



LENIN AS ELECTION CAMPAIGN MANAGER

BY DOUG JENNESS

"The Communists in Western Europe and America must learn to create a new parliamentarism. They should everywhere strive to rouse the minds of the masses and draw them into the struggle, utilizing the apparatus the bourgeoisie has set up"—V. I. Lenin.

In recent years much criticism has been leveled against the participation of revolutionary socialists in capitalist elections. Almost all ultraleft organizations and many ultraleft individuals, including sincere but inexperienced radicals, denounce such activity. For example in an editorial written just before the November 1968 elections, the *Guardian* (which often adapts to ultraleftism) stated, "we find it impossible to support anyone for any elected office within the government of International Murder, Incorporated." In order to reinforce this point, the editorial calls on Lenin for support. Agreeing with Lenin that there are times when running in elections might be useful, the editorial adds, "We also agree with Lenin that it's sometimes useful, and even essential, to reject parliamentary reform. This is one of those times." This attempt to strengthen a weak case by distorted and disjointed references to the writings of a great revolutionary like Lenin is a common practice among these ultralefts.

In order to understand the revolutionary socialist approach to capitalist elections, we must untangle a web of misunderstanding and falsification of the history of the Marxist view, particularly Lenin's view, of electoral strategy. Is it true, as the *Guardian* indicates, that there were times when Lenin thought it useful to run in elections, while at other times he favored boycotting the elections? Did he place greater emphasis on boycotts or on participation in the electoral arena? Under what circumstances did he advocate these various tactics?

Marx and Engels were ardent champions of universal suffrage and strongly supported all struggles to extend the right to vote in capitalist elections, particularly to the working class. They had no illusions, however, that the exten-

sion of suffrage would be the means by which the working class would win political power.

According to Engels, "the possessing class rules directly through the medium of universal suffrage. As long as the oppressed class, in our case, therefore the proletariat, is not yet ripe to emancipate itself, it will in its majority regard the existing order of society as the only one possible and, politically, will form the tail of the capitalist class, its extreme left wing." ("The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State" in *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Vol. II [Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962], page 322.)

But if universal suffrage is employed as a means of deception by the capitalist rulers, what possible use can it have for the revolutionary workers movement? Engels answers this question, writing in 1895 about the situation in Germany at that time:

The franchise has been . . . transformed by the workers from a means of deception, which it was before, into an instrument of emancipation. And if universal suffrage had offered no other advantage than it allowed us to count our numbers every three years; that by the regularly established, unexpectedly rapid rise in the number of our votes, it increased in equal measure the workers' certainty of victory and the dismay of their opponents, and so became our best means of propaganda; that it accurately informed us concerning our own strength and that of all hostile parties, and thereby provided us with a measure of proportion for our actions, second to none, safeguarding us from untimely timidity as much as from untimely foolhardiness—if this had been the only advantage we gained from the suffrage, it would have been

much more than enough. But it did more than this by far. In election agitation, it provided us with a means, second to none, of getting in touch with the masses of the people where they still stand aloof from us; of forcing all parties to defend their views and actions against our attacks before all the people; and further, it provided our representatives in the Reichstag with a platform from which they could speak to their opponents in Parliament and to the masses without, with quite other authority and freedom than in the press or at meetings.

It was found that the state institutions in which the rule of the bourgeoisie is organized, offer the working class still further opportunities to fight these very state institutions. The workers took part in elections to particular Diets, to municipal councils and to trade courts; they contested with the bourgeoisie every post in the occupation of which a sufficient part of the proletariat had a say. And so it happened that the bourgeoisie and the government came to be much more afraid of the legal than of the illegal action of the workers party, of the results of elections than of those of rebellion. (Frederick Engels, "Introduction to *The Class Struggles in France 1848 to 1850*" in *Marx-Engels Selected Works*, Vol. I [Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962], pages 129-130.)

Engels goes on to say that in the last decades of the nineteenth century in Germany, electoral propaganda was a more effective means of struggle than "revolutionary" adventures "carried through by small conscious minorities at the head of unconscious masses"—referring to the various ultraleft attempts by small groups to seize power through street fighting.

In the same article he explains that through its electoral strategy the Social Democratic Party of Germany grew rapidly despite the imposition of the Anti-Socialist Law by the Bismarck government. (For a time in the 1880s the party had to function without a newspaper, without a legal organization, and without the right of combination and assembly.)

What are the key lessons from Engels' observations of socialist election policy in Germany? He viewed the participation of socialists in elections as "one of the sharpest weapons" to fight the state institutions and to expose the other parties before the masses; as an effective method of reaching the masses of people with the ideas of the party; as a useful platform to express the ideas of the party and attack its opponents if the party succeeded in winning seats; as a gauge of the strength and support of the party among the masses; as a means of legitimizing the party before the masses and putting it in a position where attempts to outlaw the party could more easily be fought. This was particularly important in Germany in light of the Anti-Socialist Law. The party's legal activities—its election campaigns—were a very powerful weapon enabling it to fight for the right of the party to exist.

Boycott of the 1905 Duma

Because of the relatively peaceful development of German capitalism and the mighty advance of the productive forces with no major revolutionary situations, large sections of the German Social Democratic Party gradually adapted to capitalism and became reform-

ist. As a consequence, the parliamentary activity of the German Social Democratic Party took on an entirely different form than that outlined by Engels. Socialists in the Reichstag began to view parliamentary activity not as a valuable method of agitation and propaganda, but as a means of winning legislative reforms and for advancing their own parliamentary careers. A similar phenomenon was also occurring in France and other European countries. Parliamentary tactics were no longer seen as part of the mass struggle against capitalism. Election campaigns were viewed as a means of reforming capitalism.

In the United States before the first world war, one wing of the Socialist Party under the leadership of Eugene V. Debs made excellent propaganda use of capitalist elections—a magnificent example from which we can learn a great deal. But there was also a very large reformist section of the party that sought seats and careers in the capitalist government, primarily municipal governments, in order to carry out a few minimal reforms—such as fixing up a sewer system. "Sewer Socialists" is what they were aptly called by the revolutionists of that time.

At the same time that this parliamentary careerism deepened and became stronger in Western Europe and the United States, Lenin, basing himself on the revolutionary traditions of Marx and Engels, was creatively enriching the revolutionary socialist approach to electoral strategy. The first experience of the Bolshevik Party with elections was in 1905 when the czarist regime attempted to call elections for a Duma, the Russian form of a parliament. (It wasn't a parliament like those of Western Europe because Russia was not a bourgeois republic. Russia was ruled by a czarist monarchy which was making a concession to the revolutionary upsurge by having a form of parliament, with the aim, however, of maintaining the monarchy.)

The Bolsheviks utilized the tactic of boycotting the elections to the Duma, and the Duma was swept away by a general strike in October 1905. The tactic was obviously successful, and Lenin later analyzed it as such. The boycott tactic was consistent with the objective conditions and the revolutionary possibilities in the country at the time, which made it wrong to rely on the parliamentary tactics of a more stable period.

In 1906, when elections were called again, the Bolsheviks again boycotted the election. Later, Lenin admitted that this boycott had been an error. The Bolsheviks had failed to recognize the ebbing of the revolutionary upsurge as soon as they should have, and to make the necessary tactical adjustments. It was a minor tactical error, Lenin wrote later, but nonetheless, he said, it was an error. The Bolshevik boycott did not succeed in sweeping aside these elections and the Duma was established. In a few months the czarist government felt it was necessary to disband this Duma and set up a new one that would be more loyal, and so it called for new elections in early 1907. This time the Bolsheviks joined with the Mensheviks and other radical parties in running candidates in the election. A number of Bolsheviks were elected to office as deputies in the second Duma.

In June 1907 the second Duma was dissolved, smashed by a *coup d'etat*, and the Social Democratic deputies were arrested and imprisoned. New elections were called for November 1907. At this time a strong ultraleft faction within the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (to which both the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks belonged),

embracing the majority of the leadership of the Bolshevik organization, took the position that these elections should be boycotted. Basing themselves on the experiences of the second Duma, which had been smashed, and on the successful boycott in 1905, they said that the party should not participate in these elections.

Lenin was the only central leader of the Bolsheviks who favored participation in these elections. The ultraleft Bolsheviks were defeated, and the party ran candidates, with the Bolsheviks having a few deputies elected to the third Duma. That particular faction fight is worth studying to learn how the ultraleft faction was finally defeated and how Lenin won over the majority of the Bolsheviks to his view of participating in the Duma.

The third Duma lasted until 1912, when elections were called again for the fourth Duma—the last Duma before the February 1917 revolution.

Campaign slogans for the 1912 Duma election

Because there is more written about the 1912 elections than the previous ones, an examination of these will demonstrate Lenin's approach to election campaigns and to participation of the Bolsheviks in capitalist parliaments. Unlike the elections in 1906 and 1907, the 1912 elections were held during a rapidly growing upsurge of the working-class movement. Consequently, the opportunities existed for a larger propaganda offensive than in the previous elections. A significantly larger campaign was possible. In 1911, one year before the elections were to take place, Lenin wrote an article entitled "The Election Campaign and the Election Platform" (*Collected Works*, Vol. 17 [Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1963], page 278.), which in its opening paragraph says, "the elections to the fourth Duma are due to be held next year. The Social Democratic Party must launch its campaign at once. Intensified propaganda agitation, and organization are on the order of the day. And the forthcoming elections provide a natural, inevitable, topical pretext for such work." In other words, the election campaign was going to be the center of the party's propaganda offensive.

Lenin then goes on to explain the importance of the election platform. It is not created especially for election times, but flows from the general program of the party and the positions that the party has established through the experience of previous years. Then he states:

Very often it may be useful, and sometimes even essential, to give the election platform of social democracy a finishing touch by adding a brief general slogan, a watchword for the elections, stating the most cardinal issues of current political practice, and providing a most convenient and most immediate pretext, as well as subject matter, for comprehensive socialist propaganda. In our epoch, only the following three points can make up this watchword, this general slogan: 1) a republic, 2) confiscation of all landed estates, 3) the eight-hour day. (*Ibid.*, page 281.)

These were the Bolshevik election slogans. These were the demands that the Bolsheviks popularized and took

to the masses, just as the Socialist Workers Party currently focuses on several key demands such as "Bring the Troops Home Now," "Black Control of the Black Community," and "Women's Liberation" in its election platforms.

In January 1912 (the elections were to be held in November), the Bolsheviks adopted an election platform along the lines proposed by Lenin. The initiation of the election campaign coincided with the publication of the first legal Bolshevik newspaper, *Pravda*, a four-page newspaper that came out daily. The launching of *Pravda* was a major victory for the Bolshevik Party. It became the principal instrument for publicizing the election campaign and popularizing its program. Reading the articles Lenin wrote at that time, one can see that he viewed the promotion of *Pravda* and the building of the election campaign as an interlinked process. He wrote comprehensive articles about the paper, discussing how many new subscribers there were, how many were from the working-class districts, etc. Since he was in exile in Poland at that time, he had to send to Russia for the subscribers lists. Then he analyzed what parts of the country the subscriptions came from, what proportion of subscribers were workers, and so on. He followed the development of the paper very closely along with the development of the election campaign.

At that time the election laws in Russia were extremely restrictive and discriminatory, denying the majority of peasants and workers the vote. They almost make the restrictive election laws of this country seem democratic. In addition, the laws were very complicated and hard to understand. In the section of his biography of Stalin covering this period, Trotsky points out that "combining painstaking attention to details with audacious sweep of thought, Lenin was practically the only Marxist who had thoroughly studied all the possibilities and pitfalls of Stolypin's election laws." Not only was Lenin the party's expert on the election laws, but he was, in essence, the campaign director. Trotsky writes, "Having politically inspired the election campaign, he guided it technically day by day. To help Petersburg, he sent in from abroad articles and instructions and thoroughly prepared emissaries." (*Stalin* [New York: Stein and Day, 1967], page 142.) That Lenin functioned as campaign director in this manner is particularly amazing since he was in exile in Poland.

Lenin followed the development of the elections just as he did the growth of the newspaper and the growth of the membership of the party. When the elections were over, he wrote detailed statistical analyses of the meaning of the elections including the votes that each party received.

In the working-class districts, only Social Democrats were elected, including six Bolsheviks. All six Bolsheviks elected to the fourth Duma were workers, some of whom had been very active in the trade-union movement and had played leading roles in it. That was not true of the Mensheviks. Only one or two of their deputies were workers.

In the first round of elections, the government used one or another pretext to disqualify workers at a number of factories in St. Petersburg. This triggered huge demonstrations by the workers in support of the right to vote, their right to have an election, their right to have their own deputies. That was their level of consciousness. And the Bolsheviks were in the leadership of those demonstrations. As a result, some of the elections in these districts were invalidated and new elections were held. In such a

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Chicano Liberation and Revolutionary Youth

BY MIRTA VIDAL

Oppression of the Chicano people is one of the pillars upon which capitalism rests. During the last decade La Raza has begun to demand liberation. The Young Socialist Alliance unconditionally supports the right of self-determination of the Chicanos.

One of the pillars that has held up the capitalist structure over the past one hundred years is the oppression of the Chicano people. The Chicano people have their origin in a cultural and racial mixture of Spanish with the original inhabitants of what is now Mexico and the Southwest United States. Aztlan, in the Southwest part of what is now the United States, is the national homeland of the Chicano people. With the growth of capitalism and its constant need for expansion, Anglos began moving west, taking over that land and destroying the culture of the Chicano people which had developed over several centuries. During the past seventy years, three waves of immigration from Mexico have enlarged the Chicano population, not only in the Southwest but all over the United States. Perhaps as many as 10-15 million people in this country today belong to La Raza de Bronze (the Bronze People).

In many ways Chicanos in the Southwest suffer an even greater oppression than do Blacks. According to government figures, 28 per cent are functionally illiterate, while only 4 per cent of Anglos and 14 per cent of Black people in the Southwest fall into this category.

Spanish, the traditional language of Chicanos, has often been forbidden in the schools. Literacy tests are given in English, but large numbers of Chicanos do not speak this language. As a result, in California, while the student population is 14 per cent Chicano, 27 per cent of the students classified "mentally retarded" are Chicano.

The brutal oppression of Chicanos is the result of a system which requires cheap labor and masses of people with poor jobs, poor housing and poor living conditions.

This has been one of the keys to the relative economic and political stability of U. S. capitalism.

Because this system needs a layer of people who will take the worst jobs with the lowest wages, who can be fired at will and discriminated against in many other ways, it has had to create the racist myths which justify the oppression of nationalities like La Raza. This oppression applies to one degree or another to the Chicano people as a whole.

La Raza suffers a double oppression: exploited as part of the working class and oppressed because of its culture, race and language. It is this dual form of oppression, both class and national, which gives the Chicano struggle a profoundly revolutionary character.

The recent growth of nationalist consciousness is the logical development of a people with a common culture, history and language, which, as a nationality, the capitalist system has been unable to assimilate. A number of factors have set the stage for this process.

Urbanization of the Chicano took place at a fast pace during and after the second world war. First came the Bracero program of the federal government which administered and controlled immigration from Mexico. These workers were used primarily in agriculture to keep wages down and replace those who had been drawn to the city and into the war industries; they were also used to break strikes. At the same time thousands of Mexican nationals crossed the border illegally in search of employment. The concentration of Chicanos into cities became even greater with the postwar prosperity of capitalism and the mechanization of agriculture. By 1960 urbanization had increased

to the point of equalling that of the Anglo. Today, most Chicanos are crowded into the barrios in all the major cities of the Southwest, but there are large Chicano communities in many Midwest cities. For example, several hundred thousand live in the Chicago area. Perhaps as many as one-half of all the steel workers in the eleven western states are Chicanos.

The decline of the small farmer and the rise of large-scale agribusinesses resulted in a worsened situation for the Chicano farmer whose land remained relatively unproductive.

The growth of the international student movement which began during the 1960s along with the worldwide youth radicalization has had a visible impact on Chicano youth. The Cuban revolution, the French revolt of May-June 1968, and particularly the massive student actions in Mexico in 1968 contributed significantly to the growing awareness of the Chicano youth. The identification with Mexico and its revolutionary tradition is reflected in many ways in the Chicano movement today. There is also more and more a strong sense of solidarity with oppressed people in all of Latin America. In addition to Zapata and Pancho Villa, Che Guevara is one of the heroes of Chicano youth.

Although this report cannot attempt to give a detailed history of the Chicano movement, I will briefly sketch some of the highlights.

Evolution of Chicano nationalism

In 1962, the Alianza Federal de los Pueblos Libres (then called Alianza Federal de Mercedes) initiated a movement in New Mexico exposing the violation of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo and demanding the restoration of stolen lands. The treaty, which concluded the Mexican-American War, legalized the forceful seizure of one-third of the national territory of Mexico; but it also guaranteed the cultural, linguistic, and land rights of Mexicanos remaining in the Southwest. This movement, under the leadership of Reies Lopez Tijerina, raised the concept of self-determination of the Indo-Hispano, and inspired succeeding movements.

An important factor in the rise of Chicano nationalism was the experience of the Black struggle. Many Chicanos who later became activists and leaders in the Chicano struggle gained their initial experience from the struggle of Black people in the early 1960s. Some of them gained valuable experiences in SNCC. The Poor People's March in 1968, which was organized by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, was joined by such Chicano figures as Tijerina, Corky Gonzales and Cesar Chavez.

The repeal of the Bracero program, which had made unionization of farm workers extremely difficult, created a new opening for the struggle of farm workers in the Southwest.

In May of 1965 Cesar Chavez and the National Farm Workers Association led the "Strike of the Roses" in Delano, which was followed by other strikes in California and elsewhere.

The National Farm Workers Association and the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee merged in 1965 to form the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee and began the now famous grape strike and boycott which spurred the radicalization of the Chicano community. The

"Huelga" produced many of today's activists, drawing thousands of Chicanos into action for the first time.

Chicano students, particularly high school students, have played a central role in the rise of the Chicano movement. Of the two million U. S. students with Spanish surnames, 70 per cent go to school in the Southwest, and they are predominantly Chicano.

The oppressive conditions in these schools, such as the prohibition of the Spanish language on school grounds, led to a series of mass student strikes in the spring of 1968, starting in Los Angeles where thousands of Chicano students walked out of school. The high school strikes, which became known as blowouts, soon spread throughout Aztlan. Demands raised by the students included Chicano history courses, the firing of racist principals and teachers, and the right to use Spanish in the schools. (Until 1968 it was illegal to conduct classes in any language other than English in the public schools.) The high school blowouts paved the way for the mobilization of broader forces in the Chicano community.

While in 1960 the main political expression in the Chicano community was the "Viva Kennedy" committees, by 1966 discontent with the Democratic Party was manifesting itself. Democrats in some places in 1966 were defeated because of a shift of the Chicano vote to the Republican Party. One year later Chicanos in Texas began holding Raza Unida conferences in answer to President Johnson's "Cabinet Hearings on Mexican Affairs." Although generally dominated by reformists, these La Raza conferences played an important role in registering the developing nationalist consciousness.

Around the same time, Corky Gonzales of the Crusade for Justice, a Chicano community organization in Denver, began to break from the Democratic Party. The first National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference was called by the Crusade in March of 1969. It composed *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan* and projected the idea of an independent Chicano political party. *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlan* was the beginning of a transitional program for Chicano liberation. It raised the concept of Aztlan, a Chicano nation.

The second Chicano Youth Liberation Conference, sponsored by the Crusade in March of 1970, led to the launching of La Raza Unida Party in Colorado, projected the National Chicano Moratorium action of August 29 in Los Angeles, gave support to Hugo Blanco and other Latin American political prisoners, and discussed women's liberation as it affects La Raza.

Chicano YSAers participated in both these conferences. Our participation in the 1970 conference in support of those forces who were for mass antiwar action and an independent Chicano party was an important factor in the defeat of the reformists and ultralefts at the conference.

La Raza Unida Party

The current rise in nationalist consciousness has found one of its highest political expressions in La Raza Unida Party in Southwest Texas. This party grew out of struggles for community control in Crystal City, Texas, and has gained the first electoral victories of an independent Chicano political party.

These struggles for community control make the con-

cept of self-determination concrete. Because this system is unable to grant self-determination to any oppressed nationality, the struggle for that right is a direct threat to the capitalist system. Without the pillar of Chicano oppression the whole capitalist structure would topple. This is especially true given the social composition of the Chicano people: almost entirely workers—and the most oppressed workers at that.

The Cuban revolution has demonstrated that only the overthrow of capitalism can lead to total liberation from imperialist political and economic control. This lesson will be learned by the Chicano masses who become mobilized and involved in the Chicano struggle around demands that, of necessity, are directly related to their needs. Because of the dual oppression of Chicanos as workers and as a nationality, the Chicano struggle will occupy a vanguard position in the coming American revolution.

The success of the Chicano movement depends on its ability to remain independent and build upon the strength of the growing nationalism. As *El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán* explains, nationalism is the common denominator that all La Raza can agree upon and has the potential to unite and mobilize a massive and powerful movement that can shake up the *status quo* of the two-party system through which the capitalists rule. This would show the way to be followed by the Black movement and the labor movement.

Subordination of the Chicano struggle to some abstract call for "working-class unity" can only weaken that struggle by obstructing the mobilization of the masses of Chicanos around nationalist demands through their own organizations, their own party. Alliances between the different sectors of the struggle against a common enemy can be made and will be made on the basis of each sector's independent strength.

In the course of the independent struggles of Chicanos as Chicanos, the working-class aspect of the struggle will also emerge. A concrete example of this is illustrated by the role La Raza Unida Party activists in Crystal City are playing in the fight of the primarily Chicano work force at the Del Monte cannery. The workers have organized a new union at that plant. The overwhelming majority walked off the job when the Anglo Teamster union bureaucrats attempted to conduct a vote by locking up the workers and forcing them to vote in favor of a contract which the union membership opposed. This new union is called the Obreros Unidos Independientes (Independent United Workers).

As revolutionary socialists, YSAers unconditionally support the right of self-determination of the Chicano people. Demands based on the right to self-determination have a revolutionary content and cannot, will not, be met fully under the capitalist system. Moreover, independent mass struggles for self-determination can lead to many significant gains for the Chicano people.

The role of the YSA is to support that nationalism, and it is by participating in and leading the struggle for national self-determination as the most consistent Chicano nationalists, that Chicano revolutionary socialists will best build the Chicano movement.

Revolutionary socialist consciousness will be developed out of the nationalist mobilization of the Chicano people. Those revolutionary nationalists who become revolutionary socialists as well will join the YSA.

Chicano militants who understand the tasks facing La Causa are beginning to see that other social forces in addition to the Chicanos can be mobilized against American capitalism. They see that the different struggles are not separate and unrelated. Because these different forces are all fighting a common enemy—American capitalism—the coming together of these struggles can result in the overthrow of capitalism. But as YSAers, we also understand that this process cannot take place without the consistent leadership of a revolutionary socialist vanguard which is active in all these struggles and armed with a program based on an understanding of the combined character of the coming American revolution.

Those who understand this will also arrive at an understanding of the key question: the need to build a multinational revolutionary socialist vanguard. A multinational revolutionary socialist organization is not counterposed to nationalist organizations but is actively involved in supporting and building them. Because the YSA is active in all these different struggles—the women's liberation movement, the Black struggle, the antiwar movement, and the student movement—Chicano young socialists will be better able to contribute to the Chicano struggle.

This is not an abstract theory but one which has been put to the test in this last period. At the 1970 Chicano Youth Liberation Conference, Chicano and Latino YSAers were the most consistent speakers for the formation of an independent Chicano political party. We were also among the most active builders of the August 29 Chicano Moratorium in Los Angeles and, following the police attack on that demonstration, became a crucial force in calling the September 16 demonstration to protest that attack and the murder of Ruben Salazar. Our newspaper, *The Militant*, has played a major role in publicizing important developments in the Chicano movement, and is looked to by Chicano activists as an authoritative source of news and analysis on the movement.

The YSA is one of the vehicles through which the lessons and experiences of all the other movements will be conveyed to the nationalist movements and through which the lessons and experiences of the Chicano movement are taken back to the other movements.

Other organizations claiming to be multinational socialist organizations, such as the Progressive Labor Party and the Communist Party, either overtly or covertly oppose the Chicano nationalist struggle. PL's antinationalist position, as expressed in their call for "working-class unity," flows from a lack of understanding of the revolutionary character of nationalist struggles. It essentially expresses a lack of faith in the ability of the Chicano masses to draw the necessary lessons that will lead them to the logical conclusion of the need for a socialist revolution. Unlike the Marxist approach, this plea for "working-class unity" is a formalistic approach which implies that Chicanos are not an oppressed nationality but are all "workers," and nothing but workers. Chicanos are also students, are also women, are also people with special demands that relate to their special needs and around which they are waging independent struggles.

PL's role at the Chicano Youth Liberation Conference in March 1970 was to distribute a position paper attacking

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nationalism. After August 29 in Los Angeles, rather than helping to build a united front in defense of the movement, PL organized their own small, sectarian, provocative rally. PL's antinationalist line has made them particularly unpopular among Chicanos.

The Communist Party is a reformist tendency in the Chicano movement with a significant influence. Their approach is to keep the Chicano movement tied to capitalist political parties. The CP's role has, for the most part, been limited to supporting liberal democrats such as California's Senator John Tunney and Congressman Ed Royball. They played an important role in the Peace and Freedom Party campaign of Ricardo Romo in California, counterposing this coalition of assorted radicals and Anglo liberals (with a sprinkling of Chicanos and Blacks who have not broken with capitalist politics), to a nationalist Chicano party. One of the tactics the CP uses is to attempt to dilute the independent character of La Raza Unida Party by calling *vendidos* (sellouts) like Royball "Raza Unida candidates." In the same way, articles in the *Daily World* talk about the Raza Unida movement in an attempt to get around having to state openly their opposition to the independent Chicano party.

Recently this tactic used by the reformists was taken on directly by the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO). A Raza Unida Conference in Austin, Texas, this summer called by reformists attempted to by-pass the issue of an independent party and deal only with the question of registering Chicanos, leaving the door open for endorsement of liberal Democrats. MAYO militants were able to defeat the reformists. The conference called for a complete break with the Democratic and Republican parties.

The events following the August 29 police attack on the Chicano Moratorium clearly pointed to the need for a clear perspective of mass struggles building toward the formation of an independent Chicano party. The National Chicano Moratorium Committee leadership, which lacked such a perspective for counteracting the attack, yielded to the pressure of the reformist forces. Despite the mass sentiment for a militant protest, the September 16 action was a watered-down protest with Jesse Unruh, Democratic Party candidate for Governor of California, leading it through East Los Angeles. Along with the Chicano Moratorium leadership, the CP encouraged this trend.

A common way that the CP intervenes in this movement is to attempt to counterpose some abstract struggle against "repression" to building mass independent actions around concrete demands. In order to fight repression, they say, the movement must support liberal politicians as opposed to so-called repression candidates. While it is true that the Chicano movement has been and will continue to be a victim of repression, the way to fight repression is not by supporting the very people who are the tools of the ruling classes for carrying out that repression, but by building the broadest possible united fronts in defense of individuals or organizations that come under attack.

A thorough understanding of nationalism is essential for YSAers since nationalist rhetoric is often used by reformist Chicanos to try to exclude the revolutionary socialists and to disorient the revolutionary nationalists. Chicano and Latino YSAers at the Denver conference were attacked by some for belonging to an organization which includes whites and has a socialist ideology. In fact, we

were among the most consistent nationalists. It became clear that this tactic of the reformists was a cover for an attempt to exclude the left wing of the movement.

A similar problem occurred in Los Angeles after August 29 when Rosalio Muñoz, under the pressure of the right wing, attempted to exclude Chicano and Latino YSA members by claiming that they were outsiders in East Los Angeles, a very dangerous position which opens the way for the government to clamp down, not only on the socialists, but on the movement as a whole. Our response was to draw up a statement reaffirming the concept of nonexclusion and the need for unity in defense of the Chicano movement. That document was circulated and well received by Chicano activists.

Ultraleftism is another orientation projected for the movement. The ultralefts counterpose "serve the people," "pick up the gun" rhetoric to a strategy of mass action for community control. By substituting a self-proclaimed vanguard for the mass—by posing themselves as the vanguard of the movement and rejecting the concept of electoral action and of mobilizing the masses around transitional demands—they are contributing the least to raising the consciousness of the Chicano people or to making concrete gains. While they project free breakfast programs or free health clinics which involve small numbers of people and are of minimal help to the Chicano community, the greatest number of people are being radicalized through mobilizations over such things as community control of the schools and the war in Vietnam. Free breakfast programs for all children can be gained as a result of a mass movement.

Such ultraleft abstention from mass struggles caused the Brown Beret leadership in Los Angeles to disassociate themselves from the Chicano Moratorium Committee and play no role whatsoever in one of the most politically significant events in Chicano history.

Chicano student movement

The correctness of our program, our strategy for mass action, our support and active participation in the nationalist movement, and our ability to relate to every aspect of the Chicano liberation struggle will guide us in the tasks that face the movement in the coming period. We must see as one of our prime tasks helping to publicize, support and build La Raza Unida parties, Chicano antiwar actions, Chicano student struggles, Chicana liberation, and other aspects of the Chicano movements.

Our Raza comrades can play a major role in the Chicano student movement. The level of organization that students have displayed, and the profound impact they have had in the Chicano community as a whole places them clearly in the forefront of the movement. The experiences gained by high school students in the course of the blowouts, their involvement in the struggle for community control of education, the role they have played in building La Raza Unida parties and the experience of the Chicano Moratorium which students initiated, are the key factors that have contributed to the high political level of the Chicano students. The international youth radicalization has given this process an added push, so that Chicano students today are not only the most militant

sector but also the most open to the ideas of socialism, for antiwar mass actions, for La Raza Unida parties and for Chicana liberation.

While the Chicano enrollment in colleges has been increasing in the last two years, Chicanos are mainly channeled into the junior colleges instead of the universities. Combined with their growing radicalization, the continuing oppressive conditions in most schools guarantee that these struggles will continue.

An impressive example of the gains that can be made around the struggle for community control of the schools is the establishment of the Latin and Mexican-American Studies Department at Merritt College in Oakland, California. It was one of the victories of several student strikes which mobilized community support in the Bay area around the demand for a Brown University. The faculty and students of the Latin and Mexican-American Department are involved in all aspects of the Chicano struggle, including the two Denver youth conferences, two northern California Raza Unida Moratoriums against the war, and support to the high school strike of Chicano students in Oakland in the fall of 1969.

The struggle for the Brown university, a university controlled by the community with university funds and resources at the disposal of the Chicano students, is a key to reaching out to and involving nonstudent Chicano youth. The utopian concept of the *free* university, counterposed by ultralefts, fails to understand this fundamental fact.

Tlatelolco, the school that has been formed by the Crusade for Justice for about two hundred students, is not intended to be a substitute for fighting for community control of educational institutions. In this case, the school has been initiated as a result of the Crusade *having established* a base in the community through struggle. It is not seen as a means of winning over or "serving" the community, *in order to* establish such a base. They also view the school as a means of educating cadre for the struggle for community control.

Chicano student organizations have been in the vanguard of a number of struggles carried out by the community and most importantly in La Raza Unida Party (RUP). The RUP in Texas grew out of a struggle over a set of demands of Crystal City high school students. The Mexican-American Youth Organization, after learning the lessons of that struggle, organized a campaign to register voters for La Raza Unida Party. In Colorado, the United Mexican-American Students has actively supported the RUP and had some of its members running as candidates. The Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (MECHA) in California has supported the grape strike and the Chicano Moratorium and has led Chicano studies fights in California.

Our orientation toward the Chicano student movement means that we will help to build and initiate Chicano student organizations.

Another essential task which faces the YSA is building and supporting La Raza Unida parties. One of the most important lessons of this development is the need for a mass base gained in the course of struggles for community control. This lesson will be an important one for other movements. The steps taken recently by a group of Black activists in New York to initiate discussions on a Black political party were partly inspired by the RUPs,

which provided a model. Articles in our publications, in addition to our participation, made a substantial contribution to those discussions.

The Raza Unida parties' ability to relate to the needs of the community and play an active role in community struggles has been illustrated by the Colorado RUP's support to the lettuce workers strike and the support of the Texas RUP to the workers of the Del Monte plant.

Despite illegal moves by election officials to keep the RUPs off the ballot, and later to minimize the votes credited to RUP, the percentage of votes received in the recent elections was a definite success. The RUP in southwest Texas is now planning to expand into a twenty-six county area in south Texas which is predominantly Chicano, and later to become a statewide organization.

At the same time, although a number of victories have been gained, there are still many tests ahead for these and other RUPs which may be initiated in the future. La Raza Unida parties in Texas and Colorado are not yet mass parties. One difficulty they will have to face is the intervention of the Democratic Party, which will not just oppose them, but may try to get in and take them over.

The spreading influence of La Raza Unida was seen most recently in La Raza Unida Party Conference held in northern California on November 13. A definite agreement to go back to the community and begin organizing Raza Unida Party chapters came out of the conference, along with agreement to give no support to the Democratic and Republican parties. This, and the understanding of the need for establishing a base through mass mobilizations for community control, is the only guarantee that such a party will be successful in the future.

A good example of how a revolutionary vanguard can concretely support and build the nationalist movement is the role that the YSA and SWP have played in publicizing and popularizing La Raza Unida parties through *The Militant*, Pathfinder publications, speaking engagements and particularly the SWP candidates' tour of Aztlan.

One major responsibility that revolutionaries have is to prepare other forces for mobilizations in defense of sections of the movement that come under attack from the ruling class. The concept of broad united defense committees should be consistently explained to every sector of the movement as the most effective form of defense.

The National Chicano Moratorium of August 29, which mobilized 30,000 Chicanos around the slogan "Bring our Carnales Home," was a dramatic demonstration of the deep and widespread antiwar sentiment among the Chicano people. Chicano youth are drafted and killed in Vietnam in high, disproportionate numbers. This fact makes the war an extremely relevant issue to Chicanos. Unlike the Black movement, the Chicano movement developed a leadership which was able to organize and mobilize that sentiment through the National Chicano Moratorium Committee around the demand for immediate withdrawal.

The experience of the Chicano Moratorium holds important lessons for the entire radical movement in this country, and squarely refutes the argument of the reformists and ultralefts who claim that the antiwar movement is irrelevant to oppressed nationalities. Although the National

Chicano Moratorium Committee had the potential to become one of the central organizations in the Chicano struggle, at the peak of its accomplishment the leadership retreated from the orientation of mass action. This retreat created a temporary vacuum in leadership for the Chicano antiwar movement. Nevertheless, Chicanos continue to participate in actions against the war. Chicano contingents led the antiwar marches in Seattle and San Francisco on October 31, 1970. A good percentage of the demonstrators in Riverside, California, on that day were Chicanos. Involving Chicanos in the antiwar movement will be one of our central tasks.

Whether these actions are separate from the coalition-called antiwar actions or are a part of them will depend on the specific situation. The correct strategy will be the one that can involve the largest possible numbers of Chicanos in action against the war. Through the Student Mobilization Committee and the National Peace Action Coalition, Chicanos can be involved in the national demonstrations set for April 24. Chicano YSAers have been and will continue to be in the forefront of this process.

The most oppressed sector of the Chicano population is the Chicanas. Both the nationalist movement and the women's liberation movement have contributed to the growing consciousness of Chicanas, not only as nationalists, but also as feminists. We have seen the phenomenon of feminism coming to the forefront in the Black struggle. The dynamic of this movement foreshadows the potential of a similar process taking place among La Raza. An important part of the northern California Raza Unida Party conference was the enthusiastic response to the section of the Oakland-Berkeley Raza Unida platform which outlined the oppression of Raza women. The second Chicano Youth Liberation Conference in Denver, and other conferences held in Texas, have held workshops and discussions and drawn up resolutions on Chicana liberation. In Seattle, a campus women's liberation group held a rap session with Chicanas on the relationship between nationalism and feminism. A Chicana conference in Texas has been called some time this spring. YSA women have been in the leadership of the feminist movement, are gaining a thorough understanding of it, and are best equipped to bring its lessons to other movements.

One of the most important advantages the YSA has over other groups that call themselves socialist is that it functions as part of an international revolutionary socialist movement that is participating in the Latin American revolution. We must educate ourselves on these struggles and build the defense of political prisoners through support of the USLA Justice Committee. The Chicano movement helped to free Comrade Hugo Blanco! We must serve notice on the Peruvian government that we will not rest until Eduardo Creus is free. A defense campaign must be launched in the Chicano movement to free the Mexican and other Latin American prisoners.

This feeling of solidarity with people struggling against similar forms of colonial oppression means that lessons of the Latin American struggles, some of which are led by revolutionary socialists, can be applied to the Chicano movement. This can give added impetus to the Chicano movement and aid in the recruitment of Chicano youth to the YSA.

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situation, one can safely say, advocates of boycotting the elections would not have been too popular among these workers.

Bolshevik deputies in the czarist Duma

The thirteen Social Democratic deputies—six Bolsheviks and seven Mensheviks—operated, at least in the beginning stages of participation in the Duma, as a common faction. On the opening day of the first session of the fourth Duma, the joint faction refused to participate in the selection of a presiding committee and a presiding chairman. This action was symptomatic of the policy that the Bolshevik deputies took for the next two-and-a-half years. They spoke on the floor, introduced exposés about the conditions of the working class, demanded answers from various government ministers about why things weren't being done better or differently, and participated in committees. But they did not help work on legislation or pass laws. On almost all the bills that came before the Duma, they abstained from the vote. When occasionally a law was introduced that would have a certain benefit for the working class, they would vote for it. But that occurred very, very seldom in the reactionary Duma.

Although the Bolshevik deputies were continually harassed, sometimes suspended from sessions, occasionally arrested, usually interrupted and heckled when speaking on the Duma floor, and continually tailed by the czarist police, they were still able to function. All the Duma deputies of all parties were supposed to have immunity from arrest; they could only be convicted by a trial of their peers, that is by the Duma itself. But the government continuously tested to see if it could violate the immunity of the Bolshevik deputies. When the government tried this, however, the masses would intervene with demonstrations and limit the power of the government. Any infringement of the rights of the Bolshevik deputies had a profound radicalizing effect on workers who sincerely believed that their deputies should not suffer such indignities. The Bolshevik deputies had continuous contact with the workers in the factories. They visited the factories, and workers sent delegations to their fraction's headquarters. Badayev, one of the Bolshevik deputies, wrote many years later: "There was not a single factory or workshop, down to the smallest, with which I was not connected in some way or other." (*The Bolsheviks in the Tsarist Duma* [New York: International Publishers, 1929], page 86.)

Between sessions of the Duma, the Bolshevik deputies extensively toured all the working-class areas, talking to workers, gathering information, and above all, doing internal party work. It is important to remember that at this time the Bolshevik Party was underground. Even a small liberal bourgeois party, the Cadets, was officially illegal, although it didn't operate underground. The Bolshevik Party could not operate as a legal political party. But the existence of a fraction in the Duma, whose members had a certain measure of legal standing, immunity from arrest and a certain respect—not only respect, but real authority among masses of workers—meant that these deputies were in a strategic position to do party work. They could do certain kinds of work much more easily than members who were underground. They helped arrange false passports, set up conferences, raised funds

and worked on the newspaper. Badayev describes how Lenin urged him to work on the newspaper and do internal party work. He describes a myriad of such assignments that these Bolshevik deputies carried out. Their main responsibility was not to pass legislation; it was a large number of other activities that would be the normal function of any revolutionary party.

Lenin not only played the principal role in inspiring and organizing the election campaign, but he also played a key role in the activity of the Bolshevik fraction in the Duma. There were several meetings in Cracow between the Central Committee members of the party and the Duma deputies to discuss what should be done. Badayev recounts the results of one of these meetings: "We returned from Cracow, armed with concrete practical instructions. The general policy to be followed by the 'six' was clearly outlined and also the details as to who was to speak on various questions, the material that should be prepared, the immediate work to be done outside the Duma, etc. Coming, as we did, from an entirely complicated and hostile environment, this direct exchange of ideas with the leading members of the party and above all with Lenin was of the utmost importance for us." (*Ibid.*, page 64.)

When the Bolshevik deputies were first elected to the Duma, Lenin sent each of them a long questionnaire, with questions probing nearly every aspect of the election campaign: How much support had they received from this faction or that faction; how many intellectuals supported them; how many workers supported them; what issues were raised besides those that were in the election platform; how were the various parts of the party platform accepted; what were the arguments that were raised by the workers; what were the questions that were raised? He said, in effect, "I want each of you to fill out a questionnaire so that we can decide what we should do next and how to improve our work in the Duma."

Krupskaya, a leading Bolshevik who was also Lenin's wife, writes in her memoirs that Lenin sometimes drafted the speeches that the deputies gave in the Duma. (*Reminiscences of Lenin* [New York: International Publishers, 1970], page 256.) She recounts some of the speeches, particularly those on education and on the situation in the schools in Russia. It's interesting to look over these speeches because the speeches Lenin wrote for deputies in the Duma were quite different from most of the articles he wrote for *Pravda* or the letters that he sent to party members. He wrote each in a way that could be understood by the people he was trying to reach.

Very little coverage was granted in the bourgeois press to the Bolshevik deputies and of course there was no television or radio then. The only way that a speech in the Duma could be widely circulated to the workers was by publishing it as a pamphlet, printing excerpts of it as a leaflet, or printing it in *Pravda*. Since forty thousand copies of *Pravda* were sold every day in the working-class districts of St. Petersburg, that was the principal way the speeches got out. To hear what *their* deputies were saying in the Duma was a good reason for the workers to buy the paper. In the eyes of the workers, they weren't just Bolshevik deputies, but were looked on as *the workers' deputies*. That was a common phrase in all the propaganda language of the time, *the workers' deputies*. That's how the Bolsheviks referred to their deputies, and that's how the workers referred to them.

Like any parliamentary fraction, the Bolshevik's deputies were strongly susceptible to the pressures of adapting to the parliamentary environment. There were more than a few instances when Lenin wrote to them, urging them to take a sharper position on major questions. This was particularly true when the first world war broke out in 1914.

This wasn't the only problem that the Bolshevik fraction faced. At the time they were elected, they had been working together in a joint Duma faction with the Mensheviks. But political differences between the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks, not only in the Duma fraction, but in the party as a whole, had become so sharp that within a year after the elections the Bolshevik deputies formed their own fraction. In the Duma faction the Menshevik deputies attempted to muzzle the six Bolshevik deputies by placing them under "majority" discipline. A definitive split occurred between the Mensheviks and Bolsheviks that was never healed.

This split had to be explained to the class-conscious workers, and a massive campaign was launched to solicit the support of the workers: collection of petitions; debates at factories between Bolshevik and Menshevik deputies; articles in *Pravda*, and so on. In other words, the position of the Bolshevik deputies was also used to expose the Mensheviks before the masses, to drive a wedge between the masses and the Mensheviks, and this they did very successfully. They pointed out that the Mensheviks more and more wanted to adapt to the liberals on this or that question. They wrote about it in their paper and they talked to the workers about it, and within a few weeks it became crystal clear that the Bolsheviks enjoyed far more support among the workers than the Mensheviks. Badayev estimates that among the class-conscious workers, the Bolsheviks had between three-fourths and nine-tenths of the support; the Mensheviks, the rest. For example, the Bolsheviks held a majority of seats on the boards of fourteen of the eighteen major trade unions in Russia at the time.

Another problem was that one of the Bolshevik deputies, in fact the head of the fraction, was a police agent; he was a czarist cop. In his position, he was of course responsible for the persecution and imprisonment of many Bolsheviks, including the execution of many. But because of the disciplined manner in which the fraction functioned, he was forced to speak for the line of the Bolshevik Party. When, at first, he tried to deviate a little from the line, to soften his position on this or that question a little, Lenin would quickly note it, and he'd be brought to order quickly by the fraction. He actually became one of the best speakers — if not the best speaker — for the Bolsheviks. He was one of the best, most aggressive and outgoing speakers for the Bolsheviks in the Duma and he did a lot of good propaganda work. He was forced to because of the way the fraction operated and the way the party operated. So, we see, a disciplined party can't easily be destroyed by police agents.

While he was still a deputy, there was a shift in the hierarchy of the police department and his superiors decided to pull him out. Suddenly one day, he left. The Bolsheviks had no warning whatsoever. There had been a few suspicions that he might be a cop, but basically there was no warning. He just took off to some other country. Of course, the fact that he just left like that created a big scandal and the Bolsheviks had to be able to answer it. They denounced him and kicked him out of the party. But there

was still no proof that he was an agent. It was never proved until after the revolution when the Bolsheviks obtained the czarist police files. When he returned to Russia after the revolution, the Soviet government executed him on the spot.

So we see that one of the best examples of a parliamentary fraction of a socialist party was worked out by the Bolsheviks. They did it in spite of tremendous obstacles, despite a poor objective situation, and despite the fact that the head of the fraction was a police agent. That's a lot better than what the German socialist movement was able to do at that time under much more auspicious conditions.

With the outbreak of the first world war and the entry of Russia into the war, the Bolshevik deputies held firm in refusing to vote for war credits in the Duma. They voted against the war credits and walked out of the session, at first jointly with the Mensheviks, and later they held fast by themselves as the Mensheviks capitulated to the pressures. They denounced the imperialist war of their own imperialist ruling class on the floor of the czarist Duma. Of course, with this position, it was only a matter of a few months before all five of the Bolshevik deputies (not the agent) and six other Bolshevik leaders in the country were arrested, tried and sentenced to hard labor in Siberia.

Despite the hysterical chauvinism that was sweeping the country and the tightening hold of the governmental reaction, the arrest and trial stimulated worker and student demonstrations and protests. There were protests in the factories against the sentencing of the worker deputies. News of the trial swept throughout the country, leaflets were distributed by the thousands, and the Bolshevik's opposition to and explanation of the war were widely communicated. (Lenin wrote an article after the trials criticizing most of the deputies for not more clearly stating their position on the war, but explaining, at the same time, the good tactics that were used in the defense.)

It's interesting to note the kind of defense campaign that they waged. They launched a *massive* defense campaign to get the issues out to the country. The fact that the elected mass leaders of the working class were being sent to Siberia had a profound impact on the consciousness of those who still had parliamentary illusions.

What are the lessons of these two-and-a-half year of experience? The campaign and election of Duma deputies provided legitimacy and important legal opportunities for the underground, illegal Bolshevik Party. It served as a means for reaching and cementing ties with the mass of workers. It served to expose the czarist government and political parties as well as the liberals and Mensheviks. In particular, it helped to draw a sharp line of distinction between the Bolshevik Party and the reformist Mensheviks. It showed that revolutionaries can use the parliamentary tribune without becoming corrupted, or maneuvered into taking responsibility for the reactionary government and its policies. Parliamentary work can be merged with, and play a central role in the entire scope of party activities. Lenin did not view electoral work in a period of ascending radicalization as a peripheral or sideline activity. It was not a task to be carried on in routine fashion; rather it was the central task of the

party, requiring a tremendous mobilization of forces, political inspiration, and great care for detail.

The parliamentary fraction, in order to maintain its principled line and to be effective, must be subordinate to the party as a whole. This was crucial. The Menshevik and Western European Social Democratic parliamentary representatives at that time had begun to develop procedures in which they would decide for themselves what their line in Parliament was going to be. But the Bolsheviks proved that the only way you can maintain a revolutionary perspective in this kind of activity was to keep the Duma fraction, with all the pressures on it, subordinate to the party as a whole.

One of the key lessons was the relationship of this work to the February and October 1917 revolutions. Trotsky writes in his *History of the Russian Revolution* that had a revolutionary situation developed in 1914—and it was possible then—the Bolsheviks might have come directly to power without the country having to go through a provisional government and a Menshevik-Social Revolutionary coalition government with the capitalist parties as occurred in 1917.

He points out that because of the first world war, national chauvinism and the victimization of their party, the Bolsheviks were not in a position to seize power during the February 1917 revolution. He then explains, in the chapter "Who Led the February Revolution," that it was those class-conscious workers who had assimilated the lessons and the teachings of the Bolshevik Party two or three years before the outbreak of the war who played a key role in making the February revolution. In 1912-14 the Bolshevik Party was *the* mass party in the working-class districts. The lessons absorbed in that prewar period—the election campaigns, the participation of the Bolsheviks in the Duma, the things they said in their speeches, the publication of *Pravda*—were crucial in February 1917.

After the February revolution, when the Bolshevik leaders returned from exile and the party began to rebuild itself, many of the roots that had been planted in the masses before the war still existed, and this facilitated the process of rebuilding the party for the October revolution. There was a direct link between the activity that the Bolshevik Party carried out in the 1912-14 period and the making of the October revolution.

There is another chapter in the history of the Bolsheviks' approach to electoral activity: its attitude toward the election of the Constituent Assembly in 1917. The Provisional Government that was thrown up after the czarist regime was ousted in the February revolution continually promised to call a Constituent Assembly. But in practice, it kept delaying it. The Bolsheviks took the stand of supporting a Constituent Assembly because there were still widespread illusions, particularly among the peasants, about the necessity of a Constituent Assembly, i.e., a bourgeois republican form of government; and these illusions had to be dispelled all during 1917.

The Bolsheviks' vigorous support for a Constituent Assembly helped expose the reluctance of the bourgeois parties and the reformists to call elections for the Constituent Assembly. Although the Bolsheviks supported a Constituent Assembly against the restoration of the monarchy or a military *coup d'etat*, they left no doubt that

between a workers republic based on soviets and a bourgeois parliamentary republic they favored the former.

When elections for a Constituent Assembly were finally called the Bolsheviks participated in them. Lists of candidates had to be drawn up and submitted by all the parties to the electoral commission by October 17. Elections were scheduled for November 12. Between these dates, the Soviets, under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party, took political power. There was a social revolution, the most momentous in the history of the world. This posed the question: should the Bolsheviks cancel the elections for the Constituent Assembly scheduled for November 12? The Bolsheviks decided to permit the elections and keep their own candidates in the race.

When the Constituent Assembly met the first week in January 1918, two months after the new Soviet government came to power, the Bolsheviks introduced a resolution into the Constituent Assembly calling on the body to support the Soviet government. The Bolsheviks did not have a majority at this gathering and when the delegates voted this motion down, exposing where they really stood as opponents of the workers' government, the Bolsheviks dissolved the Constituent Assembly in the name of the Soviet government. By this time, after two months of revolution and experience, and because of the stand of the other reformist parties on the question of the Soviet government, most of the illusions of the masses about parliamentarianism had been dispelled.

Reviewing this experience later in *Left Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, Lenin wrote:

the conclusion which follows from this is absolutely incontrovertible; it has been proved that participation in a bourgeois-democratic parliament even a few weeks before the victory of a Soviet republic, and even *after* such a victory, not only does not harm the revolutionary proletariat, but actually helps it to *prove* to the backward masses why such parliaments deserve to be dispersed; it *helps* their successful dispersal, and *helps* to make bourgeois parliamentarianism "politically obsolete." (Lenin, *"Left-Wing" Communism, an Infantile Disorder* [Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House], pages 52-53.)

The positive lessons of the Bolshevik experience in parliamentarianism, along with the negative example of the Western European parties, was discussed thoroughly and codified in a set of theses adopted at the second congress of the Communist International in 1920. In summary some of the key points included in these theses are:

Bourgeois parliaments or congresses cannot in any way serve as the arena of struggle for reform, or for improving the lot of the working people.

Revolutionary socialists repudiate parliamentarianism, as a state form, for the class dictatorship of the working class. They repudiate the possibility of winning over parliament to their side. It is only possible to speak of utilizing the capitalist state organization with the object of destroying it.

The fundamental method of struggle of the working class against capitalist rule is the method of mass action; parliamentary tactics, although important, are supplementary and subordinate.

The objective of work within elections or capitalist congresses is propaganda to reach workers and other sectors of the population who have not yet been reached.

Election campaigns should not be geared primarily

toward getting votes, but should be revolutionary mobilizations involving not only the party leaders and candidates but the entire party membership.

Refusal to participate in elections in principle is a naive, childish doctrine.

The question of the form of intervention in elections, including boycotts, is a tactical question, to be worked out according to the concrete circumstances.

These theses were discussed and passed because of the strong tendency in many of the new, militant but inexperienced Communist parties adhering to the Third International to reject all forms of parliamentarianism and all participation in any type of legal organization such as trade unions.

I would like to conclude by referring to Lenin's attitude toward election campaigns in Western Europe and the United States. He stated that he knew people said that this form of parliamentarianism was fine in Russia, but that in other countries things were different. That was the wrong conclusion, Lenin said. Communists in all countries should:

change, all along the line, in all spheres of life, the old socialist, trade unionist, syndicalist parliamentary work into *new* work, communist work. In Russia, too, there was always a great deal of opportunist and purely bourgeois commercialism and capitalist swindling in the elections. The Communists in Western Europe and America must learn to create a new, unusual, non-opportunist, non-careerist parliamentarianism: the Communist parties must issue their slogans; real proletarians, with the help of the unorganized and downtrodden poor, should scatter and distribute leaflets, canvass workers' houses and the cottages of the rural proletarians and peasants in the remote villages . . . they should go into the most common taverns, penetrate into the unions, societies and casual meetings where the common people gather, and talk to the people, not in learned (and not in very parliamentary) language; they should not at all strive to "get seats" in parliament, but should everywhere strive to rouse the minds of the masses and draw them into the struggle, to hold the bourgeoisie to its word and utilize the apparatus it has set up, the elections it has appointed, the appeals it has made to the whole people, and to tell the people what Bolshevism is in a way that has never been possible (under bourgeois rule) outside of election times (not counting, of course, times of big strikes, when, in Russia, a *similar* apparatus for widespread popular agitation worked even more intensively). It is very difficult . . . but it can and must be done, for the task of Communism cannot be fulfilled without effort; and our efforts must be devoted to fulfilling *practical* tasks, ever more varied, ever more closely connected with all branches of social life, *winning* branch after branch and sphere after sphere *from the bourgeoisie*. (*Ibid.*, page 97.)