

# Chicano movement and the left

By P. Mendez

It was very inspirational seeing so many different faces and forces at the Chicano Immigration Conference in San Diego during the last weekend of May, the most graphic reminder in many years of the potential strength of our movement.

Of course, it's only natural that the defense of the most oppressed segment of our people—undocumented immigrants—be the magnet attracting nearly 1,000 people from a broad range of political views. The participation of the left was particularly important. Left-sectarianism towards the Chicano movement has in the past, kept many left groups isolated and apart from this struggle and unable to relate to its broad, united front character. This in turn evoked some unnecessary hostility towards the left.

It was little more than one year ago that the Committee for Chicano Rights (CCR), the host of the conference, circulated a manifesto stating their refusal to work with the Socialist Workers Party. Roughly one year later, the MEChAs at San Diego State and San Jose State followed suit and expelled the Revolutionary Communist Party from their respective chapters.

Though these two opportunist organizations have a long history of chauvinism and sectarianism towards the Chicano movement, many other revolutionary forces have also fallen into leftist errors to one degree or another. In fact, the left in the U.S. has all too often underestimated the revolutionary potential of the Chicano people's liberation movement, and has been chauvinist towards it.

The problems stemmed largely from efforts to impose Marxist slogans and phrases on a movement that was basically against national oppression and when these concepts were not accepted, people with dif-

fering ideologies were attacked and labelled. Problems also arose from dogmatically analyzing the movement on the basis of foreign definitions or experiences.

The magnitude of the anti-deportations conference shows the potential for building a Chicano united front. In fact, this approach is already being applied within the Chicano movement. The San Diego conference followed by only one week a conference of Chicano trade union activists held in L.A. to map out a common program of work. And several revolutionary organiza-

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tions have gone on record calling for the formation of such a front. Marxist-Leninists should whole-heartedly join in these efforts to build the Chicano united front.

Their objective existence as an oppressed people leads Chicanos to organize themselves into a movement to wrest from the capitalist system their national democratic rights and full equality with the rest of the population in the U.S. It also gives rise to the consciousness among some that total liberation, far beyond the "liberties" offered by capitalism, is what is needed. This movement is composed of many forces, both revolutionary and reformist.

The choice for the left is either to actively strive to unite these forces into a common front, or leave this task to the old-line, Democratic Party reformists.

The united front concept is not rigid because the movement is not static. Some individuals and organizations will take a correct position on certain issues, and not so correct a position on others. This should not

*P. Mendez, a Chicano activist, recently covered the CCR Conference for The Call/El Clarin.*

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exclude groups nor people from participating in the Chicano united front.

Class position does not automatically exclude anyone from this front either. We should keep in mind that the great majority of Chicano people of different classes are in antagonistic contradiction with the vicious U.S. imperialist system. We should unite with every organization

seeking democratic rights for Chicanos, stressing the points of unity, reserving differences for patient discussion and resolution.

This brings to mind two organizations which were invited to the San Diego Conference but did not attend. They are the GI Forum and LULAC. Both these organizations espouse total immersion of the Chicano struggle into the bourgeois political system. Both employ lobbies in Washington as their main

political weapons. And both were tied closely to the Democratic Party.

Many of their top leaders also rub elbows with elements of the imperialist bourgeoisie. However, these organizations will find that they have to take up the issue of justice for undocumented Mexican workers if they are to retain any credibility among the Chicano people. Their combined membership of close to 250,000 includes many whose parents or relatives entered the U.S.

“illegally” at one time or the other.

It is a fact that the core of the Chicano united front will invariably be composed of individuals and groups who do not see eye to eye on every issue. Most do not yet see socialism as a solution. Some seek a separate state or reunification with Mexico. But all are united by their dedication to bring liberation to their beloved Raza, manifested in their consistent practice.

Given the history of national op-

pression in this country, and the suspicion which this generates among Chicanos about the Anglo majority, the task of integrating Marxism with the broad Chicano movement is a difficult one. But by humbly serving the Chicano movement and by consistently fighting around issues directly affecting the Chicano masses, communists can help Chicano activists build a powerful front in the fight for Chicano liberation.