

14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
February 25, 1976

Harry Ring and Miguel Pendas
Los Angeles

Dear Harry and Miguel,

Enclosed for your information is a copy of an interview by Caracol with leaders of the Texas Farm Workers Union on 1/18/76. The interview, which appeared in Spanish in the February issue of the magazine, deals with recent developments in the division between the UFW and the TFW. The UFW apparently sent their secretary-treasurer, Gilberto Padilla, to the Valley last December for discussions with the TFW and to get the TFW to move out of its offices, El Cuhamil, in San Juan. The UFW owns the property, although the TFW claims that it was Texas farm workers who built the offices that are on the property.

I have enclosed a translation of some of the more important parts of the interview, as well as the translation of the Padilla letters to the TFW appearing in the same issue of Caracol. The editor claims that the letters were unsigned and undated.

Another item I am sending is a copy of an article appearing in the February 14 issue of the Houston Post, the day before the TFW was supposed to vacate the Cuhamil. The article is based on a UPI dispatch.

In my opinion, this is a very serious development, and may require comment from us in the Militant. The division between the UFW and the TFW has now become public in the worst possible way, and has the potential of exploding in the UFW's face. It can only serve to alienate Chicanos, particularly Chicano youth, from the UFW. What is at issue here, I think, is not simply a question of who owns the Cuhamil offices, or who is right or wrong in the split in the farm workers. The way in which the UFW appears to have handled the most recent problem will be seen by many as an attempt by them to destroy the Texas farm workers movement, at a time when the TFW is having difficulties of its own in the organizing drive in the Valley. You'll note in the Post article how the bourgeois press jumps on these differences to violence-bait the TFW.

The TFW has asked its supporters to send letters to Chavez asking him to stop the eviction, and to make his own position on the matter known.

Since the Caracol interview only presents the TFW's version of what is happening, it is very important for us to find out what, if anything, the UFW leadership is saying about this. I have already

spoken to Stu by phone to find out what information the comrades in Texas had. Stu said that while we haven't been to the Valley lately, we do know that on Feb. 15, the deadline for getting out of the Cuhamil offices, the TFW left. They have set up an office elsewhere in San Juan. Houston is going to try to send some one down to talk to the TFW and to Jim Harrington. Harrington is an attorney for the UFW who helped the Texas farm workers during the melon strike last summer. According to the TFW, he is now involved in trying to evict them. We, of course, have to take a lot of what both sides in this dispute say with a grain of salt. But relations between Texas and California seem to be deteriorating rapidly.

Supporters of the TFW on various campuses in Texas were organizing a car caravan to the Valley to support the TFW against the moves to evict them on Feb. 15. This caravan was cancelled, however. A benefit to raise money for the TFW was built in Austin by TFW supporters there, and Stu tells me they raised around \$1,000.

If you have heard anything about this whole thing in California, could you let me know? After the comrades from Houston have had a chance to meet with people in the Valley, we may have a little more information. I'll let you know of any other developments.

Feel free to share this letter with any comrades whom you think could help on this.

Comradely,

Olga Rodriguez
Olga Rodriguez

SWP National Office

Enc.

cc: Stu, Jose, and Pedro

14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
February 24, 1976

Stu Singer
Houston

Dear Stu,

Here's the translated portions of the Caracol interview with the TFWU-leaders that I promised you. I didn't have time to translate the entire interview, but I tried to do the most important sections. I have also enclosed a translation of the Padilla letters appearing in the same issue of Caracol.

If someone from Houston does get a chance to go to the Valley and talk to the TFW people, it would be very good. Also, whoever goes should also try to speak to Jim Harrington and get his side of the story.

By the way, I received the Houston Post article today. Thanks loads. I am sending a copy of it, along with the material from Caracol, to Harry and Miguel.

Comradely

Olga Rodriguez

Chavez facing removal of friend

Houston Post 2/19/76

SAN JUAN (UPI) — Cesar Chavez and Antonio Orendain were friends during the early part of the farmworker struggle in California.

Chavez sent Orendain to direct the Texas wing of the United Farm Workers Union. Now Chavez must decide whether to ask the police to remove Orendain from office.

Orendain's early organizing efforts led to violent confrontations with growers, Texas Rangers and police and a march to the state capital in 1966 and 1967.

Orendain held the title of Texas organizer for the UFW until last spring and was still regarded as Chavez's No. 1 man when renewed picketing began at melon farms of the Rio Grande Valley. A court order which had prevented mass picketing was dissolved by a Supreme Court

decision which abolished Texas labor laws under which the Rangers and local officers kept peace during the 1965-67 organizing.

Violence again erupted and from California, Chavez, after viewing embarrassing network newstilm of a group of union men harassing field workers near the Mexican border, denounced the Texas leadership as having lost control of the situation. Chavez said the peaceful organizing he ordered had been "infiltrated by provocateurs."

Now Chavez, who has based his struggle in California on the theme of non-violence and passive resistance but spent some time in jail himself, must decide whether he will call on the police to oust Orendain and his renegade Texas union from UFW headquarters in San Juan.

Orendain said he has received a letter from the UFW ordering him and his rump group out of the San Juan center by Sunday, but he does not intend to leave without a court fight.

"It is in the hands of California," said Orendain, who was on the UFW executive board from 1962-73. "The problem is if they want to do something like that, they'll have to use the police force. The problem, I think, is a moral problem — not just a legal problem. We don't deny they're the owners of every single thing we have around here."

Rebecca Herrington, administrator of the UFW's center in San Juan, confirmed Orendain was asked to vacate the building but denied the union has sent such a letter setting a Feb. 15 deadline as Orendain claimed.

Letters released by Gilberto Padilla (Secretary-treasurer of the UFW) in the Texas Valley by order of the Board of Directors and Cesar Chavez, without signature or date. (Caracol)

(Editor's note: In the middle of December, 1975, Mr. Gilberto Padilla arrived in the Texas Valley like a demon with a grand design for dividing the farm workers movement that is being carried out not only in this country, but throughout the world. The farm workers of Texas are the poorest people in this great pit-capitalist nation. With great spirit they constructed a building and gave it the name of "El Cuhamil," a Nahuatl word that means "piece of the earth." Well, we are screwed because our people have never been organized to fight the gringo ranchers. And this is precisely what the organizers of the Texas Valley are doing: organizing the farm workers through strikes. But consequently this did not seem good to the UFW. Only God knows why not. Isn't this something the whole Chicano movement should deal with? Fine, but here's the important point: The UFW wants to run the Texas farm workers out of El Cuhamil. Imagine, to take these poor people out of the only office they have had in their lives, offices they had built themselves, simply because some batos in California don't like to have strikes. The farm workers of Texas are not against Cesar Chavez; they respect and admire him. But, they also recognize that he is a man who can make mistakes. We believe that this (UFW attempt -- or) is a great mistake. We are begging Quetzalcoatl and the Virgin of Guadalupe to straiten out Cesar's mind and that on February 15, 1976, he will not drive his own brothers out of El Cuhamil. We know that many people in California read Caracol. We beg them to telephone Cesar Chavez and tell him that the farm workers movement is one; that here in Texas we are struggling against the same enemy as in California and that, please, treat us as brothers, as the Raza carnales that we are.)

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Letter (1) from Padilla -- Proposals

A. UFW and TFW (Texas Farm workers)

1. To dissolve the TFW. In place of the TFW a local branch

of the UFW will be formed that will be an integral part of the UFW, following the work of the UFW (whether it be the boycott or other activities).

2. There will be a representative of the UFW and a director of the Services Center in this local or branch.
3. The local will use only the symbols and flags of the UFW.
4. There will also be respect for all farm workers, whether they are working in California, Florida, Texas, or any state.

B. Advisory Board of the Local

1. This board will be formed, electing 7 persons who are members of the UFW in the following manner: any member under contract can vote, and those not under contract, the paid member votes (whether man or woman).
2. Also, those persons who have actively helped on the boycott picket lines for more than 6 months can be candidates and vote, with one vote per family.
3. No less than 4 members of the Board must be farm workers; that is, those who have worked at least 2 months during the 12 months prior to running for the Board.
4. No less than 3 members of the Board must be women.
5. The members of the Board must be approved by the Executive Board of the UFW. Each year this board will be changed. The members will elect a Coordinator of the Board, an Assistant Coordinator, and a Secretary (who will keep the minutes of Board meetings).
6. It will be the responsibility of the Coordinator to notify all the members of the UFW by letter when there are to be elections 2 weeks before the elections.
7. The representative of the UFW and the director of the Services Center cannot be members of the Board because they are directly responsible to the Executive Board of the UFW.
8. The Board will meet each month.
9. The purpose of the Board is to receive complaints of the members and advise the representative of the UFW and director of the Services Center as to how to correct them.

(Editor's Comment: It should be mentioned that when Mr. Fadilla arrived in the Valley he had done his homework. He already had contact with several families, including the Fadillas and Harringtons. Without consulting any of the organizers of the Valley, Fadilla, with his 4 or 5 families, set up a Board of Directors.)

C. Funds

1. The local can raise funds only in the state of Texas.
2. Funds can only be used for the Services Center. These funds cannot be used for salaries of the UFW representative, director of the Center, or a Board member.

D. Strikes and the Boycott

- Strikes and the boycott must always be coordinated with the Executive Board of the UFW.

E. Meetings of the Local or Branch

1. The purpose of the meetings is to discuss and resolve the problems of the farm worker and to discuss the affairs of the UFW.
2. Each month the Board Coordinator will make a report on what is happening with the Board.
3. Meetings can begin with 10 minutes of prayer.
4. All farm workers must be invited to these meetings, especially the UFW members.
5. Each meeting must be led by one of the Board members, and with a different member at each meeting until they begin over with the first.

F. The UFW representative will be responsible for distributing a letter each month to the members of the UFW, informing them of local and national UFW news and activities.

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Letter (2) from Padilla -- Demands

- A. No one can drink (alcoholic beverages) at any time.
- B. The office which Antonio Orendain now occupies is rented to the TFW. The immigration project (PFC) and the printing equipment (with the air conditioner) are in this office.
- C. To the NFWSC -- all the rest, including the front office (at the entrance of the office).
- D. We will let the TFW use the postage permit until February 1, 1976.

- E. The TFW cannot publish articles against the UFW and cannot use the offices for meetings where they dissent against matters of the UFW.
- F. The TFW cannot take charge of NFWSC functions.
- G. The immigration office must pay rent, gas, light and telephone to the NFWSC.
- H. The telephone number 787-5984 will continue to be the NFWC's. If the UFW (sic. ?) wants its own line, they can put one it.
- I. The NFWSC Building cannot be used for TFW dances.
- J. All the keys for the building and rooms will be in the hands of the NFWSC.
- K. The TFW cannot use the symbol of the black eagle.
- L. All equipment under the name of the UFW or NFWSC, or gotten in their names, will remain in the hands of the NFWSC.
- M. The TFW must move their offices and carry this out before February 15, 1976.
- N. All the officials and sympathizers of the TFW will respect and treat well other persons that work with NFWSC.

(Editor's comment: Well, companeros, this was the task of Mr. Padilla when he came to Texas, on orders of the UFW. Padilla probably went back laughing to California, thinking he came off well, and had stunned the people of the Valley. It was not fear, it was simply that the people here are noble and respect Cesar very much. We hope that Mr. Chavez's conscience will be enlightened so that he can see very clearly the incredible division that he will cause if he tries to throw out of his house the Valley farm workers.)

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Translation of portions of an interview
by Caracol with Texas Farm Worker Union
leaders on 1/18/76, printed in the Feb., 1976
issue of Caracol

Cecilio: Mr. Ramirez, when the San Antonio Farm Workers Support Committee was in San Juan, Texas on December 19, 1975, you gave us some letters from Mr. Padilla, Secretary-Treasurer of the California UFW. It appeared that Mr. Padilla had arrived in the Texas Valley and had formed a big maze. You advised us not to bring these letters to light because it would prejudice the farm workers movement, since the letters clearly pointed to the existing conflict between the UFW and the TFW. And, so we did it (what you asked). We took the letters and we put them away. But now, from what I understand, already it's been a week that the Harrington's, a group of people who receive instructions from Padilla, have been putting out information on the radio, newspapers, and television against you. What has happened since Padilla came in December to talk to you?

Ramirez: Well, nothing was accomplished with regard to the conflict between Chavez and the Texas farm workers. We did not want people to know, because we have been trying to solve the thing in a human way, that is, we had hopes that things would be worked out. For this reason, we remained quiet, supporting everything that the Padilla group was doing to us. They promised us things, both came out with something else. Look, the other day they took away our postal permit for the paper. Also, the group that Padilla left in El Cuhamil has taken away the typewriters from us and have thrown us into the back rooms. They don't let us talk to the people. And there we are... supporting what they do to us. And now they have started to publish many things against us; they have said that Antonio Orendain wants to steal El Cuhamil, and that Antonio no longer works for the campesinos. They have also threatened Valley Texans who are members of the California union with taking away their union benefits. Aside from this, they have warned us not to park in front of Cuhamil. They have done many things to date, and we, well we were quiet, because we didn't want this plot to come to light so as not to shame the movement.

Cecilio: Mr. Luna, who is this Mr. Padilla ...?

Luna: Well, I say Mr. Padilla is a dictator. We try to negotiate with him, but it always remained negative. When we offered a point on which we could negotiate with reason, he defended the legal point of being the owner of Cuhamil -- that is, the offices of the union, to let us know it wasn't necessary to negotiate with us. Because, if he wanted to, he could tell us to leave immediately. That if he gave us opportunities, it was because he has good faith with us. But from the outset, all the conditions under which we negotiated were imposed by Padilla and the board of directors that was elected by him. That is why I call Mr. Padilla a dictator, because in reality,

there was no point of negotiation on our part.

Cecilio: Mr. Hernandez, in your opinion, do you think that Chavez is actually against the Texas farm workers?

Hernandez: Well, I am going to say that which I have seen and heard there. For example, when we try to communicate by telephone, personally, with Cesar Chavez, it was impossible to talk to him or even know where to find him. Another thing is that after Padilla came to the Valley, he had already left us his rules there, Jose Saldana spoke on a radio program called Voz del Pueblo (Voice of the people). He was interviewed by Palacios Cano and was asked what he thought of the Texas Farm Workers, if they had caused any harm. To which Saldana replied no, that they were going to try to negotiate with us and help us, and things of that sort. But we saw that those were only words in an interview -- words he didn't mean and things they didn't think about doing. From what we have seen on radio and TV, they give a message, and do another thing in reality. Apparently, they are trying to win the public. What they are doing is harming the movement; wanting to destroy us, so that afterwards, they can return to California. They want to close el Cuhamil. Why they want to do this, we don't know. But we have an idea it is because all the donations that are coming in from Texas and other states which they are in need of. I don't know if they consider the money more important, or is it more important to organize the Texas farm workers and bring them justice, as they did in California.

Cecilio: Mr. Zaragoza, in the Valley there is a group which is fighting the TFW.... Who is this group, how is it effecting you, and what are your plans to defend yourselves?

Zaragoza: Well, first of all, it is true that a little group has recently formed, which in reality is a conspiracy of various boards the ACLU attorney, Jim Harrington, started. This little group began to conspire to try -- we don't know, but we believe on the orders of Cesar Chavez -- to destroy the farm workers movement in Texas. This little group was formed by Rebecca, the wife of Jim Harrington, Mr. De la Fuente, Mr. Saldana, and Jim Harrington. This is a committee that is self-appointed as the group representing the Farm Workers of America. The harm that this group is doing is putting obstacles in the way of our work as farm workers in Texas to have a good organization here. At the same time, they are on a campaign against the director of the farm workers union, Antonio Orendain. They have said that Orendain is going to retire. This is not true. The farm workers movement in Texas, on seeing the problem refused to make a statement because we thought this problem could be resolved. In the beginning, we thought that Cesar Chavez was not informed of this political move and of the power of Mr. Harrington. But now, after we have sent letters and telegrams trying to resolve the problem, he doesn't answer us. After so many attacks by these people against Antonio Orendain and the farm workers movement in Texas, we have

decided to answer them, to fight for the right to have a union here in Texas -- an independent union or an affiliate of the national union. The main harm they can do to us is to destroy us, but we doubt it because the California union is only a paper union here in Texas. Or, as we say, they have the name, we have the people.

Cecilio: Mr. Ramirez, how have you been effected since the fight with the Harrington's over el Cuhamil has come out as an open one?

Ramirez: Well, it hasn't (sic -- has?) effected us personally because they don't let us talk to the people. But as Mr. Zaragoza said, we know that the people are with us. And in one way or another, the people tell us the problems and the lies that this group are telling. We know that the people are a part of us and are ready to fight... Thanks to us, the peace has been able to be maintained up to this point because we don't want to hurt the movement because it will be the workers who will suffer, not us. Like we told Mr. Padilla, we can leave Cuhamil immediately, but those who can't are the group which follows us, the campesinos. Mr. Padilla told us that all he wanted was for us to leave -- that if we wanted to tear down the building, we could tear it down -- that his interest in it would be finished....

Cecilio: Mr. Hernandez, I think so that there isn't a scandal over the division between the Texas and California campesinos that you have to leave Cuhamil. And I believe that the Jacinto Trevino University in San Juan, Texas, has given you a piece of land -- three acres. Why is it that you didn't move to this land?

Hernandez: Well, as Antonio informed us of this, I think he was arranging this thing about moving us there. But as to this, since the lawyer Harrington is also a member of the Board of Directors of Jacinto Trevino, he also blocked this move we were going to make there. That is, he prevented us from entering there. For this reason, we think that they don't want to help us, but that they are doing every thing possible to destroy us.

Cecilio: Mr. Zaragoza, I have heard that you know Cesar very well.... Can you tell us what type of man Cesar Chavez is and perhaps why he is so against the TFW?

Zaragoza: Well, as I said yesterday, I knew Chavez in 1965 when I went out on strike and joined the huelgista movement in California. We fought together on the picket lines and then, they sent me to the boycott for several years. I was in several states fighting in the boycott of grapes until we succeeded in winning the strike. I always had the concept that Cesar was a fine person. Now, what has amazed me after all the years I have known him and remembering what he has said of us, is why has he made this change so much against the Texas campesinos. I don't know if there is some outside pressure on

him -- of some group that doesn't let him see the problem that is developing here. Because, as we have said, up to now we haven't had the benefit of an interview or some direct communication with him so that he can tell us personally who the enemy is. We want to know if he is directing this. We think that he is directing the moves against us. Only, Cesar has a system where it is better for others to get burned before he himself does. Therefore, he hasn't even made a public statement, nor has he sent us a telegram or letter telling us that it is his orders. We respect Cesar Chavez very much. We all want the farm workers movement to continue to grow more and more each day so that it becomes a national union. We are ready to affiliate ourselves with him, but that he gives us some autonomy so that we can continue organizing, building something positive for the workers in Texas. If he refuses these things, then in any case, the farm workers union, independently, with or without his help, is going forward until it wins a victory in the near future...

Cecilio: Mr. Hernandez, can you tell us something about the land where Cuhamil is located?

Hernandez: Well, the land was donated by the Diocese of Brownsville to the Farmworkers of America. But those who constructed the building that presently exists and which is where we have meetings every week, were the Texas farm workers. Cesar Chavez hasn't even seen this building. We believe that this building morally belongs to the people of Texas, not California. I proposed to them, especially the Saldana family, who are part of the group left here by Padilla, that instead of continuing to cause so much disorder in our meetings, that together we can work for the California union and the one in Texas. But they simply refuse to do this; they say that two unions can't be in the same place. This is another proof that they don't want to negotiate in good faith. They don't look for unity, but instead, they are looking for division and destruction of the Texas union....

Cecilio: Mr. Zaragoza, according to the orders given by Padilla, when he was in the valley, you had until Feb. 5 to get out of Cuhamil. On the 15th the police or Texas Rangers are going to come down on you. What do you think the Valley farm workers will do?

Zaragoza : According to the workers who have spoken to us, and people who aren't even farm workers, the word is that El Cuhamil morally belongs to the people here....everyone has already decided that when the 15th arrives, we won't leave the building. El Cuhamil belongs to us and if the Union of America or Cesar Chavez issues a legal order to expel the workers of Texas from this place which is theirs, they are ready to go to jail or fight. If there is any blood shed of any farm worker, it will be on the hands of Cesar Chavez.

Cecilio: Ramirez, do you see the conflict as one between the Texas and California farm workers?

Ramirez: ...what difference is there between the TFW and the UFW? Being farm workers, we are in the same situation and we have to see each other as brothers. As I said, that building is made for all farm workers, no matter from what part of the world they are from. Because, people have come there from as far away as Venezuela and many parts of Central America to visit the building. And they have gone away very impressed to see the great spirit of their neighbors who built such a building with their own hands. Because everything we have done was done with this spirit -- with raffles, dances, selling tamales, donations, or simply bringing a brick or a sack of cement. This is how we have made everything we have. We have nothing against the California campesinos. What worries us is the disaster they are going to bring about and what the farm workers are going to suffer, because the main part of the farm workers in California are from here in Texas.... It is the movement which they will destroy, not us....

Cecilio: Mr. Hernandez, ... do you think that this division between the UFWU and TFWU is effecting the grape and wine strike (boycott?) in the Valley?

Hernandez: Well I think that it is because ever since they stopped us from participating in the boycotts, the situation has worsened. Everyone here is with Orendain and we were the ones who were boycotting week after week at the stores. Now, they have informed us recently that the stores are already bringing back the grapes. And that's why I think that it is effecting the boycott. This is not to see we are pleased by this. We are only very sorry because nothing is left of all the work we did to help the cause of the California farm worker. This demonstrates that we aren't against the California farm worker, but instead, for us, it is the same struggle. The only thing is that we want to continue our struggle here in Texas in the Valley. Yes, it is very sad and it hurts us very much to see that all those grapes are coming back. And we can't do anything about it because they prohibit us from entering in the picket lines. It is the farm workers movement which is suffering....