisionist critique possible? Or are we going to be satisfied with telling them that El Machete is lively, that is, merging with them? As for the central organ, Detroit comrades have proposed several ways in which CWVTJ could be made more frequent, flexible and responsive.

But Chicago has refused to consider such proposals and to join such an organization, calling it an "organizational fiat" and a "party-type" organization. Proposing that a grouping form an organization and democratically decide the nature of the editorial board of its main publication could only be an "organizational fiat" in the eyes of people who have begun to think like anarchists. As for "party-type", if having a set of principles and choosing an editorial board for a national organization is creating a "party-type" organization, then we have a whole lot more parties around here than I ever thought. These are defensive objections, meant to defend Chicago's localist orientation.

As the Chicago comrades seem intransigent on these issues, the question is, what now? We have fragmentation of our minority either way we look at it. The alternatives are: fragmentation on Chicago's terms which, I am sure, will lead to further drift and the complete disintegration of our trend, or, a partial fragmentation in which Chicago's and Detroit's models exist side-by-side and cooperate where they can but neither restricts the other within its own framework. Let Chicago continue CWVTJ. Let Detroit create a small, frequent journal of its own and push forward its work on the principles it has outlined. Let all the other sections cooperate with each to one degree or another and see which is solving the problems of the times.

This is what I believe will happen; I can see no alternative. One of the negative consequences of this could be the collapse of Struggle magazine. This would be a shame because it continues to show a vitality and to generate new links to the masses. But at the March meeting I was going to have to ask for the subsidy that was postponed in November. A fair amount of contributions and orders have recently come in, but nothing near what it would take to support it completely. And my fear is that a fragmented minority may not be able to shoulder that burden. I am determined to find a way to continue it, so we will see.

Nevertheless, I heartily agree with Gary that things must move forward; a repetition of the last minority meeting would be destructive.

Revolutionary greetings,
Tim

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Re-trans. art. 022495
From: NC
To: Minority
2-25-95

Dear cde. Jake,

Thank you very much for the re-trans. of 0224. We hope that you will continue to keep us posted as to your views.

It is the views of the cdes. here that we intend to remain in the active motion in the class on the key fronts of possible future upsurges, ie. Anti-187, defend AFDC, GR, fight the Contract On America assaults on all other social programs for the working people., to wage struggle for a big minimum wage increase, fight privatizations, speed ups and unemployment, and racist divisions of the class.

We also want to contribute if possible to the theoretical studies and research, on state capitalism, globalistic 1990s imperialism, the mass power of the working class industrially organized, etc. We also are in 98% agreement with you on the need

to sum up the history of the ACWM-CousML-MLP with a 'no holds barred' approach because we must bring out the positive as well as the negative aspects of the organized structure and methods in theory and practice.

Comrades here think that without realistically paced active work in existing motion, albeit at low levels now, we will have practically disqualified ourselves from effective work and politics in the upsurges of the future which may come around.

Of course the LA cdes, even though some worked around the CousML-MLP since 1979-80, were kind of 'outside the loop' until the late 80s insofar as the real internal dynamics (and corrosion) of the MLP were concerned, we agree with your assessment more open accounting needs to be worked out concerning the organization norms of the MLP. Without this and the other MAIN theoretical and political tasks set out by the 'minority' reaching some sort of tentative completion (this can never be really completed 100% in a scientific approach, there will probably be 'gaps' left for others to fill in), a 'new' de-facto rehash of the old group with the 'old' norms will probably emerge. This will not help us or the class generally very much--believe it!!

I hope the outstanding issues can be sorted out in a comradely manner. It galls me no end that some who are shooting from the hip today at a few errors of the CWVTJ would not even reach for a cap-gun when it came to working around the apparently years long duplicity/renegecy of the former MLP leader majorityites, like Jim, Michael, Joe, etc. It is obvious that a big contradiction exists here. Is this proletarian justice or something else? It must be corrected.

If this argument is sloughed off. What about our ability to draw around and keep around us new activists and militant workers? Won't they be sharp enough by then to see our own methods/styles organizationally and compare them to the alienating, crass, elitist, and stifling methods/forms that dominate them in outright bourgeois institutions??

In many instances, we are people with 20-30 years of socialist political-industrial work in the USA. All of us have various and manifold political, ideological and organizing strengths we have gained though both 'the thrill of victory (albeit most of these small) and the AGONY of defeat'.

We have some quite brilliant and dedicated elements still ready to continue the struggle--we should all be thankful for that. But we also all have our weaknesses individually and as a collective and we must face up to our deficiencies and limitations too!

What is amazing about the old MLP is how far we came to overcoming our tremendous political and theoretical problems. We did light-years better than most all on the marxist left wing in the USA. But the goal line was further away than we thought. This federalism may be a step back, and maybe not. But this way at least we can see by our problems, that some new altered forms and methods are needed for this period. The political obstacle course is daunting. A brick wall may be ahead internally comrades. Some want to 'sound the (ML) bugles' and charge full speed ahead. They really believe in the 'triumph of the will' alone. Sometimes diplomacy and learning political 'flanking' methods can get better results.

... [sentence omitted, CWV] We thought in spite of some type-sentence printing errors, it (the CWVTJ #6) is the most interesting thought provoking journal yet produced.

Fraternally
nc/LAWV

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On 'Joseph to Jake' 022395
From NC
To minority
2-25-95

Dear cde. Joseph,

Usually, on inter comrade e-mail debates, I usually wait until others speak, study it and then join the fray. Or sometimes I just apply the yiddish word 'luzim' (lay off) to the problem and let others handle it. I think however on these important (mostly welcome and quite frank!) recent exchanges, all involved should really say their piece!

As to yours of 0223--replying to Jake.

Your analogy about the situation in Germany circa 1919. I see your point about their uniting organizationally-- but there we were dealing with diverse trends in the movement. I am not sure of the relevancy to 1990s USA and our one 'trend'. In 1919, the German CP was born of a (lost) war, mass revolts, strikes, hunger, revolution and counterrevolution. Our situation is quite different, we are at a different stage.

Maybe the 'status quo' has 'retarded' the 'El Machete' debate, but then is it not true that it has retarded other key questions that comrades want to traverse? I want more analysis of mexican workers and socialist politics as well (Frank's CWVTJ article was a good step forward). I don't think we can 'dodge' El Machete but we will not stand or fall on it either.

On the MLP history, I see it as a balance sheet to assist the future work of ourselves and others who come up fighting in the struggles. Some of it will be still inspiring--other parts no doubt quite embarrassing. But I do not think any of us are convening any

board of courts-martial or the like. Nov 21, 1993 may have been a day of infamy for many of us. None of us however, want to treat our comrades a la Adm. Kimmel or Gen. Short-- or Marshal Tuchashevsky either! We don't want scapegoats.

From what I see, CWV cdes. have reached some tentative conclusions on the history of the Party and the CousML, they seem to also want to research more before publishing. Is their being accurate and careful not a better approach?

On the time lines of your comparisons: CWVTJ came out in a period of both dissolution and overall reflux and has only been around for a year. The Party and CousML had 20 years so maybe we should let them live and learn. Of course they are, as are all of us, subject to withering (but comradely!) critique--as well as unstinting praise where necessary!!

Your comments implying some ulterior motive to CWVs insistence on the connection between theory and practice I am a little bit miffed over. This issue may have been discussed in the context of the 4th congress plans but it also in the general (and specific) sense is a basic marxist and leninist method, is it not? In our history, I recall the SF Bay Area giving us some correctives concerning excessive theorizing detached from social practice and experience, and they turned out to be right on most of it!

On current and near future functioning, I don't see it as EITHER-OR -- work in common OR our own decisions, I see a combination of both, and this may prove more effective -for this period anyway.

Finally, specifically on this period. It is quite contradictory. The global crisis is becoming like the Dutch dikes on the Zuy-der-zee. The powers manage to plug some up, but then other big ones burst out. Contention grows over who has hegemony in trade and markets. 'Allies' steal each others biggest secrets! Anger and revolt come up from below. Capitalists signal their state machine--'cut social programs and terrorize the working class poor--and this time do it without pity!' Suffering is greater--so must be built the will to struggle against the rich!

Fraternally
nc/LA

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Yours of 0225-'more thoughts'

From: NC
To: minority
2-26-95

Dear Joseph,

Thank you for resending 'thoughts.asc' of 0223. It looks like it's reading out just fine.

Believe it, we are quite happy that Detroit will most probably be putting out a journal. We are also ecstatic that you want to 'maintain cooperation and solidarity with everyone else.' We certainly want to have cooperation/solidarity with DWVTJ akin to the close solidarity/support we have maintained with CWVTJ. On the lighter side, you cdes. do not have to worry about any LAWVTJ ---at least for a while!!

In my sally critical of some of the methods employed in today's controversy (your nailing the CWVTJ) compared to the almost 'free ride' that was given the 'majorityite' leaders around the old CC when they did really serious damage, I only wanted to point out the obvious contradiction. I had no intention of belittling your previous fights against real liquidators, renegades, etc., both internally and externally. I look forward to your notes/articles on the study of the history of CousML-MLP history, organization, strategy, tactics, ideology, etc.

As I have tried to state before, I am not opposing criticism of anyone, per se. ALL of us are really subject to it now! That's OK, though sometimes it hurts! I think sometimes we can all have been guilty of laying on criticism a bit thick.

Your complaints about some on CWV bushwacking you probably refers to some methods of Rene, etc. I don't support his disrespectful name calling approach, though some of the mans political criticisms I would not just slough off either.

I don't know what the exact itinerary of CWVTJ is for #7. I get the feeling from cdes Jake and Oleg that in addition to the Mexican struggle and 'El machete' politics, Contract On America, etc., they want a balance sheet on the successes and problems of the old MLP, especially the relation between the leaders and the ranks.

My argument about the rancid baggage meant the 'works' of Jim/Ben/Manny/Jason crew. My ideas on the journal may have been a bit too optimistic because of the reflux period we are in. Forces like the Majority leadership need to be exposed to be sure. But I think we should be open to new things, like the readers section where we can print letters & take on ideas and programmes that come from both workers and fakers trends and groups, this material to me has probably far more relevancy to the class than does the post-modernist views of the 'retired' majorityites. E.g., some working class anarchist groups, AFL/CIO labor/management cooperation schemes, human toll of speed-ups, Why welfare recipients are not all indolent--who are the REAL parasites, expose the profits of the rich.

Fraternally,
nc-LA

From: Gary
To: Minority
2-27-95

In the fall of 1993, Manny told me that the dissolution of the MLP would become an attack on Marxism-Leninism. I thought he meant that in terms of defending it; I found out soon he meant the opposite, that he was leading this attack. In reaction to the dissolution, some of us, who had avoided the organized undermining of comrades' resolve somehow, united on the basis of opposing the majority's politics of denial of theoretical division and of anti-communism. To salvage the Marxist-Leninist trend, to keep some of the fire of the Party alive, we united on the basis of exposing the majority. The key issue became the journal to carry on the debate. It was defeated by the majority because their intent was to stop the debate. But that was not what they said - they put up a smokescreen of "we can't fund a post-Party formation" (even though they just voted to finance Struggle), and "Joseph would have too much power", and "Joseph doesn't realize the Party is over, he's just trying to start the Party all over again", etc. Using Chicago's intact branch, we united to put the journal out ourselves.

The majority has evaporated, and none of us are surprised. Their vacuous assertions of being the real Marxist-Leninists soon blew away. But our unity to expose them has lost its foundation. Our original unity had the ability to encompass anti-Party elements (Rene in particular) and even anarchism because its target was a majority of the ex-MLP leadership. Now that the basis of the original unity no longer exists, the other shoe has dropped.

The logic of Chicago's opposition to Mark's statement and to forming an organization is based on labelling it MLP Part Two. That is laughable, and it sounds like it's coming from someone never associated with the Party. Every elementary criterion of party formation does not fit, yet a smokescreen is being set up that we are calling for a party. Smokescreens of details of party history, and "power plays", and other such side issues dealing with being "burned by" the MLP are more excuses not to take up the key questions to move forward. The issue is whether there is agreement on the theoretical content of the statement, and whether we need a more focused organization. Whether someone said this then, failed to do something there, might be appropriate if a party proposal were on the table. It's not. An editorial board is not a CC, and I don't understand why this point even has to be explained, except maybe to an anarchist! How can someone so out of touch with basic party principles be expected to contribute to an understanding of MLP history? The statement explicitly calls for local areas to decide and carry out their own work, for differing opinions to be published in the journal, etc. And you cannot sort out party history without first advancing theoretically, which means taking things a step forward with this organization proposal. Other arguments soon degenerate into anecdotal, unsystematic pot shots. Again we are faced with throwing out the baby with the bathwater, behind smokescreens.

What would lie ahead in the status quo is years of flea-cracking over party history separate from any real politics. Chicago and LA have called for mass participation on the left to advance our theoretical work - but that is an abstraction unless the real pressing problems on the left are taken up so we have something to say. Everyone is in favor of continuing mass work, but on what basis? It is not enough to go out week after week among the left and any mass movement and not identify yourself. How would we identify ourselves now? As the Chicago ex-branch of the MLP who have problems with the MLP but not written out yet, who are opposing the ex-majority who doesn't exist?

The basis of unity being proposed is required by new circumstances. To proceed we need a statement of purpose for ourselves and the outside world, and some elementary organizational advancements to carry this forward. The hierarchy that exists now is not appropriate for uniting on this new level. "Federalism" is fine in a period of eclecticism and groping for a way forward. What is necessary now is to gradually introduce some centralization of tasks, and some tightening of theoretical agreement. If we don't agree on this level, maybe it is time to go our own ways, continue to share and cooperate and see how things work out. ... [section deleted, CWV] Chicago does not want Joseph. Why? Has Rene's bile sunk in that deep? Joseph has been stoned for not openly criticizing CC members in the past, and then stoned for openly criticizing the present leadership. And please, don't insult everyone's intelligence by saying there are SEVERAL other comrades more important to theoretical work than Joseph! If we are really that far apart in thinking, than a split is not some arbitrary, unprincipled action, but an objective fact.

And I would ask the Chicago comrades to ask themselves how is it that you feel "burnt" by the MLP, while comrades Joseph, Mark, Pete, Tim and others, who have been around as long or longer, have a different outlook?

So, I support the statement as written, and I would support a more militant version; I support the formation of a rudimentary organization as outlined in the statement. I would support a militant Marxist-Leninist pre-party group organizing to keep the fire alive. Leaner and meaner it could open up and solve some theoretical issues in the midst of the left and any mass movements, sort out party history in the course of taking up actual issues in the left and in polemics on how to organize in concrete circumstances being faced by these movements. A single coal glowing red, if tended and fed kindling properly, can become a raging fire. For the time being,

better fewer, but better. <>

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[Ed. note, the following letter is being added out of time sequence because it was suggested that it should be included after the layout was almost done. It is a reply from Pete to a letter from NC which was printed in the *Chicago Workers' Voice Theoretical Journal* No. 6 under the title "On Ideology".

To: NC

From: Pete, Detroit

RE: your notes on November meeting (On Ideology)

1-25-95

Dear NC:

I received your January 17 revised notes on the minority meeting in Chicago. What you say is interesting and well-said in many cases, but the main point mystifies me. I have the feeling you miss the main issue debated at the Chicago meeting. Some things about the meeting were clearer to those who were present, so I will try to give you a better sense of the controversy.

Your impression is that some comrades counterposed program to ideology. You criticize this and then particularly stress the need for ideological struggle. Along these lines you make many good points. As usual, what you say is trenchant and inspiring.

But this was not the main issue at the Chicago meeting. This was a side issue, an issue in history of MLP. It was mentioned that some MLP members had raised that a party should be based on program, not ideology. This had been raised in the past by Michael, and it has been raised more recently by June (as a possible explanation for "what was wrong with the MLP"). These are the people who have raised the banner of "program, not ideology." But these people were not present at the Chicago meeting.

The hot topic in Chicago was the counterposing of mass movement to ideology. This was particularly raised by Rene. He glorifies every action of the Zapatistas and every demonstration, apparently distributing El Machete to activists, while denouncing our attempts to build an anti-revisionist political organization as "fundamentalist" and "popish." He sees our attempts as "just talk" while what the Zapatistas are doing is "real action."

Many of the points you make about the importance of ideological struggle apply to Rene's mistake also. And there does seem to be some connection between the two types of mistakes. counterposing program to ideology, and counterposing mass movement to ideology. And, as was said at the meeting, if we're going to criticize the majorityites who ridicule Marxism, we cannot at the same time give Rene safe passage when he utters the same kind of statements.

But there are also some differences in what is raised. Those who raised "program" did so in the context of seeming interest in building a party, while Rene seems to ridicule such a project.

Both issues can come up as we try to build another anti-revisionist organization, but they come up in different ways. Whether the organization should have a formal written program is one issue. But whether the mass movement exists or not is not an issue in that way -- it's not a topic for debate, it simply exists. Glorifying the mass movement isn't an organizational plan or party program; it's simply dragging along in the wake of the movement. This was the main issue debated in Chicago: should we drag along behind the mass movement under slogans like "serve the activists" or should we try to organize, extend and deepen the mass movement by working to orient it on the basis of revolutionary Marxism? Working to do so will require ideological struggle and the class viewpoint; it will also require a formal program of some sort, something around which the organization's basic work is centered.

Pete

1/25/95