

YSA

DISCUSSION BULLETIN

Vol. 10 No.8
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25 Cents

YOUNG SOCIALIST ALLIANCE

YSA, BOX 471, COOPER STATION, N.Y., N.Y. 10003

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The Chase-Meseke-Barzman-Sherrill Resolution

By Lew Jones

The Vietnam war's central importance to world and national politics and our leading role in the antiwar movement make the antiwar discussion and decisions at the coming convention crucial for our work in the next period.

The submission of the Chase-Meseke-Barzman-Sherrill resolution underscores the importance of the discussion. The YSA is now presented with what the authors contend is an opposing general line for our central arena of activity.

We will first reiterate briefly the general line which has guided our activity in the antiwar movement since its inception and which is embodied in the NEC draft resolution. Second, we will deal with the CMBS version of the history of the antiwar movement. Third, we will examine the alternative course for our antiwar work implied by the CMBS resolution.

I. Our Line

From the beginning our attitude toward the antiwar movement has been based on the characteristic which makes it unique compared to past pacifist movements. Classical pacifism opposed war in time of peace, but when war broke out, used its authority to mobilize patriotic support for "this particular war." That is, classical pacifism always voiced its opposition to war in general but always found an "exceptional reason" for supporting its "own" government after the outbreak of armed conflict. The crime of the pacifist leaders was that they used their authority as advocates of peace, to turn the wholly progressive pacifism of the masses, who are opposed to war, into its chauvinist opposite when war broke out.

The present antiwar movement is distinguished from classical pacifism above all by the fact that it has developed and grown in explicit opposition to the shooting war being waged now against the Vietnamese. This is the first time in American history that such a movement has developed during a war. This fact dictated from the beginning the necessity not only of our participation but a willingness to shoulder leadership responsibility in this movement. It precluded intervening by simply condemning the movement as pacifist and "making the record" as to where we stand.

Proceeding from this premise, and from the knowledge that the movement was made up of conflicting tendencies, we have from the beginning fought for a policy of non-exclusion. Non-exclusion is the basis of our participation in the broad united front type coalition that makes up the antiwar movement.

As we interpret the concept of non-exclusion it embodies, not only the principle that no tendency shall be excluded because of non-conformist ideas, views and opinions, but that we reserve

the right, for ourselves--and others--to advance such slogans and demands within the movement that we feel can best advance the struggle in opposition to the war. We do not issue ultimatums to others to accept our views as a condition for joint action in the struggle against the war. Nor do we tolerate such ultimatums from others. We are confident that given a democratic milieu our views will prevail among substantial numbers of young militants and antiwar activists. This basic framework of non-exclusion and a serious attitude toward working out specific agreement for joint action dictates the necessity of arriving, within strictly defined limits, and wherever possible at decision by consensus. United action would otherwise become impossible. It is within this general concept that we have, from the beginning, advanced and vigorously promoted our central slogan, Bring the Troops Home, Now!

Our insistence on a "single issue" antiwar movement has been grossly misunderstood in some quarters. The "single issue" around which the coalition has been built was never intended to be the single slogan of withdrawal of U.S. troops but joint struggle in action to end the war. It is around this issue that the widest possible unity in action has been mobilized against the imperialist war in Vietnam and against the capitalist class that is waging that war.

We never considered, and we do not now view the antiwar movement as a united front of propaganda with a general program. It is a united front of action. Opposition to imperialist war is tested not in words, which come easy, but in deeds, in marches, and in periodic mass demonstrations. It was around this axis that we concentrated our efforts to keep the movement from being channeled into class collaborationist politics, community organizing projects, individual anti-draft gimmicks, research projects, etc.

It is this that has characterized our "single issue" approach to the antiwar movement.

Within the broad united front type coalition organized around struggle against the war, we have been able to build and maintain to this point a working bloc with the radical pacifists. The bloc has rested upon agreement on the following points: 1) The most important question of the day is opposition to the war, and it is around this issue that the broadest coalition of diverse tendencies can be formed. The movement must be non-exclusive. 2) The movement should engage in mass actions, and not subordinate such actions to the so-called "multi-issue" projects of particular tendencies. 3) The movement's propaganda should reach out to the labor movement, the civil rights movement, and the G.I.'s. 4) Within the broader coalition, we seek to convince as many as possible to demand immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops. This demand is a concretization of the right of the Vietnamese to self-determination and links up the immediate interests of the G.I.'s in Vietnam with the antiwar sentiment at home.

This is our political line, embodied in resolutions of past conventions and national committee plenums, conferences, articles, and editorials in our press, in pamphlets, brochures, speaking tours, etc. From this general line flows our tasks, as outlined on Page 16 of the NEC draft resolution.

Chase, Meseke, Barzman and Sherrill contend that they represent a tendency with a contrary line which they present in the form of a minority resolution for convention decision as a substitute for the line of the majority. Unfortunately, nowhere in their document is their alleged "line" clearly set forth.

Except for some casual, unsubstantiated "criticisms" in their first few paragraphs, they do not critically examine the line of the NEC draft resolution. Instead, we are presented with an "indictment" of the leadership for being derelict in carrying out the line adopted by previous YSA conventions. Yet, although not explicitly stated, the logic of the views expressed does lead to a contrary political conclusion from which flows their charge of tactical "adaptation," unwarranted concessions, deviations, etc., etc. Let us examine these views.

II. A Review of the Last Year

The analysis of the antiwar movement which tortuously emerges from the Chase-Meseke-Barzman-Sherrill resolution runs along the following lines: There was a "...change in the relationship of forces which began to show itself toward the end of the summer. The emergence of the liberals and pacifists in the leadership at this point..." (Page 10-11). "The March Days of Protest marked the high point of the independent thrust of the antiwar movement, the weight of the CEWV's, and our influence through them." (Page 3). The authors have found each succeeding demonstration since the March 25-26 protest inadequate, at best. The liberals and pacifists have taken over the movement and it has lost its "independent thrust."

Our analysis of the antiwar movement over the past year is quite different. We have not seen a downturn of the movement or takeover by reformist forces. On the contrary, the antiwar movement has reflected the general deepening of antiwar sentiment in the United States by growing in numbers and broadening in forces on a united front type basis. Moreover, this growth over the last year has occurred as other major peace and political groups have been forced to pay lip service to the concept of self-determination.

The growth of the movement on a militant basis has occurred with YSAers playing leading roles, both on a national and local level. Far from just "occupying positions," our members have utilized their well-earned positions to play vanguard roles in educating and leading the movement.

Our estimate of the situation is underlined by the fact that some leaders of the labor movement and the civil rights movement have made and continue to make steps toward the organized antiwar movement.

The Past Year

The summer period was chiefly characterized on the one hand by a deepening of popular sentiment against the war and on the other by a division in the organized movement over reformist community organizing versus mass demonstrations which reflected the more general debate over the November 1966 elections.

In this period the National Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam (NCC) launched its summer project which was to be a base for supporting "peace" candidates in the autumn. At the same time the New York Parade Committee had become the de facto leadership of the antiwar movement, representing on a local New York basis a broad united front grouping.

In the eyes of antiwar activists these two groupings represented in organized form the division in the movement. The NCC, dominated by one tendency, stood for a "multi-issue" approach oriented toward community organizing and "peace" candidates.

The Parade Committee represented a broad, united front type grouping (over 60 groups at this time) that strongly reflected the militant and student section of the movement and whose officers, Dellinger and Muste, were supporters of self-determination. The committee was established solely on two simple points--non-exclusion and periodic mass demonstrations against the Vietnam war.

The August 6-9 national protest was initiated by the Parade Committee. This call for action came out of the continuing debate over perspective, and was made in spite of the NCC's opposition. The call not only represented a victory for those opposed to class-collaborationist politics but also a change in the relationship of forces in the militant wing's favor. This fact was outlined in a June 4, 1966 NEC report; "In this work we have the definite advantage. In an important sense the situation we faced last fall ('65) has now been reversed. (Emphasis added). In many areas our initiative is not challenged and it is the coalitionists (those supporting class collaborationist politics primarily with the Democratic Party) who bear the responsibility for attempting to slow down or split the IDP (International Days of Protest) and reverse the relationship of forces, so they can introduce a peace candidate perspective." This situation was also described in a June 17, 1966 report by the SWP-YSA joint antiwar fraction: "To a large degree the position in which the militant wing of the antiwar movement finds itself is the reverse of that at the Washington Convention. It is the coalitionists (class-collaborationists) who are opposed to the action and direction and themes that have been decided by the majority of the activists and committees around

the country. The militants are trying to maintain a united front and build actions while the coalitionists forced into verbal support are dragging their feet. Under these circumstances the fight of the left is for unity and to build the International Days of Protest." (Emphasis in original).

Chase-Meseke-Barzman-Sherrill say on Page 4, "By calling the August 6-8 demonstration we hoped to find some activity to occupy the activists, to divert attention from the peace campaigns." (Emphasis in original). Apparently, Chase et al do not understand that action in the streets against the war is not a mere diversion from class collaborationist politics--it is its opposite. The August days of protest kept the movement in the streets in action against the war, and was a strong blow against the "peace" candidates perspective for this reason.

A concrete example was the situation of the Berkeley Vietnam Day Committee (VDC). There the committee was split by the forces behind "peace" candidate Robert Sheer who sought to turn the VDC into a multi-issue grouping and one of his campaign committees. We had predicted that his actions would divide the movement. And indeed they did when the Sheer supporters left the VDC and publicly attacked it.

We were active in bringing what there was of the VDC back together on the basis of opposition in street actions to the imperialist war. For example, we were instrumental in organizing a street demonstration of 4,000 on April 13, which helped expose Sheer who attacked the demonstration. Later on August 6, 10,000 people demonstrated in San Francisco, an action we actively helped to organize. Through these activities we were able to reactivate the VDC and lay the basis for winning activists away from the Sheer grouping back to the VDC.

Do the authors think these actions were wrong? Only a "gimmick" to occupy the attention of activists? Was this "tail-ending?" Or were they used to effectively combat the "peace" candidate approach? The test of the line is in deeds. And in this case, particularly, our line was proved correct.

The Newsletter and its supporters played an influential role in this new situation and before. The Newsletter representatives attended the numerous regional NCC gatherings and put forward their position against "peace" candidates and for mass action. The Newsletter had also launched several campaigns and actions to educate the movement and to project the Newsletter as the leadership of the militant wing of the movement. These included the New York Women's March, the Lt. Howe case, the Withdrawal vs. Negotiations pamphlet, publicity for such things as the Afro-American CEWV's, and the Fort Hood Three case.

During this period, however, it was clear that the Newsletter did not have the authority or forces to launch a national organization. Such an organization could not be created artificially. We began viewing the Newsletter supporters as one of the components

that would eventually form such an organization.

A change in relationship of forces occurred in favor of the militant wing. It is important, however, to realize that even though a victory was achieved by calling the demonstration, a section of the movement remained unconvinced and only gave verbal support to August 6-9. In fact, a split in the movement was a very real possibility.

The Fort Hood Three Case

The case of the Fort Hood Three further aided the militants' position. At its inception and through most of its development, the case tended to sharpen the opposition of antiwar activists to the government and "peace" candidates.

This was outlined in a NEC report by Doug on July 2 (the "confidential memo" was not the only report, but one of several). Three reasons were given for the political importance of the case. "1. A well publicized and active defense of these three G.I.'s--none of whom are "pacifists" and all of whom are presently in the army--is a link between the antiwar movement and the G.I.'s... 2. The case sharply confronts the Johnson administration at one of its most sensitive points--the draftee army. A reliable, unquestioning army is of the utmost importance to Johnson and his war aims, and if soldiers and groups of soldiers begin challenging the war and their participation in it, it is a direct challenge to the government. (Emphasis in original)...3. ...There is a need for the freshness and inspiration of new and daring focal points. This case can become one of those points."

This was not a turn away from building the civilian antiwar movement, nor a "major turn" toward the troops. It represented a broadening of the scope and consciousness of the movement.

The popularity of the case and the inspiration it gave the movement helped to provide a basis for consolidating the coalition in the Parade Committee.

More important, however, was the education of the movement itself. There had previously been difficulty convincing others in the movement that troops were potential allies of the antiwar movement, and that the movement's strategy should be gauged to show that the antiwar movement was on the side of the troops. Through the Fort Hood Three case we were able to convince major sections of the antiwar movement of our argument.

The campaign around the Fort Hood Three strengthened our arguments for the Bring the Troops Home Now slogan. Prior to the case when the consideration was raised that it was wrong for slogans to alienate the troops, we would be laughed down. But the Fort Hood Three case became an argument to point out the importance of 'Bring the Troops Home Now' as a slogan which

could reach the troops. In fact, the Fort Hood Three case did more to convince the antiwar movement that withdrawal was a correct slogan than any other single factor aside from the Spring 1966 demonstrations in Vietnam.

Our emphasis on the case was not agitational, but educational. No demands were made of the troops. We had basically four simple aims: 1) Educate the antiwar movement to the fact that troops were potential allies and one force that could help end the war. 2) Make it clear to troops that the antiwar movement was fighting for their interests. It was simple. The movement wanted them to come home, not die for Ky. 3) Set the precedent, through action, that the troops have a constitutional right to read literature on the facts of the war.

This case enabled us to fight for both withdrawal and a broadening of the movement at the same time. The so-called "trade" the minority is so upset about was simply a matter of supporting the Fort Hood Three as one way of furthering our aims, rather than presenting an ultimatum of withdrawal as the only slogan of the August 6-9 protest in New York which could have led to an uncalled for, unnecessary, and irresponsible split, and would have severely limited the opportunities open to us and the movement.

(Incidentally, the minority excerpts quotes "selectively" from the "confidential memo." The very next two paragraphs after the "excellent trade" paragraph describe the total situation:

"We haven't given up the withdrawal position. None of the nine slogans contradicts that position...What we did was decide not to irritate the more conservative groups over where 'Bring the Troops Home Now' would be in the leaflet, so that we could emphasize the complete unity around the proposition of going to the G.I.'s with the message this case carried..."

"This unity now exists. But it is important to remember that the old dichotomy exists beneath the surface. And it is important to understand the implications of the turn that has been made in order to take full advantage of the united support before a cleavage between right and left again appears.")

The Struggle Over The Fort Hood Three Perspective

Let's trace the development of the Fort Hood Three case. It began as a radical case based on the slogan "Support the G.I.'s Right Not To Be In Vietnam"--a withdrawal slogan--and on the proposition of distributing the facts of the case and the war to G.I.'s. As an opening to a working class force we seized upon this opportunity to probe deeper, just like we would with an opening in the labor movement. On this radical basis the defense committee grew and became widely known.

As the case had widespread support and entailed a sharp confrontation with the government, the class collaborationists attempted to blunt its implications. With the aim in mind of transforming the case into a draft case, supporters of the CP became more active and a protracted struggle over perspective ensued in the defense committee.

Our perspective lost in this struggle, despite our strong opposition, and the defense committee is now oriented more toward antidraft activity. It is of utmost importance, however, to note that 1) the nature of the committee was changed in the course of a struggle, 2) the perspectives for the committee were changed only after the full impact of the case had begun to ebb.

Our Preparations for the Case

Was the YSA unprepared for this development as the authors of the minority document charge? "Previously, there had been no discussion in our movement of a turn toward the G.I.'s..." (Page 5). No, their charge is false. When the YS ran its first 32 page issue featuring an article on the "Bring the Troops Home Now Movement" (the longest article ever published in the YS) it was not due to some subjective interest by the editor. This article and the political importance of it had been discussed at length at the 1965 plenum. Moreover, the YSA sent several speakers on tours speaking on the importance of the antiwar movement projecting an image that would have the sympathy of the G.I.'s.

The August 6-9 demonstrations and the Fort Hood Three case, of course, did not settle the conjunctural debates or the underlying questions for the antiwar movement, even though the relationship of forces had changed. August to November saw the development of capitalist "peace" candidates which if supported by the movement would have derailed it into the capitalist camp; a development we fought against and educated the movement about for over a year.

Our aim was to maintain the movement on its broad and militant basis of a united front of action and to emphatically oppose any support to the "peace" candidates. A contradiction between the deepening popular sentiment and the reluctance by the class-collaborationists to support antiwar action existed.

The September Cleveland Conference

Within this context the September Cleveland Conference occurred. Called by the Inter-University Committee for Debate on Foreign Policy (IUC) the conference laid the basis for taking the broad united front approach of the Parade Committee onto a national scale. The conference itself had many new forces in attendance, which later became the basis for a sponsorship that ranged from the Women Strike for Peace, the Friends, and SANE, to the YSA and the SWP.

We projected a perspective opposed to that of the class-collaborationists. Our perspective was to build mass demonstrations and rallies on November 5-8. Our proposition--which was carried--demanded that the peace candidates support the demonstrations and not vice versa.

The slogans adopted at the conference--Against the War in Vietnam, For Economic Justice, For Human Rights--were acceptable to us and represented a realistic basis for united action. The "Sick of the War" idea was simply the title of the call (not the one we would have chosen if we had complete control) and a tactical adjustment to more conservative elements.

Chase, Meske, Barzman, and Sherrill are chiefly concerned that we should have 'made the record' more at this conference. They miss the entire point. This conference organized a national united front mass action against the war.

The perspective decided upon was a realistic one. Mass demonstrations, although smaller than previous actions in some areas, occurred in every major city. The "peace" candidates fizzled with no major figure or number of candidates appearing. The question had splitting effects in two places during that period--the Queens CEWVN (NY) and Boston. The threat of a diversion of the movement into capitalist politics was surmounted.

During the growth of this national formation we began to notice significant changes in the objective situation in the United States. Civil Rights groups, especially the black power wing, began to become more outspoken against the war, and to take steps toward the organized antiwar movement.

The earlier airline mechanics strike and other developments revealed how the war was beginning to affect labor. Johnson's wage guidelines, threatened anti-labor legislation, and increased taxes have all affected the ranks of labor, making it necessary for some bureaucrats to show more militancy and for a small number of them to oppose the war.

In contradiction to this deepening antiwar sentiment stood the pessimism of many of the student activists, who had become discouraged by the continuing escalation of the war. The conscious reformists tried to take advantage of this pessimism to promote their orientation for the movement.

Our job in this situation was, first, to maintain the national grouping and relationship of forces that had developed. Second, to set a perspective, by discussing out and convincing the activists, that would enable this national formation to reach out to the deepening and broadening antiwar sentiment.

The Thanksgiving Cleveland Conference

Within this context the Thanksgiving Cleveland conference took place. The conference itself was poorly organized and did not have representation from the whole movement. The student wing particularly was not well-represented. At the conference we took on the job of convincing those that were there, as a first step, of the necessity of the movement reaching out through organized activity to broader forces, including the labor and Negro movements. Taking the form of a debate over community organizing versus mass demonstrations, an extended discussion of what perspective the antiwar movement should have taken place. YSAers took the floor several times to spell out what was occurring in the United States and the need for an ambitious program of action.

A report from the YSA-SWP joint fraction on January 16 described this educational process we initiated:

"Our main job was to educate those who had been involved in the November 5 Mobilization to the possibility of projecting a new kind of mobilization for the spring and to cut across the pessimism that the professors and activists, especially some of the non-YSA student youth, felt. Our arguments revolved around several themes: that the reason for the sense of demoralization and lack of appreciation for the accomplishments of the antiwar movement was the movement's isolation from the labor and Negro movement; that the protests could not expect to rapidly end the war under these conditions; that nevertheless the economic and social pressures generated by the war, and the anti-Negro, anti-labor moves by the Johnson administration emboldened by the war, would increase as spring approached and we could expect resistance to them.

"Further, we said that the core of the antiwar movement represented at the Cleveland conference had a responsibility to try to reach out and attempt to involve these other layers, as well as remobilize the middle class activists that have made it up to now. We said that we should think in terms of not just another day of protest but of organizing a qualitatively larger demonstration that would represent a new political step for the antiwar movement, taking advantage of the developments in the labor and Negro movements that we knew would occur in the next few months."

Our perspective carried the conference, even though, once again, a large number remained unconvinced. The most important thing was that a date for action against the imperialist war was set, a perspective of mobilizing massive numbers and of reaching out to labor and Negro forces was set, and a structure with A.J. Muste as chairman was established to carry out this perspective. A set of slogans, which included withdrawal and none of which contradicted withdrawal, was referred to the steering committee.

The conference itself was small and unrepresentative of the movement, yet it came at a time when new opportunities were presenting themselves. The YSA-SWP fraction thus faced a problem. We saw the need for the conference to set an ambitious course and yet we had no desire to simply win a verbal victory on the withdrawal slogan because of our voting strength. The most important thing for the conference to decide on was the setting of a date for a future action that would lay the groundwork to attempt to involve forces from the trade union and civil rights movements, and the establishment of a structure to make sure this perspective was carried out. These proposals reached significant agreement and have been implemented.

The Communist Party supported the April 15 action, trying to recoup many of the losses they had suffered by only being minimally involved in the antiwar movement. This shift in line necessitated an attempt to work with, not over or around, the YSA, which in practice has led to the opening of new milieus to our ideas. They also hope to convince a section of the movement to support their brand of "peace" candidates in 1968, which we, of course, will oppose. But we can only welcome and encourage the participation of the CP in all the united front type formations.

The Chicago Student Conference

The Student Strike Conference in Chicago in December, 1966, organized primarily by the CP youth, represented an attempt by the CP to set up a front group to fill the vacuum created by the lack of a national student formation to end the war. Their aims changed slightly with their turn toward support of the April 15 action, and with our active participation in the conference.

We participated in the conference as leaders of the antiwar movement with several aims: 1) to educate activists on the potential of the movement; 2) to tie the spring student action concretely into April 15; 3) to try to involve SDSers and independents; 4) to lay the basis at the Chicago conference for setting up a student united front, nationally and on each campus.

On every count we were able to convince the conference of our view. SDS opposed April 15 and remains on a national scale outside the Student Mobilization Committee but this was not our intention nor a result of our policies. In local united fronts, SDS chapters have become involved in many areas.

An important achievement at the conference was the Student Mobilization Committee's (SMC) foundation based on self-determination for the Vietnamese. Organizing the student wing on the basis of the demand for withdrawal, the development of the Student Mobilization Committee represents significant motion toward the perspective the Newsletter projected. On that basis the Newsletter has thrown itself into building and

developing the committee. The Newsletter's contacts, staff, resources, and prior experience have played a major role in building the SMC into what can become a viable organization.

The Chase-Meseke-Barzman-Sherrill resolution is confused on the development of this committee. They down-play the importance of the SMC giving as a major reason "...their (CP's) reasons for entering the Student Mobilization Committee...are diametrically opposed to ours." (Page 10). That's of course true, but who expected anything different? If no one disagreed with us, the word opponent--nor united front--would not be in our vocabulary. But, what do they make of this? "This basic conflict makes the future development of this formation highly questionable." (Page 10). Maybe yes, maybe no. But, in any case, by building it energetically now on its present militant basis we maximize the possibilities of a successful development and minimize the possibility of the CP imposing its popular front-peace candidate aims.

The Current Conjunction

Where does the antiwar movement stand today? Our perspective for it has in good measure been proved correct. The process of reaching out to other sections of society has moved forward, drawing in representatives of both wings of the civil rights movement, a few unions, and the conservative peace groups. The addition of James Bevel as executive director symbolizes and further aids the process of organizing antiwar sentiment in the ghetto. The addition of Cleveland Robinson, secretary-treasurer of District 65 of RDSWU, as a vice-chairman and the formation of labor subcommittees within the Spring Mobilization Committee, and local union support on the West Coast indicates the growing labor support and the expanding opportunities in this area.

It took time and constant campaigning by our forces to set the Spring Mobilization in motion. The call, delayed by long political debates, has finally been released containing the demand for withdrawal of U.S. troops and no demand suggesting that the U.S. has the right to negotiate the future of Vietnam. This call is the most militant of any of the previous days of protest.

Around the Mobilization a campaign spirit is developing, promising to make April 15 the largest demonstration in the antiwar movement's history.

The Effects of New Forces

There is a contradiction involved in the entry of labor and civil rights groups into the movement, of course. As organizations from the labor movement and the Negro struggle begin to become involved in the protest movement, they move through their own organizations and leaderships, and at their present level of political consciousness. These leaders are

for the most part class collaborationists.

The leaders move toward the movement because 1) they feel antiwar pressure from their own ranks and 2) they see a growing radical movement that threatens to go over their heads.

Their entry is welcomed by us, because it signals the beginning of antiwar activity by working class forces. Of course the entry of bureaucrats adds to the specific weight of reformism in the movement and will lead to increased attacks on withdrawal, non-exclusion, and radical influence generally. If such forces do come into the movement in sufficient numbers, it is likely we will have to re-fight some of the prior battles of the antiwar movement.

In such circumstances our conjunctural role will begin to change. It will tend to shift from one of direct leadership in a relatively small mass movement to one of fighting to build a class struggle left wing among larger organized masses.

But we do not approach this conjuncture nervously and fearful that we will lose our integrity, talking about "girding" ourselves and "we must fight even if it means merely 'making the record'" as Chase et al do on page 11. No, we welcome, urge, and actively solicit the entrance of new forces into the antiwar movement, confident that we will not merely "make the record" but will reach out to even more people with our ideas and build a class struggle left wing.

There is no contradiction between the leading role we are now playing and what may be our role 3-6 months from now. On the contrary, by building the Spring Mobilization we maximize the possibilities and opportunities for our ideas and influence in the future.

There are other factors which will or could influence the development of this contradiction: the 1968 elections, the possibility of negotiations, the escalation of the war, a new revolutionary upsurge in the world, etc. Our job will be to watch the objective developments closely and gauge our tactics realistically to the movement as it develops in order to reach our strategic aims.

The central tenets of the analysis of the antiwar movement in the Chase-Meseke-Barzman-Sherrill resolution are completely wrong. The movement has not declined. It has continued to grow, reflecting the deepening sentiment against the war in the population, particularly in the labor and civil rights movements. The last year has seen the growth of united fronts of action based on non-exclusion on national, local and even campus levels. The liberals and pacifists have not taken over, and the movement has not lost its "independent thrust" since March 25-26. Just the opposite is the case. The independence and anti-imperialism of the movement has deepened and will reach its highest point so far on April 15. At this time

new forces are beginning to enter the movement which will give increased opportunities to disseminate our ideas to greater numbers of people. Our past activity has prepared the YSA to play such a role, contrary to the position of Chase, Meseke, Barzman, and Sherrill. Had their approach been followed during the last year we would now be isolated from the present openings.

III. The General Line of the Chase-Barzman-Meseke-Sherrill Resolution

Underneath the tendentious and false charges made against the YSA leadership, the counter-resolution contains an implicit general line which runs counter to the line the YSA has been following for the past two years and which the NEC resolution projects for the next period. This line is nowhere made clear and explicit, but can be deduced from their document.

On page 13 they state, "Bring the Troops Home Now...is the only principled basis of opposition to U.S. imperialist war." On the same page, they say, "Therefore it is our main task to build an organizational form in the antiwar movement which can adopt this slogan (withdrawal of troops) as its central demand." And, on page 10, they say, speaking of the Student Mobilization Committee, "In reality this formation is not based on the demand for withdrawal. Again, as in the Spring Mobilization Committee, withdrawal is just one of three demands which are subordinated to the central task of building the mobilization."

(This last statement contains the absurdity that the Student Mobilization Committee is "not based on the demand for withdrawal," because "end the draft" and "end university complicity" are also slogans the committee supports. This almost defies comment. Are they suggesting that we should not support these two demands? Are these demands in contradiction to the withdrawal demand? The committee, in fact, is based on withdrawal and the other two slogans are good ones which help to build the committee.)

These three quotations, as well as the thrust of their criticisms in general, indicate that they do not understand the essential character of the antiwar movement.

The antiwar movement, by which we mean the whole coalition which has been built up around the single issue of struggle and action against the war, is deeply, profoundly anti-imperialist in character. It is not true that the withdrawal wing is the anti-imperialist wing within the larger movement--the whole movement is anti-imperialist. The test of anti-imperialism in a period of war is action against the imperialist war in Vietnam; this is the concrete test of anti-imperialism in the present period.

This fundamental appraisal of the thrust of the movement

against the war has been the basis of our whole approach since the 1965 SDS March on Washington. This is why we are for the broadest possible coalition around action against the war, and why we do not make acceptance of the withdrawal slogan a condition for our participation in and leadership of united actions. From this view of the antiwar movement's deeply anti-imperialist character, our primary task is not now to "build an organizational form in the antiwar movement which can adopt" the withdrawal slogan. Our primary task is to continue to build mass actions against the war to achieve the greatest unity in action of a continually expanding antiwar movement. Yes--the "central task" of the Student Mobilization Committee is to build the April 15 Mobilization!

On page 7, they say, "By this time (the November Cleveland conference) almost every major opponent had given lip service to the slogan of withdrawal. This position had been clearly adopted by the previous Cleveland conference on its own initiative. Yet our fraction did not even attempt to have this statement re-affirmed officially (emphasis added) by this conference." That's right--we decided that rather than register a purely formal victory for verbal radicalism at Cleveland, it was more important to get agreement to launch the next antiwar action and to lay the groundwork to bring the largest possible numbers of people out into the streets against the war.

We had enough support to carry the vote at the conference, but did not have that majority among the antiwar forces we wanted to bring into the April 15 action. We should also note that far from contradicting our line of Bring the Troops Home Now, our tactics beginning in Cleveland have not only helped consolidate the largest action against the imperialist war in Vietnam to date, within which we have complete freedom of action, but for the first time in any national day of protest, the formal call "makes the record," if you please, for withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam.

Throughout their document, they denigrate the concept of the antiwar coalition, belittling our efforts to build the widest possible unity against the war. The Parade Committee is referred to derogatorily as the "catch-all Parade Committee." (Page 1). We are for "catch-all" committees like the Parade Committee, to organize the widest possible unity in action against the war. We want to build the "catch-all" antiwar movement. We hope it eventually "catches all" of the labor movement and Negro movement.

Following through on their belittling of the united actions against the war, they say on page 11: "Furthermore, to confine ourselves to finding activities which divert their attention away from political conflicts, conflicts which would threaten the alliances between us and petty bourgeois organizations, is to throw away the lessons of the revolutionary working class tendency in the united front." And, "we must fight even if it

means merely 'making the record' or isolating ourselves from the petty bourgeois organizations we oppose."

Implicit in this approach and behind this advocacy of verbal radicalism and 'making the record' (what record?) lies the concept of reversing the priorities in our antiwar work.

Instead of the primary task being to build the widest possible unity in action against this imperialist war, and fighting for our slogans, demands, ideas, etc. within this framework, they would have us open a fight to make withdrawal the central demand and not "subordinate it to" building mass actions!

This approach could have only one result and effect, whatever the authors subjectively intend. That effect would be to split the movement against the imperialist war in Vietnam.

Implicit in their position is that we begin laying down conditions, making ultimatums--fighting "even if it means merely 'making the record' or isolating ourselves." From this we can only conclude that they want us to demand that the antiwar movement adopt our line and to thereby exclude those who refuse to go along. But this would be the wrong turn at the wrong time. The next "moderate forces" who will come into the antiwar movement are sections of the labor movement and Negro movement! This is just what we want. What we want then is only the right to express our views as a minority within a mass movement, not be standing on the sidelines, safely wrapped up in our purity, smugly content for having 'made the record.'

The whole thrust of their line, intended or not, is to jettison a basic plank in our approach--non-exclusion. A fundamental tenet of non-exclusion is that we do not force others to accept withdrawal as a condition of joining the movement, just as we demand to be included in the broader movement against the imperialist war with the right to educate about and advocate the slogan for withdrawal of U.S. troops.

On Page 14, the counter-resolution lists a series of truisms everyone agrees with on the united front. "The united front," they say, "is not a partnership with the reformists but a form of struggle against them. We must not rely on them but mistrust them." That is true--but the logic of their position leads in the direction of abandoning the point of departure for the application of Leninist concepts within the united front; that point of departure is the united front itself.

Our Bloc with Muste and the Radical Pacifists

On the question of the militant pacifists, they say on page 2: "The 'radical' pacifists who are sympathetic to the liberation struggles play the rôle of fence sitters and mediators,

but at every critical turn line up with their fellow reformists on the crucial dispute over withdrawal as a central demand, as Muste has done time after time." (Emphasis added). Again, they see the question of whether the withdrawal slogan is the central demand as the crucial issue. Not only Muste, but we, the YSA, have not forced the withdrawal slogan to be the central demand of the massive national actions against the imperialist war in Vietnam because we understood that not everyone agreed with it who could be mobilized in action against the imperialist war, and it is this action against the war which is our central objective. This is the correct, anti-imperialist approach.

They repeat their criticism of the radical pacifists on Page 13: "It appears that the pacifist leadership in the Spring Mobilization Committee are sympathetic to the Vietnamese revolution and they agree with us on this level. But it must be remembered that they continually waver on the key questions of withdrawal and self-determination, and generally fail to aid us at any critical conjuncture." (Emphasis in original).

In the first place, this is factually incorrect. If it were true that Muste and Dellinger and the other left wing pacifists fail to side with us on any critical juncture, the movement would not have been able to establish unity on the militant basis that it has. The radical pacifists support the withdrawal demand. Time after time they have sided with us on non-exclusion, withdrawal, broadening the coalition, and the single issue basis of periodic actions against the war.

The latest time was in the Spring Mobilization Committee, when the CP and other class collaborationist forces on the West Coast succeeded in passing a resolution recommending that the Spring Mobilization drop its withdrawal position in favor of advocacy of U.S. negotiations to end the war. The radical pacifists among others blocked with us to kill this move.

Muste and the SWP 'Peace Candidate'

Another factual error: they state on page 4: "The Newsletter contained an article in May raising the question of peace candidates, but since then contained not a word publicizing or exposing peace candidates--not even on the minimal basis of their antiwar platforms being for or against immediate withdrawal. Why Not? Because now we were to use the Newsletter to form an alliance with Muste who supported peace candidates."

Muste supported no capitalist party peace candidates. He did support Judy White and Herbert Aptheker--two working class candidates--or do Chase et al consider White and Aptheker in the same category as capitalist peace candidates? Within the antiwar movement, Muste was the main single force outside of ourselves fighting to prevent the movement from being diverted into support to capitalist peace candidates instead of building mass actions.

The whole question of peace candidates was handled by the Newsletter through its fighting for the alternative policy of actions against imperialist war. The Newsletter, as an organ of the antiwar movement, could not present the full Trotskyist analysis of the question. This was done in the Young Socialist and the Militant in articles directly on the question, articles explaining the Judy White campaign, articles explaining our critical support of Aptheker, and articles on our opposition to the petty bourgeois "peace" candidates. The SWP election campaigns, which we supported, provided us with an important avenue to fight on this question. It was by bringing these campaigns to our co-workers in the antiwar movement that we made some of our biggest gains.

Again, what is the implicit line contained in this position on the radical pacifists? Although they don't come out and say so, the logic of the Chase et al position is that we should not be in a bloc with the radical pacifists, and we should now break that bloc. This, too, just like their implicit position that we give up non-exclusion is another piece of sectarianism bordering on abstentionism. Without our bloc with the radical pacifists neither the antiwar movement nor our movement would be where it is today. Of course this bloc has its frictions. Of course new events may upset it and maybe sooner than we would prefer. But we are going to hold onto it as long as we can, and won't lightly break it up in order to "make the record."

"Making the record" appears to be the essence of revolution-ary politics to Chase et al. What we fear is hidden behind this verbal radicalism is a position that objectively approaches that of PL, Wohlforth, Spartacist, and the other ultra-lefts. They "make the record"--from A to Z--and have used that as a springboard to launch themselves completely out of the movement. That is the logical extension of the implied "line" in the Chase-Meseke-Barzman-Sherrill resolution, and the road which we unqualifiedly reject.

The antiwar movement has been the first large movement the YSA has had an opportunity to work deeply in as builders and leaders for a sustained period of time. It is important we approach this movement correctly, by understanding its inherent anti-imperialist character, by understanding and applying the concept of non-exclusion to build the broadest unity in action against the imperialist war, by learning how to present our ideas and build the YSA without losing sight of the tasks of building the antiwar movement itself in struggle against the class enemy. In this movement we are learning valuable, if incomplete, lessons on how to intervene in the working class movements and great class battles to come.

No, our task is not to "make a clean break from the policies of the leadership in the past year" as Chase-Meseke-Barzman-Sherrill say. Rather it is to re-affirm the general line we have carried out in the past, affirm our tasks for the future, and deepen our understanding of the class-struggle approach of this line.

We must reject the line implicit in the Chase-Meseke-Barzman-Sherrill resolution--the line of isolating and splitting ourselves off from this movement.

One final point. The general line of the counter-resolution is unclear, and is not spelled out. Chase-Meseke-Barzman-Sherrill insist that they have a counter political line to that of the NEC draft resolution, however, since they place their resolution in opposition to that of the NEC. We have discussed the logic of their position, and have demonstrated where it is leading them. Supporters of the counter-resolution should seriously consider whether they actually agree with the political implications of their resolution or whether they are in actual agreement with the political line and tasks of the NEC resolution, with perhaps reservations and criticisms on how that line was carried out. If that is the case, the principled course for such comrades should be to vote for the line of the NEC resolution, making their criticisms and suggestions concerning implementation.

March 12, 1967

On Our Fort Hood Three Activity

By Dan Styron

(The following was written to me in response to the Chase-Meseke-Barzman-Sherrill resolution as a suggestion for part of the foregoing contribution in which I quoted or paraphrased Dan several times. Dan did not write it for publication, but agreed to have it printed at my suggestion. Comrades should note this in their reading of it. Lew J.)

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I just read the Chase-Meseke-Barzman-Sherrill resolution on the antiwar movement. My initial reaction is to point out that the general considerations raised are well worth examination in the pre-convention discussion. If I understand the resolution, it doesn't say that we have acted in an unprincipled manner, but rather that we have given our opponents more concessions than we should have. Only an examination of the facts can give us the answer to this question.

The Chase-Meseke-Barzman-Sherrill document points to the Summer of 1966 and the Fort Hood Three case as the best example of this. In this, I think they have made some important factual errors.

First, they state, "There had been no corresponding change in the political consciousness of the troops. We had always maintained that turning petty-bourgeois elements to the working class before a real radicalization had occurred would not tend to alleviate their frustrations but only increase them." This statement illustrates that its authors don't understand the nature of the turn toward the troops.

The turn had several important functions. Consolidating the Parade Committee was one. At that time the NY Parade Committee was the de facto center of the antiwar movement in the United States. More important, however, was the education of the movement itself. We had been having difficulties in convincing many pacifists, progressives, and Maoists that troops were potential allies of the antiwar movement and all strategy should be gauged to show that the antiwar movement stood for the best interests of the troops. Through the Fort Hood Three case we were able to convince every major section of the antiwar movement that this was the case. This was an extremely important lesson for the antiwar movement to understand.

Did our campaign around the Fort Hood Three put the demand "Bring the Troops Home Now" aside? Hardly. In fact, quite the opposite. Within the NY Peace Parade Committee when we would bring up the fact that slogans had to appeal to the troops, we would get laughed off the floor. After the Fort Hood Three case, this was a major argument we used to point out the importance of "Bring the Troops Home Now." In fact, the Fort Hood Three case did more to convince the antiwar movement that "Bring the Troops Home Now" was a correct slogan than any other

single factor aside from the demonstrations in Vietnam themselves.

The turn toward the troops was not an agitational turn. It was educational in character and everything the center sent to the locals on the turn emphasized this fact. We made no demands on the troops. All we wanted to do was (1) educate the antiwar movement to the fact that troops were potential allies and one force that could help end this war. (2) Make it clear to G.I.'s that the antiwar movement had the best interests of the G.I.'s in mind. (3) Set the precedent, through action, that the troops have the constitutional right to receive literature on the facts of the war.

Were some of the Boston comrades confused as to the nature of the turn? Maybe. However, I had the opportunity to visit Boston following the "turn." There I was able to speak with most of the comrades involved as well as talk to a large meeting of comrades where I was given a considerable amount of time to go over the nature of the turn. It was obvious that there was some confusion arising from the report mentioned in the minority document. However, after I had gone over it with them they seemed to understand and agree with the perspective. As I remember Linda and several others were quite enthusiastic about the perspective.

Could they have thought that I was giving only my opinion on what the turn meant? I doubt it. It was well-known that I had over-all responsibility for our antiwar work in the New York local at that time and that I was expressing the thinking of the YSA leadership.

Stalinist influence in the case was a liability that we took into account. (I mentioned this in my report in Boston too). The fact that they are now gaining influence in the committee and the direction they are taking it, demonstrates how important our intervention in the FH3 case was. Otherwise, it may well have been a "We Won't Go" outfit from the start. The fact that we may now have to disassociate ourselves from the committee does in no way detract from the gains we and the antiwar movement made through our work in defense of the G.I.'s and our turn toward the troops.

One other factual error I would like to point out. The Chase-Meseke-Barzman-Sherrill document says, "Previously, there had been no discussion in our movement of a turn toward the G.I.'s..." This is false. When the YS runs its first 32 page issue featuring an article on the "Bring the Troops Home Now Movement" (the longest article ever published, by the YS) it was not due to some subjective interest on the part of its editor. In fact this article was discussed at length at the Fall 1965 plenum. In addition, we sent a speaker--no several speakers--on tours speaking solely on the importance of the antiwar movement having an orientation of sympathy with the G.I.'s. In addition, the troop train demonstrations in

Berkeley were discussed at the Fall plenum with the same considerations in mind.

There are many other factual errors in the minority document. However, they are less important than the misinterpretation the document gives of our Fort Hood Three work.

I get the distinct impression that the document is not so concerned with errors made in the past, but rather seems quite certain that at some point in the future the "leadership" will make important unprincipled decisions. Well, I'm not ready to promise anyone that this might not happen. No one can.

Within our powers, the only thing we can do is determine what the record of the leadership has been. Once we get the facts straight, then we can see if we did "tail-end," "accommodate" our program to pressures from our milieu or otherwise act in a manner which compromised our revolutionary politics.

I'm sure that such an examination will show the same thing the Fort Hood Three example shows. That is, the leadership played not only a principled role in directing our antiwar work during the past year, but in addition, the leadership showed a real ability to perform as revolutionary politicians.

A full discussion of this document will be very valuable for educational purposes.

Not participating in formations involving the Stalinists, pacifists, and other hostile tendencies is one way of averting any temptation toward "accommodation." However, such an attitude on the part of the YSA would not only greatly hinder its growth, but also greatly decrease the speed and extent of the rising radicalization in this country. The Chase-Meseke-Barzman-Sherrill document has more than a small streak of sectarianism incorporated into its general line.