



After the May Upsurge: Young Socialists and the Student Movement

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This draft political resolution was written for the Young Socialist National Convention to be held at the Manhattan Center in New York City, December 27-31, 1970. It was drafted by the National Executive Committee of the Young Socialist Alliance.

Similar resolutions and discussion articles will deal with other activities in which young socialists are involved. These initial draft resolutions, along with any others submitted to the convention, will be discussed and the general political perspectives outlined in them will be voted on.

The resolutions are being circulated prior to the convention to assure the fullest possible discussion on political perspectives and activities before the convention meets.

Young socialists from around the country are invited to participate in the written discussion and urged to attend the convention. Contributions to the discussion and inquiries can be sent to the Young Socialist Alliance, P.O. Box 471 Cooper Station, New York, New York 10003.

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AFTER THE MAY UPSURGE:

YOUNG SOCIALISTS AND THE STUDENT MOVEMENT

The 1970s will be a decade of profound crises for American capitalism and of unprecedented opportunities for revolutionary socialists. We in the YSA are optimistic about the prospects for organizing masses of people in struggle against the U.S. ruling class and its government in Washington. Our experience in 1970 has confirmed our view that the current radicalization, which began in the 1960s, can lead to the elimination of capitalism in the stronghold of world imperialism through a socialist revolution in the United States.

The May Upsurge

In May 1970, two government actions--the invasion of Cambodia and the massacre of students at Kent State--touched off the largest student general strike in history. The invasion of Cambodia by U.S. forces represented a decision by the Nixon administration to extend and intensify the war in Southeast Asia. The murder of the Kent students symbolized the attempts of the ruling class to silence one of the most dynamic and effective opponents of Washington's war plans, the student movement.

The combination of these two events, which were followed by the gunning down of Black youth in Augusta, Ga., and at Jackson State, in Mississippi, triggered a nationwide student upsurge which threw the entire country into a major social crisis, producing shock waves which have not yet subsided.

The size and scope of the campus actions were unparalleled. The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, headed by Clark Kerr, reported on the extent of the May campus upsurge: major protests occurred on 1454 campuses (out of a total of 2551); and 550 campuses had strikes which completely halted the normal functioning of the schools.

One of the most significant features of the upheaval was the creation of new

forms of struggle by the mobilized masses of students. For the first time in history, striking students "opened up" their schools as antiwar universities. Students began reconstituting their schools, turning them into instruments of struggle against the war. Taking control of the school facilities, students used them for reaching out to involve other sectors of the population in the antiwar movement. The process of attempting to reach out beyond the campus demonstrated an understanding by students of the need to link up with more powerful social layers in order to win their aims. This understanding represents a new advanced consciousness among thousands of students about the student movement's role in fighting for social change.

The form of organization which spontaneously emerged in the struggles of May was the broad-based, representative strike committee which called and presented proposals to mass meetings and coordinated strike activities. At many schools, these committees involved the entire university community and served to organize the new functions of the antiwar university.

These important new forms of struggle have become permanent acquisitions of the student movement because, while the strike was only temporary, it lasted long enough for the concept of the antiwar university and democratic strike councils to engrave itself in the consciousness of the millions of students who took part. Future upsurges will tend to follow the pattern established in May. In this sense we can say that May 1970 was the "1905 of the student movement"--new organizational forms of struggle emerged and were tested for the first time, just as the first soviets emerged and were tested in the 1905 Russian Revolution, and in 1917 became the organs of the new state power. Universities run by the strike committees will not become organs of state power, but they will emerge again to play a crucial role in helping to organize masses outside the campus into anticapitalist action.

The YSA learned important lessons in the May events. First, the events expressed the tremendous depth of the youth radicalization and revealed young people's increasing lack of confidence in the government's ability to solve the problems facing American society. While the radicalization is deepest among youth, the widespread sympathy and support for the students' objectives expressed in other sections of the population and the strike's impact on the rest of the country offered impressive testimony to the extent of the radicalization in society as a whole.

Second, the May events dramatically illustrated once more that the war in Indochina remains a central driving force in the radicalization and the central issue in U.S. politics. In spite of Nixon's elaborate schemes for "Vietnamization," U.S. imperialism is gripped more tightly than ever in the vise of trying to maintain its world domination on one side and trying to maintain social peace at home on the other. The war in Vietnam and the antiwar movement are the sharpest expression of the dilemma Nixon faces.

Third, the May strike revealed more clearly than ever before the increased social weight and power of the student movement in today's neocapitalist society. The impact of the students' actions, both directly on the government and through their influence on other social sectors, provided conclusive evidence of the decisive role students can play in detonating major social explosions. The May student strike stamped its impression on the entire society, serving notice to America's rulers that they must take account of the reaction of students in any of their future plans.

Fourth, the development of antiwar universities confirmed in action the YSA's strategy for the student movement, that is, the use of the university as a base to organize other sectors of the population into anticapitalist struggle. This proved to be an attractive idea to masses of students once they had gained a sense of their own power in the first days of the strike.

Finally, the student upsurge graphically illustrated the power of independent mass action. The student strike, which arose completely independently of the "dove" capitalist politicians, forced Nixon to adapt his plans and helped educate masses of people that they can succeed only by taking action on their own without relying on the capitalist politicians who pose as their leaders.

Another aspect of the strike as massive independent political action was the rejection, on the overwhelming majority of campuses, of any ultraleft actions or forms of organization which would narrow the base of the strike, such as

limiting participation in the strike committee to the traditional campus radicals. This stands in sharp contrast to the SDS-led campus struggles of 1968-1969.

The YSA's understanding of these lessons enabled us to play a leading role in the May events. YSAers helped initiate and participated in strike committees on many campuses, working to mobilize students and to deepen their understanding of the antiwar university. Where it was possible, we helped organize citywide and regional coordination of the strike. We were the only group able to act as a national organization in our support of and participation in the upsurge. The Militant, to a limited extent, served the function of a national strike newspaper, giving the only national coverage and analysis of the events as they were happening.

We went on a campaign footing to build the strike and explain the concept of the antiwar university. At the same time, we reached the broadest possible layers of the population with the ideas of revolutionary socialism.

The pattern established in May illustrated the potential for the next upsurge to succeed in drawing in the participation of the organized working class, high school students, the Third World communities and masses of women. The May events produced the first significant break in the trade union bureaucracy's monolithic backing of Nixon's war policy, a break which expressed itself, for example, in the labor-student demonstration called in New York City at the initiative of trade union officials as a response to "hard hat" attacks on antiwar demonstrators. While the May strike fell short of touching off a generalized social upheaval, it came close enough to let the ruling class see the outlines of a social revolution in this country. The capitalists were so frightened by what they saw that the threat of another May has become a permanent factor for them to consider before making any major moves in their continuous campaign to crush the world revolution.

Nixon's Offensive

During May, the ruling class counterposed campaigns for capitalist "peace" candidates and doorbell-pushing for legislation such as the Cooper-Church and Hatfield-McGovern bills to the independent mass action organized by the students. In typical fashion, they attempted to disorient the mass movement and divert its independent struggle back into the arena of the Democratic and Republican parties. While the majority

of students did not shed their illusions about the possibility of winning their demands through capitalist "peace" candidates, the attempt to divert their struggle met with little success during May.

Once the strike had been effectively ended by the pullback from Cambodia and the closing of the schools, the ruling class launched a two-pronged counterassault designed to eliminate the threat revealed in May. First, the U.S. rulers used the fake debates of the capitalist campaigns for the November elections to play down the issue of the war and to try to draw students back into "the system." Second, they conducted a propaganda campaign against "campus violence" and initiated a drive to restrict students' rights to organize political activity.

During every election campaign, the ruling class puts up "alternatives" to try to make the American people think they have a choice and to give them the illusion that they control the government. Maintaining these illusions is, of course, one of the primary functions of elections in a bourgeois democracy. Because of the deepgoing and widespread nature of such illusions among the masses of people and the resources the capitalists put behind their campaigns, election periods have always been difficult times for organizing mass independent political action. There was virtually no independent political action in 1964 when nearly everyone stampeded into supporting the "lesser evil" of Lyndon Johnson against Goldwater. The support of many antiwar activists for Congressional "doves" in the capitalist parties during the 1966 elections seriously hampered the development of the then new antiwar movement. In 1968, the Kennedy and McCarthy campaigns were successful in recruiting the energies of thousands of young people away from mass action into playing the two-party shell game.

Considering this pattern, the striking feature of the 1970 elections was not that they were able to dampen independent struggles but that they were far less successful than previous elections in this respect. There are three reasons for the relatively limited effects of the 1970 elections.

First, Nixon's phony gestures at "winding down" the war succeeded in silencing opposition among the "doves," who endorsed his maneuver with grotesque servility.

Second, virtually all of the liberal candidates caved in under Nixon's and Agnew's pressure and adopted a patriotic "law and order" pose, denouncing student "extremists."

Third, more young people than ever

before have begun to see through the fraud of capitalist politics. These radicalizing young women and men perceive the futility of supporting a capitalist party "lesser evil" and look instead for ways to express their opposition independently.

Far from "swinging to the right," (as the bourgeois press reported in an orgy of wishful thinking), young people in fact rejected the real shift to the right by the capitalist candidates.

Combined with the effort to draw students into the elections has been the second prong of the capitalist counteroffensive. Nixon's drive to de-politicize the campuses is aimed at silencing the student movement, which has consistently opposed his administration and his continuing aggression in Southeast Asia. Nixon hopes to divide and disorient the student movement in order to prevent another May. He has employed several tactics in this drive.

First, Nixon has launched a general propaganda offensive to discredit student radicals in the eyes of the American people. Characterizing students as "bums" and "thugs," the capitalist politicians and the bourgeois press have tried to associate a few isolated incidents of terrorism with the mass movements on the campuses. Falsely pinning the blame for violence on students, they have attempted to whip up hysteria about student-inspired "anarchy."

Second, Nixon sent, along with his own covering letter, an "Open Letter to College Students" from J. Edgar Hoover to 900 college administrators. In his letter, Hoover calls the attention of the administrators to the "extremist" groups which are most dangerous, fingering the YSA and the Student Mobilization Committee as prime targets for administrators to attack.

Third, the Nixon administration initiated a set of unconstitutional political guidelines through the Internal Revenue Service, threatening universities and colleges with the loss of their tax-exempt status if they allow campus facilities to be used for "political" activity, such as support of candidates for public office. These guidelines are designed to give college administrations an excuse to crack down on the student movement. In accordance with the IRS-backed guidelines, most colleges have issued their own guidelines restricting the political rights of students. These range from prohibiting the use of student funds for the antiwar movement to proscribing the sale of radical literature on campus.

Fourth, the Ohio Grand Jury indicted the Kent 25 in the most blatant example of the attack on students, attempting to

use the trial of these activists to whitewash the murder of four Kent students and intimidate the entire student movement.

The counteroffensive directed against the students in direct response to May has not succeeded in stifling struggles on the campus. In spite of the ruling class attempt to curb the radicalization, activity since May demonstrates clearly the potential for another upsurge in the near future.

The Struggle Continues

The struggle has continued and deepened in the movements for women's liberation, for Third World self-determination, and against the war. The revolutionary socialist movement has continued to grow in size and influence.

The women's liberation movement emerged as a major political force on August 26, when masses of women demonstrated in cities across the country for free abortion on demand--no forced sterilization; free 24-hour childcare, community-controlled; and equal opportunities in jobs and education. Campus feminist groups have grown and multiplied at a spectacular rate. Women's liberation conferences in Boston, Detroit, Washington D.C. and other cities drew hundreds of women to their sessions. In New York City, a citywide, action-oriented coalition has been organized, representing the advanced consciousness of growing numbers of women about the importance of united mass action in building an effective movement. In addition, new Third World women's liberation organizations have emerged and grown.

Nationalist consciousness among the oppressed nationalities in the United States has continued to spread since May. The national Chicano Moratorium, held in Los Angeles on August 29, drew 30,000 Chicanos to the largest antiwar demonstration ever held in that city. In addition, the election campaigns of La Raza Unida parties in Texas and Colorado registered substantial gains in winning support for independent Chicano political action.

The intensification of nationalist sentiment in the Black community is reflected by the participation of 14,000 Black people in the Congress of African People and the Revolutionary People's Constitutional Convention plenary session. These two conferences were held on the same weekend in September. Another reflection of growing militancy and political consciousness has been the struggle of the Cairo United Front in Cairo, Illinois. The Cairo United Front has taken a step forward from previous struggles by linking the concept of armed

self-defense by mass organizations representing the whole community to a mass action perspective aimed at mobilizing the Black community and building broad support for the fight against the white racist city and state police and vigilante groups.

The antiwar movement won a major victory in mobilizing tens of thousands of people in the October 31 demonstrations. In spite of the election pressure, Nixon's phony "peace" maneuvers and the defection of the capitalist "doves," mass actions were held in more than 40 cities, organized largely by the Student Mobilization Committee and the National Peace Action Coalition. The actions, while smaller than those in the fall of 1969, were the largest antiwar demonstrations ever held during an election period.

Moreover, in spite of the objective difficulties of the post-May period, the SMC has consolidated a base of hundreds of campus chapters and thousands of loyal, active members. The SMC is now better prepared than ever before to build mass actions and to give direction to the next antiwar upsurge.

The continued growth of antiwar sentiment in the rest of society was distinctly pointed out by the results of the November 3 referenda on the war in Detroit and San Francisco in which significant majorities voted for immediate withdrawal from Vietnam. (In Massachusetts, another referendum which gave three choices also showed an overwhelming majority opposed to the war.)

The 1970 Socialist Workers Party election campaigns were the most successful local campaigns ever run. They reached thousands of people with revolutionary socialist ideas, presenting an alternative to the two-party charade of capitalist politics. The SWP ran more candidates who spoke to more meetings, got more TV and radio time, and more general publicity than in any previous SWP campaign. The SWP candidates in a number of states were able to force their bourgeois opponents to confront them directly in front of large audiences. Many young activists who were introduced to revolutionary socialist ideas by these campaigns have joined the YSA.

All of these developments underscore the fact that the contradictions plaguing Nixon's administration have in no sense been resolved. To the contrary, they continue to intensify, threatening the ruling class with new and bigger upsurges like the one last May.

The war in Vietnam remains the central axis of the world conflict between the forces of capitalist reaction and socialist revolution. Nixon's renewed bombing of North Vietnam and the

bungled landing of ground assault troops near Hanoi make clear his intention to press ahead toward the imperialist objectives in Indochina rather than accept a defeat for imperialism, which is what the withdrawal of troops would mean. The continued prosecution of the war while the overwhelming majority of Americans oppose it fuels the deepening radicalization and keeps eroding the facade of "democracy" behind which the capitalists govern.

The threat of U.S. troops being sent into the Middle East, which came close to being realized during the Jordanian civil war, is the threat of a second Vietnam. Nixon was prepared to commit American soldiers to fight on the side of King Hussein, and he only decided against such a move when it became clear that Hussein's regime would survive the civil war without direct U.S. intervention.

The opposition to the war in Vietnam has provided fresh confirmation of the importance to the colonial revolution of resistance inside the imperialist countries. Domestic opposition to U.S. intervention against the Arab revolution can play the same crucial role in defending the Arab struggles. While the immediate threat of U.S. troops being sent has temporarily receded, there can be no doubt that Nixon is now laying the basis for a future invasion should Washington find such a move necessary. As long as GIs are not directly involved in a shooting war, the possibility of organizing mass actions in the U.S. is limited, but the YSA has an important task in winning support for the Arab revolution. By educating people about imperialist and Zionist objectives in the Middle East and hammering away at the threat of a second Vietnam, we can prepare the way for massive opposition to Washington's future attempts to use troops against the Arab peoples.

The job squeeze is closing off more and more opportunities for employment in the working class as a whole. Increasingly, well-trained technical workers and professional workers, such as teachers and engineers, are among those affected. A college degree no longer guarantees a job. After four years or more of training at the expense of thousands of dollars, graduates from universities are finding themselves "socially unnecessary." This process will accelerate the radicalization among graduates and among students themselves who can look forward to the same plight. The rising number of young graduates who are unable to find work, together with the runaway inflation which also hits hard at young workers and students, poses a serious threat to the "prosperity" of America in the 1970s.

The Nixon administration is faced by

proliferating and growing social movements organizing around demands which capitalism can satisfy only partially or not at all. Capitalism cannot end the national oppression of Blacks, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans. It cannot allow the complete liberation of women. It cannot cease to be imperialist. It cannot satisfy the demands of students, young workers, or young people in general. As these movements grow more powerful and the radicalization continues to deepen, we can expect recurring mobilizations, of which May 1970 was only the beginning.

Defense of the Movement

The reaction of Nixon and the ruling class to May has brought into sharp focus the necessity and importance of fighting for democratic rights under capitalism. The question of democratic rights and civil liberties assumes even more importance as the radicalization broadens. As the YSA moves closer to a central position in all of the mass movements, we will more than ever have to act in defense of democratic rights.

There are two main errors generally made within the student movement in connection with defense of the movement.

The first and most frequent is the mistake the liberals make of viewing civil liberties as a strictly legal or legislative matter. When their rights are threatened by legislative action, their response is to lobby against legislation they oppose or to campaign for politicians with "good records" on civil liberties. If a trial comes up, the liberals are inclined to rely exclusively on good lawyers, fearing that public defense activity will alienate the judge or jury.

The liberals' approach stems from their failure to understand that the Constitution, courts and laws are, like the state itself, instruments of the ruling class. As such, they are affected by shifts in the relationship of forces between the capitalists and their opponents in the masses. The American people enjoy democratic rights only because they have been won in struggle, and only by continuing the struggle can these rights be maintained and extended.

All lines of legal defense must be pursued in the fight for democratic rights, but only by waging a campaign of mass political action can we create a climate in which legal arguments will be effective.

The second error made by some sections of the student movement is the dismissing of the fight for democratic

rights as a "reformist" or "irrelevant" issue. Ultralefts such as the Progressive Labor Party argue that students must "go beyond" the struggle for rights and liberties which can be won because anything which can be won is not revolutionary. Such a sectarian refusal to participate in the defense of democratic rights ignores the responsibility revolutionaries have to lead this fight. The ruling class is constantly trying to restrict civil liberties. These liberties are important conquests of the class struggle, and the battle to defend them will remain a central part of revolutionary activity right up to the day the working class takes power.

We expect the YSA to become involved in more civil liberties battles and legal cases in the coming period for two reasons: 1) As the YSA becomes larger and moves toward becoming the dominant revolutionary youth group in this country, we will be singled out more often by the government and face more direct challenges to our democratic rights to function without restriction. 2) As the influence of the YSA within the radical movement continues to expand, we will more often be looked to for leadership and political direction by various forces under attack. When the rights of all students are threatened by government moves or right-wing activity, the YSA must play a leading role in defense efforts.

Because our resources are limited, we must allocate them in a realistic manner, deciding the extent of our active participation in different campaigns and defense cases as each one comes up. At the same time, we must understand that the revolutionary youth organization must always be in the forefront of the battles over democratic rights, and the YSA must do everything it can to support other defense cases.

Where possible, the YSA will want to take the initiative in organizing broad-based defense efforts in response to administration interference with such campus activities as selling newspapers, inviting speakers, and allocating student government funds as students see fit.

Nixon's campaign to de-politicize the campus by restricting student rights can be defeated with a determined response from the student movement. The deepening radicalization tends to weaken attempts by the state to restrict civil liberties and cut across any attempts to whip up support for a crackdown on the student movement. The only real guarantee of student rights, however, is a student movement that understands the importance of its democratic rights and the value of mass action.

High Schools

Today's high school students have spent their entire conscious lives in the midst of a thorough-going radicalization. They have grown up under the influence of the antiwar movement, the nationalist struggles for self-determination, and now the women's liberation movement--and high school students have become part of all these struggles.

An important factor radicalizing high school students has been the socially and politically repressive administrations in the high schools. High school students reject the concept that they are "children." They are beginning to realize that they are at least as capable of running their own lives as their elders who have made such a mess of the world. They are rebelling against a system which denies them their First Amendment rights, which presumably apply to all citizens.

High schools severely restrict the political activity of students in the schools, denying them to various degrees the right to publish and distribute leaflets and papers, to speak and listen to speakers from outside the schools, and to meet and form their own organizations in school.

In urban high schools, police are often stationed in the halls, making high schools resemble prisons more than educational institutions.

This means that every student who becomes politically active immediately confronts the school administration and its anti-democratic rules. As a result, high school students' attempts to organize around political issues become struggles for democratic rights as well.

In many cities, high school students make up a large and active component of the SMC. High school students were among the most active builders of the October 31 antiwar actions, and in many cities made up a majority of the demonstrators.

The significant turnout of high school women on August 26 demonstrations indicates the degree to which the women's liberation movement is growing in the high schools. High school women are organizing around the basic demands of August 26. They are also fighting against the particular forms of oppression they face as high school women: such as lack of birth control information and devices; tracking away from scientific and other "unfeminine" courses; expulsion or suspension if they become pregnant.

The profound nationalist sentiment

of the Third World communities has produced militant struggle by Black and Brown high school students. The fights by high school students for the study of Black, Chicano, and Puerto Rican history in the schools, for the right to form nationalist organizations, against tracking and against racist school administrations are organically linked with the broader struggle for community control of the schools, giving the high school fights tremendous potential power and leverage.

The struggles of Third World high school students take on special importance in the major urban areas, where they are a majority of the high school population.

An important part of socialist activity in the high schools is the YSA's support of the Socialist Workers Party election campaigns. By having SWP candidates and their representatives speak in the high schools, by organizing high school campaign support groups, and by participating in high school student government elections through Young Socialist slates, along with our participation in high school SMCs, women's liberation groups, and nationalist organizations, the YSA will continue the fight for high school rights and win more and more high school militants to its ranks.

Like their counterparts on the college campuses, high school students in growing numbers are receptive to the ideas of revolutionary socialism. Because of the strategic importance of this sector of society, the YSA must pay special attention to the recruitment and education of high school members.

Opponents of Revolutionary Socialism on the Left

As the organization striving to become the leadership for all radical youth, it is necessary for the YSA to clearly understand the political positions of the other organizations vying for the allegiance of the newly radicalizing youth, and the social forces these organizations represent.

In looking at the broad spectrum of organizations on the left, it becomes clear that what separates the different radical groups are more than merely superficial differences, although these differences may not be immediately understood by newly radicalizing youth.

The YSA is the only radical youth organization which understands the dynamic of the antiwar, Third World, women's liberation and student movements and how they pave the way for the entrance of

other social forces, including the organized working class, into anti-capitalist struggle culminating in the socialist revolution. The YSA's opponents among the radical youth organizations have either abstained from today's struggles, or have sought to divert them into a reformist or ultra-left course.

In a period of deep radicalization, almost every radical group or tendency tends to grow in size. The following groups, however, are the most significant groups on a national scale.

The Communist Party and the Young Workers Liberation League

Although we have not directly confronted them in the main arenas of our activity during the immediate past period, the Communist Party and the Young Workers Liberation League have been and continue to be our main opponents within the radical movement.

The pro-Moscow Stalinist movement in the United States, as around the world, identifies the interests of the world working class with the interests of the ruling bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. The Stalinists see as their main tasks working to ensure the continuation of "peaceful coexistence" between the Soviet Union and the capitalist world and furthering the immediate diplomatic interests of the Soviet rulers, in order to prevent an invasion of or war against the USSR. This perspective lies behind their policies of class-collaboration and reformism in the capitalist countries--policies which have betrayed countless revolutions and caused the deaths of hundreds of thousands of revolutionary militants. Because of their history of betrayals and their continuation of these same policies today, the pro-Moscow Stalinists have found themselves to the right of the student movement and the other mass struggles of the current period. Masses of new radicals around the world correctly identify the pro-Moscow Communist parties with class collaboration in the capitalist countries and support to the policies of the parasitic bureaucracy in the East European and Soviet workers states. Young radicals look to other forms of struggle and organizations to bring about social change.

Over the past decade the CP in this country has been unable to construct and maintain a viable youth group capable of carrying out their political line in the student movement. The CP has launched and dissolved a number of youth organizations, including the DuBois Clubs; the current Stalinist youth group, founded in February 1970, is the Young Workers

Liberation League.

Despite these problems, the CP has significant political influence in sectors of the Third World liberation, antiwar, and trade union movements. The YWLL has grown in some areas and has a membership roughly equal to that of the YSA.

Why do the Stalinists continue to be a powerful force on the left? First, their political program and organization represent the interests of the Soviet bureaucracy in the world working class movement. Until a political revolution in the Soviet Union and the East European workers states restores socialist democracy, the existence of a bureaucratic caste in these countries provides a social basis for the existence of Communist Parties throughout the world. Because of their political agreement with these Stalinist regimes, and their political acceptance of the anti-Marxist ideas of Stalin, we categorize these parties as Stalinist.

The existence of mass Communist parties in many countries, especially in Western Europe, lends added authority to the Stalinists claim to speak for socialism.

Although today only a fraction of its former size, in the 1930s and 1940s, the CP in the United States was a mass party. This past enables it to maintain a large periphery and material resources.

The Communist Party and the Mass Movements

The CP's strategy for the developing mass movements is guided by its fundamentally reformist politics. Instead of independent mass action in the streets, it presents these movements with the perspective of supporting the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, a perspective which, if successfully carried out, would destroy their anticapitalist thrust. This can be seen by taking a closer look at the role of the Stalinists in the antiwar, Third World, women's liberation and student movements.

The Stalinists play a contradictory role in the antiwar movement. At times they have participated in adult and student antiwar organizations, supporting mass demonstrations. But within these organizations they have always pushed for the adoption of a reformist program in the name of "dealing with other issues" in order to steer the antiwar movement into support for capitalist "peace" candidates. For example, in both 1968 and 1970, the CP was instrumental in splitting the antiwar coalitions, covering their retreat from independent mass action with rhetoric about the antiwar movement's need to take up the issues of racism and repression. The CP did not support

the October 31 antiwar actions and has not participated in the Student Mobilization Committee or the National Peace Action Coalition in the recent period. In spite of their abstention from the organized antiwar movement, we must continually seek to involve them in antiwar united fronts, realizing that their participation adds important forces to the antiwar movement.

The CP does not recognize the right of Black, Puerto Rican, Chicano, and Native American peoples to self-determination, but in order to adapt to these powerful movements, they give token support to certain aspects of the national struggles. However, they reject the independent thrust of these movements in favor of what they call "working class unity" and "fighting racism." Nationalism, they say, "divides" Black and Brown workers from white workers. In reality, four hundred years of racial oppression have divided the working class. Real working class unity can only be achieved on the basis of support for the right of self-determination for oppressed nationalities.

The CP and YWLL do not support the formation of an independent Black or Chicano political party which can lead the fight for self-determination on all fronts. One of their main tactics in the Third World movements is to advocate support for "progressive" Democrats, especially Black Democrats, such as Ron Delums, Shirley Chisolm, and Carl Stokes. Although they give lip service to La Raza Unida Party, they oppose the principled stand taken by many of the LRUP leaders against support for any Democratic Party candidates. The CP has not campaigned in support of LRUP.

The CP and YWLL is beginning to participate in the women's liberation movement to an increasing extent, and here again, their line is the same. They introduce the same phony argument into the women's movement as they do into the Third World movements, i.e., independent feminist organizations "divide" the working class. As with the antiwar movement, they charge that the women's movement is racist unless it makes "fighting racism" part of its program. In the electoral arena, they have urged support for women Democrats like Chisolm and Bella Abzug. These arguments are geared toward preventing the women's liberation movement from becoming a mass independent movement.

Moreover, the CP is compelled to defend the nuclear family by its support of the Soviet bureaucracy, which maintains and champions this oppressive institution in the degenerated workers state. Flying in the face of Marxist theory from Engels to Lenin, the Stalinists maintain that "love" can make the working class family "revolutionary." This completely unscientific and reactionary concept runs

counter to the whole thrust of the women's liberation movement, and clinging to it will present the CP with difficulties in attempting to win support from militant feminists.

The CP and YWLL have developed no program for student struggles. They do, however, look to the current radicalization to replenish the forces of the CP, particularly through their youth organization, the YWLL. But the YWLL has not concentrated its activities on the campuses, and as a result played only a minimal role during the May events, making no significant gains for their organization.

Because the Communist Party and the Young Workers Liberation League remain the central opponents of revolutionary socialism within the radical movement, and because their reformist perspectives are a dead-end for the developing mass movements, the YSA must continually work to limit the Stalinists' influence among radicalizing youth. We want to politically confront them whenever and wherever possible, engaging their members in debate and discussion and exposing their bankrupt politics to the entire radical movement. In this way, we can make sure that no young radical joins the YWLL under the mistaken notion that by doing so, she or he has joined an organization fighting for socialism.

Progressive Labor Party

The Progressive Labor Party was founded by former Communist Party members who left the CP in the late 1950s. The CP had lost thousands of members during the McCarthy period. They were further weakened when thousands more of their members became disillusioned by the Soviet crushing of the Hungarian uprising in 1956 and the shock produced when Khrushchev, at the 20th Party Congress of the CPSU, brought to light a fraction of the crimes committed by the Soviet bureaucracy during the Stalin era. These events helped precipitate a shake-up in the CP and many members began looking for alternative organizations, or dropped out of politics altogether. Although the founders of PLP left the CP during this period, they did not agree with the criticisms of Stalin or his policies.

Despite their break with the CP and their adoption of Maoism, PLP never analyzed or explained the degeneration of the Communist Party. Moreover, they never broke with the CP's basic political perspective of class collaboration and peaceful coexistence. Their ultraleftist rhetoric to the contrary, PLP is a reformist organization.

In the student movement, they put forward the strategy of the "worker-student alliance," holding that students are powerless and their only role is to "serve" the working class. While their extreme

sectarianism prevents them from participating in the women's liberation and Third World movements almost entirely, their political attitude to these movements is similar to that of the CP. They oppose feminism and nationalism on the basis that they divide the working class. They also abstain from the antiwar movement, charging that it has been co-opted by liberal politicians. They even say that the NLF has "sold out" the struggle of the Vietnamese by accepting Soviet aid and by negotiating in Paris!

During the May events, the Progressive Labor Party was the only national organization which put forward an alternative to the strategy of the antiwar university. Their position was that the universities should be shut down and kept shut down, since students could do nothing on the campuses until the workers seized state power. At the most, PL said, students could "ally" with campus workers. This strategy won little support and by and large isolated PL during the May events.

When Students for a Democratic Society split up in June of 1969, the PL-led Worker-Student Alliance faction assumed the name of SDS and attempted to recapture the prestige of the "old SDS." This proved impossible, due to the political sectarianism of PL, which condemned WSA-SDS to remain outside the mainstream of all the mass movements. SDS's size and political influence are declining, as shown, for example, by their "Elections are a hoax" demonstration held in Detroit on November 3, which drew only about a thousand, although it was built as a major national demonstration. There are growing indications of dissatisfaction among non-PL SDS members with PL's lack of an action perspective. YSAers should continue to discuss and debate politics with SDSers, where we have the possibility of winning some of them away from SDS.

The New Left

The once-powerful SDS disappeared from the scene over a year ago. This fact, more than the relationship of forces among the traditional working class political tendencies, has made a qualitative change in the YSA's relative position within the student movement. Although new left type formations exist on a number of campuses, the possibility of the formation or regroupment of a national new left organization anything like the old SDS becomes more and more remote as the radicalization continues and our own forces grow. Where before a newly-radicalizing young person would automatically look to SDS as the organization to join, she or he now looks most often to the SMC, the YSA, or, less often, to PL or YWLL. If any new left organization does form on a national or regional level, it will be viewed as only one tendency within

the student movement, unlike the old SDS which claimed to speak for the entire student movement and involved many young radicals who had not yet chosen among the existing political tendencies.

Terrorism

Several tiny terrorist groups exist in the U.S., composed of individuals who have completely rejected the perspective of winning masses of people to the struggle for social change. As Marxists have pointed out for over a century, isolated acts of violence carried out by a small, self-appointed elite "vanguard," represent a complete retreat from the mass independent struggles that are needed to actually make a revolution.

Although the terrorist groups in the U.S. today are small and have little political influence in the student movement, their actions are widely publicized and can both disorient the movement and provide the ruling class with a tool for discrediting and attacking it. It is important for us to continue to counterpose a revolutionary socialist mass action perspective to terrorism and to help educate the mass movements against terrorism.

The United Front

One of the ways in which the YSA is distinguished from other radical organizations is in our application of the united front-type tactic to mobilize masses of people against the government. A united front-type coalition is based on an agreement between different organizations and individuals to carry out common action around specific demands. The National Peace Action Coalition is an example of the united front tactic as applied to the mass antiwar movement. The organizations in NPAC all agree to organize periodic mass demonstrations against the war around the demand for immediate withdrawal, even though these organizations and individuals have serious disagreements on other questions.

The central purpose of the united front is to mobilize the broadest possible action in opposition to the policies of the government--broader than any single organization could mobilize by itself. For example, the YSA and SWP would not by ourselves be able to mobilize significant numbers of people beyond our membership and supporters to take action against the war in Vietnam. But by uniting in formations such as NPAC with other organizations and individuals who

also want to act against the war we are able to help organize hundreds of thousands--even millions--of people in mass antiwar mobilizations. Even when revolutionaries are leading mass movements they still look for opportunities to unite with other organizations and forces in order to mobilize the maximum numbers of people.

In addition to the agreement to carry out common action, there are two other principles upon which the united front is based. The first is non-exclusion, which means that no organization which agrees with the aims of the united front should be excluded from participation on the basis of other positions it may hold. In the early days of the antiwar movement, for example, some organizations, such as the Socialist Party, felt that communists and revolutionary socialists should not be allowed to participate. The principle of non-exclusion within the antiwar movement was first confirmed when SDS, which called the first anti-Vietnam war march for April, 1965, refused to bend to pressure from its parent organization, the League for Industrial Democracy, to keep socialists from organizing for and participating in the action. The YSA and SWP have been the most consistent fighters for non-exclusion in the antiwar movement and in other united front-type formations. We oppose any measures unnecessarily limiting the forces brought into action, and we also oppose the introduction into the united front of the reactionary red-baiting and witch-hunt tactics of the government, which only serve to divide the movement.

The second principle upon which we insist in united fronts is that all participating organizations continue to have the freedom to criticize other organizations within the front. The fundamental reason why we organize and participate in united fronts is to lead the largest number of people possible in mass action. In order to do this we seek to involve in the united front organizations that we disagree with, such as the CP and PL, realizing that their participation will bring added forces into the struggle. At the same time we must remain free to debate and polemicize with these other organizations who are our competitors for hegemony within the radical movement.

The united front is a tactic we use in all the developing mass movements: the women's liberation movement, the antiwar movement, the movements for self-determination, and the student movement. In this way we are able to organize independent political action against the government on a broad scale. The united front is especially crucial in this period when there exist no mass working class or Third World political parties capable of

mobilizing these sectors on their own. When such formations do exist, the united front will remain an important tool in mobilizing mass opposition to the government.

By building these united front actions, the YSA is also able to get out its ideas, recruit activists, and extend its influence. We realize that newly radicalizing young people, who first move into political action around a single question, such as the war, soon begin to question other aspects of capitalist society and will be looking for ways to change society as a whole.

United front formations are a test for every radical organization. If, for example, the CP, YWLL, or PL claims to support "free abortion on demand," but refuses to join in building actions around that demand, this gives us an opportunity to explain the reasons behind their abstention. If, as we urge, they participate in united front formations, they add to the power of the movement, and we are able to discuss and debate politics with their members before a broad audience of radical youth.

Within the Third World communities, the united fronts organized around such demands as community control of the schools can lead to a break with the Democratic Party and can be a stepping stone toward the creation of a mass Black political party.

Mass Action

Mass action is fundamental to the Marxist concept of class struggle and social change. It is only through the mobilization of the majority of the American people led by the working class in action independent of the capitalist parties and politics that we will be able to defeat the U.S. ruling class and end once and for all the system whose existence depends on the exploitation and oppression of millions of people throughout the world. This basic concept is one with which all our opponents disagree.

Liberals and reformists rely on "good" bourgeois politicians to do what only the masses of people can do, whether it is ending racial oppression, or forcing the government to withdraw from Vietnam, or defending democratic rights.

Ultralefts, while shouting the loudest for revolution, are no more effective than the reformists. They try to substitute tiny "super-militant" actions for the actions of the millions. They are basically elitists, having no faith in the masses' ability to understand or act against their oppression.

Revolutionaries have a different approach. We participate in and help

lead the ongoing mass movements, fighting to keep them independent of the capitalist parties and centered on carrying out ever larger actions against the government. We support demands for these movements which will draw in the largest numbers, and which will help raise the consciousness of those involved about the need for social change. We also understand that by participating in successful actions, the self-confidence of people about their ability to affect and control their own lives is deepened.

The question of mass action is at the core of most of the debates within the different movements. It has come up in the antiwar movement, the Third World struggles, on the campuses, and most recently within the women's liberation movement. Although the form of the debate differs, its essence is the same.

Socialist Electoral Action

As revolutionary socialists we have no illusions about being able to bring about fundamental social change through elections. However, it is precisely because the masses of American people do have these illusions that we have an obligation to present a revolutionary socialist alternative to the capitalist parties and candidates. Around elections there is a heightened interest in politics and there are increased opportunities for getting our ideas out through speeches, radio and TV coverage, etc. We utilize these opportunities to publicize and build the mass movements that can bring about social change and to get out our socialist program.

Ultraleft organizations, such as PLP, call for abstaining from electoral activity, ignoring the fact that the majority of American people participate in elections, believing their demands can be met by electing the right man or woman to office. In fact, the policy of boycotting the elections does nothing more than leave that field of political activity completely in the hands of the capitalist parties and their candidates.

Reformist organizations, such as the Communist Party and liberal groups, make two major errors in their approach toward elections. Not only do they support bourgeois candidates in the elections, but they counterpose support for "good" Democrats or Republicans to building the independent mass movements against the war in Vietnam, for women's liberation, and for Third World self-determination.

By supporting the election campaigns of the Socialist Workers Party, the YSA is able to reach broad layers of people with our ideas and build support for the mass movements in which we are involved. In addition, through our support for the

SWP campaigns, which combine electoral activity with building the independent mass movements, we can help educate about the need for organized labor and the oppressed nationalities to break with the Democratic and Republican parties and form independent political parties which would organize and lead mass actions around all their demands, as well as participating in elections. Our socialist electoral activity has been and will continue to be an important arena of YSA-building activity. For many young people, supporting an SWP election campaign is the first step toward joining the revolutionary socialist movement.

In the coming year, there will be major local election campaigns run by the SWP. One way in which the YSA will support these campaigns is through initiating Young Socialist Campaigners groups, in order to involve those young people who want to carry out socialist political activity, but who may not yet be ready to join the YSA. Another way to both build support for the SWP campaigns and get out our socialist program to the student movement will be to run Young Socialist slates in college and high school student government elections.

The 1970 SWP election campaigns, and those coming up in 1971, help lay the groundwork for the 1972 SWP presidential campaign, of which the YSA will be the key supporter. That campaign will be the focus of our activity in the pre-election period and will provide us with great opportunities to expand the size and influence of the YSA.

Tasks

The opportunities for the growth in size and influence of the YSA have never been greater. Both in terms of the objective openings, and in terms of the YSA's political and organizational capabilities, 1971 offers every reason for optimism. Successfully carried out, the following tasks will lead to the continued expansion of our organization, and bring us closer to becoming a mass revolutionary youth organization. At the same time, they will strengthen all the anti-capitalist forces now moving into action.

1. We will support and build the antiwar movement, particularly the Student Mobilization Committee, on the basis of mass actions in the streets, independent of the ruling class, around the demand for immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam.

2. We will support and build the burgeoning women's liberation movement,

especially campus women's liberation groups and action coalitions.

3. We will support and build the struggles of oppressed nationalities in the United States, especially the struggles of Third World high school and college students.

4. We will prepare for new upsurges in the student movement, explaining to masses of students the concept of turning the schools into centers of struggle and organizing and initiating struggles in defense of the student movement against government attacks.

5. All of these tasks will be related to the big 1972 presidential campaign to be launched by the Socialist Workers Party. Our active support of the 1971 campaigns will help lay the basis for the large-scale, exciting 1972 campaign.

6. In addition to our work in support of legal defense cases in the United States, the YSA will continue to support international defense efforts. Two of the most important of these are the campaign of the Mandel Case Legal Defense Fund to gain support for the suit against the government, challenging the ban on Ernest Mandel visiting the United States, and the campaigns of the U.S. Committee for Justice to Latin American Political Prisoners, especially the campaigns to free Hugo Blanco and the political prisoners in Mexico.

7. We will continue to work in defense of the Arab revolution, and especially of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. We will help educate the student, antiwar, women's liberation, and Third World movements about the role of the U.S. in the Middle East, the nature of Zionism, and the Israeli state, and the necessity to support the Arab peoples' struggles.

8. We will continue the distribution of socialist ideas through widespread sales and subscription campaigns for The Militant and International Socialist Review.

9. We will continue the education of our own ranks in the fundamentals of Marxist ideas and in the history, strategy and tactics of the movements in which we are involved, through regular classes, summer schools, and conferences.

The YSA and the Coming American Revolution

The YSA was founded in 1960. In the past ten years we have grown, along with the deepening and extension of the radicalization, from a small and relatively

isolated group of radicals into the largest, most cohesive, most dynamic and most stable radical youth organization in the country. As we have grown, we have seen other radical organizations rise and fall, torn apart by internal contradictions or smashed by events they were unable to foresee and unprepared to grapple with. SDS was the most well-known of these other organizations. SDS made the fatal mistake of thinking it could ignore the question of program, failing to examine and choose between the three major tendencies in the socialist movement--Stalinism, social democracy, and revolutionary socialism.

Organized without a program, including people whose political ideas were in fundamental conflict, SDS was able to stay together only so long as the situation in the country did not make united action necessary. But as the radicalization and the mass movements grew, SDS was paralyzed by its inability to reach agreement on what to do; it reeled under the impact of events, zig-zagged from reformism to ultra-leftism, and finally flew to pieces.

The YSA was organized from the very beginning on a clear political program and built to include people who agreed with that program--a revolutionary socialist program based on the knowledge and experience of the world revolutionary movement from Marx to Lenin to Trotsky, preserved and enriched in the United States by the Socialist Workers Party. Building on the basis of this program of

action, the YSA began to grow as the crises our Marxist understanding enabled us to foresee developed and called for the kind of united action our democratic-centralist organization equipped us to carry out.

We face the period ahead with considered optimism, realizing that the problems of the capitalists have never been so grave and the prospects for revolutionaries have never been so bright as they are today in the United States. Working in close political collaboration with the Socialist Workers Party, the revolutionary vanguard party in this country, we expect to continue and expand our growth and influence in the coming year, using our energies and our Marxist understanding to further the student movement and the struggles for women's liberation, Black, Puerto Rican, Chicano and Native American self-determination, an end to the war in Indochina and the defense of democratic rights.

Together with the SWP, the YSA belongs to the world revolutionary movement, not in the abstract, but concretely, with strong fraternal ties to our co-thinkers in the Fourth International. Our ties to the American and world parties of the socialist revolution put the YSA in a position to win to its ranks the best young militants of this generation and become the mass revolutionary youth organization which, together with the vanguard party, will lead the masses of American people in the coming American socialist revolution.

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