



bill fibben

The American Left has fallen upon hard times. SDS, the largest and leading leftist youth organization a year ago, has fragmented on the national level into three sizable factions, several smaller ones, and a residue of thousands of unaligned members at the grass roots. Several hundred members of the Revolutionary Youth Movement, one of the three main factions, gathered last weekend in Atlanta to try to make a fresh start. It is not clear yet how successful they will be. RYM took several steps forward, but steps whose effects have so far been felt only internally. At the same time, there were a couple of steps back; and on some of RYM's most pressing problems, little or no movement at all.

RYM's major problems have been, since the SDS National Convention in June, sectarianism, dogmatism

and unison and waved Red Books and chanted slogans at each other. The ebbing of sectarianism is probably a result of several factors—the expulsion of the Worker-Student Alliance (Progressive Labor) faction of SDS, which had generated much of it in the first place; the passage of time, during which RYM has had ample opportunity to observe the effects of its rhetorical posturing on other people; and the emergence within RYM of a powerful caucus of RYM women who, with some exceptions, seemed last weekend to take more sensible attitudes than the men toward such things. The question is whether the pendulum can swing back far enough and fast enough before RYM suffocates in its sectarianism or drowns in a sea of rhetoric.

The most unfortunate aspect of RYM's sectarianism is that it often obscures the fact that RYM is gen-

supremacy, petty bourgeois attitudes and national chauvinism are seen by RYM in terms of "repudiating privilege": i.e., whites must repudiate their "white-skin privileges" over blacks; men must repudiate their "male privileges" over women. Critics make the following objections to this formulation:

1) It is next to impossible to organize anyone around the concept of giving up something. 2) White workers are not privileged at all—they also are exploited by imperialism, altho not as much as blacks. White workers may be the trustees of the jail, a popular analogy goes, but they're prisoners, too. 3) Repudiation of privilege is a moralistic, liberal appeal to guilt and shame, when what is actually needed is an appeal to whiteworkers' or males' own best interests.

All three objections seem to be semantic, once one understands what RYM really is saying. When RYM people get down to specific demands and concrete situations, a seemingly negative concept becomes more positive: open admissions to universities for black people; equal hiring, pay, working conditions, promotions, and fringe benefits for blacks and women; sharing of housework and child care by men; equal representation for women on decision-making bodies, etc. White workers and men are exhorted to give up their "privileges" over blacks and women not on the basis of guilt or shame, but because it is in their interests to do so: as long as whites and men hold on to their advantages, they will never be able to unite with blacks and women against the bosses and against imperialism, which oppresses all working people, men and women, black and white. The shame and guilt seem to be straw men conjured up in the minds of RYM's critics. And finally, to admit that men have privileges over women, or white workers over blacks, does not mean that all are not exploited and oppressed by imperialism: they are. The privileges, tho real, are illusory in the sense that they are much smaller than the benefits which would accrue to all working people, men and women, black and white, from the overthrow of imperialism.

The struggle against male supremacy and the repudiation of male privilege, came down from the realm of theory to the nitty-gritty of RYM's internal organization and the chauvinist attitudes of RYM men last weekend. The issue was forced by the unified action of the RYM women's caucus, with the internal program. (See other story, this issue.) The conference responded by electing eight women and two men to RYM's interim steering committee—which in turn elected three national officers, also female—and by repeatedly confronting men with instances of their own chauvinism, and asking them what they were going to do about it, to the point that every man present could not help but become aware of the depths of his own chauvinism.

To my knowledge, RYM is the first movement organization to deal with male supremacy in such a concrete structural way, and has made the most conscientious attempt of any movement organization I

Toward Mass Action

and a rote, mechanical Leninism-Stalinism-Maoism which has wrapped them in a cocoon of rhetoric and isolated them from all of their potential constituencies. These tendencies have perhaps been most clearly seen in the case of the local Revolutionary Youth Movement, whose sectarian outlook has effectively prevented them from working with other movement and antiwar groups—any and all of whom they are fond of charging with revisionism, opportunism, adventurism, centrism, economism, anticommunism, objective racism, national chauvinism, liberalism, tailism, non-struggle attitudes, Trotskyism, and petty bourgeois tendencies. Many of these terms have precise meanings and, when used carefully, can aid our understanding of past, present and future movements. ARYM has used them so indiscriminately and so often, however, that one is sometimes left with the impression that such label-mongering has become its *raison d'être*. ARYM's frequent criticisms of other groups have been further vitiated by the fact that its own politics have been in such flux over the past few months that it has been impossible to predict with confidence where they would be two or three months hence.

Last weekend's convention made it clear that sectarianism, dogmatism, Leninist-Stalinist-Maoist rote and label-mongering continue to plague RYM—altho RYM chapters elsewhere don't seem to be as virulently infected as ARYM. One hopeful sign was that a countervailing sentiment against sectarianism, "honchoism" and rhetorical masturbation, as one sister aptly put it, is emerging *within* RYM. Furthermore, sentiment was overwhelmingly against defining RYM as a Marxist-Leninist organization. The pendulum has begun to swing back, ever so slowly, from the high-water mark of sectarianism reached at the SDS National Convention in June, when opposing factions jumped up in

erating a coherent set of politics around some of Amerika's most fundamental problems—imperialism, white supremacy and male supremacy. I had the feeling last weekend that, after months of flux, RYM's politics were now reaching a bedrock level of coherence upon which RYM will take its stand in the months ahead.

RYM's whole politics begin with the premise that the principal contradiction in the world today is that between Amerikan imperialism and the oppressed nations (including the black nation inside the U.S.) who are struggling against it. That struggle is being led by the National Liberation Front of Vietnam, the black liberation movement in the U.S., movements of anti-imperialist youth around the world, and the peoples of Cuba, China and North Vietnam, who have already liberated themselves from imperialism. Anti-imperialist white American youth must support and integrate themselves with these existing anti-imperialist forces. In order to achieve solidarity within the anti-imperialist movement, and hasten imperialism's downfall, all divisive forces in the movement must be eradicated.

Chief among these are white supremacy over blacks and other peoples of color, and the racist attitudes which grow out of whites' concrete privileges and advantages; male supremacy over women, and their resulting male chauvinist attitudes; the privileges of "petty bourgeois" youth over working-class people, and the resulting petty-bourgeois attitudes; the domination of other peoples by the United States, with the resulting national chauvinism; and anti-communism, which keeps working people from joining radical movements which are fighting for their interests.

The struggle against white supremacy, male

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know of to deal with male chauvinism in all of its ramifications. This was the conference's most significant achievement, and should assure it at least a footnote in future histories of the movement. An anti-imperialist organization of youth led by women is putting theory into practice and has the potential of catching some imaginations. (Unfortunately, there was no black caucus present to force both white men and white women to deal with white supremacy and our racist attitudes; a steering committee dominated by black women would have been even more of a mind-blower.)

This example of RYM's internal practice should make it clear that positive currents are stirring within RYM. It is unfortunate that RYM seems to have a compulsion to cast everything, even the positive things, in terms of negation: repudiate or give up privileges, fight against anti-communism, against fascism, against the exploitation of working men and women, against the oppression of youth, against imperialism, against racism, against national chauvinism, etc., etc. There is unfortunately some basis in fact to the bourgeois media's image of radical youth as being opposed to everything but offering few positive alternatives. In particular, altho many in RYM consider themselves communists and their end goal the dictatorship of the proletariat, RYM does not describe itself as a socialist organization and has very little to say about what a socialist America would be like.

Part of this stems from RYM's definition of terms: "imperialism" is used in the Leninist sense to mean not merely a foreign policy but the highest stage of capitalism. Since imperialism and capitalism are synonymous by this definition, capitalism is rarely mentioned—nor is its antithesis, socialism. It seems to be generally assumed that the fall of imperialism will lead automatically to socialism, and that little more need be said about that. That is unfortunate.

The time has come for an explicitly socialist organization with a liberating but down-to-earth vision of what socialism would mean in terms of equalizing wealth and power, production on the basis of human need rather than profit, abolition of alienating work, the consumer ideology, repression of sexuality and other obstacles to the fullest and freest development of human potential.

It is on this count, in fact, that RYM has taken its biggest step back. At the time of the SDS National Convention, RYM people talked of the need for SDS to become an explicitly socialist organization; "fight for socialism" was among a list of "principles of unity" circulated in RYM several months ago. RYM people say it now has been dropped because 1) "socialism" has so many meanings, i.e., so many people mean so many different things by it, that it is open to misinterpretation; and 2) it would stand in the way of building a united front against imperialism—i.e., some who are ready to join an anti-imperialist movement aren't ready for a socialist one. Sad.

Related to RYM's failure to articulate a positive vision of socialism is its blindness to the revolutionary aspects of hip culture. RYM correctly criticizes the reactionary strains in hip culture—apathy and passivity, addiction to hard drugs, lack of class consciousness, indiscriminate pacifism, vestiges of male chauvinism and other hangovers from bourgeois upbringings. But RYM often mistakes the part for the whole; hip culture is extremely heterogeneous. RYM appears to have little awareness of the extent to which the institutions, attitudes and ideology suitable for a libertarian, socialist America—new attitudes toward and new kinds of work, openness to sensuality, currents of

communality and egalitarianism, new forms for the family, gut aversion to all manifestations of militarism, nonrepressive personality structures, saner attitudes toward the environment—are developing and being experimented with *right now* by young Americans outside the political movement.

RYM reaffirmed its intention of taking a more vital role in the antiwar movement. There was a consensus that RYM should work thru the New Mobilization Committee and the rapidly-growing Student Mobilization Committee to help build the antiwar movement, transform it into an anti-imperialist movement and wrest control of it from "bourgeois, liberal and Trotskyist" elements. The same consensus was present at the SDS National Convention in June, but those good intentions were transformed by the Weatherman leadership into an ass-kicking, pig-baiting, window-breaking spree in the streets of Chicago.

Right now, RYM's most pressing problems are organizational ones. It has been decided to establish a national office in Chicago, to put out a position paper on its principles, and to launch a mass newspaper. All these things and more will be necessary to halt the present tendencies toward disintegration. But in the long run, RYM's survival probably depends on finding answers to the problems which shattered SDS—specifically, RYM will have to find a way to have ideological debate and struggle without the sectarianism, manipulation and rhetorical posturing which has accompanied it in the past. All one can say at this point is that there are a few hopeful signs.

—bob goodman

JUST LIKE THE FRENCH

JORDAN (LNS)—"You can call it collective punishment; we call it defensive measures."

That's the way *The New York Times* quoted a senior Israeli military government official describing the recent intensification of punishment of Palestinian Arabs living in the west bank and Gaza strip areas. The west bank, formerly a part of Jordan, and the Gaza strip, formerly under Egyptian mandate, have been occupied by the Israeli Army since the June war of 1967.

Until several weeks ago, Israeli occupation officials were supposed to demolish the homes only of those suspected of participating in or assisting Palestinian commando activities. But, according to the *Times*, "Now the Israelis are also blowing up the dwellings of Arabs who they feel are reasonably likely to have known about acts of terrorism [sic] committed in their area."

While homes are demolished, means of livelihood are confiscated. Last week in Hebron, for instance, the Israelis seized 26 shops owned by Arabs—13 on each side of the street where a grenade had been tossed at an Israeli military vehicle earlier in the day.

Since the toughening of the punishments, two dozen homes were blown up by the Israeli army in one incident near Hebron, and eight houses in another incident in a Gaza village. Arabs say that 7,000 houses in occupied areas have been demolished as punishment since the June war, and many villages erased from the map.

The Israeli policy goes beyond the "collective punishment" the *Times* reporter saw, or the "defensive measures" the Israelis claim against commando action. It is part of a conscious policy extending backward through several decades—to expel the Palestinian Arabs, frighten them out, starve them out, force them out, so that their homeland may become, in Moshe Dayan's words, "A Jewish state as the French have a French state."

Principles of Unity—Revolutionary Youth Movement*

Revolutionary Youth Movement is a mass anti-imperialist organization of youth united around the principles of:

- the struggle against white supremacy—the repudiation of white skin privilege
- the struggle against male supremacy—the repudiation of male privilege
- support for the right of self-determination of all oppressed nations, including the right to secession
- the fight against the exploitation of working men and women by imperialism
- the fight against anti-communism
- the fight against the oppression of youth
- the fight against fascism
- support of the right of all oppressed and exploited peoples to armed self-defense. We cannot deny any level of struggle in the fight to attain and maintain our principles.

*statement adopted by the Revolutionary Youth Movement at its national convention last weekend at Emory University

THE PSYCHIC EXPERIENCE

On December 6, The Institute For The Harmonious Development of Consciousness will present a full evening of demonstrations and lectures by authorities in all the allied fields of the Occult & Metaphysical. The area covered will range from "faith healing" and Astrology to Witchcraft and Astral-Projection. The program will commence at 7:30, thusly.

- 7:30—Rev. W.C. Brown— "Understanding The Inner Man."
- 8:00—Janai Fusco: "Development of the Totao-Man through Dianetics and scientology."
- 8:30—Ed O'Neal: founder of CSA, ed. & pub. of "Orion" magazine. "The New Age: Realization of Man's Perfection."
- 9:00—George Houdeshel, chairman of Atlanta ARE. "The Edgar Cayce Legacy."
- 9:30—Ben Baldwin, WRNG Radio: "A Skeptic Looks at Occultism."
- 10:00—Rev. Peter Calhoun, Center for Spiritual Healing and Enlightenment: "The Church and Occultism."
- 11:00—Knoxie Witt: "Sex and Astrology."
- 11:30—Frank Stanton: "Hypnosis and the Expansion of Consciousness."
- 12:00—Dent Myers, author of "Life Is Half Death"; a follower of Aleister Crowley's Theory & Ritual. "Black Magick: Here and Now."

This program will be presented on December 6, at the Community Playhouse 1150 Peachtree St. and is limited to a seating capacity of 660. All seats are \$5.00; tickets may be ordered by mail. Make checks payable to J.M. Cox, 428 Miller Bldg. 1145 Peachtree St. Atlanta, Ga. 30309

There will be representatives from many various groups of this area available for information concerning their activities. As this is a unique undertaking, we expect a sell-out crowd, and hence, advise those interested to send for tickets at the earliest possible time. Enclose stamped, addressed envelope

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