BRAZIL REALITY TOUR

Observations, Questions and Analysis.

A report on a trip to Brazil under the auspices of Project Abraco.

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October/November, 1989

PREFACE

I went to Brazil to learn about: liberation theology, Base Christian Communities, the role of clergy, laity, religious and hierarchy, the progressive Bishops and everything else in Brazil's extraordinary Catholic Church; moving people from fatalism to participation, popular education and the relationship of Paulo Freire's pedagogy to it; the labor movement and the newly emerging Workers Party (PT); I was also interested in how the Brazilian organizations and movements dealt with many of the problems facing community and labor organizers in the United States: the "isms" of race, sex, age and others, the relationship of local organizing to national power, internal conflict, the balance between action, reflection and analysis, the relative roles of self-interest and values in motivating people and other common organizing problems; I wanted to know about the relationship of the progressive church and the movements and organizations that grew out of its "option for the poor" to the traditional Left, particular to the Marxist parties. By the time I left for Brazil, thanks to excellent preparatory kits put together by Project Abraco, I had something of an overview of the problems facing Brazil.

I'd like to thank Project Abraco and its staff person, Judith Hurley, for organizing the trip; Sandra Necchi, our tour guide and translator for doing a very difficult job very well; my travel companions for their good spirit and company; and, especially, the many people we met who gave so generously of their time and knowledge, some of whom will be acknowledged below and others of whom, for reasons having to do with either their security or the confidentiality of their comments, will not.

Special thanks to the following organizations and individuals who contributed to OTC's sabbatical fund which, in part, underwrote this trip:

New World Foundation and Colin Greer
World Vision and Robert Linthicum
Presbytery of the Golden Gate and Dave Hawbecker
W.H. and Carol Bernstein Ferry
Northern California Conference, United Church of Christ and
John Deckenback
Lu Walker
Esther Miller.

And thanks to the OTC Board of Directors who approved my taking this "mini-sabbatical" and also approved funds toward it from our rather tight 1989 budget.

INTRODUCTION

The trip's point of view was captured in its title, "Reality Tour", specifically the reality of Brazil's poor and working class who make up about 80% of the country's population of 150,000,000. More particularly, the Tour sought to expose the 8 Americans on it to Brazilian life through the eyes of people trying to change it in a more democratic and egalitarian way. We visited with leaders and members of "popular organizations" of women, Indians, Afro-Brazilians, the rural and urban landless and environmentalists, with labor leaders of both the CUT and CGT (Brazil's two national labor organizations -- more on them later), with liberation theologians and pastors and activists of Brazil's extraordinary Catholic Church, with leaders of the Worker's Party (PT) and administrators in Sao Paulo appointed by its recently elected PT Mayor. We visited urban "favelas" (squatter communities) and rural land occupations, passed out flyers with the Metallurgical Workers Union and spent time in lots of offices. Finally, the sympathies of those planning our trip lie with the Worker's Party and the progressive wing of the Catholic Church and the Protestant Churches who are in Brazil. That's also who they know...and therefore who we most saw.

In between "reality", we managed to take a six hour boat trip up the Amazon River, enjoy an Afro-Brazilian dance production, swim in the Bay of Salvador (Bahia), enjoy the native dance of Rio Grande Do Sul, eat well and otherwise enjoy ourselves.

As any traveler must, I saw Brazil through the eyes of my own experience. To shed one's own culture, background and predispositions is an impossibility. At the same time, by recognizing them and keeping biases clearly in front of me, I hoped to be able to separate observations from conclusions -- and to hold the latter in abeyance as long as I could. Where I do raise questions about what I saw or draw conclusions, this is done with a recognition that I was in Brazil about a month and it would really take dozens of months to begin to have knowledge of this vast, complex and fascinating country.

Our trip began and ended in Brazil's major City, Sao Paulo. Our next stops were Salvador (Bahia), Manaus (1,000 miles inland and the major city "up the Amazon"), San Leopoldo (near Porto Alegre) at the southern tip of Brazil. Each stop was of between three and four days. I stayed on in Sao Paulo, living in a Catholic Parish rectory as the guest of Oblate Fr. Bill Reinhard, after the tour ended and took a brief side trip to Rio de Janeiro and Brasilia, the nation's capital.

One final note. In the Report I sometimes do not refer to people by name. This is because these are notes of informal sessions, in which a speaker didn't anticipate being quoted publicly. As one American priest advised me, "...(We) are not authorities and our conversations with you were informal...Thus we would not like to see this material published using us as specific references." Fair enough. By the way, he also noted, "(This) is a very valuable document and you were very faithful to what we all said."

REPORT

SAO PAULO. Brazil's largest city. Population 11 million. Metro area 15 million. Population in 1950, 1 million, in 1900, 30,000. One of the world's most polluted cities. Center of Brazil's industrial development (particularly the adjacent "ABC Zone" which produces 50% of the factory goods of all South America), banking and commercial development. A bustling metropolis! The ABC Zone (so named because of the towns of Santo Andre, San Bernardo and Sao Caetano) produces trucks, autos and buses; among the companies represented there: Ford, GM, VW, Mercedes-Benz, Volvo, Scania, Saab.

We met with one of the City's "regional administrators" and his assistant. Sao Paulo is divided into 11 administrative regions. They deal with roads, parks, plazas, land use planning, but NOT flood control (a State responsibility), etc. Their directors and key staff are appointed by the Mayor. In this office, the Mayor appointed the Director and 4 other key staff people. The rest of the staff is civil service. The office has a budget for infrastructure improvement and provides some social services. On larger projects, they have to go to the Mayor for approval. Sao Paulo's socialist Mayor, Luisa Erundina, a candidate of the Worker's Party (PT), was a surprise victor in last year's elections. In Sao Paulo, as in a number of other Brazilian cities, PT candidates won mayoralities and city council spots.

Comments of Regional Administrator and one of his Assistants:

"We took this office over and it was doing nothing; everything was corrupt. People weren't working. They used cars for personal activities, the phone was always busy with personal calls, equipment was in disrepair. Nothing was happening here. We came in with the attitude of trying to win these workers over -- by example and by education. We do this by our own action, in staff meetings and by getting the people we serve in direct contact with the staff.

"Our emphasis in on fixing old things and making better use of existing land and space in our region. For example, a city owned parcel of land had been occupied and used by a private owner for a tire store. We moved the store and are planting trees there so there will be less pollution and a small park. We don't have a lot of money with which to do things.

"The favelas (squatter communities) are a distinct problem for us. Where they are organized, we work with the local organization; where they aren't, it is difficult. Favela organizations may be church, political party or otherwise organized. The favelas have far more demands than we have resources to meet. There are 40 in our region. They want to clean up pollution in rivers and "urbanize" their favelas (paved streets, electricity, water, street lights, garbage collection, flood control, etc). The people are very low income and frequently live marginal lives."

(FAVELAS. Millions of urban Brazilians are recent arrivals in the cities. They were pushed off the land and pulled to the cities in the hope of finding work. Many of them arrived and found no housing, so they occupied unused public and private land. At first they would throw up plastic, cardboard and wood shacks. After a while, if it appeared that their existence might be more permanent, they would rebuild with concrete blocks, bricks and corrugated tin (for roofs). They would illegally connect a wiring system to a local electrical source. If they still survived, and if they organized, they would then push local government for some kind of tenure on the land, which government could grant if it owned the land or secure and then grant by negotiations with private owners -- many of whose "titles" were themselves suspect. With tenure, favelas would push for "urbanization": running water, electricity, asphalting of streets so that

ambulances, cars and garbage trucks could drive in, flood control, street lights and other physical improvements.

The favela house is very small; as many as a dozen people might live in two or three rooms, sleeping different shifts. Houses are frequently very close to one another -- too close for vehicular access, so that when urbanization does come a new problem arises as some people's houses have to come down. There is frequently no space for a community center, social or athletic activities.

Social and political organization of the favelas varies considerably. Frequently favela dwellers come from the same rural area, town or region. There may be extended families living close to one another. An informal leadership structure exists, but is difficult for an outsider to learn. Favela dwellers develop deep ties to their own favelas; it is difficult to get them out of their own favela. There's a lot of "turf consciousness". You don't go unaccompanied into a favela, especially at night.

Various groups, including political parties and the churches, try to organize in the favelas. There are also more official organizations. One is the favela "society". This was set up under the military dictatorship and is viewed as a "company union" by the people we met with. Another is the favela "Association". These emerged toward the end of the dictatorship and are more democratic. They have officers, but frequently don't believe in popular participation. In some places they were coopted by local politicians. Some favelas were organized by one or another of the political parties, and the favela organization acts something like a precinct organization in an old-line political machine. Finally, there are Base Christian Communities and popular organizations working in the favelas. Where they have a strong role, the favela residents might challenge and take over leadership in an Association.

Rivaling all these forces are the gangs which are an increasing force in the favelas. They deal drugs and rule by intimidation and violence.

When a favela is recognized legally, dwellers have the right to stay on the land at no cost. They can get electricity and water at a special favela rate of about $1.25 a month. They might get government assistance in constructing a new home or modernizing their present one for which they will pay a very low monthly payment over a long period of time.)

Administrator and staff (cont): "The other emphasis is on involving the 'popular organizations' in the ongoing planning in our office. We meet regularly with the popular organizations; they have a say in the allocation of our budget. We foster meetings between popular organizations and private owners. For example, we set up a meeting between a community organization and a factory whose noise disturbed the neighborhood. They got the factory to agree to move; we helped the factory find a new site.

"Our big problem is that the PT raised the expectations of the people in the recent campaign, but doesn't have the resources to deliver all the things the people want. People expect immediate results and we can't give them. We engage in dialog with the local people and act in a way to win their confidence. But sometimes this isn't enough; people aren't satisfied.

"Another big problem is that we are under attack constantly by the political right and the media which is hostile to the PT. We have to rely on our own organizational means of communication. A principal means for doing this is the popular assemblies we create in each of our regions. These are meetings of the representatives of the popular organizations which come together around the responsibilities and budgets of our offices. We involve them in every detail of our work, from plans for a local project to priorities for our budget."

(POVERTY IN BRAZIL: We were told that between 70% and 80% of the Brazilian people are poor. Another 15 - 18% are middle class, and the remainder are the rich. Poverty is further broken down, with some estimates that half the poor are "miserable", meaning, among other things, in a constant state of malnutrition. Two out of 5 of Brazil's children will reach age 3 with underdeveloped brain capacity because of inadequate diet. By the time you are 3 you reach 90% of your brain power. An even more striking figure: 2/5 of Brazil's children die before they reach age 5. Of the remaining 3, 1/2 will grow up without full mental capacity because of malnutrition. Brazil is the 6th poorest country in the world in terms of nutrition, joining Papua, Ethiopia, Burma and El Salvador. According to some, the 1989 real wage is at 59% of what workers earned in 1980. Thus when people speak of the poor, they are speaking of the overwhelming majority of Brazilians! In Sao Paulo, in just the one year between 1988 and 1989, people ate 45% less meat, 39% less fish and chicken, 22% less milk.)

Regional Administrator and staff (cont): "We also support unions in our area in their negotiations with employers. The unions and the churches are our institutional bases. But the office works with everyone, not just PT supporters. For example, we work with local merchants. We are interested in developing relationships with other forces in the local communities."

Our hosts then took us for a small trip within their region. We passed by the "River of Young Boys", so polluted that you get chemical poisoning if you drink it. It periodically rises and floods the area. One of the frustrations of the local office is that flood control is a State rather than City jurisdiction, and they get little cooperation from the State authorities. When you look at it, the River actually is black in color.

We then visited the Heliopolis Favela, one of Sao Paulo's largest, with some 45,000 residents. After occupation, struggles with the police, hassles with local government and a continuous state of mobilization, the favela finally got recognized by the previous administration. The Regional Office is now actively working with the favela local organization. A favela assembly voted for a first site for new housing, and materials were provided to residents to construct self-help housing. Roads are being widened and garbage collection now reaches some areas of the favela. The goal is to complete urbanization in 8 years, but the City lacks the resources at this time to realize the goal.

We spoke with one resident, atypically a middle-aged single woman living alone. She will pay 10% of her income for 5 years and then own her place, though not the land. When we arrived, she gave Brazil's typical greeting to the Administrator--an embrace with a kiss on each cheek. There is no deference to authority in her way of dealing with him, and he seems to enjoy that. He asks her about the population of the favela. 12,000, she says. He argues, pointing out how big it is. She persists. After a couple of rounds, they both laugh and move on to another subject.

Elsewhere in the favela, roads haven't yet been widened so garbage is simply thrown out of the windows of houses down the hill below where it piles up awaiting who knows what. Here narrow paths connect houses. Only one person can pass at a time in some places.

(THE SAO PAULO GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION. Worker's Party candidate Luiza Erundina won an upset victory in last year's municipal elections. A number, though not a majority, of seats on the City Council were won as well. The top vote getter for City Council, by a ratio of 4:1 to the next closest candidate, was from PT -- son of a wealthy Brazilian family who, as his critics say, "betrayed his class" and joined the left. Because seats on the Council are assigned by proportional representation his large vote carried some other PT

candidates onto the Council with him. He is now Council Chairman, though PT and its allies lack a majority. The Mayor's Office is constantly fighting with the City Council. The State and Federal governments aren't cooperating with her because they don't want her to succeed.

Once in office, the new administration brought 4,000 activists from various popular organizations (unions, church related organizations, favela organizations, women's movement, etc) and the intellectual and middle-class left into positions in city government. None of them had much experience in actually administering major programs. They also quickly discovered the constraints under which they would have to work. The City is deeply in debt. The inherited civil service staff is not used to working. Many of them got their jobs as patronnage during previously corrupt administrations. Deferred maintenance of infrastructure cannot be allowed to continue without disastrous effects. City authority is limited, with State and Federal authority preempting the City on many important fronts. And State and Federal officials aren't cooperating -- they don't want the PT to look good! Further, local taxing authority limited. National inflation, operating at 40% a month when I was there, creates problems as well. For example, the City raised the bus fares by 5 centavos. The private owners wanted more; the patrons wanted no increase. The buses are overcrowded; there is a need to double the number of buses and add many new lines. The City lacks the resources. The schools were in great disrepair -- broken chairs, no books, physical plant in decline...and the teachers were deeply demoralized.

The Mayor has appointed committed and talented people to top positions, including Paulo Freire as head of the public education department. They lack depth of personnel to actually implement programs, something to be expected after a period of military dictatorship which kept anyone remotely left or progressive out of government. She insists on a separation of Party from government, and was recently quoted as telling Party activists that she was responsible to all the people, not just the Party. An activist herself (she participated in urban land occupations and was arrested), once preparing to be a nun, a Marxist and a women's movement leader, she is a respected person in Sao Paulo. Some middle class and business community people supported her simply because they thought she was the only candidate who might do something about the City's ubiquitous corruption.

Despite the constraints noted, the Mayor and her Administration have taken steps that win them points. Freire is mobilizing parents, teachers and students to deal with the physical problems of the schools. Local school assemblies of the three groups make plans and are given technical assistance and materials by the central administration. Municipal unions threatened to go on strike despite the Mayor's claim that to meet their wage demands she would have to cut services. When the unions went on strike, the Mayor brought representatives of the popular organizations together with the unions to negotiate what services would be cut. When faced with City residents dependent on their services, the unions scaled back their demands. The Mayor got media credit for "a coup". There is now an openness of city government to the various organizations of the poor and working class; city government is accessible.

Not all is well, though. The Transportation Department head blew up at a meeting of people protesting a bus fare increase. There was lots of negative reaction, especially because in the campaign PT had promised no increases. The situation was further complicated by the fact that the previous administration signed giveaway contracts (from 6 to 11 million dollars) with the bus companies during their lame duck period. The Mayor refused to honor these agreements and renegotiated them, actually making some gains for the City.

The street merchants, of whom there are thousands in Sao Paulo, are now getting licensed to operate. Before they were constantly hassled by the Police. This

has created tensions with the store owners, but it is winning her support from a large constituency and in the City as a whole. Many claim that these street entrepreneurs are a major asset to the economy. Since many are not licensed, they operate outside the law; as a result they pay no taxes.

Regional Administrator (cont): "Our most difficult problem in the Regional Office is that we face so many demands and have so few resources. We have 40 favelas with many needs; working class people in other parts of the Region have needs as well. The resources to clean up the polluted rivers aren't under our jurisdiction. People expected immediate results after the election. We're now in a process of dialog to get the people to understand the limits under which we work. Many people are now learning the limits of government; they have modified their demands to fit the reality of City authority.

"Prior to PT victories, and even under the military dictatorship in its later years, mass action won concessions. Favella organizations, for example, won community centers. The Federal Government now builds affordable housing or gives favella residents the materials to do their own construction. Mass actin also won some environmental victories, particularly on some of the pollution problems. There were also victories for child care and neighborhood health centers. Now we have an opportunity to develop programs, not just protest."

Catholic parish priest: He works in a favella in his parish, has an active Base Christian Community program and is a strong PT supporter.

"The drug gangs have begun to move in here. Historically, the favella was unprotected by the police, so vigilante groups formed. Some of them, as in this favella, became corrupted. They have become the nucleus of the drug gangs. Here they are tied into the local police who are paid off by the drug dealers.

"The combination of the old corrupt politicians, the police and the gangs is now challenging the Base Christian Communities and other popular organizations for control of the favela. My life has been threatened, as have the lives of others in leadership here. There are local gunfights. (We later saw the bullet holes on a sign above one of the parish sponsored community centers.)

The priest took us for a walk through the favella. Throughout are small community centers built by the people of the favela with assistance from the parish. They serve different functions: one is a health center where local women are learning the use of herbal cures; another is a cooking school for girls; another a workshop where boys learn to make brooms; and yet another a woodworking center. Products are sold, with 10 - 20% of the proceeds going to the individual who made them and the rest back into the center to cover the cost of a trainer/supervisor, materials and maintenance. There are decentralized child care centers as well. The boys who work are challenged by some of their friends who say the earnings aren't worth it. The boys shrug off the challenge saying they prefer the earnings, however meager, to the street life of their buddies.

The priest has great hopes for a Lula/PT victory in the national elections. At the same time he is cautious about what such a victory might mean.

Priest (cont): "The Presidency is constrained by the Constitution. The military, local capitalists and the middle class wouldn't support action that they considered too radical. The military sees itself as enforcing the Constitution. But the times are different, and I don't believe that direct American intervention would occur. Gorbachev's influence in the world is a big part of this. He is humanizing communism. As the Cold War diminishes, there will be more political space for the people of the Third World. A 'Communist scare' tactic is now less likely to work."

Sandra Necchi notes that the military is now fragmented and doesn't have an apetite for running the country; they did, and failed. Some sectors are anti-US and would oppose direct or indirect military intervention by the US.

The following factors distinguish the present period from that of the '64 coup: (1) The Catholic Church supported the coup; large sectors of it are now on the left. (2) The military was unified. (3) The mass popular organizations were weak then; now they have up to 25 years of experience. (4) The middle class marched against President Goulart and demanded military intervention; that is unlikely to happen again. (5) The US government actively supported the coup; it is unlikely that such open support could be developed again.

Women associated with the Rede Mulher, "The Women's Network".

Rede Mulher staff person: "I've been here for 5 years, before that spending 4 years working in Northeast Brazil with poor women doing popular education. That is the purpose of our center, popular education. We seek the transformation of Brazilian society on class, sex and racial issues. All of these issues must be tackled simultaneously; none can be subordinated in the name of another. We work with existing organizations, seeking to work with women in these groups and we work with Third World women's groups and others around the world. We seek to work in a way which pursues the women's agenda without isolating ourselves from the major popular movements and the labor, religious and political organizations.

"The women here are middle-class, but our principal work is with poor women in the popular organizations. In these organizations, women are 80% of the participants, but their role and their issues are still subordinate. Our work is to help these women introduce their issues into these movements without weakening the movement's overall purpose.

"The principal forms of our work are popular education, popular communication (comic books, theater, videos) and participatory research.

"Popular education trains women in class and feminist theory. For example, we started with the women's rights problem here in Sao Paulo two years ago. We offered a one week course and it got a positive response from women. We are now opening the course to men. Women here had been organized by the church, the unions and the political parties but there were no autonomous women's organizations. These institutions are central to our movement, but they don't address our questions and issues so there is a contradiction. The men didn't understand women's issues or they were threatened by them. Our first course that involves men will be for pastoral agents (people working for the church). The men are skeptical; they say the women's issues are secondary. All of us in Rede Mulher have church backgrounds, so we know how to talk with the church people.

"Another program we had was for peasant women. Most of them don't read, so we developed simple materials that could be used by someone with a little reading who would lead others through the materials. The themes were production, reproduction and organization. In production, we asked women to look at 4 parts of the day and what they did during these parts of the day. Many of them work when their husbands do, but they also work in the morning at home, in the evening when they get home, and at night if a small child makes any demands. Each of these is work. Our aim is to get the men to share in the work at home. This is very difficult because Brazil is a very 'macho' society.

"Popular communication involves 80 titles of audio visual materials relevent to women in Latin America. These are designed to show the similarities of

condition of women throughout the Continent. These are sent to women's groups all over, and are in Portuguese and Spanish.

"The theater group, the second part of popular communication, emerged from our participatory research. It develops and presents plays on women's issues and is now an independent group. Last year a workshop on popular theater was attended by 40 women who will make use of what they learned in their own organizational settings. This year two such workshops are planned for different parts of Brazil. Our goal is to train local women to do popular theater.

"Participatory research, our third major activity, involves direct work with poor women. We are developing a project in 8 States in Brazil to see if women's participation in organizations is leading to anything new for women. The outcome of the research will be used to further develop our women's education program.

"Our materials emerge from our participatory research. We listen to the people before preparing any of our materials.

"Out of all this work we are now articulating a network of 400 women's groups all over the country. We have contact with 1,000 women's groups in the popular sector (church, labor, popular organizations).

"The feminist movement in Brazil started with middle-class and intellectual women. Women in the popular sector were struggling with different issues. The feminists didn't know how to talk with the popular sector women. The feminists wanted to impose their vision and didn't listen to the day-to-day problems of the women of the popular sector. Many popular sector women became anti-feminists. Rede Mulher developed out of discussions among middle class women who wanted to break their isolation from the popular sector and who saw their work as part of a broader movement. The center isn't identified as "feminist"; rather, it is part of the 'women's movement'.

"The feminist movement has taken on the objectification of women. They got the government to withdraw some tourism ads. Media started to then use men. The feminists shifted their target to the dehumanization of all people.

"The feminists also had a t.v. night with the candidates for President. They took all of them on with the most radical of feminist issues. Only one, the Communist Party candidate, had a clear line supporting them. That's because they have nothing to lose. All the other candidates fudged the issues because the reaction of the country would have been great. Brazil is very conservative on these issues.

"Abortion must be dealt with as a health issue and in the context of democratizing medicine and health care. Everyone knows that middle and upper class women have private doctors who do illegal abortions or go out of the country if they want an abortion. Poor women can't do this, so they do things which hurt themselves. That's the way we define the issue. We are now putting abortion in the context of women's health. Women kill themselves or are killed by many of the present means used by poor women for abortions. Same with birth control. Women's health is frequently at stake, and some women risk death to go through birth.

"Machismo is pervasive; it is in the society as a whole, but it is also in the church, labor or the political left. It is in the schools, in texts, in the media.

"Women face a serious problem of violence against them in their homes. This is thought of as a private problem, something between the man and 'his woman'. There was a widely reported case in which a woman screamed for help all through the night. Finally a neighbor went and got her brother. When he arrived, it was too late. The woman died. Her drunk husband had beaten her to death. The women's movement fought against this kind of thing, and during the end of the military period we won the creation of special women's police stations. These were staffed by women police who would take reports of rape and domestic violence. These policewomen were trained by groups like ours. At one time we thought beating wasn't done by men who were active in popular organizations. It turned out that this isn't the case. They are frequently just as bad.

"A special contradiction is in the Afro-Brazilian women's movement. There is a very strong movement there. And there is also a problem of racism in Brazil, so Black Brazilian women face a double problem. At one of their meetings they excluded Black men, but invited some white men to participate. This caused a huge reaction. Now the Black men are invited to come as observers."

We were shown a film on the history of women's clubs in the churches. At first these were very traditional--cooking, Bible study, etc.--but they became the incubators for the women's popular movement. This happened because of the church's human rights emphasis and education. While it didn't focus on women, the women talked about it in their groups and drew their own conclusions. They then expanded and began to take on the economic issues affecting family life. The women's movement led to divisions in the popular organizations. Many contradictions had to be resolved. The women's movement is still unfolding. It is no longer limited to the church which started it but now limits it. The political party (PT) is a new space, but few of us are leaders. The governmental institutions for women are patronizing and paternalistic.

Rede Mulher staff (cont): "The women's movement has created more difficulties for many women, but they feel better about themselves. This is the period we are in. We'd do it again, as would the women with whom we work, even knowing the difficulties. Our liberation is still a long way in the future. It is more difficult to talk about our lives than it is for us to talk about the state of the world.

"The problem is not men but the subordination of women in society. This formulation makes it easier to talk with men who we have to convince to change.

"The church is hierarchical and male. When there was a recent women's convention, the church used all its machinery to get an anti-abortion position adopted. They got over 1 million signatures on petitions! So we did some research and found that the majority of women getting abortions were Catholic. This is a very divisive issue even in the women's organizations. There is a whole range of positions: support, decriminalize, oppose. All these positions exist in the popular organizations and progressive church as well.

"This year a Christian organization of women will discuss this issue publicly; it is the first time that has happened in Brazil.

"Our work has led to some results. In some places family life has been altered. There are direct positive results in the home. Discussions now take place between husbands and wives, and some husbands are changing. But they are a small minority at this point in time. We are now focusing on the leaders of the popular organizations and the progressive church. They have influence on other men. But it is a constant struggle here as well. The men always ask us, 'what do you women want?' Equality is what we want, and it requires vast changes.

"The women's police stations were a sad success. In their first week, they had 750 cases. We're now pushing for the opening of battered women's centers. We want society to see this as a social problem, not just a personal problem.

"There are many prostitutes in Brazil. For 20 years there has been a church supported organization that worked with them and that had a humanitarian and philanthropic approach. In the last 5 years an organization has emerged of the prostitutes themselves. It is now only 1 year old, and is very young as an autonomous organization. They have a national newspaper. A major demand of theirs is for legalization.

"The theater group with which we work now has branched out into the use of mime as well as writing its own plays.

"I'm from an Italian family, with a strong Catholic upbringing. Every Catholic family wanted one son to be a priest or one daughter to be a nun. I went to convent school and became a nun and a music teacher. I became involved in the period of Vatican II. Then I left the church, married, had 2 children. I'm now divorced and my children live with me. I became active in the early '60s in Northeast Brazil where there was and is terrible poverty. I was persecuted by the police and called 'an agent of Paulo Freire'. My work with popular organizations led to my exile in 1965, a year after the coup.

"Maybe only 2% of the men in popular organizations support the women's issues and are changing in the home. In the Amazon region there is now a group of men and women discussing gender issues; it is the only one I know of in the country.

"The vast majority of women's groups function as caucuses or groups within the popular organizations, autonomous but not separate. Women here don't believe it can work if they separate from the popular organizations. The problem is that when they form caucuses it leads to a sharp reaction. They are actually excluded from parish groups by many priests, and many of the union leaders oppose them and seek to isolate them.

"The gay issue is almost invisible in Brazil. There is some discussion in the major cities. There is discrimination against gay people. AIDS is growing, but the government doesn't understand it. There isn't even a good blood screening program. Many hemophiliacs have died as a result of transfusions. Lesbians are less open, so face less problem but only because they are not open. Some men are openly gay, but only a few. Only a few professions, like the arts, will support you if you are openly gay. There are still lots of stereotypes in the media."

Private conversation with one of the Rede Mulher staff:

"Sao Paulo isn't governable: It is too big. Thousands of people arrive from the countryside everyday, with no work here. There aren't enough resources in local government. The Administration doesn't have the capacity to administer the City. The State and Federal government are hostile and want to embarrass Luisa. The City has a huge deficit and debt. There is a big problem of deferred maintenance of infrastructure.

"The PT can't deliver on its promises. It's a mistake to have taken over the government in Sao Paulo. Many PT people now blame the media for their problems, but that's not it. People don't read the papers, they don't believe the politicians on TV. Blaming the media is just a rationalization.

(The Regional Administrator disagrees and argues that the PT convenes popular assemblies so the people can become involved in the details of administration; they decide how to spend the budget available for their area; they participate

in site selection for self-help housing; they have access to all decision making.)

Impression: The leadership of the movements here comes from the PT, which is now committed to an electoral strategy. This leads me to lots of questions: (a) do enough people participate in the popular assemblies to convince the electorate that what is being done is the best that can be done, and (b) if energies are now put into administration and electoral politics as strategy, then what happens to the building of the broader movement -- namely to organizing the unorganized, to mutual aid and to mass action (disruption, strikes, boycotts)?) Is the effect of hiring 4,000 people from the popular organizations to run the City to decapitate the popular organizations? Do they have the depth of leadership to be able to lose so many people and continue on track? These questions, somewhat like my questions in the States about the poverty program and model cities, all boil down to this: can the popular organizations absorb the problems of running programs (and cities) and still keep their eye on building a national movement and organization...or will they be swallowed by the problems of administration?

Observation: The problem of electoral strategy is that you can't take over the government unless your constituency recognizes the problems you are inheriting and the limitations under which you work. If the constituency isn't there, then you get a backlash, especially because the tendency of politicans is to promise more than they can deliver. This means that you shouldn't get into the electoral arena until you have very deeply rooted mass organizations. The problem is compounded by the fact that a new administration hires its staff from the popular organizations which may not be so deep in leadership as to be able to lose key people. The more I was in Brazil, the more I came to this conclusion and saw this as the Achilles Heel of their movement.)

Rede Mulher staff (cont): "You can't solve the problems of the cities without agrarian form because you have to stop the tremendous in-migration. Yet the opposite is what is happening: agribusiness concentration which is developing crops for export (oranges, soy beans and sugar cane). These are owned by wealthy Brazilians or the trans-nationals. They are given big government subsidies and tax breaks because the government wants to earn hard currency to pay its debt. Japanese, American and European trans-nationals were sold the land at very low prices. They bring high tech agriculture. They want skilled people and need less people. The poor peasant is forced from the land into the cities, but there's no place for them in the cities either.

"We recently have had left administrations, though not PT, at the local level. They did a good job but weren't re-elected after their first term. When they sought to explain why, they really didn't have a good understanding of what had happened. The best they came up with was that the people expected paternalism (favors) and had too high expectations of what the local government could deliver. In one case, the local mayor had wonderful relations with all organized sectors of the city, but still wasn't reelected.

"During the military period, we knew the enemy. We knew who made decisions because things were run by the military and it was very hierarchical. Since the democratic opening, things have become more difficult. Everything is now amorphous. No one wants to take responsibility for anything.

"PT is a very complex organization. 9 'tendencies' within it. Among them: Syndicalist (Lula), independent Marxist (Luisa Erundina), radical Catholics, a number of vanguard parties (Trotskyist, a communist party) and others.

"I'm not optimistic about the future of the Left in the next 2 - 3 years. The right will win the coming national elections. We will be in a period of "rest". Small work of everyday issues. We'll have to build more before we can take governmental power."

SALVADOR, BAHIA. Over one million people. Center of the Afro-Brazilian movements and culture. As much as 80% of its population is Black. Port city. The emphasis here was on the Afro-Brazilian experience. Our hosts were Walter de Oliveira Passos and Ajax Teodoro Reis d'Aliantara. In addition, there were several other local contacts.

Afro-Brazilian Groups: GUCN (Union of Black Consciousness Groups). It is the most working class of the Black groups and is related to PT and the labor movement. Both Catholics and Marxists are active in it. MNU is more nationalistic and middle class. There are cultural groups which are anti-political. The Pastoral Black Commission is an arm of the Catholic Church. The Black United Front is another of the Afro-Brazilian groups. The Union of Landless Farmers is largely Black. Black Liberation Front focusses on issues of Black poor and working class in the neighborhoods.

(NOTE: Either my notes or the information obtained later in our trip are contradictory. In Alvarado we were told that GUCN is multi-party, and includes both Blacks and whites...and addresses both Blacks and whites. MNU was described as close to PT and more political. Black Liberation Front was described as more nationalistic and middle class.)

Lawyer from the Pastoral Commission on Land (CPT), an agency of the Catholic Church:

"I worked in the interior of Bahia for the Diocese. Lots of soy is grown there now on large tracts of land, forcing smaller farmers off the land. People now migrate here from Parana (in the South) because of the land problem there, but we've got our own problems.

"CPT was founded in 1975 by progressive sectors of the Catholic Church who were concerned with the problems of the Central and North of Brazil. The Commission serves the landless rural workers in their struggles against landowners and for land reform. Bishop Dom Pedro De Casaldaliga was the first head of CPT. The Church divided Brazil into regions; CPT grew out of this region. We deal with the problem of violence against the landless.

"The principal work of CPT is to assist the formation of unions and to conscientize the rural workers. The organization of rural migrant workers is especially difficult.

"We've been kept out of some Dioceses because the Bishop was conservative. A recent concession of the national conference of Bishops was to give a Bishop veto power over CPT being in his Diocese. We don't think this is consistent with the idea of solidarity; we want to go wherever there are problems facing the rural workers. This is now an issue in the relationship between CPT and the Church. The Vatican wants to transform the Church in Latin America and get it out of support for things like CPT. But CPT is getting stronger; we may get less support from the hierarchy of the Church, but our base is growing. At our coming national meeting we will be reviewing our relationship to the Church.

"Lawyers are now a target for the right and the large landowners. It began in 1987. A lawyer was killed then; others have since been killed. When you are working in a rural area, the police are frequently close to the large landowners, so you have no protection. The Rural Democratic Union (UDR), the organization of large Brazilian landowners, has targeted two of our lawyers for death. We are afraid but it doesn't stop our work.

"In addition to legal resistance, which doesn't work in areas where the judges are pro-agribusiness, there are other sides to our work: (a) support for land occupations, (b) media work, (c) pressure on State authorities, and (d) international solidarity work. Violence is not a practical strategy. We don't have the guns and ammunition.

"The day before yesterday a group of people were evicted by the military police from land they had occupied. The CPT in that Diocese contacted our office which began to deal with the State Government. We're now mobilizing media and legal support for the people there. The goal is to get them back on the land. This is an example of our work.

"In the Northern part of the State we're trying to stop the concentration of land ownership. Last year, one of the rural organizers was killed because of his role in the struggle there. 14 workers have been killed in the last year here. When someone is killed we mobilize international solidarity but our resistance remains nonviolent. International support comes from Pax Christie, Amnesty International, Oxfam and a couple of other organizations.

"There are two distinct forces pushing the peasant off the land. First, the big Brazilian landowners, mining companies and lumbering companies. They are the heart of the right wing and support the death squads. Second, the State and Federal Governments which respond to the multi-nationals and the foreign banks who are concerned about the debt. Both of these forces, in the case of agriculture, favor the development of cash crops for export. For example, there is now a big expansion of growth of melons and tropical fruits for export to Europe.

"The land question here is in constant flux. International pressure helps. Pressure on the World Bank, for example, has stopped projects."

Union of Agricultural Workers (Federacao dos Trabalhadores da Agricultura - FETAG). It is made up of 334 local unions in the State of Bahia. We met with its President, their chief counsel, organizers and a number of farm workers who were in the office that day because of a crisis situation in a community in the rural part of the State. Federacao is a very complex organization. The different local unions that make it up have different leaderships from various political tendencies, including two Communist parties (PCdoB and PCB), Workers Party (PT) and pro-capitalist political parties, and others who are in it just for their own career. There is a great deal of internal politics in the Union. According to our local contact, there is too much internal politics in the union and not enough direct confrontation with the landowners at the grassroots level. Federacao is a member of a national rural workers union which, in turn, is a member of the CGT (the more conservative of Brazil's two national labor federations). The PCB, he says, supports affiliation with the CGT because CUT is controlled by the Workers Party. In Brazil, most of the unions are sponsored by a political party, thus are directly tied into politics.

The following is a composite report on things that were said in a period of several hours at the Federacao:

"This union was created to defend the rights of rural workers; our principal cause is the right of people to land. Today a group is here from a small town where a Police Lieutenant is trying to burn their houses. The worst rural incident happened near here, so people are frightened. The Police are linked with the UDR. The judges always side with the landowners. Bahia is second in the country in the killing of rural workers. The land system here is capitalist-feudal. Big, native landowners. Financial capital has accepted some idea of land reform, but the great landowners won't accept any."

Black organizer: "I work at the level of the base in rural areas to organize against the acts of UDR. Most of the workers are Black. Inside Brazil, Blacks have no space to achieve their rights. In colonial Brazil we were slaves. When we were freed, there wasn't much space for us. We stayed in rural areas working sugar, cocoa and other crops. When we began to organize there was much resistance. We are now developing Black leadership at the base.

"Inside the State of Bahia, the whole Black movement and community supports the agricultural worker's movement. The poorest of the agricultural workers are almost all Black, and until recently were the least organized. We organize all workers, whatever their race. But we raise the issue of the double oppression faced by the Black worker -- of race and class. The landowners are all white. There are now over 300 Black or predominantly Black unions in Bahia. (A "union" here is, I believe, equivalent to a "local" in the United States.) Over 500 Black communities in Bahia are threatened with destruction by a combination of local government and landowners. These Blacks are isolated, with no contact with organizations. Only 50 of them responded to a recent survey by our union. In one community there are 500 direct descendants of slaves who are now threatened by landowners and the State Government. They have been on the same land for generations. When they are pushed off the land, the people here go to Sao Paulo or other big cities. Violence is greatest against the Blacks.

"The new colonialists here are the Japanese. They are buying land; they cheat people who are illiterate. They are getting the land at very cheap prices. It is rich land, and also has lots of natural resources: tin, minerals, etc. Multi-nationals are also coming into the area. Some of the Japanese owners are multi-nationals. Others are Japanese immigrants who are now settling here. In either case, Blacks are being pushed off the land.

"The unique exploitation of Blacks is not part of the consciousness of CPT and the other popular organizations. There are not enough Blacks in leadership positions in the rural organizations. 90% of the rural workers are Black, but this isn't reflected in leadership."

President of one of the rural unions in Bahia: "In one plantation we invaded and were expelled by the police who were there for 23 days. A judge put the people back on the land they had occupied but not all of it, so there isn't enough land to support the 100 families who participated in the occupation. One family has 15 members and is on 2 acres of land; this isn't enough to support them. People here are literally hungry every day. Many leave for the South. There is no support from the government. One of our strategies is to pressure the government to become an ally of the rural landless. The government is aligned with the rich and the middle class who have no interest in the rural workers. Despite this many workers vote for these people because they did them some kind of a favor. We have a problem of a low level of worker consciousness."

Activist: "I'm a member of the rural workers union, and a landless person. My life is very difficult because I'm landless. We work the land and then are expelled from it. We have no day-to-day security. We want to own the land we work, and have worked for generations. Yesterday the landowner sent private pisteleros to evict us. That's why we're here at the union today." (One of our hosts later told us of his own experience with the pisteleros. They kill unarmed people; they cut off the hands of children. They are hired by the landowners to brutalize the people.)

Union leader: "This situation is repeated throughout rural Brazil. Millions are being pushed from the land. These workers are from a sugar cane area; the same thing is happening in cocoa and coffee areas. The result is crime and violence. Since the 16th Century and arrival of Arican slaves there has been

oppression of the rural poor. Emancipation came 100 years ago but the people remained landless and poor. They had nowhere to go. Former slaves occupied plantations and were expelled; the same struggle goes on today--it is 100 years old. There have been a few successful methods of struggle: (1) some got their own small piece of land. They get some minor support from local politicians with government programs, and they become dependent on these politicians. It is the politics of dependency and favoritism. (2) In some cases there have been successful land occupations in which, after an occupation, the government either buys or takes the land from the former owners and recognizes those occupying it as having tenure on it.

"I started as a rural worker, then came to Salvador and got a unionized construction job. That led me to union consciousness. A friend of mine got me a job as janitor here in the rural workers union. I became active in the union at the same time, and began to take leadership roles. That led to my election to a leadership position in the union."

(Role of women: Of the 334 rural worker unions in Bahia, 200 have women directors and 1 has a woman president. Women work in the fields along with their husbands and children; frequently only the husband gets paid.)

Education: "We have a great problem of illiteracy. It is hard to spread the struggle because people can't read. Even verbal communication is sometimes difficult because of literacy levels. This illiteracy is used against the people by the owners and the government. Our organization is still struggling with this issue, especially because of its relationship to union and political conciousness. We get little support from local politicians for our demands, but many of our members vote for these politicians because they did them some kind of favor or gave them some individual gift. There is little concept of citizenship and rights. On the other hand, in the last 5 years we hae seen a lot of progress in the development of the consciousness of the workers."

Violence: "Self-defense is not an issue here; we use legal and nonviolent direction action methods. Individuals don't engage in self-defense because of the reaction it would precipitate. For the first time we just got a policeman arrested and imprisoned. He was hired by a landowner to intimidate rural workers. He killed one. We're also working successfully to reach members of the police force. We've converted someof them to be allies in our struggle. They are also from poor families. They now privately support us. They oppose the immorality of being hired as private gunslingers by the landowners."

The Afro-Brazilian experience (as told by one of our hosts): "To understand Blacks in Bahia, you must understand the historical process that got us here. We were kidnapped from Africa. Resistance began in Africa, took place in slave boats and continued here in Bahia. There are ethnic influences carried over from Africa. People know their tribes: Ibo, Yoruba, etc. They know their country of origin. Each of these groups brought different methods of struggle which were rooted in their own culture. These included: suicide; infanticide; guerilla resistance; colombos (fugitive slave communities); rebellions; assassinations of slave owners. This is the suppressed history of slavery in Brazil; suppressed because whites were the conquerers and the writers of history. They invented the idea of the passive, submissive Black.

"Our historic reality was always a struggle of slaves against masters. We have many examples of resistance. In the case of Calmaris, a federation of colombos, there was an indepencent Black Republic that held independence for 100 years. Blacks, Indians and poor whites lived together and struggled against their common enemy. Calmaris struggled against all the colonial powers: Dutch, Portuguese and Spanish. Hundreds of colombos existed and maintained a long guerilla war against colonialism. Black cults that exist today are heirs to

this period of autonomous resistance. Brazil's violence against slaves was the worst. In one period, all girl infants were killed by the Portuguese slave owners.

"Our situation is different from that of African-Americans. The Black Americans lost their heritage because of the imposition of white Protestantism, the end of contact with Africa and the smaller number of Africans in America. In Brazil contact was maintained with African roots because of continuous illegal trading of African slaves and because of the colombos and other centers of Black autonomy.

"The view that there was a just end to slavery 100 years ago and that Brazil is now an integrated society is a lie. Slavery ended because of resistance to it and because it was no longer economically viable. The former slaves are now the lowest paid workers, the unemployed, prostitutes and otherwise at the bottom of society. There is a tremendous problem of abandoned children, especially among Blacks. There are now efforts to sterilize poor women. These are frequently supported by Protestant churches with the support of US money."

Black/white relations and the world situation: "The struggle is not between Blacks and whites. I have known Blacks who don't participate in the struggle for Black liberation, who sell out the poor Black for a job and appointment or some money, who ignore the poor Black pretending their struggle doesn't exist. And I know whites who join the struggle of the Black poor, who are in solidarity with us, who suffer with us and who have given their lives in our struggle. The struggle is for a just world and against a racist society.

"The major division in the world is not between East and West, but between North and South. The Soviet Union, Japan, Western Europe and the US all, in their own ways, exploit the countries of the South, especially Africa and South America.

"Diverse groups throughout the country have different responses to the situation of the Afro-Brazilians, ranging from direct confrontation to accommodation. There is now an organization of locally elected Black officials which is sponsored by the government but works for the interests of Black people. It puts pressure on mayors who don't respond to the interests of their Black constituents.

"Despite being 80% of Salvador's population, the Blacks here are marginalized, working in the lowest paid jobs, victims of police brutality (even though the majority of the police are themselves Black) and filled with doubt of their own worth. There are many color gradations in Brazil, with Black at the bottom. The Black has internalized the oppression agains him. We seek, in our organizations, to involve the Blacks in the process of their own liberation. Now American Blacks come here to discover how we do this because of some of our successes in reestablishing Black identity. The greatest discrimination is suffered by the poor Black woman. Unlike in the US, we are taught here that racism does not exist. We aren't portrayed in the school books; we don't have the funds or agencies for our own publications."

Carnival: "It is a great source of Black identity in Brazil, especially Bahia. During Carnival, white people imitate Blacks. Brazilian culture is really Black culture: our food, dance, mysticism, music are all rooted in African culture."

(Carnival, by the way, is controversial among people we met. For some, it is an expression of Afro-Brazilian culture and the ability of Black people to be expressive and fun loving. It sustains Black identity. For others, its critics, it is seen as a safety valve which once a year provides an outlet for the miserable condition of Afro-Brazilians.)

As the day went on, we were joined by more and more of the rural workers who had come to union headquarters to deal with a crisis situation of violence where they work in "the interior". Toward the end of the day, they were asked to speak. It was obviously something they did with hesitation. Several are on death lists. All who spoke were direct: they want land, an end to violence and an opportunity to provide something better for themselves and their families.

One woman worker was especially moving: "I am a worker with a hoe on a farm. My husband and I have 10 children. He works for a very low wage. So do I. Our situation is very difficult. Our plantation is now owned by a racist Brazilian bank. It wants us off the land. We have lived on this land for 37 years. We were here before sugar cane. My father carried sugar cane on his back on this land when sugar cane first came here. The bank wants us off so that the land we now till for ourselves can all be turned over to sugar. We don't know what to do now. Yesterday the Bank sent the Police to imprison us because we refuse to move from the land. We have no rights to work, for education for our children, for housing, for health care. We took care of the land all these years and now they are throwing us off."

Esclarecimento/Enlightenment. Walter de Oliveira Passos

A luta	The fight
o protesto	the protest
do Negro	of the Black
nao e contra o branco	is not against the white
A luta	The fight
o protesto	the protest
do Negro	of the Black
nao ficara em branco	will not be dismissed by the white
A luta	The fight
o protesto	the protest
do Negro	of the Black
e contra a sociedade racista.	is against a racist society.

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MANAUS. 1,000 miles up the Amazon is the bustling city of Manaus. Once Brazil's rubber capital, it declined in the early 1900s when Brazil's rubber monopoly ended. (Rubber tree plants were illegally smuggled out of the country and grown in Indonesia and Southeast Asia.) It is now in a second period of growth, with over a million people. Our principal hosts were Ted and Lucilene Whitesell.

CPT visit. This is the Catholic Commission whose office we also visited in Salvador. 20 people work out of this office which assists rural workers, women, popular organizations and indigenous people (particularly of the Amazon basin). One of the workers, deals with land issues in the cities, particularly in those situations where empty lands were taken over by speculators and developers and subsequently squatted on by people moving into the cities from rural areas. Title is unclear, because at one point it was government owned land. Manaus is a city being created by people moving into it from rural areas and squatting on vacant land.

Former CPT worker: "In 1967, a free trade zone was created here. Commerce and industry began to arrive. The free trade zone was created by the Superintendency for the Development of the Amazon (SUDAM), a Federal government agency for Amazon development. Tremendous incentives were offered to business to locate here: no taxes for 20 years (now extended another 20 years), free development of infrastructure, etc. In addition, there was the promise of cheap labor. SUDAM was created in the Military Dictatorship period (1964-1984) as an instrument of the military's vision of Amazon development. They saw this as Brazil's new frontier; and for geopolitical reasons, they wanted development here. Prior to the "Zona Franca" there were 200,000 people in Manaus. After the opening of the Zone, there was a huge population explosion as people migrated to the Amazon. There was no way to absorb this huge in-migration. Government was urging people to come, and they were being pushed off the land by flooding that resulted from some of the Amazon basic hydroelectric projects. In addition, people from all over the country were being pushed off the land. The result was people coming into Manaus from the Amazon region's interior but also from the Northeast and the South.

"In the migration process there is usually one person from a family who comes to Manaus. He finds a job and a one room house. He writes home or sends word home and tells his success. His family comes. Now there are 8 - 10 people in one room. They move out and occupy vacant land. But many can't find jobs, thus creating a huge reserve of unskilled and unemployed workers who, in turn, keep wages down.

"After an occupation, the support organization goes in and begins to work with the people to prepare them for a police effort to evict them. There are now 10 - 12 occupations going on in Manaus. We go to those where there might be success. Success might occur because an occupation is made by people tied to a local politician who supports the occupants. We don't work in those situations. We work with occupations of private land (95% of the occupied land in Manaus is privately owned or has private claims on it). The city doesn't have resources to build housing on the land it does own. In the private occupations, we encourage the people to build their own housing, then get the government to expropriate the land and give the residents tenure rights to it. We work directly with the people, in the courts and in politics. Much of the work with the people involves basic education. We use slides and other popular media to foster self-organization and the development of a popular consciousness of the people as their own liberators. One of the tactics is to get a large number of people to move onto the land at the same time and quickly build houses. It is harder to evict in this situation. They don't always succeed, and in some cases

the occupation has been terminated by the police. Our office is now known by word-of-mouth, and has a good reputation with the favela dwellers.

"There are some important differences between land occupations here and those in Sao Paulo. In Manaus, they are more spontaneous and self-organized and less church linked. This gives them a better chance for permanence because the people have already taken a step toward self-determination. When the occupations aren't too closely linked to a priest or a nun, the people are doing it with greater resolve and strength.

"The people who are in a favela during the day are the women and children; it is they who must be organized to resist the police. Many people are likely to get arrested; some may got shot; a few have been killed, including children. A victorious land occupation is one in which people stay on the land and begin to win public services and infrastructure. Government oppression is frequently followed by an effort at cooptation by a local "populist" politician. Managing to stay on the land is frequently a battle of will. Where people re-occupy the land over and over again, rebuild their destroyed houses over and over again they may win. In other cases, they may develop their consciousness and organization on one site, lose their occupation there, but successfully occupy another place. Out of this develops a permanent residents organization. It is these organizations that the politicians try to coopt.

"There is an estimated deficit of 40,000 housing units in Manaus, but noone really knows what is needed because of the constant rate of inmigration."

(Favela Sassa: named after a popular TV hero in a populist TV soap opera. The main character emerged from a working class background to become mayor of a town. We are being taken on a tour of the favela. The choice of name was a conscious tactic to make the occupation a media event and a popular issue. They have already illegally tapped into the electrical system. The land is owned by a housing construction firm. But there is a question about the legality of the deed. The resident organization is claiming that the deed was forged. This came out of their research into the history of the parcel. The favela has been leveled 5 times in the last year, and each time it has been reoccupied. The people are still building in plastic, cardboard and a little wood because everything is still so uncertain. The resident organization has decided that each squatter is to have a plot that is 8 x 20 meters, and that absentee ownership won't be recognized.

An adjoining area is owned by the State Governor. Another is government subsidized middle class housing. Its residents want the favela dwellers out. The government money was supposed to be for the poor. All the development is destroying the environment here too. A once clean river is now polluted with waste disposal from the new developments.

As we are walking, we are joined by a number of people. A woman in the group wants to know from our guide, who works with the resident organization, whether he thinks that she can have a site here. She explains that she is about to be flooded out of her home in another favela. "The community decides", he responds. The woman isn't satisfied with this answer. Another person in the group says, "come to the meeting this afternoon; we will decide." He asks her if she has a site picked out. She does. "Good," he says, "after the meeting we will help you move and build a house." We also encounter a man who wants to occupy a cardboard shack that has been vacant for three weeks. He, too, wants the staff person to make the decision. Again, he is referred to the resident organization. "I just get words, no action, from them," he complains. The expectation is that the lawyer (our guide) can decide. This reflects, he tells us, the history of paternalism in Brazil. The Socialist Mayor tried to convince the people to leave. They believe The Mayor has relationships with the people

who own the land. The people told him they wouldn't leave; he has backed off. They now think there is a 95% chance for success.)

There are lots of irregularities in the judicial system. Because title is unclear in many situations, those pursuing eviction bribe judges. In one case, the side demanding eviction quite clearly didn't own the land. The land is owned by someone in Sao Paulo who owns millions of hectares of land in the Amazon. The people pursuing the eviction want to buy and develop the land because it is a prime site in Manaus.

Amazon lands are now owned by multi-nationals, large Brazilian land owners or, in some situations, by the Brazilian government.

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Manaquiri: town of 5,000 that we visited on the Amazon (Solimoes) River, a six hour boat ride from Manaus. We stayed in a small "pension", whose owners tried to overcharge us even after a price had been negotiated. It is probably a pretty typical little town. Walking through the town you see the signs of subtle social differention: slightly better developed housing, indoor plumbing, small stores. The churches are Catholic, 7th Day Adventist, Assemblies of God. One house, that of the Mayor, is qualitatively different from all the others. In a town like this, we are told, you really learn how "assistentialism" (favors) works: your child is sick, and you need a boat ride to town; you need to make a phone call; you need someone with a boat to pick something up for you in town.

Observation: It seems that the pro-PT people we meet don't see this kind of personal touch as a legitimate part of politics, so the field is given over to those who use it for their personal ends. There is something of the reform politics of American cities in the attitude toward "favors". But why are "favors" incompatible with principled politics? As precinct captains and parish priests know, the personal touch is needed in addition to the rules. Some of the organizers implicitly recognize this when they talk about how they first enter a community -- getting to know people, helping key people with problems, etc.

Observation: Consciousness and Organizing. I had a long talk with two of our Manaus hosts, in part prompted by my observation of two faces of conscientization. Earlier we had attended a service in the local Catholic Church, led by one of two nuns who live in Manaquiri. During the service, one asked, "Does God intend that there be the very rich and the very poor?" Some people said, "yes, we need the rich because they provide the jobs for us." The nuns said, "no, this is not what God intends." Their intention is good, but it is telling not thinking through -- the opposite, I think, of what is intended in Freire's pedagogy and in liberation theology. This led me to think of what I now see as two faces of conscientization: on the one side is a careful and patient process of education that is closely related to people's experience, that seeks to establish their humanity by getting them to examine what it is they do that is uniquely human. In this process people discover their own humanity. On the other side is education that tries to tell people they are equals simply by asserting it. While the content is certainly to be preferred to the fatalism or classism engendered by the old church, the method is no different and the person told this can be told tomorrow the opposite. It reminds me of the famous Gene Debs quote, "If I could lead you into the promised land I wouldn't because if I could lead you there someone else could lead you out."

This led to a long discussion with two of our hosts on the whole question of consciousness and organizing. In her union work, she spent time getting to know

people, developing relationships and establishing confidence. The first issues they worked on fit the organizer's criteria: immediate, specific and winnable. But, and unlike what happens in most US organizing, paralleling this is the introduction of ideology. They ask the workers why the capitalist should have so much money when they have so little. Workers say because the capitalist provides tools and organizes the work. 'Without him we wouldn't have jobs.' They introduce the labor theory of value through the use of slides, comic books, discussion or whatever other means they can. They are explicitly anti-capitalist/pro-socialist. I said I wanted to play the role of a trade union conscious, but not class conscious, worker and see how she dealt with me. We did that, and it isn't a matter of "convincing". I stuck by my guns and she stuck by hers. What then happens? It seems to me that "socialism" in this situation is accepted because the trusted organizers are socialists, not because the workers have internalized a sense of their own capacity to organize society or because they understand that if the profits were kept by them, then they could buy the tools. "Business unionists" are called "pelegos" -- a derisive term.

Unions in Brazil: A once strong Communist led labor movement was destroyed in a period of violence in the late 20s-early 30s. The union's present form emerged from the Getulio Vargas period of 1930 - 1945 (with a brief return to power 1951-1954). President Vargas was a follower of Mussolini's corporatist state. Each sector of society is organized and coordinated by the State: labor and capital. Individual unions relate directly to the Department of Labor. One day's wages per year are collected by the Government and used to pay the costs of the union's (salaries, benefit programs, etc). The Department of Labor is the collector and disseminator of the money. Thus union officials are tied to the Government. The labor movement is organized at three levels: the individual union (equivalent to our local), the Federation (a state organization of locals), the Confederation (a national organization of federations); then there are two labor centrals -- CGT and CUT. Individual unions affiliate directly with either of the centrals. Thus, for example, you can have a union which is a member of a federation which is part of a confederation that is CGT affiliated. But the union might itself belong directly to CUT. Essentially, CGT has the view that capital and labor must cooperate for the good of the country. This is the "social pact" supported by the present government. CUT rejects this approach and favors independent, pro-socialist unionism.

On the line with the Metallurgical Workers Union: Back in Manaus, some of us joined with the Metallurgical Workers to flyer buses coming into the enterprise zone. The flyers invited workers to come to a union meeting that night where a strike vote was going to be taken. A lively and spirited group gathered at union headquarters at 7:00 a.m. We then went out to the road that all transportation takes to bring workers into the enterprise zone. The Union doesn't have actual access to the factory gates. As buses came by, we reached up to hands from the open windows to give them the flyers. Some people just threw the flyers into the open windows. Among the destinations shown on the buses: Sony, Bosch, Sanyo, Telefunken, Panasonic, Sharp, Philco, Toshiba, Honda, Evadin, BASF, Seiko, Nelima, CCE, Tectoy.

The Metallurgical Workers are now at 13,000 members, down from their 1987 peak of 24,000 because of massive firings of union militants. Many of these first workers are now blacklisted and can't get work in Manaus. A strike in '86 led to many of the firings. Prior to that, their organization had been underground, but the strike brought leadership into the public. 300 leaders were later fired. In the internal election within the union, CUT ousted the CGT leadership. They opposed both CGT and an extreme right group. They won 68% of the vote. There are 50,000 workers in the unit they are trying to organize. A non-ideological internal opposition developed; they charged the CUT leaders with stealing, but had no evidence to support the claim. They were ousted from the

union. They also have to deal with company paid informants and plants. They are very hard to uncover, and the leadership just assumes that they are in the Union.

In the firms there is a committee to prevent accidents. Members are elected. The union runs people for the 2 year terms. These people are legally protected while in office, so it is important to win these positions. Their current emphasis is on direct negotiations with employers rather than dealing with the government. The Union survives on a monthly voluntary contribution from members and the Department of Labor "tax".

Organizing strategy. The union does home visits to workers. If someone is sympathetic, they try to recruit him/her to direct and active participation. They are now considering a proposal to form groups of workers in neighborhoods from different companies as well as form units of workers within the companies. The former would be public, the latter not. Through the in-plant units they would research the workings of the company, seeking points of vulnerability for action and that would give them the intelligence to make good decisions on strike timing -- such as when there is low inventory. They also want to pick on and isolate one target for strike action. While there is a problem of scabs, there aren't enough scabs to make the plants run if there is an effective strike action.

60% of their leadership is women; 7 of 24 Directors of the Union are women. In 1986 they created a women's committee to focus on women's issues and raise the membership's consciousness of women's issues. Sex harassment is common and hard to break. Women are fired if they become pregnant. Many companies will only hire young women. There is a claim that at least one of the companies is requiring proof of sterilization in order to be hired. Another claim is that a contraceptive is being introduced in the orange juice served to employees as part of their workplace meal.

Pastoral Operaria: This is the body of church people who work with urban industrial workers. They are parallel to CPT. They support CUT and the PT. They have been active in a number of internal union struggles over leadership and many of the present CUT leaders got their start in the PO. They are Biblically based, Catholic sponsored, but ecumenical in their work. Their Christianity calls for struggle to realize the Kingdom of God here on earth. Their principal objective is to help the workers organize themselves into militant, independent unions. PO has only one full time staff person; most of their funding comes from Catholic church groups in Europe. The Diocese of Manaus is conservative, but they have adjusted to this and operate pretty much as they believe.

Church Commission on Indigenous People (CIMI) and Committee for Defense of the River and Association of Indigenous Women. We met all these groups at the CIMI office. Like PO and CPT, CIMI is an arm or agency of the Catholic Church and works with the native people of Brazil. It began in 1972 at a national Catholic Bishop's meeting. It reflects a basic change in the Catholic Church's approach to mission. In an earlier period, the Church sought simply to convert native people to Christianity. The progressive Bishops had a different view, and it was adopted in '72. CIMI, which expresses this view, has two objectives: (a) support native peoples in their efforts to define demarcation and recognition of their land rights, and (b) support native peoples in their right to maintain their own culture, language, religion, etc. There are 68 Indian nations in Amazonia, and 5 more in the adjoining State. Together they represent 70,000 people. These are people living in Indian villages who have not dispersed into cities and who retain their language and culture. CIMI has been helping them get together; CIMI also supports each of the nations in developing an autonomous, independent organization that is not dependent on Brazil's Indian agency, FUNAI (Fundacao Nacional do Indio). This agency has been responsible for a lot of the destruction of native people's culture. FUNAI tries to persuade Indians to go along with government policy; for those who do there are government programs (schools, health centers, etc.). For those who don't, no government support.

Now 25 distinct Indian organizations in Amazonia have a coordinated approach to their issues. They are organized in "assemblies" which oppose the government's demarcation efforts and the creation of the small colonias. FUNNI's response has been to support the creation of competing Indian organizations which support government policy.

In the last two years there have been major confrontations between the Indians and ranchers, miners and prospectors. Further, the Sarney government has been aggressively seeking to demarcate lands so that the Indian "colonias" are small. This approach would make large tracts of land available to development. This also reflects a military concern that if the Indian lands are large, Brazil is vulnerable to its neighboring countries to the North and West. Government strategy is to push Indians toward assimilation, to limit native lands and to break communal traditions by giving individuals plots but refusing to recognize communal lands. An example in Northern Brazil: the Government has broken a once large, contiguous piece of land into 19 separate and small units. The land not part of the small units is now open for development. By breaking the nation up, you open the area to lumbering, prospecting, mining and development interests.

Indian man: "There are many battles in my area. Indians are frequently killed. We survive because of our belief in God and because of the support of our organizations. If we don't organize and fight, we will die as a people. Our strategy is to build our independent organizations in the jungles, then to bring the different nations together to struggle in the broader areas."

CIMI Staff person: "Brazil's Constitution provides for the demarcation of Indian lands based on history, resources necessary to live and a recognized right to a buffer area for protection. Government practice is to ignore the Constitution and seek to create colonias that are much smaller. They do that by buying off the more acculturated Indians with "assistencia" programs, which have the effect of making them dependent. Government policy treats the Indians as two groups, "native" and "acculturated" despite the rejection of this distinction in the Constitution. Everything in the Constitution depends upon enabling legislation, and none has been passed. Our response is to seek to strengthen the indigenous movements. This, rather than a legal approach, is our strategy. The Indian organizations know about the law, and we would make lawyers available if they wanted to pursue a more legalistic approach. CIMI is

supported by the Church while, at the same time, other traditional conversion approaches are used by other Catholics. Thus there is a contradiction in the Church."

Indian woman: "We are an organization of 47 Indian women in Manaus; most of us are domestic workers. We function as a support and friendship group, and in our meetings we speak our native language. I came here in '76 from a tribal area. Our association began in '84. A north American anthropologist helped us get started. It was very exilirating when we started, because before that we had been isolated, each of us living in the home of a rich family for whom we worked. There are about 10,000 Indians now living in Manaus who want to maintain an Indian identity here and are not likely to live with their tribes. Nuns in the rural areas prepare us to move into the cities when we cannot economically support ourselves. Here there are jobs, clothes, shoes. There is no work in the tribal areas. Our organization helps protect our rights with our employers. CIMI helps us, for example, write letters to employers when we want to protest something. This has worked in the past. There is no maid's union here, though there is one nationally and there are some in other States."

Former staff person of CIMI: "The unique character of our area, as distinct from the South and Central parts of the country, is that the people here are amphibians; they aren't classically agricultural people. They fish and plant, living off both land and water. They live in nature. Thus we must reform both water and land policy to survive. We need to protect the many rivers and small waterways where people fish. The new landowners claim to own both the land and the water. Most recent struggles have been over access to water for fishing. CPT is organizing both fishermen and land workers. Another important category of worker here is the extractive worker: nut gatherers, rubber tappers, wood cutters (not the big timber companies). The extractive workers live in debt servitude to a patron who owns the land. For the right to their work, they pay him. They are frequently dependent upon him for the marketing of their work. They buy their goods from him. The same kind of system is now being imposed upon the fishermen. It is a non-cash economy, with the worker never able to cover what he owes from what he produces. So he is always in debt.

"In one town last week fishermen wanted to confront the government on the issue of depletion of fish in the rivers by large commercial fishermen who fish for export.

"The agricultural problem is created by the colonization projects that were begun during the military period. Building of dams; highways into the Amazon; encouragement of colonization; break of up Indian lands and encouragement of prospecting, mining, commercial fishing, farming and commercial lumber are all part of a Government strategy to transform the Amazon. Only one of the colonization projects has succeeded -- one in the flood plain along the trans-Amazon highway. Otherwise, the Amazon isn't supporting traditional farming. The land plays out in two to three years. The Government knows this but uses the small farmer as an opening wedge to later bring in wood and mineral exploitation. Further, the promise of land draws the small farmer from areas where he is now being pushed off the land. It functions as a safety valve for a government that is unwilling to engage in agrarian reform.

"Another important point is that there are differences of interest between the different rural groups: fishermen, extractive workers, Indians, native and small farmers, etc. CPT just concluded its 12th annual meeting and in this meeting created to first alliance among these groups. The death of Chico Mendes, who sought such unity, was a tragic spark to the bringing together of these groups.

"Another problem is electrification. There are 73 dams projected in the 2010 plan. Balbinas Dam is one of these. It is a complete failure, causing problems during construction and after construction. Down river from Balbinas is now polluted; the fish are all dead. Eletronorte (the massive Federal Government electrification agency -- perhaps something like our TVA) failed to cut the trees in the area that was flooded by the Balbina Dam. The wood rotted and decomposed. It is the source of a major pollution problem.

"We haven't been able to make an effective alliance with urban workers; only Manaus allies are the environmentalists. Some CUT workers in Manaus give us support.

"There is an extraordinary problem in just having meetings. People have to travel on the rivers for a day or more to come to a meeting."

Spokespersons for Uatuma (Committee for Defense of The River): "This is our 3rd time coming to Manaus to get help for the consequences of the Balbina Dam. There are six organized communities along one down-dam river. Every since the opening of the flood gates our river was polluted and the fish in it killed. This is our source of livelihood. The pollution is so bad you can see and smell it; animals that drink from this river now die. We are trying to pressure Eletronorte, the government agency that is developing the dams, to deal with our problem. We don't want to move to Manaus, but we need some alternative source of livelihood while the River is cleaned up. The problem is now so bad that the pollution is creeping into the well water. It will take 8 - 10 years to restore the River. We now grow pigs and chickens as an interim source of livelihood. We visit people down-river from future dam sites to tell of our experience and warn them of what might happen to them.

"In Sao Sebastiao do Uatuma, CPT helped us organize. We've had no success with any government agency. At least in Manaus the Mayor has met with us but there are no concrete results from the meeting. The State Governor won't even meet with us. Eletronorte only talks about the benefits of electrification."

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PORTO ALEGRE. A city of over a million in the Southernmost State of Brazil. This is an area in which some of the most militant rural landless activity takes place. Many of the landless here are people of European extraction who came to Brazil because of the promise of land. The Brazilian government actually recruited people in Europe to come and settle. Two influences from Europe are important in this particular area: the Lutheranism of the Germans and the anarchist tradition of Italians. Like the rest of Brazil, the area is predominantly Catholic.

We were met by Werner Fuchs, Professor at the Faculdade de Teologia of the Evangelical Lutheran Seminary. He is a Brazilian; his responsibilities include student mission work and foreign student exchanges and visits. Werner got us into his VW van for a trip to a nearby successful land occupation that recently celebrated its first year on the land. He and other faculty and students at the Seminary were our principal hosts in Porto Alegre.

66 families are on this fazenda (plantation), one of four successful occupations in this area. This one is 3,000 acres. The families came in different stages from "Anino", the largest land occupation in the State of Rio Grande Del Sur. There are over 2,000 people at Anino. Smaller groups spin off from Anino and do these occupations.

The families with whom we met work their land communally. Other sub-groups on this fazenda are organized in individual, privately owned parcels with cooperatively owned machinery. The land was owned by a single owner who was behind in his mortgage payments to the Federal Bank. This created an opening for legal action to gain title or tenure on the land. Their first occupation was unsuccessful; they were put off by the police. They lived in tents along the road until their second occupation, which is the one that turned out to be successful. Most recently they occupied the former owner's mansion and some families are now living there. This was a cattle rancher's area. Now they are farming corn, wheat and vegetables, growing some of their own livestock and doing some woodcutting. They got a government loan with which they bought 5 tractors, though they need more. Prior to winning government support they got loans from a national organization for land occupations which helps occupations with the financing of their first stages of farming. This organization is an arm of the landless movement.

Farmer: "Our parents owned land but not enough for all their children. The children moved to the city, but it wasn't for them. They became tenant farmers and migrant laborers, but had a history of owning land so it was always a dream to do that. We are 9 families who work together and make decisions communally. We work by consensus. On bigger questions, all 66 families have a committee to make decisions that affect the whole 3,000 acres. We are not only working our own land. We are always traveling to help other landless with whom we are in solidarity in this struggle. We market directly to urban favelas, and the favela resident organization is our buyer. This supports the organization of the urban slum dwellers. We don't sell to individuals, just to the favela organizations. We are part of a movement to which we have an active responsibility.

"Our first financial help came from West German aid organizations. Most of our people are of Italian origin; some of our people are of German origin, and others of Portuguese. Now we are close to being independent. We are diversifying crops and getting into animal husbandry. We hope to develop a small food processing plant.

"These visits, like yours, come every week. People from Venezuela, Washington, Europe, etc. But they don't steal from my work. This is part of the struggle -- the exchange of ideas and support.

"We are called the 'group of the gate' because we first occupied at the site of the gate you passed when you came onto this land. Our unity is the source of everything we accomplish. Alone we couldn't do anything. This is why we decided to own everything communally. We are communitarians. In our most difficult times, the two things that sustained us were talk and prayer. There is a traveling couple with some theological training who helped us with our prayer.

"We learned how to deal with disagreement. Sometimes it is hard to stay calm, but we are one family. The fights that take place are sometimes between 2 individuals and the group encourages them to work things out. We use a group evaluation process when we get in trouble. In group discussions of common problems we look at all the alternatives and then work them through. We have a meeting every 8 days where we do our evaluation of the past period. These meetings help us maintain our sense of being a group; here we think through what it means to be a group. For example, the government gives money to us as individuals but we pool it in a common fund and then decide how we will spend it. We also buy collectively. We buy food monthly and because we buy a large lot we get it delivered free. We are also able to buy cheaper.

"All but one of us came from Anoni. For 3 years we struggled to get what we now have. Noone will take this from us. It is for our children as well as for us. Altogether our families are 39 people. We are always struggling against individualism -- of wanting to pursue just our own individual interests. For example, we decided not to have personal titles to the land. We want to own the land together, and want that recognized as a legal right. After 5 years of continuous production we will get permanent title to the land, but it will come to individuals for individual plots. We don't want it granted in this form.

"In the other settlements on this fazenda people are not as communal as we are. They don't pool resources, for example, and they aren't trying to own land communally. Each of our settlements has representatives on the fazenda Council where we make decisions on common concerns. 3 or 4 people from each group are on the Council. We are all united in our support for the larger landless movement. Our different settlements may be called communal, semi-communal and private. There is a lot of autonomy for each of them. The Council makes no decisions without things being referred back to each of the settlements for discussion. The Council makes proposals, but decisions are made at the base. One important decision had to do with who we were going to select as an advisor; we rejected the government advisor and accepted a church related advisor. Our farm advisor comes at 6:00 a.m. and we have a meeting to decide the work of the day. The church organization also provides a health advisor who sometimes stays overnight; she is like a member of our community.

"We have different political tendencies in the fazenda as well. I am a PT member, but I don't know if I will vote for Lula for President. I vote for the person, not the Party. There are PT people here who disagree with me. But the outcome of the election won't really affect us. (Another member of the group disagreed: 'If Lula is elected it will help us and people like us', she said.) The key is the level of organization at the base. It depends on the rank-and-file. The electoral process is limited. There is not a lot of political space to implement serious change. The bigger problem in Brazil is that we don't have enough preparation at the base and we don't have enough coordination of the different movements.

"The fazenda operates its own school, with some of our members serving as teachers. We use our own education methods. Each of the settlements has a representative on our education committee which runs the school. There are 4 teachers who meet with the parents regularly to discuss with them what their children are learning and what they want them to learn. The average adult education here is 3 years; 2 of our adults can't read. Our teachers aren't accredited and this is a problem with the local government. Only 1 of our teachers has formal teacher training. This lack of accreditation is an issue now. We want to teach a new way of looking at the world, a non-capitalistic, non-individualistic way; this isn't taught in the local schools, so we have to do it ourselves. There is lots of pressure against our school. We want education that is based on our concrete reality. The 4 teachers are now taking a crash course to get their credentials so we can get our school accredited. The teachers are in a special night and week-end adult education program."

Lutheran theologian: "The development of the concept of 'the base'. (1) In 1969 the Left engaged in a critical self analysis and concluded that it was isolated and was caught up in 'vanguardism'. (2) During the military period, political organizing was prohibited. Support was found in the churches. The churches were the only place where there was political space. (3) The Base Christian communities were developing in the Catholic Church. (4) Paolo Freire's influence was being felt both in the churches and on some of the left. This was a different way to think about the people. They know. One has to work from their reality. (5) After 1973 the outbreak of inflation led to greater poverty which, in turn, led to the emergence of social movements. That is when

the debate crystalized and became polarized as vanguardism vs. base"ism". It was a false polarity; a synthesis is now emerging. Trained people have a contribution to make but it must be done in a dialogical way, not imposed upon an inert "mass" of the people who are simply mobilized by a vanguard group. The people know many things; the intellectuals know some things. They have to share that which they know and bring each of their strengths to the movement. Knowledge is a collective thing. Freire now publishes dialogs because that's how knowledge is created. It is social. This is "banking" vs. "thinking through" theories of learning. This thinking is influenced by Gramsci, the Italian Communist and Marxist thinker.

"How this works in practice. In one year, I accompanied a group 12 times to a government agency with petitions for land reform. 6,000 people had signed. Nothing happened. The local leaders discovered this out of their own experience and evaluation of that experience. They, not some separate vanguard group, decided to engage in land occupations. Their first occupation was of land that turned out to be a hidden drug dealers landing strip.

"The occupation was deeply rooted in the faith of the people. When it took place, the Catholic Bishop was very opposed to it. He was very conservative. But he decided to interview the people to see why they were doing it. Perhaps he had suspicions that they were being manipulated by someone else. After many interviews, he decided that these poor people had a deeper grasp of faith than did the middle class or wealthy. He became a convert to what they were doing! This faith of the poor is renewing the church. It is expressed in their struggle and their solidarity. They believe God is with the poor. They are reading the Bible and applying it to contemporary situations and their own experience, making analogies between Biblical times and their own lives and times. They believe God is with them. Religion, in its truest sense, is to be found at the periphery, not at the center. Jesus began his ministry at the periphery of Jerusalem. He was with the poor.

"Liberation theology is not a theology of theologians, though it can stand up in theological debate. It is not intellectually derived. It is collected and emerges from the experiences of the small groups that are the Base Christian communities. It starts with an understanding that God is on the side of the poor, and it views things through the eyes and experience of the poor. Theologians systematize this. At first liberation theology was largely political. Beginning in 1976/77, work also went into the spiritual side and focus was placed on the celebration of faith -- liturgy, worship, etc. This is a living faith.

"Liberation theology is now increasingly accepted, but it is getting watered down as it moves into the mainstream. There is also a risk of it becoming too intellectual, of it losing its connection to the religious and life experience of the poor. It is dangerous for the intellectuals and for the pastors if this new theology loses its connection to daily life and religious experience. Liberation theology is still predominantly Catholic, though there are now more Protestants emerging. Re-reading the Bible among and with the poor must remain the heart of this theology or it will just become another activity of theologians. The Protestant liberation theologians are especially looking at questions of hierarchy and the role of the Pope. This is very interesting, as well, to a number of the Catholics.

"I fear that the Brazilian Catholics are not taking seriously enough the threat posed to their developments here by the Vatican. There is an attempt at cracking down. My Catholic friends are, I believe, naive about how serious this is. The replacement of progressive Bishops with conservatives is very serious. The conservative Bishops close CPT offices, move progressive priests from poor parishes to middle class ones, etc.

"There is lots of struggle, and there is lots of hope. When you work at the base, you are enriched by the people.

"Attempts to apply liberation theology to work with middle and upper class in Brazil haven't been particularly successful. Can you conscientize the non-poor? Is there a 'pedagogy for the non-poor'? We don't know how to work with the middle class. The middle class lay movements are Diocesan wide or larger in scope. They undermine the parish and Base community approach. We need to work with the middle class but don't know how to.

"In the development of the rural struggle, the people overcame 4 dependencies. (1) They overcame the ideological -- "I deserve to be poor". (2) They overcame economic dependencies on the system, learning to share and developing other means of surviving during the course of their struggle. (3) They overcame institutional and political dependencies -- the dependence on the patron, on favors from the system, on the boss or politician or someone else who "knew better". (4) They overcame their fear of death, deciding to take risks in relation to the armed forces and the police after careful consideration of the possible consequences. They learned to carefully analyze the will of the police and the army.

"The landless movement, made up mostly of formally uneducated people, now advises the more educated urban workers.

"At the one year celebration of the land occupation, Catholics, Episcopalians, Orthodox and Protestants participated. The lay people organized their own liturgy. The clergy isn't yet completely comfortable with this. This liturgy at the base is ecumenical. The Protestants who work here are very careful not to try to convert. The people want an ecumenical approach and an ecumenical worship for their community. They don't want a separate worship. This is a radical break with denominationalism. The sharing at the base is what is going to lead to the renewal of the churches.

"Reality is more conscientizing than words. (But you need both.)"

Organization for the Rights of Boys and Girls of the Street: This is a national organization dealing with the welfare of street children, of whom there are millions in Brazil. It is estimated that there are between 10 and 20 million abandoned children in the country.

The problem emerges out of the poverty of Brazil. Fathers can't sustain families on their incomes. If the mother works, there is no place for children. The nuclear family is weakening. The extended family tries to step in, but it is weakening too. Half the families of these children are in favelas. In the favelas there are whole families who seek to eke out an existence by foraging in garbage. There is pressure on the children to earn money as soon as they can, so they drop out of school. Once on the street, 30 - 40% of them don't have schools they could go to. Frequently the child leaves the home to find a source of income. If no job, then begging, crime or prostitution. On the street it is dangerous because of the police repression, on the one hand, and the criminals on the other. Society defines these children as vagabonds. Merchants see them as a threat to their stores, and they don't want them begging on the street. Drug dealers recruit the children. We met with several full-time workers in the National Movement of Children. A composite report follows:

"The Government's response to the problem of street children is the Foundation for Child Welfare. It is a negative force; it is repressive. The Government agency was founded during the military period when there were 12 million street children; now there are 40 million. Our movement arose to deal with this situation. In the 1980s alternative models arose to address the problems of

youth. It began with gatherings of people in neighborhoods, churches and non-governmental organizations. With some funding from international sources they began to develop alternatives. A major emphasis was to focus on teachers and others who deal directly with youth.

"The children internalize society's definition of them. Our approach is to get them to see themselves as "subjects" rather than "objects" of history. We fight for a definition of these children as oppressed and without fundamental rights (food, education, housing, health care, recreation, etc).

"This office has two major functions: (a) direct work with youth and teachers, and (b) serving as the local office of the national movement. We: (1) denounce violence, (2) organize street youth, (3) educate educators, (4) articulate the national movement. Our approach is legal, political and direct action."

Involvement of youth in educating teachers is difficult. At national level they are able to do this, with teachers and youth working together to formulate proposals for the recently adopted Constitution.

They work directly with children on the street who have lost connection with their familieis or who have left their families because of child abuse. In San Leopoldo there are 50 such children with whom they have regular contact. The children have no job, no home, no school and no place to sleep but the streets. They are frequently hungry and sick; some are getting caught up in drugs. In the commercial zone they find glue and use glue sniffing to get a drug high. The glue is very toxic, and kills people who've used it for 10 years. They have found no way to deal successfully with the kids once they are addicted. They try to work with the children in groups; in the groups they discuss their problems. They've been doing this now for 5 months and are still working to get the trust of the kids. These children are very hard to work with. They will sometimes destroy things given to them. They are prone to fighting. The older ones are in gangs.

"We start with what the kids want to talk about and what they want to do. Recreation was a problem the kids wanted to do something about, so they now are developing some recreation programs. The children miss play in their lives; when they get some money, they spend it in the video arcades. The Center got some money and asked the kids to make a plan for spending it. There are now some games in the Center wich are free to the kids. This is a space where children can be children. At the same time, we ask why they don't have a place to play, schools to attend, etc. These are questions we raise to begin to get the children to become conscientized.

"The school problem is not only lack of space. At this point the kids don't want to go to school. They don't do well in the rigid, disciplined setting. When they are in school, they are frequently expelled because of their behavior.

"After play came the problem of having enough to eat. We are now discussing what can be done about this. Along with it, jobs has come up. We now have no way of getting them a trade which can lead to a decent job. The only kind of work they can now do is very exploitative.

"In September, there will be a national meeting of children's delegates. This is the second such meeting. First was in '86. It denounced the problems of street children. The second 'encounter' (meeting) is to figure out a practical program of enforcing the rights of children. The gathering is being organized by children, teachers and community center workers (like this center). A document on violence against children will be presented, along with demands for police protection of street youth. There will be workshops on sports, theater, music, puppets. Some nationally known athletes and artists will participate.

We will also discuss AIDS, sex, child abuse. AIDS is beginning to become a problem among the street children. On the second day, all Presidential candidates are invited to appear and respond to Conference demands. On the third day we will visit the Federal Congress which is now debating a children's rights statute which would implement provisions of the Constitution. The Conference will create a space for street children in Brazilian society.

"There are now groups which actually go out and kill street children the way you would kill an animal. The children are not viewed as being human. The death squads that kill children are a mix of police, military (both off-duty) and right wing businessmen. The businessmen will make lists of children they want killed because they are thiefs. They will pay for the killing."

This project is supported by the Lutheran Church and receives money from the German Lutheran Church. These funds are for the direct services to youth. The wider political function is supported with funds from the government, UNICEF, Ford Foundation and others. The project is an autonomous organization.

Observations and questions. Somethings I have noted other times, but that seemed even more pronounced here: (1) There is a heavy emphasis on documentation, as if the facts themselves will be powerful enough to bring about change. Why this focus on documentation? (2) There seems to be no local political strategy that is connected with other groups who might be allies of the street children. They are integrated into a national organization, but lack a "horizontal" strategy. Do they think they have the power to do something at the national level? If not, why so much emphasis on it? Why do they think a national conference will create political space for these issues? (3) The people in these program offices combine the provision of direct services, advocacy in behalf of those served and organizing of the served. These can conflict with one another; there doesn't seem to be a focus on empowering specific groups of people and, in connection with this focus, a view that anything else you do has to serve this end...and if it doesn't, you don't do it. (4) I had no sense of the full time workers trying to figure out with the street children immediate, specific, realizable projects that the children could either do by and for themselves with the assistance of the Center workers (mutual aid) or that they could bring about by challenging government or other institutions (institutional change). Granted that it is still early for this project, I didn't get the sense that the people working in the Center think about things in this way.

Union for the Protection of the Natural Environment.

"The first modern ecologist of Brazil started in San Leopoldo in 1939. He sought to defend the Bells River. There is a strong tradition of ecological concern here. Our current goal is to recover the Sinos river, now totally polluted. The river goes through 18 municipalities. It is lined with many tanneries, whose toxic waste is dumped into the River, causing 1/3 of the pollution; another 1/3 is from other industry; the remaining 1/3 is domestic sewage. Our priorities are water and nuclear. There are about 100 members of the organization and many supporters.

"Nuclear issue is ignored by the Left. PT's attitude is to say we'll look at the nuclear issue after we win the election; they are unwilling to make this a campaign issue. There are nuclear plants in Brazil -- 1 that is completed and 2 underway but without funds for completion. The one that is completed only functions 40 - 50% of the time. The government is also working on an A-Bomb.

"We have no particular links to the workers in the tanneries, but we work in their behalf. For example, we acted in behalf of a man who died from toxic exposure in one of the tanneries. There are no talks between us and the workers in the tanneries; no outward cooperation either. One of our cities is tannery capital of the world. Air pollution there is awful. Everyone there is afraid of fighting pollution because they fear the loss of their jobs. We had a demonstration there recently; most of the participants were teachers and students. Brazil is a major exporter of leather. Most toxic waste is industrial, not home waste.

"There is almost no sewage treatment here. Cities don't have much money for this. Most money is at the Federal level (80%); (state: 10-15%; city: 5-10%).

"We have a 'Green pedagogy'. There is a lot of education on the environment now in schools; the time is for action. We must face fatalism in relation to environmental issues: the feeling that 'we can't do anything about it'. We try to pick issues we can win; we want to work with the taste of victory.

"Brazil has good environmental laws, but no enforcement. We use legal action, sometimes involving the office of public prosecutor. This is a State office available to the people. We put pressure on it to file suits.

"We also use civil disobedience as a tactic. We believe that those who are really disobeying are the civil authorities who fail to enforce the law. The bourgeoisie pays no attention to any legal constraint that is against its interests. Thus we do civil disobedience in the name of the law, to see that the law is enforced.

"We don't have links to other movements, such as the landless or workers. We do connect through the Evangelical Lutheran Church."

We had earlier learned from one of our Manaus hosts that the "Debt for Nature" swap, a favorite idea of environmentalists in Europe and North America, is very controversial in Brazil. This is a proposal by environmentalists that the foreign debt be purchased at a discount in exchange for the creation of land preserves that the buyer would sponsor. The land would be a park "in perpetuity"; it would be operated by the Brazilian Government, but under terms negotiated with the buyer of the debt. The proposal is opposed for different reasons by many sectors of Brazilian society. The military, and others, see it as "internationalization" and the loss of control over the land. Commercial interests want to exploit some of the land under question. Extractive workers, indigenous people and the Left have concerns for those who now live and work in these potential park areas.

Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra--MSTSUCA (Movement of Landless Workers).
We met with one of the principal staff people at the State office for Rio Grande Del Sul:

"There are 18 states with office of the Sem Terra movement. There's also a national office. 4 people work full time out of this state office. We have fraternal relations with all the movements of the landless and indigenous people in Brazil and throughout Latin America. This office has people working directly with the landless in the interior, an administrative person, a finance person and someone working on documentation. Another office runs a popular radio station aimed at favelas and land occupations; it also produces videos. Another group works on popular education, producing materials, etc. We also provide technical advisors to landless occupations, such as agronomists. We are now working on developing direct links to urban workers, for example working with the Metallurgical Workers Union. Our strategy is to get people to move away from mono-crop farming, diversify their products and sell directly to city dwellers through favela and union organizations. This is all part of a strategy aimed at developing alternatives--coops and other methods of alternative economy.

"Our immediate attention is on two land occupations that have taken place in the last two days. The UDR and local police are getting ready to surround them; it is very hot right now. About 1,000 people (200 families) are involved in these occupations. They come from the interior, about 500 km away, and were part of an occupation there that has been going on for 2 years. In these situations, we work with the people during an occupation and will continue to work with them if it is successful. We encourage people to work in a cooperative way rather than split land up into individual, privately owned parcels. It should be noted that 48% of the arable land in the Central - South part of Brazil is not cultivated.

"There are 12 million landless in the country, now concentrated in large metropolitan areas. They were forced off the land by large owners and multi nationals who are involved in mono-agriculture; in this area oranges, soy and coffee. Many of the landless from the South went from here to Amazonia, which also has its own landless people. People went because the government encouraged it with offers of free land. They didn't tell the people that it wasn't good land. We discouraged such migration, encouraging occupations of vacant land here in the South. Many who went to Amazonia are now coming back; once there, they were abandoned by the government and ended up working as hired workers for large landowners or unable to find work at all.

"The struggle for land began during the military period, and intensified over time, especially in the time of the 'opening' ('78). By '80, we were organized as a movement, but weren't well prepared for land occupations. It took a long time for people to be ready to do occupations; they wanted to do legal things first. At the end of '83 we had the first well organized land occupation; it was the first in Brazil. It spread then to 11 other States. In 1985, there were many occupations, including the largest and best known at Anoni where there are 1500 families. The commitment of the landless movement is for people to claim the land, not move into the cities where they will only end up in the favelas. There are now 42,000 families who have been involved in successful land occupations. Another 17,000 are in encampments that are not yet secure. Another 45,000 are being prepared for occupations.

"The heart of the process of preparation for an occupation is training in living closely together and making decisions together. This is more important than specific preparation for police violence. We work with the people until they are ready to engage in an occupation; we find that people reach a critical point and then are ready to act.

"Two years ago, the Catholic Church approved food raids and occupations saying that the right to eat came before the right to private property and profit. This movement was begun by progressives in the Church, but today the leaders come from among the landless themselves with the Church playing a supporting rather than a directive role. The work of the Church was central to the subsequent successes of the movement.

"There is a continuous threat of violence. I've been threatened with death three times. In the Northeast, gunmen once invaded my home. There have been two death threats here. There are police informants in the movement, but it is hard for them to function. The people live together in very dire circumstances prior to an occupation; they get to know one another very well. The occupiers haven't been penetrated by the police. Efforts have been made to steal documents from this office, both by pisteleros and by the State government. In 1989, a total of 48 people have been killed in the movement and another 109 imprisoned.

"The United States is responsible for many of the problems of the poor in Latin America. First, the international debt, much of which is held by US banks; second, the multi-nationals, many of which are based in the US, which are involved in pushing people off the land and developing export crops; third, the support the US government provides to the military and right wing governments. If the US let us decide our own future, poor people would be better off. Throughout Latin America there is bitterness toward the US because it acts like it owns everything. My image of Americans isn't a very good one. I don't know the reality of people's lives there; we just know the US economic and political structure.

"1992 is the celebration of the 'discovery of America'. We challenge this idea. Spain is preparing 3 boats to come here to repeat the discovery trip. We are preparing an invasion of Europe to dramatize the fact that European colonialism destroyed the cultures of the indigenous people of Latin America. There have been planning meetings on the part of non-governmental organizations here to respond to this 'celebration'. We hope people in the US will do something as well."

Our speaker and host had been up all night the night before and was talking with us at about 9:00 p.m. One of his associates wasn't back, and there was fear that he may have come upon some violence. (He showed up the next day; he'd only had car trouble.)

Politics: Unlike several others with whom we spoke during the trip, he thinks the PT candidate for Vice President is a decent guy, and that he is moving to the Left. He is on the ticket because he has a base in the southern part of Brazil. He played an honorable role during the military period. He could have gone with the Social Democrats but choose the Workers Party.

Bob McKibben's report (one of my trip companions) on his interview with a landowner:

100 families (about 400 people) came from the interior to occupy two sites, one government owned, the other owned by Jose Felix Garcia who was not keeping up payments on a mortgage from the Bank of Brazil and may be in bankruptcy. The occupying families had been through incredible difficulties in the interior with both the UDR and the police. They were part of an occupation of 2,000 families. They had been bombed by the UDR (private planes dropping hand bombs), and beaten by the police. 400 had been wounded in the bombing, during which 300 bombs were dropped, though miraculously no one had been killed. That occupation had not been successful. The group of families had come to the sites in buses and trucks provided by the State organization of Sem Terra (with which we had

earlier met). They identified the two sites after doing research. Garcia has 1500 head of cattle and had tried to develop a factory that would process alcohol from sugarcane.

Sr. Garcia happened to be at the site when Bob arrived. He is a dapper, articulate and cultured man. He says he's been to America, has an autographed picture of himself with President Reagan, whom he met in LA at some event where Garcia won an award. In addition to being a rancher, he is also a surgeon. His land is now idle and is currently held by the Bank of Brazil. He also had some economic setbacks when the government failed to approve a project of his to build a distillery for alcohol (a government subsidized business in Brazil where there are lots of alcohol fueled autos). Bob's notes from the interview:

"This is a movement organized by leftist sectors in the Catholic Church. It has certain specific goals" (which Garcia never explained). "The sad thing is, these people occupying the land are just being used by the Church for an absolutely futile objective. The law protects me because this is an invasion of my property. If I wanted to, I could have the occupiers killed, but in a few hours they'll be expelled. I have not reacted with violence because I am a non-violent man. The occupiers have chosen this site very carefully. It's a suburban location (near Porto Alegre), close to schools and electrical and telephone lines, with good water supply. It's extremely productive land and has been used with maximum efficiency. This provokes envy."

Garcia attributed his problems to his independence, saying he was protected neither by political party or church. However, "If I have to choose between a dictatorship of the left and a dictatorship of the right, I prefer the right."

Garcia indicated that he thought those in the occupation were ignorant, and said he didn't think illiterate people should be able to vote. He called them "simple" people and didn't think they would engage in the occupation if they weren't put up to it by the radical left clergy. He claimed to treat his employees well, providing them with health care programs and other benefits above the minimum wage.

"The American concept of land reform is a bit different. In 1958, I believe, the farm population amounted to about 14 million. Ten years later, it was half that, but food production had increased." His conclusion was that small farms are inefficient.

(The people occupying Garcia's land are tired. Kids are fearful because of the police. The police here are being friendly, but the kids remember the police violence of the interior. No one slept last night. They have hastily thrown up plastic tents. All they possess is what they are wearing and what they carried in a bag or two. The students from the nearby Lutheran Seminary are collecting clothes and toys for them. They are a racially mixed group. The banners of the occupation read, "Occupy, Produce, Resist" and "Many Without Land; So Much Land Without People")."

Black consciousness group in the town of Alvarado, near Porto Alegre:

The local government was recently won by the PDT (Lionel Brizola's Party). They took over an unused school for a program for adult literacy and drop-outs. They operate under the Ministry of Education, so have to comply with some Federal guidelines, but within this they are able to engage in popular education, particularly emphasizing women's and racial issues.

The majority of the students are farmers or workers or their sons and daughters. There are many drop outs (or push outs) all over Brazil. The vast majority want

to learn to read. Learning in this school is related to the idea of organizing the people. The curriculum is linked to the popular organizations and unions. They anticipate that some union organizing will come out of the school. One objective is to train cadre for the movements. They equally emphasize class, sex and race in their educational program. In other places in the country, teachers have gone to jail for engaging in this kind of education. They use various educational approaches, always looking for something that will work with this particular group of students. When they go into a new community, they will frequently introduce themselves to the people through street theater performed by a multi-racial group. This draws a crowd and after their performance they start talking with the people.

In this meeting were a number of students, some teachers and a representative from the City's PDT Administration. There was a very egalitarian spirit to the exchanges between them, certainly no deference on the part of students to teachers or of students and teachers to the city official. The city's representative said, "our vision is of the local community teaching itself; the social movement is in the school. We also encourage ecological teaching in the public schools." Some of the people in this group were involved in armed struggle in the '70s. The spirit of egalitarianism was present in a very participatory class on the relationship between Africa and Brazil that went on in an adjoining room. There was lots of discussion, and it was encouraged by the teacher.

Spokesman for the Black consciousness group:

"We believe that all Brazilians need to be educated on the issue of race. We are socialists and egalitarians. Within this context there must be space for women and Blacks. We also work with marginalized whites. The Black, alone, doesn't have the political or economic strength to win. Unfortunately, here in Brazil there are Blacks who don't think of themselves as Blacks even though they are discriminated against. A very good brainwashing job was done. The space for Black consciousness has to be created in each of the popular movements. We seek to do this. We relate to all groups. We go to the base of Black people and poor people, accepting both as members. Racism is worst here in the South of Brazil. The Black movement is much stronger in Bahia, though it is divided everyplace in the country. Blacks were the first people to develop this area. They fought in the war against Paraguay for this territory. Italians and Germans who came later were given land by the government; Blacks weren't. Instead, the Blacks were forced off the land into the urban favelas.

"We are having parallel workshops here today on race, women's rights and class. Our Black group has whites in it. The workshops here will define the curriculum for the school; we are supported in this by the local city administration. We have separate workshops and classes on race and women, but we also focus on our common interests as workers. We met white people where we worked, and we were beginning to get into unions with them. From that relationships developed and that made it possible for us to invite them to participate in our school. All poor whites are not racists. We all had a common interest in and desire for education. We seek to make economics accessible to semi-literate people by tying our teaching into their own experience and history. These classes help the poor Black and white to understand the sources of their marginalization."

(The set up is very open; lots of questions and discussion. A mural on the front wall in the classroom has blank spaces for slogans the students will come up with.)

Students: "This place has opened my eyes and mind. This is an opportunity to understand why we shouldn't be afraid and why we have been kept down by the

patrons."...Another: "We've had our mouths closed; now we have an opportunity to open them, and everyone wants to talk."

Comparing North American to Brazilian slavery (group leader): "Blacks here were colonized by Portuguese and Spanish, who by that time were sub-imperialists to the French, English and Dutch to whom they owed money. British colonization of Africa was more rigid, as was its form of slavery. Plantation owners here in Brazil were all men. They had sexual relations with Black and Indian women, sometimes adopting their children. Religious syncretism was practiced here -- the practice of mixing animism of Africa with Catholicism, thus African culture was preserved. Africans maintained their religious roots though they used Catholic icons. Different from Protestantism in the US. Most important was the huge number of Africans who were brought here, creating a critical mass that could sustain culture. 100,000,000 Africans were brought here. A majority died. There was once a life expectancy of 7 years for a slave, and there was a continuous flow of new arrivals from Africa even after the abolition of slavery.

"The majority of the militant women here are white. The Black women are not as organized. They suffer the most; Black men have a deeper machismo than whites.

"My vision is of a society that is fraternal and just in which all people are treated with equal respect. My heroes are Martin Luther King and Desmond Tutu."

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SAO PAULO (RETURN)

Women's Commission rally of the PT:

About 3,000 people, overwhelmingly women, gathered in a meeting of the Women's Commission of the Worker's Party (PT). We were in the crowd as banner waving delegations came marching into the Convention Hall. Most of the banners were those of the "Frente Popular", the electoral alliance of the PT, PCdoB (Communist Party of Brazil) and the PSB (Socialist Party of Brazil). Groups came from across the country, though the preponderance was from Sao Paulo. They sang, chanted, waved their banners and generally brought the hall to a fever pitch of excitement. The walls were also filled with banners proclaiming the rights of women, the names of the women's organizations and, most prominently, the name of their candidate for President: 'Lula'. The specific occasion for this rally is for the Women's Commission to hear and present papers on a variety of women's issues: rights in the workplace, prostitution, health care, child care, sexual abuse, and others and for Lula to make a major address on his position on the issues of women in Brazil.

In the first part of the rally, about 30 women made statements. Each was from a different popular organization of women or from one tendency or another in PT. The presenters sat in a long line across the stage of the auditorium. Behind them were additional dignitaries or luminaries of some kind, each of whom was introduced. The meeting began "Brazilian time", 1 1/2 hours after it was scheduled. No matter, the enthusiasm of the crowd was undiminished. One of the largest hands came for Luisa Erundina, the PT Mayor of Sao Paulo. Lula's arrival was greeted with thunderous applause, chants and a standing ovation. He, like the other speakers, is dressed casually: sweater, open shirt, casual slacks. He is a stocky man of about 5'6", with a full beard, an intense look and a warm smile. The crowd obviously has him in its heart. I am struck by the obvious lack of security. People come on the stage and leave it at will. Anyone wanting to disrupt or do more wouldn't have much trouble. While the enthusiasm is genuine and warm, I'm also struck by how similar political rallies are wherever you go. Lots of speeches, lots of slogans. Outside the rally hall

are the usual tables of pins, T-shirts, literature. The breadth of the literature is interesting: Galbraith, Durkheim, and Weber join Marx, Lenin and Mandel. And there are Brazilian names that are unfamiliar to me.

Inside, calls for socialism are always greeted with applause. I have by this time learned that there are many meanings of socialism in the PT. Lula expressed the underlying sentiment of this crowd when he said, "to me 'socialism' is a sacred word". Whether it comes from Marxism, Catholic radicalism, communitarianism or the non-Marxist Socialist left, capitalism here in Brazil seems to encompass and embody everything that the Left wants to change: domination by international financial institutions and multi-nationals of their economy; support by the US for the military coup of '64 and the regime that followed; support now from the US for conservative politicians and politics in Brazil; the role of Brazil's own wealthy class; and so on. Socialism embodies and encompasses everything for which they stand.

I later asked people what PT's meaning of "socialism" is. I was always told, "It depends on who in PT you ask."

As in our meetings with Rede Mulher and with the GUCN in Alvarado, the women here place their struggle in the context of a broader struggle of the Brazilian poor and working class. I am struck, and perhaps this is a peculiarly North American reaction, by the fact that there is only one Afro-Brazilian woman on the speaker's platform and that she speaks almost at the end of the program. She received one of the strongest welcomes of the many speakers, and addressed herself to the special oppression of Black women in Brazil.

The PT candidate for Vice-President, from the Socialist Party, says, "as long as the women are not free, neither are the men...Lula is the only candidate interested in the fundamental transformation of Brazilian society...This is the condition for the liberation of all." At 5:35, well over two hours after the scheduled start of the meeting, Lula is introduced to a standing ovation. He is a vigorous and captivating speaker. His talk addressed the issues of discrimination against women and the double discrimination suffered by Afro Brazilian women.

American Protestant missionary on the health movement in Brazil:

She is an American United Church of Christ pastor who has been in the country a number of years and is now married to a Brazilian. She worked until last year in one of the favelas in Rio. She and her husband now live in a favela in Sao Paulo that has a drug gang operating out of it; the gang is a major force in the favela and has intimidated the people of the favela who are not in the gang. (She recommends Failure of the Grassroots Movement.)

"The health movement began in 1981 as a result of a grant of $51 million from the World Bank to the Brazilian government to construct local health projects. The money wasn't being spent for its purpose because of the corruption of the government. People began to organize on this issue and were led by church people. The first issue was rats -- getting rid of them. A major issue is establishing local health clinics that are accessible to people in or near their neighborhoods. The base of the movement as well as most of its leadership is women because most men work from 5:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. (including travel to/from work of anywhere from 1 1/2 hours to 2 1/2 hours).

"Since the election of PT in various cities there has been a program to form councils of beneficiaries of the health clinics at the local level. This is a new idea to the poor; they are used to being told what to do. People are skeptical; they have no real experience with democracy. They're not used to challenging authority; they don't think you can fight or change City Hall.

"We use a basic health education course to get the women to begin to speak up. This becomes very threatening in most of their homes because of the tradition of machismo. It leads, in some cases, to divorce; husbands forbid their wives going to meetings; etc. The women are trained in the health course to administer various health tests (blood pressure, self-examination for breast cancer, etc). They become experts in this; people begin to treat them as authorities, and their status increases in the community. They make presentations on health matters before groups. They grow in self-confidence and competence. This begins to translate into how they expect to be treated by their husbands -- and this is where the crisis at home begins. Husbands don't want their wives in the program because it results in the wives beginning to challenge the husband's monopoly on power in the home.

"There are also exceptions that provide wonderful stories. One husband forbad his wife participating in the program. She ignored him, and secretly remained involved. He found out, and she learned from their child that he had discovered she was still attending the classes. She was afraid of a fight and, perhaps, a beating. But when she got home, he wanted her to come with him to his mother's and take her blood pressure!

"The women health workers go door-to-door in the favelas with their testing program. They know the people and are trusted by them so they can get them to participate in the testing. Otherwise, health professionals have a very hard time getting access to the people. Prior to coming into this program, most of the 40 women who have been trained accepted their position in the world as pre-ordained, determined by God. They now have a different consciousness, both of themselves and of God."

American Catholic missionary:

Bible study: "a new emphasis among the progressive Catholics is to go 'back to the Bible', but with a new approach. They believe that the fundamentalists pay more attention to popular reading of the Bible so are able to make their interpretation the popular one. This, they believe, is a mistake of the progressive church. They need to teach people to read the Bible and to understand it as a story of God's intention to free the oppressed. This is the "literal" reading of the Bible -- not the one proposed by the conservative fundamentalists. A major figure in this movement is Carlos Mesters, a Brazilian theologian who writes for popular audiences. They are now very interested in writing and developing liturgy with and for the majority of the people."

Religion: "while 85% of Brazilians are nominally Catholics, and only 15% Protestants, on any given Sunday more people are in Protestant Churches, especially the Pentecostal and fundamentalist conservative churches, than in Catholic churches. The fastest growing are the Assembly of God, the Christian Congregation of Brazil, Brazil Para Christo and Deus de Amor. The latter two are strictly Brazilian, while the others have international connections. All of these churches offer cures, are highly expressive, promise salvation in a future life, involve all participants in reading the Bible, feature laying on of hands and have strict demands for moral behavior (marital fidelity, no drinking, even no smoking). They also enforce a tithe commitment from members. They are very attentive to individuals, concerned with their personal situation. They bring food baskets if you are in need. They effectively recruit local popular people to become leaders. Their approach isn't to change the system. That is not the business of the church. "Politics" is a dirty word. Catholics and non conservative Protestants need to learn from some of this, which isn't inherently conservative or authoritarian. Only the Catholic charismatics use some of these approaches.

"Catholic liberation theology says that the reorganization of society so that it is more just, democratic and egalitarian is an intrinsic part of faith."

On Politics: Brazil's political parties:

"A brief overview of the major political parties and those on the Left; it should be noted that it only takes 300 people to constitute a political party in Brazil and that 28 parties have candidates for President.

PMDB: Was the "loyal opposition" during the military period. Brazilian's say the PDS (the military party) said, "yes, sir" and PMDB said, "yes" so there's something of a tweedle-dee, tweedle-dum view of the two. During the military period, the Left operated within the PMDB. It is the Party of Neves (who died before he could assume Presidency after the military period) and Sarney, the current President. The Neves-Sarney ticket was elected by Brazil's national Congress, not by popular election.

PDS: The old military party; very right wing. Almost totally discredited because it was a puppet of the military during the military period.

PSDB: Social democratic; headed by Mario Covas who played a very respected role during the military period.

PSB: Socialist party; Bisol, the PT vice-presidential candidate, is from this party.

PDT: Left-Center "populist" party; Lionel Brizola is its candidate for President. He is now 2nd in the polls; was Governor of the State of

Rio de Janeiro. (Post first round election update: Brizola was narrowly beaten by Lula of the Workers Party.)

PSD: Called "social democratic" but really right-wing; The head of UDR, Caiado, is its candidate for President.

PCB: Traditional (Gorbachev-oriented) Communist Party of Brazil. Roberto Freire (no relation to Paulo) is its candidate for President. Party started in 1922; has some major Brazilian intellectuals, but not a major electoral force. It is influential in some unions, particularly in the more conservative labor federation - the CGT. Bitter rival of the new Workers Party, which they see as usurping their turf.

PCdoB: Split off Communist Party with an Albanian (!) orientation. Is part of the Popular Front, so endorses Lula-Bisol ticket for President-Vice-President. But is a rival with these parties in the unions and in local elections. Very small. Very vanguardist; believe in violent revolution.

PRN: New right-wing party created by Coller for his candidacy; it is assumed that the more sophisticated conservatives have abandoned the parties of the military period and are gathered behind Coller.

PFL: "Liberal" (Milton Friedman economics) party; believes in the free market. To the right of other conservative and right parties.

PT: The Workers Party emerged out of the ferment of the period from the "opening" (1978-79) to the end of military rule (1984). It is heavily influenced by the Catholic left, but includes Marxist and other tendencies.

"PT: In local elections, PT won 36 mayoralities in middle sized to large cities. Now it is facing the problems of governing.

"PT is now filled with internal debate about direction. It has 7 organized tendencies within it, and many independent points of view. The debates about strategy, tactics and policy are going on in all levels of the Party. There are theoretical magazines and popular pamphlets arguing the various issues. These issues include: whether too much emphasis is being placed on electoral victories; whether the public employees in CUT unions should strike against PT administrations; whether the PT should automatically support strikes (it recently supported a strike by the Rio police even though the head of the Union is known to be a member of one of the death squads); whether the CUT unions, especially those in the public sector, should reconsider the tactic of a strike (because of the hardship worked on those who receive public services who are usually the poor)."

<u>Lula, the labor movement and the Metallurgical Workers (which is the union that organizes all the auto plants in Brazil)</u>:

"Lula and his brother come from a Catholic family in the Northeast of Brazil. They went to Sao Paulo to work in industry. His brother joined the traditional Communist Party, and tried to recruit Lula who remained skeptical of its conspiratorial approach and isolation from the rank and file. Lula worked to build a rank and file movement within the Metallurgical Workers Union. This became the internal opposition during the military period. In Sao Paulo, the Metallurgical Workers Union is in the more conservative labor federation -- the CGT. Its President is a very complex man, pursuing "bread and butter" unionism though trained 4 years in Moscow! He's now an ex-member of the CP and has also been to AFL-CIO training. The Communist Party and the unions of the CGT have a

very complex relationship. The CP is actually in the leadership of some CGT unions even though they are the more traditional, government supported unions. The CP doesn't support the more radical CUT because CUT is clearly led by the Workers Party, which the CP sees as its most serious rival and with whom it has an antagonistic relationship.

"Lula built the opposition with the Metallurgical Workers Union by involving the rank and file in campaigns on winnable issues during the military period. They won such things as clean toilets, coffee breaks, better meals in the cafeteria, improved safety, etc. They began at a factory and organized by shifts. They would develop a committee that operated underneath the structure of the union, which had no shop steward structure. If they couldn't win at this level, they would take the issue to the union. In the 'ABC Zone' (ABC Zone: Santo Andre, San Bernardo, Sao Caetano. This is the center of auto, truck and bus production and/or assembly. Among the companies represented there are: Ford, GM, VW, Mercedes-Benz, Volvo, Scania, Saab. The Zone surrounds Sao Paulo.), Ford, GM and VW assembly plants are all physically close to one another. So are many of the suppliers. Workers could meet and get to know one another. The Metallurgical Workers Union included all of these workers. The Union at first demanded a standard wage that would cover both the multi-national large companies and the smaller, independent, Brazilian owned suppliers. The suppliers said they would go out of business. The Union leadership backed off. The opposition called for a scale based on company size. The union officials wouldn't support this either. The opposition used this issue to build its strength. Finally it was able to run for leadership and win in a number of the unions. This same build from the bottom approach won in other unions as well.

"In the course of this and other similar struggles a new consciousness developed in the working class: (a) a shift from support for "pelegos" (union leaders who ran the unions like political bosses and made personal deals with employers) to support for radical and militant leaders who involved the rank and file, and (b) a new idea of the union as an organization that struggled in behalf of the workers on wages, hours and working conditions rather than one based on "assistentialism" (the provision of services which were paid for by the one day's pay a year to the Department of Labor).

"In some sectors the multi-nationals were more willing to deal with this new unionism than domestic capitalists. Companies based in the US and Germany had experience with independent unions. On some of these issues they were better than the Brazilian owners. This approach of accommodation didn't come automatically. There were hard and soft liners within the multi-nationals. One of the priests accidentally heard the story of a major meeting in the US in 1973 of CEOs and regional vice-presidents (for Brazil or Latin America) at which the attitude toward unions was debated. One major executive said, "let's not let them (the workers) do to us in Brazil and Latin America what they did to us in the 1930s here". That view was adopted at that time; the hard-liners won. The big '79 and '80 strikes changed that. The employers were forced to deal with the new unions. Since then there has been some real collective bargaining on bread and butter issues.

"From all this ferment, the CUT emerged as a new national labor central. It is independent and not recognized by the government. At first, CUT conventions were attended by community and religious groups as well as by the workers. The idea was to bring "society" into the decision making of the union. This has slowly been abandoned in favor of cooperation between the CUT unions and other progressive organizations and movements in Brazil. Despite the lack of official recognition, CUT now bargains for its members in some industries and the government (including conservatives and middle-of-the-roaders) meets with them on some issues.

"By 1980, still in the military regime but after the 'opening', the opposition forces within the labor movement were able to take leadership and organize a major strike against the multi-national automakers who are in the Metro Sao Paulo area. 100,000 people attended a dramatic mass meeting in the Sao Paulo stadium. Lula was the main speaker. The electricity was cut off so that the sound system wouldn't work. Lula spoke without it and the crowd was so quiet that everyone could hear him. There was almost a violent confrontation with the police and military, but at the last minute the armed forces retreated and allowed the march and rally to occur. During the strike, the Base Christian Communities brought rice and beans to strike kitchens that were set up in churches. This solidified relations between the progressive churches and the new labor movement. The whole thing was very well organized and disciplined. Lula now speaks at the mass meetings of the Base Christian Communities; he calls his socialism Christian not Marxist. The 1980 strike won some major victories."

Labor Movement and Catholic Church: (from another American missionary priest who works with the Pastoral Operaria--Workers Commission--of the Catholic Church):

"Vargas became Brazil's dictator when he crushed a Communist led uprising in the late 20s. He admired Mussolini, and was a believer in the Corporate State (Fascism). In his approach, each sector of society had its role, and the State was to be the coordinator. In fact, the government sponsored and controlled the labor movement because the union's income depended on the government. If the unions got too militant, the government cut off their money.

"After World War II, there was an opening and the Communists, Socialists, church left and other radicals became active in the unions. A Christian left formation known as Popular Action formed in the late '50s/'60. This all ended with the military coup of 1964. Some of the Christian left people abandoned the church, became Marxist-Leninists, went underground and engaged in violent activity. Others remained Christian and adopted Marxist modes of social analysis. This group is now an important influence in PT. Many of these people were imprisoned, exiled or killed in the military period, as were all left leaning union leadership.

"During the military period, there was selective killing. It wasn't like Guatemala where there was mass killing of the peasants in areas where there was guerrilla activity. In 10 years about 1,000 people were killed. But they were key leaders.

"The Catholic Church hierarchy at first supported the right and the military. Lots of individual Christians went into the left organizations as a place to work for justice, some of them becoming Communists. But the hierarchy quickly shifted, learning from the mistake of the Catholic Church in Europe which, as Cardinal Arns predecessor said, 'lost the working class to the Communists'. This shift was accelerated by the repression and brutality of the military and the rapid increase of poverty, causing many a conservative or moderate bishop to become a radical. Out of this shift came the Pastoral Operaria (PO), initially the Catholic Church arm to work with industrial workers. It now works with all workers, from bank employees to maids.

"The shift in the hierarchy is illustrated by a story about the Bishop of the ABC Diocese. He was appointed because he was thought to be "safe", following a "left" predecessor. The unions asked to meet with him. He invited them to meet and gave them a one hour lecture on the evils of Marxism (he'd been a philosophy professor at a Franciscan college.) When he finished, the labor leaders asked if they could now speak. He agreed to that. They told him of the realities of factory life: travel time to work, pay, benefits, working conditions, treatment by supervisors and management, safety problems. This was a great education for

him. It was done without rhetoric. Because he cared about people he listened. The same kind of thing happened with Cardinal Arns who started as a moderate and was educated by his experiences with torture, repression and poverty. The radicalization of the hierarchy on social matters grew from these experiences, but hasn't translated into ecclesial matters."

Base Christian Communities: "In rural areas they are more developed simply because there aren't enough priests. Lay people and women religious play a greater role. In the cities, the BCCs are priest sponsored, and this sometimes has an inhibiting effect on their development -- unless the priest is very conscious about the development of a collegial relationship with the laity.

"Pastoral Operaria (PO) 'forms' people who become active in the unions. It doesn't seek to become or function as a caucus or tendency, though it is accused of that by its opponents in the labor movement. People who come out of the Base Christian Communities into the work force join PO which orients them toward Christian Socialism. PO is an organization that parallels the labor unions; they have their own mass meetings where they analyze things and develop strategy, but they aren't a "disciplined" group. That is, they don't operate by democratic centralism.

"The PO vision is of democratic socialism, by which I mean direct, popular participation at the local level of society with lots of decentralization of authority. The "popular assemblies" would frame policy. Government would provide basic health, education, transportation and other major services. But they we to break the idea of dependence on the State or on politicians. We want to develop a sense of local and communal responsibility among the people."

The world premiere of a film documentary on a successful urban land occupation in Sao Paulo. Produced by a French woman, the film will be released internationally this year. It is the story of a two year struggle which ultimately led to a land site and the now underway construction of 650 self-help homes. The process of victory was classic. At first they couldn't get meetings with public officials. That led them finally to take direct action, which resulted in meetings. But the meetings didn't really lead to concrete results. There would be vague or even specific commitments, but they wouldn't be honored. They finally just occupied the land. Three days later they were granted tenure on the land by the Government. This struggle came out of a favela organization that had already been through what are standard favela issues: sewage, water, health and other services. These prepared the way for the land occupation.

From the film: "The story actually began in 1981 in an occupation out of which came the movement for self-help housing. This occupation was on private, unused land. It was unfenced and had no posting of ownership (as required by law). PT was involved in the leadership and many people from the Base communities were involved. The first step was two families moving onto the land and building a wood shack. One month passed and nothing happened. Then one night hundreds of families went in, measured land and built quick houses (plastic, cardboard, wood, whatever they could get their hands on). Once you have a house on a site, the law gives you some rights. In two weeks, 400 houses were up and there was organizing of the community taking place. PT and church people supported the group. The next step was more permanent construction with cinder blocks; it was accompanied by creation and naming of streets, liturgies and great celebration.

"Then suddenly the military appeared -- 300 of them -- with the Justice Department officials who were required for there to be a legal eviction. But they were caught on a technicality. The law requires the naming of at least 3 of the squatters, and they didn't have any names. Another priest and I, who knew the law, stalled the Justice Department and Police until we could get a lawyer from the Human Rights Commission of the Archdiocese. Justice Department

people then agreed to the lawyer's proposal that they meet with the people and explain what was happening. That got them a day, which got stretched into 3 days. There were meetings every night and the people were starting to panic. Finally, the legal requirements for eviction were met. The Mayor could then have declared the invasion legal and purchased the land for its assessed value, but wouldn't. Eviction was at hand; when the police arrived there was a spontaneous sit-in at the single entrance to the favela. Women and children sat in front! The Commander ordered them out; they started praying and singing. Things just stayed that way for 3 hours. Then the police trucks began pushing their way through the sit-in, and finally broke the line. People were then forced to destroy the houses they had built, in many cases with their life savings. People fainted, cried, screamed.

"It was an awful experience. But the people wouldn't disperse. The military finally agreed to house them in a nearby school, one big room for men and one for women and small children. Priests accompanied them. We celebrated the mass with them. There was big media coverage. Out of it all came a great spirit of unity. This became the first group in subsequent land occupations. They had been joined in their struggle by people from the Base Christian Communities who already had homes. This was a great experience of solidarity for both the homeless and for the people of the Base communities.

"From this began the weekly meetings which led to meetings with the government, offers by the government of land, reneging by the government on its offers and finally title to some land in late '81. The people got pre-fab housing from the government, but it was awful. In '82, there was a major reflection on this in the Catholic Church of the parish. Out of this came the decision to really build an organization. Some PT leaders and activists got involved who had technical knowledge of housing. In '82 - '83 actual plans were developed for houses. Word began to spread through informal grapevines. People would show up at the parish saying, 'I hear you're giving away land in Vila Remo'. We began to develop our structure and a method for prioritizing the distribution of housing. At first we used the principle of need (single mother, favela dweller, etc), but this later shifted to a principle of participation (those who participated would be eligible).

"There were lots of planning, pressure on the government and demonstrations downtown. In '86, there was a sleep-out at the Secretary of Housing's Office that went for 9 days and nights. We used Biblical stories on housing, especially from the Old Testament. Street people joined us because we were serving hot food. On the 9th night, Cardinal Arns came and there was an offeratory including a bag of land from the site we wanted. In the middle of the celebration, officials came downstairs with the contract. We shot off fireworks; there was a huge celebration and party. This happened in the beginning of '86. Later the government tried to back out of its agreement with us and this is what finally convinced the people to occupy the land themselves.

"Having won, the state government wanted to see the construction of state sponsored housing. The people didn't want this; they don't like the state built housing (units too small, poor construction, paper thin walls, etc). There are other problems as well. The State built housing is much more expensive because the government has favored contractors who get this construction work as patronnage. This leads to a higher priced house, which in turn leads to higher taxes which the people can't afford.

"The leader of this group is a man named Olympio. He has a 4th grade education, but has no problem speaking up and confronting people with college degrees. The group had support from the local auxiliary Bishop (in Cardinal Arns Archdiocese), many priests, unions and others. Technicians (architects, etc) donated their labor.

"The group finally won self-help housing. They believe that it will be both better and less costly--1/3 the cost of the state sponsored housing. Materials are provided by the government, and the people who will live there provide the labor. They construct each others housing. Everyone puts in 16 hours a week in order to remain eligible for one of the houses. When a section is finished, the people who built it draw straws to see who gets which house. (A section is about 25 houses.)"

The film showing was particularly moving because many of the people in the film were in the audience, including Olympio who is the film's "star". Speakers afterward talked about the meaning of the struggle for them -- how it showed the strength that people can obtain through unity; that they are now commited to supporting other people's struggles because of the support they got from people who weren't direct beneficiaries of this project; how for many of them this was a period of great personal growth, learning how to speak up and act publicly, confronting public authority; how people were liberated in this struggle, learning to see themselves as human beings who cared for themselves and who were cared for by God. One woman spoke through tears as she described this as the most important thing in her life. Also in the audience were the Auxiliary Bishop and a PT City Councilman who had been an early ally of the effort.

The video will be used nationally to inspire other land occupations. A similar video on unionization was used several years ago with great effect.

Self-help housing: "Mutirao" is the term for self-help housing. People pay 12 - 15 cruzados a month over a 25 year period for these houses that they construct with materials provided by the government. We visited one of the mutirao complexes. Some of the housing was completed, other units are under construction. They are small, tiny by American standards, neat, well constructed units. Inside one of them we visited with a family. The mother (who lives there with her 3 children and brother) described plans to build a second floor with 2 more bedrooms. (Now the 4 people share one bedroom; the brother works at night and sleeps during the day; at night, the mother and the 3 children sleep in the 2 bunk beds.) If someone becomes unemployed, the community picks up the monthly payment until the person can resume payment.

"People in Action" is the name of their group; the slogan of their last Palm Sunday processional banner reads, "Blessed Are Those Who Work For the Liberation of the Poor".

They have had some interesting experiences and learned some valuable lessons. In the first round of construction, for example, they allowed families to hire someone to do their 16 hours of weekly work. They have stopped the practice now. The result was that hired people wouldn't work as hard as others because they had no real stake in the housing. It also led to some bad construction, and to bitterness among the people who moved into the first units. There is now strict counting of hours and enforcement of work rules such as no drinking on the job. When completed, a total of 2,000 families will live in this housing. On the drawing boards is yet another development of 2,000 + units of housing. Eligibility to move into each of the new groupings of housing is based on participation; the longer you have been participating, the higher you are up on the eligibility list. People start meeting together long before they get their actual land site. While they have over 4,000 units in mind, there are already 4,000 people participating in their movement. The word of the first successful houses has spread and the number of people who want to be part of this is increasing.

People are now organizing themselves for the next grouping that will construct their homes. There are 100 - 200 units in a grouping. There are 25 houses in each block. This is the basic unit of organization as well. The 25 families

constitute a work group. The larger group meets monthly; the 25 families meet every 2 weeks, and 7 work teams meet weekly. The teams include: carpentry, child care, electrical, concrete, metal, and health. In the particular grouping we visited there are 194 families. The unit of 25 elects 2 people to a coordinating body which meets every 2 weeks. The Assembly of the 194 is the body that meets monthly.

The leader of this whole development is now full time or, as they say in Brazil, "liberated". His salary is supported by outside funding. Each of the groupings sends a representative to a body that he coordinates.

He took us to meet some of the construction workers. One of them is an older woman who already has her house in another area but volunteers here to help the families get their housing. A young man, Jose, tells us, "I'm tremendously happy to finally be building my house. We're going to complete this project soon. It's been a long time and a long struggle; sometimes I thought it would never happen. Now the City government is no longer fighting us. They are helping us solve some erosion problems on the land." He, his wife, and 2 children will soon occupy one of the houses.

Another man at the site is the hired supervisor; in addition to his 16 volunteer hours, he works 5 days a week coordinating the work here. There are 11 similar coordinators, or supervisors, who are paid from the savings that the group has realized in the construction process thus far. The supervisor was elected by the group because of his history in the movement (he was one of the first to participate), his skill at construction work and because he was unemployed at the time.

Another PT - popular organizations disagreement is over self-help housing. The new PT Commissioner on Housing in Sao Paulo is a socialist, but she is skeptical of self-help housing. She is an architect who thinks the self-help approach is more costly and less efficient than a public housing program IF the latter were run honestly. She acknowledges the corruption of present programs. There was a struggle within PT over her appointment to the post. The radicals, especially of the Catholic left, want to use the construction of new housing to also "construct" new people. This happens in the cooperative effort of building self-help housing; but this isn't part of the perspective of a more technocratically oriented planner. Self-help housing can be used to organize the people, to develop leadership, to develop skills and to develop self-confidence among the people as they see the fruits of their labor. The Commissioner gets into arguments with Sem Terra (People Without Land) over this issue. On the other hand, the self-help people believe that she will finally yield to them on specific projects if the people involved are determined to use the self-help approach. And they recognize her honesty, openness and competence in the field. She will implement her ideas on vacant land where there aren't occupations.

The self-help housing header says, "She is a person dedicated to the poor. She looks at the housing in a technical way. Maybe she's right that honest, factory built and professionally constructed housing is more efficient and less expensive. Maybe she's wrong. For those who aren't organized, maybe this is the answer. But for those of us who are organized for self-help housing, it is not. I think she will support us. She is willing to listen."

Another of the reasons some in the City oppose self-help housing is because they think it is unfair to workers to work all week and then spend their weekends working as well. The self help movement leader responds, "These workers don't have anything to do on the weekend. They just sit around their favela. They'd rather be working with their friends, building their own houses." He has other reasons as well. "It's important that the people build their own houses. They

take pride in them. They conserve and protect them. The technical people in the City don't understand this aspect. They think we are about building housing. But we are also about building people." At the same time, he believes that the PT supporters who make up the technical team that provides them with assistance are critical to the success of their project. And, despite difficulties with the PT Administration, he says that they will ultimately listen to the people.

The leader talked about the history of their movement. "Many times we were frustrated, felt defeated and wanted to give up. When we did, we would just talk with each other, remind each other how far we'd come, about our past victories, about why we were doing this. This would renew our spirits. Also, we operated on the principle of continuous pressure on the politicians. This would help us at election time because the politicians would want our votes; whenever we got close to elections we would escalate our pressure and demand that things get delivered before election day. In the history of this struggle, the hardest thing to get people to do was to occupy the land. It took three years to get to the point where we could do this. Our people believed it was wrong to take someone else's land. I argued that the land wasn't used and that the homeless and landless also had rights to the land. I used the Bible to convince the people. But this wasn't enough; finally it was the broken promises of the politicians and the bureaucrats that got our people to occupy the land. What the people have in abundance is courage; what they lack is organization. At the first occupation, the police arrested a young man. When they put him in their Volkswagon bus, the people surrounded it and threatened to tip it over. I talked them out of it. We have some people who just want a house; others are very conscientized. You have to work constantly on the question of consciousness.

"The journey of the people," he says, "is up and down, like the streets of a hilly city. Some people continue and progress. Others don't. You have to look back over a 2 - 3 year period to see it. Many people have grown in this proces; some have not. Some people stop when they get their house but many others recognize a responsibility to the greater struggle. They know they benefitted from it and therefore owe something to it. They know the technical team donates its time and receives nothing for it. They know they have a Christian duty to act for others as well as for themselves. When you work with the people you always have a conflict. I have a vision of a new society, but I can't build it alone. Other people have other ideas of the new society, so we have to argue and compromise. But we have all struggled together, so we have to build our vision collectively. What upsets me is these 'Left' party people who haven't struggled with us but who come into meetings and make pronouncements on policy, on what we should do. I get really upset when I see them sway the vote even though they haven't worked with the people. They can't do this in our group because we have struggled together. They can't do it here because of me and others like me who have developed from the base. My friends in CUT and PT say to me, 'you're wasting your time because someone's going to come in and steal your base.' But it's not true; new leaders are developing. Our movement is bigger now than my role in it. Some of the people in State developed housing sell their units to make money. This kind of individualism is very disappointing; it isn't happening here because of our struggle and the consciousness we have developed and because we are like a family.

"My vision goes back to my childhood: a community of people who live together, work together, take care of each other. It was like this in my rural home." He laughs and says, "Sometimes I think I'm crazy." His vision is decentralist, communitarian.

Catholic missionary:

"I came to Brazil in '69. In December, I was assigned to a 'periphery' parish in Zona Sul. There were 100,000 people in the parish. It was just after the Medellin conference of the Bishops. Our staff pushed the development of base communities. We made mistakes, but we learned from them. In November '73, I attended a workshop of Pastoral Operaria. Of 42 people attending, 38 were picked up in early '74 by the police; they were tortured and imprisoned. It really shook me up. In the Base communities, mother's clubs were formed. They did price surveys of local stores and developed statistics on the cost of living. After food and rent, people had nothing. Out of this work came a movement against the increasing cost of living. The mothers from all over the country gathered a million signatures on petitions and went to the Capital, Brasilia. There was lots of publicity and learning, but no concrete results. In this period of the mid-'70s, I learned that you do conscientizing by action and reflection, not by books and lectures to the people. In this period, the base communities were taking on and winning local issues in the favelas: water hook-ups, sanitation, extension of bus lines, some new buses, electrical hook-up, some schools built, drainage, asphalting of pathways and development and asphalting of some streets in the favelas so garbage trucks, ambulances and other vehicles could come in.

"In this period, we got deeper into Biblical reflection; we learned to relate the Bible stories to the struggles and stories of the people. We'd make parallels, like the liturgy of Moses tapping the rock for water. We used a plastic bag full of water as the rock,and punctured it! We were getting deeper into analysis of the causes of poverty and repression as well...looking at the relationships between issues, and also started looking at the workplace.

"Throughout the military period, there were still elections for city councils (although the military appointed the mayors). We would always win concessions around the time of elections because the politicians wanted to look good to the people in the Base communities because they knew these people had influence in the broader community. In '78 we had our first big strikes. The workers discovered there was fraud in the government figures on inflation. This was important because of cost of living adjustments in wages. Lula led a strike for retroactive pay adjustment; out of this he became a national figure. A partial victory was won after 20 days of striking. 80,000 workers went out. These were workers at multi-nationals who were already better off. The media tried to divide them from the poor. Lula responded effectively. In '79, auto, chemical, textile workers all struck and won victories. A lot of the activists of these unions came out of the Base communities. '80 was the biggest of the strikes. The people marched in defiance of the military, and the military backed off.

"In this period of the late '70s, there were major droughts in Brazil's Northeast region. By '81, there was major migration into Sao Paulo. The first wave of migrants came to Vila Remo, my parish at the time. 3,000 people invaded vacant land owned by a Federal Department; they were met by 3,000 soldiers, police and dogs. People would charge the army with Bibles in hand. After 3 days of stand off, the people moved. The organizer of this action was the PCdoB, which was then clandestine. They told people there was land opening up; people came from all over the city. The action was a mess. Nobody knew anyone else."

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RIO DE JANEIRO: (Our host is a tour guide and left intellectual whose name I got from people in Neighbor To Neighbor, a San Francisco based organization working against American intervention and for peace in Central America.)

"Brizola: As Governor of the State of Rio, Brizola coopted the favela Resident Associations by various deals with their leaderships. The favela associations also were won over by Brizola because he built water pumps to get water up the hill into the favelas. Each of the pumps cost $100,000. This is the amount stolen every hour in Brasilia! The largest favela in So. America is in Rio -- 250,000 people. Brizola also started huge public schools projects in the State. Kids go all day and get meals. It is a very expensive program; only a relatively small number of the projected schools were built. Brizola's successor immediately terminated the project upon his election, leaving many unfinished or even nearly finished buildings exactly as they were on the day of the termination order. Brizzola is a big landowner in Uruguay. He is the last of the politicians from the Goulart (pre-military President) period who is still functioning. The others are either dead or retired.

"The 'opening': Brazil's ruling circles got tired of splitting the take with the military. Corruption is endemic from national politicians to the local cop. It is so widespread as to be a serious drain on the economy.

"Brizola vs. Lula and PT: Brizola has no plan to govern except to build public works and public schools. He thinks he and the State are the same thing; he is a classic 'left' populist of Latin America, and in some ways he is like DeGaulle. PT, on the other hand, has seven commissions (economy, agrarian reform, ecology, etc). These are headed by top people in the respective fields. The intellectuals of the Left are with PT.

"The future: it is bleak. Collor will win. He's another corrupt politician and will steal just like the others. He is front man for the Folio-media empire. He will do nothing about the inflation, corruption and debt that are destroying Brazil.

"The South: a big majority of the settlers there were Italian. The Germans were next. Unlike the Indians, they came to Brazil with some idea of rights so it was and is harder to exploit them. That's why the land occupations are strongest there. There is some influence of the Italian anarchist tradition.

"World War II: President Vargas flirted with the Axis and the Allies. He entered the war on the side of the Allies in 1944 when it was clear that the Allies would win. He got a commitment from Roosevelt for a line of credit to build Brazil's first steel mills.

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Another American Catholic missionary:

Favelas: many favelas have a 'society of the neighborhood'. This organization is usually tied into the old-line politicians; it depends on them for favors, and never challenges them. The 'association of the neighborhood' is a more recent favela organization, and is independent and autonomous. The 'associations' grew up in opposition to the 'societies'. At least this is the general pattern; there are always exceptions. In some places the Associations were formed by people who came out of the Base communities. The Base communities are frequently militant in their work with the favelas and neighborhoods.

"A story about local action: near one of Sao Paulo's neighborhoods there was a quarry whose blasting was breaking neighborhood windows and even cracking

windows. People wanted to close the mine; they went to PT, which sympathized with them but said that there was nothing that could be done according to the law. The Base communities got some legal research done by the Human Rights Commission of the Archdiocese. Armed with facts, they went to the Department of Mines where an official told them nothing could be done. They said, 'we'll be back in 30 days'. They returned with muddy shoes and screaming kids -- and lots of them. The office was left in shambles; they again said, 'we'll be back'. The Department agreed to take steps to close the mine, and one year later it was closed.

"Favelas organize on a number of common issues: lighting, asphalt, sewers, schools, health centers, bus lines, water and title to houses. One Base community got the Recorder of Deeds to have regular office hours in the neighborhood to process title applications; a chapel was used as his office. Cardinal Arns said, 'not to use the chapels for the people's needs would be an affront to God'.

"Problems in the popular movement: burnout among veterans; effects of the economic crisis (inflation, unemployment, declining standards of living for most people), the depth of poverty; PT failure to deliver very much in the local administrations it has won; absorption of many movement people into PT administration. A major weakness right now is that we don't have a reflection on organization, strategy and tactics. The faith dimension of activism is a major sustaining force; it is what initiated many people into the popular organizations. In Base community meetings there is a weekly return to themes of liberation, commitment, action and responsibility. This theology has replaced a theology of resignation. It has created deep bonds among the people that withstand internal conflict and that shore people up in times of defeat and frustration. 'The faith' motivated people to act on 'the facts' (the issues); they reached out to others, to the people who were suffering from the facts. But these people don't stay involved; 'the fact' isn't enough to sustain motivation, though some leaders have been involved through this process and they do remain involved. 'The motor is the faith commitment; the fact is the gas.' If you analyze the major popular organizations, the vast majority of the leadership has come from the faith communities.

"1964 - present: the coup was in '64; in '68 the military pushed aside the civilian facade; '68 - '78 was the worst period -- torture, selected assassinations of key leaders, repression; '78-'79 the big strikes, with the church playing a key support role. The Base communities fed the strikers from church based kitchens and dining rooms. The churches became union headquarters when there was no place to meet. Dom Paulo (Cardinal Arns) opened the Cathedral and used its pulpit to support the strikes. The unions say, 'we couldn't have won without the progressive church'."

Pastoral Operaria meeting with a "liberated" (full time) person:

"I'm paid by PO; I used to be a factory worker at the Mercedes-Benz plant. Our objectives are consciousness raising, political education and Biblical reflection among the workers. We form groups at the base. We go with the workers on various demonstrations or other actions; we hold house meetings with the workers. In the small groups we confront and analyze daily experience; we evaluate facts in the light of faith (see, judge, act). We analyze documents and put them in popular language. 'Teams' are made up of full-time people and workers who come at night or on week-ends. The teams cross diocese and other levels. We are very careful about who becomes full time; it only happens with those the people at the base want to be 'liberated' to work in PO. After 2 - 3 years, people leave full time positions in PO and go back into the factories. We don't want it seen as a career. The full-time people are the think tank and

fundraising people for PO. At the base there is work on specific issues; PO also engages the workers in discussions on strategy and tactics.

"PO is opposed to the 'pelego mentality' in unions. The old pelego worked for the government and the employer while he was an officer of the union. He was completely bought. The new pelego is different. He talks about the 'union of concrete results' (business unionism). This is what is supported by the AFL-CIO through AIFLD. The modern pelego has a presence on the shop floor; he is an 'immediatist'; he wants quick results. He says he isn't political, but all organizing is political. He wants to reform capitalism. He is now out-organizing us sometimes. He says the worker just wants a little bigger piece of the pie, and it is the job of the union to get it for him. The head of the CGT recently said, 'I don't care how much the capitalist makes just so long as we get a fair deal in wages, hours and benefits.

"When you organize opposition in the unions the first result is firings. If you appeal the firing, you may win in court but the court order isn't implemented because the administrative organs of the Justice system are bought off by the employers.

"Cardinal Arns is highly respected by the militant trade unionists. In the period of the '78-'79 strikes, he was asked to mediate. 'On what side of the table would I sit,' he asked. 'You would sit in the middle because we need someone who will be fair to both sides,' he was told. 'No,' he said, 'if I am the mediator I will be fair, but I will sit on the side of the workers because it is on that side that justice lies.' This is one of many such stories about the Cardinal.

On consciousness raising: "You can paint a picture so big that the worker gets discouraged and depressed by it; then he doesn't participate."

In the PO meeting we had a lively discussion on worker councils as an intermediate step of struggle for unions which want to expand their arena of decision making, enhancing the competence and self-confidence of workers. Their fear is that it undermines a commitment to socialism because the councils can be coopted. I asked if that wasn't the risk of any "intermediate" step, including a collective bargaining agreement...and, taking their understanding of socialism as public ownership and democratic control, I asked how workers can believe they can run the country if they don't become involved in running their industries? They have had some experiences with the multi-nationals using various worker participation plans to coopt the workers and the unions. But the 'national' companies oppose these plans because they don't know how to control them."

American Catholic nuns:

"There are several Base communities in our parish; they were supported by the previous pastor. Now we have a new pastor. He doesn't visit the people, come to parties or otherwise reach out to the people. He wants money from the people for a car, a TV, etc. One of the Base communities voted not to give him the money he was asking for because of his behavior toward the people. In turn, he refused to let them use 'his' car for community purposes, saying he didn't want to get it dirty. Another time he wouldn't pick up a speaker for a dance because he was watching a soccer game on TV. The leader of the most militant of the Base communities organized a meeting with the other leaders. They met with the priest; this led to a dialog on expectations of the community, and agreement from the priest that he would change."

Neighborhood man (of 25):

On church and faith: "In 5 years we had 5 priests. I came to the conclusion that the lay people had to take responsibility otherwise everything would fall apart after each priest left. One of the priests opened up my mind so that I could entertain this idea. He asked me to become a reader in the Mass. I thought I could do that because since I was a child I was a good reader. Then the priest asked me to do other things: develop the music, coordinate the liturgy, teach catechism, help organize a parish council, organize a Base community and so on. He got me to go to a special program for lay people to deepen our understanding of theology. It was a 2 year program that met four nights a week. I didn't finish because I had to work, but it broadened my understanding of our faith. I especially liked the sections on Christology from which I got the insight that Jesus was a human person who participated in life as well as being the son of God. When a later priest wanted to undo all this we felt it was our church and he had no right to undo what we had developed. We dialoged about this, and reached an understanding.

His role in PT: "PT later asked me to be part of a nucleus for the Party in our neighborhood. The church experience gave me the confidence to think that I could do it. Our neighborhood voted by a strong majority for PT in the last election.

The U.S.: "My picture of the US is that there are also rich and poor there, but the poor aren't as poor as in Brazil. Workers here are only cheap labor. There the worker has more respect and dignity because of the law. Life is better. I only know what I see on the TV."

On 'Machismo': "I grew up in a home of 6 men, my father and five sons. The men had to help in the house, otherwise things wouldn't get done. My men friends say their wives are for sex, children and the house. My wife works and we share the housework. My friends tease me, saying, 'your wife's the boss in your house'. They think I'm nuts, but I believe in a partnership. None of the other men will allow their wives to participate in activities outside the house. They'll support women's rights in the abstract because they support PT -- but they won't apply it to their own wives. The men decide for their women what they should and should not know.

"I leave for work at 5:00 a.m. and return at 5:00 p.m. Meetings are at night. We have 3 children. In my family, my wife participates. We are lucky because her mother lives in the house and can take care of the kids. Around here it is very difficult to get neighbors, parents or relatives to take care of kids. You usually have to pay someone; we are lucky."

American Nun: "The men in PT complain about their wives not supporting their political activism but they won't involve their wives in it and don't share with them what they are doing in PT, why they are in it, etc. Sometimes women become liberated as a result of other activities. One woman in the parish became active in a campaign to improve a local neighborhood health center; she had been a typical housewife, but she really woke up in this campaign. She became a 'way out' feminist. She and her husband, who is on the Board of his Union and a PT activist, almost separated over this. But they talked it through with the help of some of the Base community families and with some of the women religious. We hoped that the Base community would actually talk about it in their meetings, but that never happened. It would have been beautiful if it had."

*****

American lay missioner:

In an area ("sector") of 3 million people. It's divided into 10 smaller areas. 5 of these have organized favelas; there are 2 paid staff people for each of the 5 favelas, recruited from within; they are paid "2 minimum salaries" (40 cruzados a week x 2 = roughly $95 US a month). At first there was only one Maryknoll staff person in the whole sector. Slowly they are organizing and developing an indigenous team. The team now develops criteria for additional staff (which are: commitment to the favela, history of activism, religious formation, political formation), hires additional people, makes decisions on program. The team meets weekly. Agenda: reflection, problems in work, plans for the next week, bigger planning, etc. A Maryknoll lay missioner, is the team coordinator along with another person. I sat in on a team meeting: 9 women, 2 men. A reflection on John 14. Lively give and take discussion among most team members (in Portuguese) of the items on the agenda. The spirit of the meeting is very democratic. One of the items was a hot discussion about two people who are always late and leave early. The Maryknoller says it's hard for Brazilians to confront one another this way, but the team needs to do it for accountability. They also decided to continue the discussion next week, not referring it to the coordinators. It is a matter of responsibility to the team, not of responsibility to the coordinator.

Favelas in this sector: "Big problem is space; houses are being lost because of flooding; space is needed for "urbanization" (the process of asphalting and widening streets, etc.). People who are losing regular apartments in Sao Paulo because they can no longer afford them are now moving into favelas. Their big question is how to deal with these pressures. The majority of the favelas here are on City owned land. With the new Administration, it will be easier to obtain tenure or title. The debate is over whether the title should be held individually or cooperatively. Many people want an individual title; this is a very important thing for Brazilians--to have their own home. The team fears individual titles because some people will subsequently sell titles to developers. Another problem is that the favelas on private land don't have the right to go for title until they have been there for 5 years. During that time the owner can have them evicted. After the 5 years are up, they can go into Court for title. The City can expropriate before 5 years, negotiating a price with the owner. Owners threaten to stall the issue in the Courts, and use this as leverage to get over market price for the property. Favelas in the sector range in size from 1,000 to 17,000."

I had earlier learned that one of the big issues in the Archdiocese of Sao Paulo was a grand plan of Cardinal Arns which created several levels of organization: the Base community (in an area or neighborhood), "below" the parish; there might be many Base communities in a parish -- and even within each Base community there might be "street committees" which are generally house meetings engaged in Biblical reflection; the parish (for those things in which it has juridical authority); the sector (above the parish); and, finally, the region, made up typically of 10 or 11 sectors. Perhaps, I asked, this is why Rome broke up the Archdiocese. The effect of this Pastoral Plan would be to allow a Base community to participate in a sector while almost ignoring its parish. Similar sector organizations would come together in regions. A wonderful scheme, I thought, to bypass conservative parish structures and pastors but not one likely to win favor in the Vatican.

On the other hand, I was told by one of the nuns that a new parish pastor had opposed some of the things they (the nuns) had been doing with the Base communities. The nuns sought a dialog with "Dom Paulo" (Cardinal Arns). He told them, in clear terms, that if there was a conflict between the women religious and one of his pastors he would always support the pastor.

(Lay missionary cont): "Favela dwellers here come from the same rural point of origin (at least many of them), so they carry into Sao Paulo their old relationships. This is a buffer against the harshness of the City, but it also keeps them from dealing with their new reality. The favela becomes a very important place for people; they don't go out of it and any threat to it is very disturbing. As a result of this, it is hard to get people to visit other favelas. They are afraid of violence, of being outsiders. The social organization of the favela is intricate. Usually several houses share a yard or space; they may be friends or family. This is the first level where people deal with problems. Next level is the respected person; if you can't solve a problem in your immediate space, you seek out the respected person closest to your group (not necessarily physically close, but socially close). This person may live in another part of the favela. People who go to this person frequently are all from the same town -- as is the respected person. The favela may be people from a common region; its internal space may be organized by town of origin within the region. The team focuses on these respected people, trying to win their support for the movement. They won't work in a favela unless they are invited to do so by people in the favela. In some favelas, the local Association or local gangs have been able to keep us out."

Relations to the PT Administration: a regional administrator of the City has promised the favella organization land, but it is now 3 weeks overdue. The team discusses what it will do. Do they want to embarrass the new City government? What about their relations with PT? Questions: should we do a land occupation? Occupy the regional administrator's office? Stage a protest at the administrator's office? How many people do we want to turn out? The meeting decided on a date for an action at the regional administrator's office. But someone on the team called the office during the staff meeting to see if the papers for transfer of title had been prepared. The team meeting adjourns with a note of uncertainty as to whether or not the action will take place.

Despite the City Housing Administrator's reservations about self-help housing, the lay missioner believes that she will respond favorably when a group wants to do it. PT isn't going to fight favella organizations on an issue like this. Also, many times the decision will be made at a regional level by a lower level administrator and not get to her desk.

Observation: The Question of "Formal" and "Real" Democracy: the team makes a lot of decisions for the community, yet it isn't elected by anyone. Whether it has the support of the people or not can only be known by seeing whether the people "turn out" or not -- whether for actions or elections. The team develops proposals; it goes out into the communities and talks with people about them; proposals come back to the team meetings for modification and adoption, but there is no formal body of elected residents that is the one to adopt the proposals. My preference is for both -- formal and real. But if I had to choose, I'd rather have the substance than the form. The ritual of elections with no real choices or no effect on policy whomever you vote for doesn't mean very much to me.

In the afternoon, another meeting is scheduled to discuss the coming October 1 Annual Meeting in the Region. The team is joined by a former member who now works for the PT City Administration. He says the purpose of the Assembly (annual meeting) ought to be to strengthen the 'Lula for President Campaign' and to support "Luisa" (the Mayor). Everyone else argues with him. The purpose, they say, is to strengthen the movement and raise the consciousness of the people of the favelas. A side-effect of this will be to strengthen support for PT as long as PT is serving the people. A classic debate on electoral politics! Typically the annual assembly discusses major issues, makes major decisions and celebrates victories of the year.

The Associations in the favelas of this region are almost all PMDB related -- that is, tied to the old line centrist/conservative Party. The popular organizations bypass these Associations for their mobilizations on issues. They occasionally go into them on local issues. They have begun to win some of the Association leader's support, and they now participate in actions of the popular organizations. The popular organizations are "the movement"; they are multi-favela, articulating issues on a wider level.

In addition to the team meeting, there is a monthly meeting of from 2 - 3 representatives from each organized favela. It is in a workshop/dicussion format, and used to train people to deal with the issues associated with urbanization.

A breakdown of their region: 10 sectors with favelas and neighborhoods. Total population is 3 million. The most organized sector has 20 local organizations; some sectors have none. When they began 3 years ago, there were no local organizations.

CEPIS (Center for Popular Education): this is a church sponsored Center, built by nuns (Dominicans, I think) who sold a school to subsidize construction of the Center. It reflects the approach that came from the Bishop's meeting in Medellin -- the "preferential option for the poor", and liberation theology. The purpose is political education and involvement. They have three areas of work: (1) popular organizations or movements; (2) Base communities; (3) unions. There are constant seminars which reflect on the practice of these three areas. They work with similar institutes in other cities. They are linked to SIMI, UNI, CPT, Sem Terra, PO, CUT, etc. A major function of theirs is to provide technical assistance. Their methodology is based on Paulo Freire's methods and teaching. Finally, they participate in campaigns of international solidarity, such as anti-apartheid. They have a major computer networking capability. They translate documents like Sante Fe II, publish studies, etc. Their audience is (a) popular, and (b) pastoral agents. They use Audio-Visual materials as well.

Work in a local union: The CEPIS staff person is working with a group of workers who want a union but who have no union experience; he also is active in his own parish. He meets weekly with the workers; they have middle-range objectives. They want to take over the CGT union in the next internal elections. They consider it 'do nothing'. The union was started by the company's owners. The company appointed its head who is a lawyer but who is registered as a Metal Worker. The rank and file members are now learning how to negotiate with an owner, how to run a meeting, etc. CEPIS has helped get two fired workers reinstated; it provides lawyers. They were fired for their opposition activity. The worksite is in a town of 20,000. Last year they had a wildcat strike of 12 days to get wages adjusted in a timely manner to keep up with inflation. They won 4 months back pay. It was the first strike in the town. All 180 workers there joined in the strike -- none of them had been active in the CGT union. The strike led to a major increase in interest in the union. There are 50 companies, some of them with 2,000 employees. It's hard to organize in a small town because if a worker gets fired he's blacklisted everyplace; he's known. They now meet semi-secretly in the local parish. Only 2 are public -- those who were elected to the factory committee. They are legally protected; the company knows it can't fire them. The Courts here are enforcing the law. The role of the church is key because it is legitimizing the organizing.

The election is a year away, so work has to remain clandestine. They conduct house meetings, get people from different factories to meet one another in the church, otherwise do things to get more and more of the workers connected with one another. They are preparing a slate to run for the entire executive board of the union. Most of what they talk about are the immediate workplace issues

that the pelego leadership won't do anything about. But paralleling their discussion of the immediate issues they raise many broader political questions with the 2 leaders who are now protected and with the 18 that are the slate for office in the next election. This includes discussions of CUT, capitalism, elections, the Brazilian debt, etc. One of the 18 came out of the Base communities. Others are influenced by the Progressive wing of the Catholic Church. While they don't seek consensus on all these issues, and while some of the 20 are more interested in these discussions than others, there are two major points on which they do seek consensus: (1) the need for unity of all workers, and (2) the need for an autonomous, combative labor movement that is independent of government.

Brazil's Future: (various sources)

Background: the dominant groups of Brazil have lost control of the economic process (inflation, external debt, corruption and poverty). Sarney came up with 12 plans, none of which worked. Chaos continues. Sarney and his government are no longer taken seriously. There are now major splits among Brazil's elite groups with each group out to protect its piece of the pie. Hyperinflation (50% + per month) is the next feared development in the economy. Money will become valueless; the financial system will go down the drain. Producers won't put their products on the market because they won't make money. This will lead to unemployment and greater poverty. Food riots are likely. The army will be on the streets. Some economists say this is almost inevitable and only by the end of '90 will the government get a handle on it.

Whoever is elected inherits this mess. The President will have a large mandate. There will be 40 million voters, far more than ever voted in Brazil because of the rapid increase in population. But the candidate may not be able to do anything because it's likely that no one with any real program will get elected. The election is a media contest. In 1990 a new Congress will get elected. Constitutionally it has substantial power. There is likely to be a tug-of-war between Congress and the President.

This crisis can lead to major demoralization of most people or a major radicalization. Hyperinflation will wipe out both the middle class and the better paid working class. Riots, strikes, perhaps armed uprising and military repression are all in the realm of possibility. Whoever wins the Presidency must deal with all the economic chaos and with a likely fight with Congress. If this scenario unfolds it is likely to be accompanied by the growth of mysticism because things will be so out of control. The God of the conservative church will emerge as the dominant face of God: other worldly, fatalistic.

A recent international meeting of economists had two views of Brazil: (a) the locomotive of the 3rd world, gaining independence from Japan, Korea, US/Canada and Western Europe versus (b) a declining power as capital leaves the country and it becomes just another neo-colonial outpost.

There are now 5 major proposals offered as ways out of the chaos:

1. Return to an authoritarian government, with the military in the prime role. Impose austerity and recession to get inflation and the international debt under control. This approach is supported by (a) the PDS (Maluf), a right wing party backed by the military, (b) the PSD (Caiado is their candidate for President; he's a dangerous right winger with connections to the death squads and a background in UDR), and (c) PRN (Collor, the most likely candidate to win Presidency; he is a media creation, unknown by most people, supported by the Globo media complex). All these parties and candidates are for the old elites and the military.

2. Neo-liberals propose a free market, diminished role of government, privatization of government owned enterprises, no State corporations and no State planning. They are supported by the Federation of Brazilian Industrialists and other large capitalists who have abandoned the far right. They are doing heavy educational campaigning on the "free market". Their parties are PFL (Chaves), PL (Afif-Domingues), the conservative wing of PMDB (Ulysses).

3. Social-Democratic proposals call for better distribution of wealth and income, more participation of the people in public decision making and a welfare state. Supporters include the other wing of PMDB, PDT (Brizola's party), PSDB (Covas). Covas is a decent, honest, open, left of center politician who acquited himself honorably during the military period. But he is quite cautious.

4. Populist proposals cut across some of the other lines. It is almost more of a style than an ideology; it is very Brazilian, and is to be found in many of the parties. Its basic idea is to unify all sectors of society under a strong leader who rules by charisma (Peron, Vargas), and who protects the interests of the poor and working class. Participation is not based on education, deliberation, decision making in local assemblies. Participation is in the mass meeting; it is mobilized by the supreme leader and is more show than substance. The leader bypasses intermediary organizations and appeals directly to the "masses". Both Brizzola and Collor show elements of this style.

5. Socialist proposals, including both the traditional PCB (Freire; Gorbachev oriented Communist Party), PCdoB (Albanian line and inside the Popular Front), others (Trotskyist, etc), and the socialism of the PT. While both question the basic organization of Brazilian society, the PT has a communitarian, decentralist, democratic and popular approach; it rejects the idea of a Vanguard Party run by the principles of democratic centralism as those have been applied by Marxist-Leninist parties.

Elections will take place almost every year between now and 1998: Constitutional reform ('91); Mayors, City councils ('92); plebiscite on parliamentary v. presidential form of government ('93); elections for President, Congress, State legislatures and Governors ('94); Mayors, City councils ('96); Governors,Congress, State legislatures ('98).

Meeting with an active progressive lay Catholic woman very involved in solidarity work with anti-apartheid groups in South Africa.)

She has a generally pessimistic view of the immediate future, though a more optimistic longer term view. There is a major problem of demobilization of the popular organizations, especially since 1985. People now expect the government to do for them. We have to get through this mentality before there is a re-mobilization of the people. Another major problem is the role of the Vatican. It is demoralizing the progressive Catholic Church and that, in turn, demoralizes others who support liberation theology. When the Sao Paulo reorganization took place there were massive demonstrations for Cardinal Arns, but Rome did what it wanted to do. The threat of US sponsored low-intensity conflict is little understood; this new form of violence is insidious precisely because it is so hard to point to armies and massive violence.

There are some positives as well. At a recent national meeting of the Base communities there was a growing sense of solidarity with the rest of Latin America and a recognition of the need to be independent of the hierarchy. This idea of independence has a long history in Brazil. Because there were few priests, there was independent development at the base. A "prayer woman" helped people pray; she was an indigenous person. People owned their Christianity in these groups. It was part of their lives. It was treated as a second class

religion by the hierarchy and theologians, but it persisted. With the military period, on the one hand, and with Paulo Freire's educational practice on the other, the hierarchy and the priests grew to respect this more indigenous form of religion. In the 1950s, the lay Catholic middle class movements made connections with the poor as well. Catholic Action was an expression of this lay middle class movement. Begun in Belgium it connected with Catholic Universities in Brazil in the '40s and '50s. Students left the universities and went "to the people". They adapted Freire's teaching methods and used them in their work. In the '60s, the Catholic Action people got radicalized by the military dictatorship; some organized for guerrilla war. Many were killed. They disbanded. Later the same phenomenon re-emerged as Christian renewal. (A parallel in the US is Apostles in the Marketplace.)

A more optimistic view from an activist intellectual who is vice-president of an institute that studies the social problems of Brazil and works with various progressive forces in the country.

"We are now in a period of consolidating democracy. People are learning citizenship. They will get beyond assistencia politics -- the idea of the politician and government doing favors for them. It is impossible to return to the military dictatorship; for one thing, the military does not have the apetite to rule. It is too internally divided. In this period, the parties will have to learn how to implement programs. This is especially a problem for PT.

"PT is now in a complicated discussion on the role of the poor. The radicals want immediate decentralization and community control. Others want a period of education, a welfare state, an equalization of resources and the establishment of standards before 'turning things over' to the people. The PT socialist project isn't defined, though it does involve the following elements: public ownership/state enterprise for all major means of production (corporations and banks) as well as for major public services (health, transportation, education); this is to be combined with popular participation and decentralization of decision making. Major redistribution of wealth and income are part of the longer range, but not in the immediate program. PT is the most vigorous force on the left now; the PCB lost many of intellectuals to the PT -- and is mad about that. Key people of the PT come from a Catholic left tradition. The PT's biggest problem now is that it hasn't delivered in places where it has won local office. If it doesn't do that soon it will suffer. It has to get tough in its local administrations and produce some results."

CONCLUSIONS

Two contradictory impressions are dominant in my mind.

The country is in extraordinary difficulties: corruption, international debt, vast poverty and all its attendant problems, illiteracy, control of significant sectors of the economy largely out of the hands of Brazilians (multi-nationals and international financial institutions), demoralization of the people, growth of escapist religion and drug use (perhaps related phenomena), the majority of the people with little sense of democratic tradition or participation and used to a politics of favoritism, sexism, racism, deep classism, homophobia, destruction of the environment...the list goes on.

Yet I am optimistic about Brazil and its future. The progressive Catholic Church and its Protestant allies, the various vital popular organizations, the Base Christian Communities, liberation theology, a strong group of independent left intellectuals who want to connect to the popular movements, Freire's pedagogy, the new vitality of the labor movement (especially the CUT), the Worker's Party and its commitment to a pluralistic development of the left in Brazil and the extraordinary dedication of a large and growing number of

organizers and leaders I met througout the country are all sources for cautious optimism.

From the point of view of the give and take that I had hoped for in this trip, the major lessons I drew for my own work as an organizer have to do with rooting action in faith and political education. It seems to me that the Brazilians have much to offer us in both regards. For many of the people I met, their faith is a living thing in a way that I infrequently experience in the U.S. We are too blase, cynical or urbane to take faith as seriously as these Brazilians. Too bad for us. I also think the careful work they do with political education, in the sense of getting people to look beyond the immediate issue and begin to understand the system as a whole, merits our attention.

On the other hand, there are of questions of organization, power, building locally based multi-issue organizations, the relationship between community organizations and electoral politics and others on which I think we have a contribution to make. Indeed, we had some fruitful dialogs in these areas while I was there...and we could have talked a lot more!

What one most understands after a visit like this to a Third World nation (even one that is so industrialized) is how dependent much of Brazil is on decisions that aren't made in Brazil -- that are made in the U.S., Japan and Western Europe, by the governments, financial institutions and transnational corporations based in these countries. In a time of peristroika and glasnost in the Soviet Union, and of a loosening of the controls held by the center over their periphery, one wonders what will be the role of the Western "democracies" in relation to those they hold dependent in the Third World. In particular, as an American, I wonder if we will again be part of an intervention designed to maintain or install an oppressive status quo -- as we were once before in Brazil and as we have been in Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Grenada and elsewhere "south of the border".

One cannot make such a trip without seeing how much our own struggles for greater accountability and responsibility of our institutions to democratic values are connected to the future of democracy in Brazil and throughout the world. Community organizer well understand disinvestment in one neighborhood accompanied by speculative investment in another; we have even begun to look at in cities and regions. From Brazil, I began to see it internationally.

The question of the future is whether the world will be a company town or a democratic community.

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