

## WORLD POLITICS

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### U.S. STUDENT MARCHERS BLAZED A PATH

- an editorial from the American Militant (April 26th)

The April 17 March on Washington to protest the U.S. war in Vietnam exceeded the most optimistic expectations of its initiators and supporters. Some 20,000 people, most of whom were students, demonstrated their opposition to the war the Johnson administration is waging against the people of Vietnam.

This huge outpouring reflects the growing opposition to the war on the nation's campuses. The success of the march is also an indication of the uneasiness over the war felt by wide sections of the population as a whole.

The Students for a Democratic Society, which organized the march, and the other youth organizations and individuals who helped build it are to be congratulated for a job well done.

The success of the march was due not only to the real and growing opposition on campus to the war, but also to the policies carried out by the organizers of the march which helped to build it and maintain its militant spirit.

The original call for the march told the truth about the war. It described the war as a civil war. It didn't buy the view that "both sides" are "equally to blame" and concentrated its fire on the U.S. government, whose military intervention threatens to plunge Asia and the world into a bloody holocaust.

All who agreed that the war should be ended now were invited to support the march. Under this policy of non-exclusion the support of revolutionary socialists was welcomed. The SDS leaders stuck to this policy despite pressure from all kinds of liberals, State Department socialists, those in the right-wing of the peace movement, etc.

The policy of non-exclusion opened the way for the activists and militants to join in the organization of the march, and to contribute their energy and spirit - no small factor in the large turnout from many cities and campuses.

The demonstration proved the fallacy of the oft-repeated argument of professional liberals that serious opposition to the Johnson administration can only isolate the movement and render its protests "ineffective". The march was built on the basis of the unqualified demand on the government to end the war in Vietnam, a demand which generated enthusiasm and support for the march.

In his speech at the march, SDS President Paul Potter called upon the students assembled there to go back home and organize to fight the system that is responsible for the war. "We must name that system", he continued. "We must name it, describe it, analyze it, understand it and change it. For it is only when that system is changed and brought under control that there can be any hope for stopping

the forces that create a war in Vietnam today or a murder in the South tomorrow or all the incalculable, innumerable atrocities that are worked on people all over - all the time."

In his speech, Potter did not give "the system" its name - but the enemy is clear. It is the capitalist system. Driven by its need to expand its markets, capitalist imperialism is impelled to seek areas of investment and control over the world's resources to maintain its dominion over a world in which resistance to capitalist exploitation and oppression continues to mount.

Under compulsion to stem the tide of revolt, capitalism is becoming more and more warlike, ready to wage wars against people fighting for independence and freedom - as in Vietnam.

Part and parcel of capitalism's increasingly warlike stand has been the development of a huge military machine. An unholy alliance between big business and the military has been formed. At the apex of this military-industrial complex stands the president as its chief executive and commander-in-chief.

This capitalist power structure is maintained through the two capitalist parties. Both the Democrats and the Republicans are committed to maintain and perpetuate the system responsible for the war in Vietnam.

By their support of the Johnson administration, the liberals, labor leaders, leaders of most of the civil rights groups, the right wing of the pacifist movement and the nearly-nouthed Communist and Socialist Parties, are in reality, lending support to the system which is waging war in Vietnam. They act as agents of the power structure, preventing the organization of an effective opposition against this system.

The mass of young people who joined the march on Washington against the war in Vietnam were in fact placing themselves in opposition to the Johnson administration and the whole system. If they follow the logic of their opposition to the war in Vietnam, they will break entirely with the system's political parties and institutions which are carrying out the war. By doing so they can lead others to do the same.

The April 17 demonstration is only a beginning. The next step is to continue without letup the campus demonstrations and discussions on a local, state, area and national scale against this war, and to turn the campuses into citadels of opposition to the war. But the organization of protest should not stop there.

The students are today in the forefront of the fight against the war in Vietnam, but by themselves they cannot stop it. The protest against the war should be carried to wider sections of the population who do have power - the working people, organized and unorganized and the Negro freedom fighters.

The monstrous growth of militarism bodes no good for the labor movement, civil-rights movement or academic freedom. Just as Truman's war in Korea resulted in the development of McCarthyism, the war in Vietnam has strengthened the most reactionary forces in America. The forces which are the most vociferous supporters of the war in Vietnam are the same forces which are in the forefront of the drive to hamstring the labor movement, turn back the civil-rights movement, and destroy civil liberties.

The labor movement, the Negro people and the students all stand to lose by a resurgence of McCarthyism which is bound to be the result of an unchecked escalation of the Vietnam war. The labor movement and civil-rights movement, in their own interests, should now join the students who have led the way, and fight against this dirty war in Vietnam.

THEY AREN'T BRAIN-WASHED

INTERVIEWS WITH WASHINGTON MARCHERS

(from the American Militant (April 26th 1965))

I went to the Washington March from New York on one of the trains chartered by the Students for a Democratic Society. On the way to Washington, and again on the way back, I interviewed a number of young people. If those I selected at random to talk to were a fair sampling of the demonstrators - and what I observed in Washington suggested they were - then there are a good number of thinking, quite well-informed people in the high schools and colleges today who see through the hoax of an American war of "liberation" in Vietnam not only because they fear the nuclear holocaust it can lead to but also because they are convinced that it is a dirty, unjust war that the U.S. is waging.

They understand that the war in Vietnam is essentially a civil war and that justice is on the side of the guerrillas. All whom I spoke to saw Johnson's Baltimore "negotiations" speech as demagoguery. And a number of them, interestingly, put their finger on the same key point - that Johnson hadn't been serious about negotiation because he refused to negotiate with the South Vietnam National Liberation Front. They made this point without solicitation.

Differing Reactions. The college students whom I talked to tended to be on the optimistic side about the prospects for doing something effective about Vietnam. The high-school students and those above college age, on the other hand, tended to be pessimistic about what could be done but felt that as a matter of personal conscience they must try anyway.

They were generally anti-establishment and radical in their thinking but not in the traditional sense. For most of them Marxism is something yet to be discovered.

An unusually articulate girl of 13 from the New York High School of Commerce said angrily: "We're there for the wrong reasons. No war is right. This one in particular is wrong."

What did she think of Johnson's speech? "He generalized. He didn't say anything. He contradicted himself. He talked about 'outside interference' there!"

She, too, was dubious, as to what the march would accomplish, but said: "I think it will show that many people feel this way and make President Johnson think about negotiating."

Her companion, a boy of about 15, explained they were members of a school club called "Students for Equality" and that about 20 of them had come on the march. He noted with emphasis: "We don't have an adult adviser."

He said there were perhaps a hundred in the school who shared their views on

Vietnam. "A lot of the kids feel we should expand the war," he said. "But most of them are really unsure about it. They don't know if Johnson's right or wrong."

A high-school student of about 16 said that most of his fellow students "believe in what's going on - up to a point." He was not over-optimistic about the results of the march. "Maybe it's futile. But maybe people can be woken up."

He thought the proposals in Johnson's speech would be "desirable if he carried them through". But, he added angrily, "It's ridiculous not to include the Viet Cong."

He spoke with a thoughtfulness and awareness that seemed far beyond his years.

Of the need for negotiations with the guerrillas, he said: "This would probably be a defeat for us in the immediate sense, but in the long run it wouldn't be. It would help erase the bad image we have in Asia."

"People in Asia" he continued, "have been hostile to us ever since we dropped the Bomb on Japan. Whether it's true or not, they feel we're using yellow people as guinea pigs for our weapons."

Returning to the nature of the guerrilla struggle in South Vietnam, he commented, "Sure, they're probably getting some help from Hanoi. Since the Middle Ages there's never been a pure revolutionary movement. All of them get some outside help."

Discussion Topic A young Negro woman who is a dance major at the Boston College of Music said there wouldn't be too many people from her school on the march but assured me there would be a good representation from Harvard, MIT and other Boston-area colleges.

She said Vietnam was a chief topic of discussion on the campus and that the people involved in trying to do something about it were largely the same ones that were concerned with civil rights and other social issues. She said they all felt strongly that the troops should be sent to Alabama instead of Vietnam and added emphatically, "That's certainly my opinion."

A young school teacher and her husband, a graduate student, were dubious about what the march would accomplish. "I don't think it will really do any good," she told me. "It won't accomplish anything in terms of stopping the war. But I feel it's my responsibility to go." She added, "I feel very strongly about this."

"It's a matter of what you believe in," she continued. "A few thousand people, parading in front of the Capitol isn't going to change things. The papers will call us "student radicals." But maybe it will alert people to the fact that there are some who are against this."

Commenting on Johnson's speech, she said caustically: "It was typical - very flowery and well-written. But it dodged the issues. He should definitely negotiate with the Viet Cong! It's ridiculous!"

"It's not a matter of whether they're right or wrong," she added, "or of what I think about them. They simply have a right to decide things for themselves. I'd want the same thing for myself."

Propaganda Machine Why was she skeptical about what could be accomplished by those in opposition to the war? She described to me the thinking of her fellow teachers who uncritically accepted the lies of the propaganda machine, and she added thoughtfully: "It's terribly difficult to convince a people - any people - that their country is guilty of mass murder."

"Besides," she added, "this country is fat, well-fed. The people don't feel threatened and they won't do anything until they feel they are."

In an interesting aside, that threw light on the reaction among radical-minded people to Khrushchev's placing missiles in Cuba and then withdrawing them, she observed: "This country has no justification for what it's doing in Vietnam. Cuba was at least in this sphere. I'm for Cuba and I was against what was done during the missile crisis but at least they could point to a base of a foreign power in this sphere. But what can they point to in Vietnam?"

Seeking to make her views on Vietnam clearer, she said: "Don't misunderstand me. I'm not a pacifist. I believe in people fighting for what's theirs. But that certainly isn't the case with us in Vietnam."

She added, "Actually I'm a socialist. I'm convinced that sooner or later, one way or another, this country will have to go socialist."

On the way back from Washington everyone was tired but there was a sense of deep satisfaction with the demonstration, stemming mainly from the fact that it had turned out to be much bigger than most people expected.

A drowsy teen-aged girl perked up immediately when I asked what she thought of the march. "It was fantastic" she said. "The turnout was amazing. No one expected more than 10,000.

"It was needed," she continued, "but I really didn't expect that so many people would take it on themselves to come. It makes me glad to feel there are so many people who feel this way and that there are so many of them outside of New York."

On the other hand, a graduate student from the University of Wisconsin said he was pleased and heartened but not surprised by the turnout. He explained that he knew there would be at least three or four busloads coming all the way from Wisconsin so he assumed the same thing would be happening on the other campuses. "I didn't expect that they would all just be from New York," he said. "There's a change taking place on the campuses. There's a more lively debate going on. The teach-ins indicated this."

A young man with a Southern accent termed the demonstration "great". "Johnson better take note," he said, and added: "I'm glad they wound up by marching on the Capitol. It's important that Congress should realize he's bamboozling them."

"I was certainly glad," he continued, "to see youth out in such numbers."

A radical-minded social worker echoed his words: "It was extremely exciting," she said, "to see young people out in such numbers."

She saw a revolutionary significance to the march. "It was the people against the government," she pointed out, "It was much more pointed than the civil-  
It was the biggest meaningful action I've seen people take.

MARCHERS' PETITION TO CONGRESS

(The following is the text of the petition submitted to Congress by the March on Washington to End the War in Vietnam)

We, the participants in the March on Washington to End the War in Vietnam, petition Congress to act immediately to end the war. You currently have at your disposal many schemes, including reconvening of the Geneva Conference, negotiation with the National Liberation Front and North Vietnam, immediate withdrawal, and UN-supervised elections. Although those among us might differ as to which of these is most desirable, we are unanimously of the opinion that the war must be brought to a halt.

This war is inflicting untold harm on the people of Vietnam. It is being fought in behalf of a succession of unpopular regimes, not for the ideals you proclaim. Our military are obviously being defeated; yet we persist in extending the war. The problems of America cry out for attention, and our entanglement in South Vietnam postpones the confrontation of these issues while prolonging the misery of the people of that war-torn land.

You must act now to reverse this sorry state of affairs. We call on you to end, not extend, the war in Vietnam.

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