

Revolutionary Communist Youth NEWSLETTER

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STUDENT STRIKES AND THE WORKING CLASS



Student strike meeting at Boston University. RCY banner is in lower right-hand corner.

from THE DAILY FREE PRESS

The wave of student protests that swept the country after Nixon's 7 May escalation speech posed yet again the problem of revolutionary leadership and the political mobilization of the working class as the key to changing protest into power. Again students took to the streets, barricaded federal buildings, seized administration buildings, jammed highways and airports; again the police fired point blank into a crowd; and again, this time within less than three weeks, all was as before--quiet on the campuses despite continued savage bombings in Vietnam.

The latest student outburst demonstrated the continuing widespread hatred of the war among college students; 27 percent of campuses had demonstrations, 3,000 students were arrested in the first two weeks of the strikes (*Guardian*, 14 May 1972). In comparison to the May 1970 strikes around the Cambodia-Kent-Jackson State events, however, the recent upsurge fell far short in both size and militancy.

The 1970 strikes reflected deep unrest and combativeness among students but was dissipated by its leadership. Mired in the Third Worldism of RYM (Revolutionary Youth Movement, former right wing of SDS, split from SDS in May 1969) and the campus parochialism of Progressive Labor-led SDS, the "leadership" of the 1970 student strikes could not see the importance of spreading the strikes to a working class discontented with the war and increasingly engaged in its own militant struggles. Ignoring the only social force which has the power to compel a U. S. withdrawal, the wave of student strikes quickly collapsed.

Two intervening years of disillusionment, depoliticalization and the retreat of most of the ostensibly revolutionary wing of the student movement into liberalism combined to produce, as Nixon announced the mining of Haiphong's harbor, little more than a pale shadow of the '70 upsurge. Unable to develop program that went be-

"PROLETARIAN MILITARY POLICY"

The sharpening inter-imperialist antagonisms upsurge in imperialist rivalry and "surprising" new alignments pose for the third time in this century the spectre of a world war, this time with thermonuclear weaponry. Imperialist war has always been a decisive test for the communist movement. Such wars are the consummate expression of the inability of capitalism to transcend the contradiction between the productive forces, which have outgrown both national boundaries and private property relations, and the relations of production which define the two great classes of modern society, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Imperialist war brings only increased misery, enslavement and suffering to the working class, exacerbating the tensions of class society to a fever pitch. Marxists seek to use these periodic violent disruptions of decaying capitalism to bring about the

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yond the boundaries of the campus, the backwash of New Leftism was inevitably liberalism. A small percentage of the strikers combined liberal politics with militant adventurist tactics in a display of desperation and impotence. For the majority, the short-lived strikes took the form of demonstrations of moral sentiment against the war with the McGovern campaign becoming the predominant political force. As can be expected, the behavior of most of the ostensibly socialist political tendencies was groveling capitulation to the prevailing liberal mood.

Students unlike workers have neither the social power nor cohesion to carry out the overthrow of the bourgeois state and the expropriation of the bourgeoisie. They are therefore not a revolutionary class. College students, with their intellectual bent, youth and intermediate social position, are the most volatile section of the petty bourgeoisie. While on the one hand this means that students can become one of the major social supports for a fascist reaction, on the other hand, important sections of the student population can be won to the cause of the proletariat. Histori-

PL/SDS SEEKS BOURGEOIS ALLIES

MIAMI--In a striking vindication of RCY's characterization of Progressive Labor-led SDS as an organization based on popular-front politics, SDS has now demonstrated beyond any doubt that its alliance with "anti-racist" liberal professors was but the prelude to seeking programmatic alliances with the liberal bourgeoisie itself, and thereby betraying the interests of the working class (see *RCY Newsletter* #12 for analysis of SDS's plunge into reformism at the SDS National Convention in Boston, March, 1972). SDS attended the Democratic Convention in Miami to lobby for a frankly reformist "anti-racist" bill. SDS will also take its bill "to Congress to demand it be accepted and enacted into law and to the U. N. to raise it as a primary issue" (*New Left Notes* flyer on the Miami Democratic Convention). The SDS bill has a series of clauses, some narrowly reformist (the demand for a guaranteed annual income of \$10,000 for a family of four), some simply absurd (the demand that federal troops not be allowed to suppress ghetto "demonstrations or rebellions against racist treatment," which ignores the nature of troops as the armed force of the bourgeois state, and even as a reformist and illusory demand says nothing about state troops or the suppression of non-black workers.) SDS completely ignores the existence of capitalism, the root of racism, and evades the class conflict, presenting racism as a series of isolated injustices which can be alleviated through federal legislation.

The very act of presenting such a bill to bourgeois politicians breeds illusions about those politicians and the system they represent and does nothing to raise the consciousness of the workers about the need to fight the whole capitalist system as the source of racism and war. What is needed is a program which can mobilize the workers themselves against racial oppression, not appeals to the class enemy.

It is especially revealing that SDS chose to attend the Democratic convention. This represents a continuation of the Stalinist-reformist tradition of pretending that the Democrats are

ally, intellectuals have contributed to the proletarian movement with theoretical and literary work and by maintaining revolutionary continuity during periods of quiescence or reaction. Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky and Luxemburg were all intellectuals who became important leaders of the international socialist movement.

France, 1968

As the French events of 1968 demonstrate, in periods when the working class is in motion, large numbers of students can be won to the support of the working class and serve as an important auxiliary social force. Large-scale student strikes at a moment of social crisis helped focus and generalize already-existing discontent and social ferment in the French working class and were an important component in precipitating the national general strike and revolutionary crisis. Far less resolute than the proletariat in the long run, students may at times initiate limited social struggles. The RCY categorically rejects theories of student vanguardism which see student leadership as essential to the success of the proletarian struggle, or dual-vanguard theories which see workers and students seizing state power simultaneously, through mutual support based on recognition of a so-called similar social position (as PL maintains). Students as a petty-bourgeois stratum have no program for their own class which is relevant to modern capitalist society in decay. Ideologically extremely heterogeneous, students will inevitably split in a revolutionary situation, one part supporting the proletariat and another the bourgeoisie. The extent to which the proletariat is capable of winning the support of students as well as the petty bourgeoisie as a whole depends on the strength of the working-class vanguard and will be an important factor in determining the relationship of forces in a revolutionary crisis.

The essential instrument of proletarian revolution is the political vanguard of the working class organized in the Leninist party. Only the mass implantation of the party in the class and

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SDS anti-racism pickets.

untiringly that the Democrats and the Republicans are qualitatively identical. We call for a labor party to represent working-class political interests. The labor party demand seeks to raise class consciousness among workers, as opposed to feeding false consciousness by lobbying and petitioning the "more progressive" wing of the bourgeoisie. To fight racial oppression, we raise, for example, the transitional demand of a shorter work week with no loss in pay (a sliding scale of wages and hours) to end unemployment, coupled with special job training and recruitment programs--and we raise this in the unions and to the unemployed, not to the political representatives of the exploiting capitalists! Seeking programmatic alliances with sections of the bourgeoisie is a betrayal of the working class and stands counterposed to the main task of communists: building a revolutionary proletarian vanguard party that will lead the working class in smashing the bourgeois state and setting up a workers' dictatorship. ■

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liberation of the proletariat. This is due not to a "the worse the better" outlook, but rather is the necessary recognition of the objective conditions of crisis weakening bourgeois society which Marxists must seek to utilize in order to drive forward to the socialist revolution.

As the outlines and alignments of yet a third global inter-imperialist war begin to take shape, it is essential to examine the policy of the Trotskyist movement in World War II and to understand the role and nature of the modern bourgeois state and its army, in order to prepare ourselves for the coming period of increasing international conflicts and war. Failure to take the basic Leninist conception of the state as a starting point for any strategy towards the bourgeois army leads almost inevitably to major theoretical errors, as was the case with the Socialist Workers Party's adoption of the "Proletarian Military Policy" (PMP) in 1940. A study of the PMP and of Trotsky's writings on the coming war, fascism and military policy in 1940 reveal a sliding off from basic Leninist concepts of the bourgeois state and army.

The PMP was a misdirected attempt to turn the American working class's desire to fight fascism into a revolutionary perspective of overthrowing its "own" imperialist state. The core of the PMP was a call for trade union control of the compulsory military training being instituted by the state. The SWP resolution on "Proletarian Military Policy" adopted at the SWP's Plenum-Conference in Chicago in September 1940 states:

We fight against sending the worker-soldiers into battle without proper training and equipment. We oppose the military direction of worker-soldiers by bourgeois officers who have no regard for their treatment, their protection and their lives. We demand federal funds for the military training of workers and worker-officers under the control of the trade unions. Military appropriations? Yes--but only for the establishment and equipment of worker training camps! Compulsory military training of workers? Yes--but only under the control of the trade unions!

James P. Cannon, leader of the SWP, defended the policy, primarily against the criticisms of Max Shachtman who had recently broken from the SWP and founded the Workers Party. Essentially, the PMP contained a reformist thrust; it implied that it was possible for the working class to control the bourgeois army. The logic of the PMP leads to reformist concepts of workers' control of the state--which stand in opposition to the Marxist understanding that the proletariat must smash the organs of bourgeois state power in order to carry through a socialist revolution.

Cannon "Telescopes" the Tasks

It is necessary to see the background against which the PMP was developed, and what the expectations of the SWP and Trotsky were in World War II, as these expectations were the assumptions which led them to the PMP. Cannon said at the 1940 SWP Conference:

We didn't visualize a world situation in which whole countries would be conquered by fascist armies. The workers don't want to be conquered by foreign invaders, above all by the fascists. They require a program of military struggle against foreign invaders which assures their class independence. That is the gist of the problem.

Many times in the past we were put to a certain disadvantage: the demagogy of the social democrats against us was effective to a certain extent. They said: "You have no answer to the question of how to fight Hitler. . . ." Well, we answered in a general way, the workers will fight to overthrow the bourgeoisie at home, and then they will take care of invaders. That was a good program, but the workers did not make the revolution in time. Now the two tasks must be telescoped and carried out simultaneously. . . .

We are willing to fight Hitler. No worker wants to see that gang of fascist barbarians overrun this country or any country. But we want to fight fascism under a leadership we can trust.

Cannon strongly emphasized that capitalism has plunged the world into an epoch of universal militarism, and that from now on, "great questions can be decided only by military means." For Cannon, "anti-militarism was all right when we were fighting against war in time of peace. But here you have a new situation of universal militarism."

Trotsky and the SWP were attempting to take advantage of the intersection of the "universal militarism" of the bourgeois states' preparation for imperialist war with the genuine anti-fascist sentiment of the masses. Trotsky's writings of 1939-40 reveal an apocalyptic vision of the coming war which led him to see the need to develop some strategy to fairly immediately win over the army. Trotsky and the SWP vastly overestimated the extent to which the processes of the war itself would rip the facade off the (Anglo-American) bourgeoisie's ideology of "democracy" fighting "dictatorship." Trotsky, in conversations with SWP leaders in Mexico in 1940, said, "If the bourgeoisie could preserve democracy, good, but within a year they will impose a dictatorship. Naturally in principle we would overthrow so-called bourgeois democracy given the opportunity but the bourgeoisie won't give us time" (discussion with Trotsky, 12 June 1940, Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1939-40).

"Reformism Cannot Live Today"

As part of his projection, Trotsky also believed that reformism had exhausted all its possibilities: "At one time America was rich in reformist tendencies, but the New Deal was the last flareup. Now with the war it is clear that the New Deal exhausted all the reformist and democratic possibilities and created incomparably more favorable possibilities for revolution." The SWP developed the viewpoint that as a result of the crises resulting from the war, reformism could not survive. A section of the SWP Resolution titled "Reformism Cannot Live Today" stated, "In the first place the victories of the fascist war machine of Hitler have destroyed every plausible basis for the illusion that a serious struggle against fascism can be conducted under the leadership of a bourgeois democratic regime." But following World War II, because of the hatred of the working class for fascism and the broad strike wave, the bourgeoisie was forced to reinstate liberal reformist ideology and parliamentary politics, in an effort to mollify the workers.

The Trotskyists took as the basis and starting point of their new policy, the deeply popular working class sentiment against fascism. The working class was being conscripted, and part of their acceptance of this conscription was based on their desire to fight fascism, the SWP reasoned, so therefore their acceptance of conscription has a "progressive" character. The PMP was based on the belief that the bourgeoisie would be forced to institute military dictatorships and thus would be forced to expose its reactionary character in the midst of war, in a situation when the working class was armed (by the state itself) and motivated by deeply anti-

dictatorship and anti-fascist feelings. This would lead inevitably to a revolutionary situation, and very quickly at that. These were the primary assumptions of Trotsky and the SWP. They do not serve to justify the adoption of the PMP, however, but rather only illuminate the background against which it was developed.

The slogan, "For trade union control of military training," implies trade union control of the bourgeois army. The PMP slid over the particular nature and role of the imperialist army as the bulwark of capitalism. Shachtman caught the core of the PMP's reformist thrust and this sliding over when he wrote:

... I characterized his [Cannon's] formula as essentially social-patriotic. . . . Cannon used to say: We will be defensists when we have a country to defend, that is, when the workers have taken power in the land, for then it will not be an imperialist war we are waging but rather a revolutionary war against imperialist assailants. . . . Now he says something different, because the revolution did not come in time. Now the two tasks--the task of bringing about the socialist revolution and defending the fatherland--"must be telescoped and carried out simultaneously."

("Working Class Policy in War and Peace," The New Internationalist, January, 1941)

In 1941 Shachtman had not yet been a year on his uneven eighteen-year-long centrist course from revolutionary Marxism to social democracy. In the first years Shachtman's Workers Party claimed to be a section of the Fourth International and argued for the "conditional defense" of the Soviet Union whose "bureaucratic collectivism"--as he designated the degenerated workers state--was still progressive relative to capitalism. And as late as 1947 the issue of unification between the SWP and the Workers Party was sharply posed. His revisionist break with Marxism was nonetheless profound from the outset: a complete repudiation of its philosophic methodology coupled with the concrete betrayal of the Soviet Union in the real wars that took place, first with Finland in 1939 and then the German invasion in 1941. Thus the SWP's departure from the clear principled thrust of Leninism in advancing the ambiguous PMP was for the early revisionist Shachtman a gift which he was able to exploit because it did not center on his own areas of decisive departure from Marxism.

Ten years later, however, under the pressures of the Korean War, Shachtman's revisionism had become all-encompassing and he advanced a grotesquely reactionary version of the PMP of his own. Writing of the anticipated Third World War he asserted that "the only greater disaster than the war itself. . . would be the victory of Stalinism as the outcome of the war." From this he concluded that "socialist policy must be based upon the idea of transforming the imperialist war into a democratic war [against Stalinism]." And to achieve this transformation he looked to "a workers' government, no matter how modest its aims would be at the beginning, no matter how far removed from a consistently socialist objective" ("Socialist Policy in the War," New Internationalist, 1951). Shachtman's "workers' government" is clearly no dictatorship of the proletariat--without socialist aims!--but rather the blood relative of Major Atlee's British Labour government, fantasized into an American labor government headed by Walter Reuther. Here the class character of the state has been disappeared with a vengeance. (Shachtman's group, by 1949 the Independent Socialist League, entered the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation in 1958. In the early 1960's nostalgic ISL types, most notably Hal Draper, gradually separated from the SP--especially after Shachtman himself defended the Cuban Bay of Pigs invasion, Draper et al. went on to found what has now become the present-day International Socialists.)

Trotsky on the PMP

The fragmentary material that Trotsky wrote on the subject in his last few months makes it clear that he bears responsibility for initiating the PMP; however, he was murdered prior to its full-blown public inauguration and development by the SWP. Trotsky's prediction that the bourgeoisie would not give the workers time to

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STUDENT STRIKES

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its struggle for its program in the day-to-day work in the class can establish its political hegemony and win the workers to revolutionary consciousness. As the youth section of the nucleus of that party, the RCY will play an important auxiliary and supplementary role in building the Leninist party. The student strike wave gave the RCY a rare opportunity to intervene from outside to supplement the work of the Spartacist League in the labor movement, through RCY-led work stoppage committees. The work stoppage committees were proposed by the RCY to striking students as an arm of the student strike to carry out direct agitation in the working class for labor strikes against the war and the wage freeze, and to propagandize for the construction of a labor party, victory to the Vietnamese revolution and opposition to the sellout peace plan of the Provisional Revolutionary Government. The international crisis precipitated by Nixon's escalation provided the temporary opportunity for students through such work stoppage committees to leaflet and directly address union meetings to help build for labor strikes against the war and the wage freeze. Only this strategy would have allowed the student strike to effectively transcend the limitations of the campus and escape its impotence.

Probably the most grossly opportunist group during these strikes was the Workers League/Young Socialists. The WL/YS attempted to suck up one week to the student movement and to denounce it the next week in typical flipflop fashion. The 24 April issue of the Bulletin boasted: "What is now expressed in these campus actions is the sharp struggle of the social classes in this period, and the tremendous offensive of the working class." A few days later at Boston University, Pat Connolly of the WL was the only one to vote against striking. Subsequent issues of the Bulletin repeated this same flipflop, alternatively condemning the student strikes as simply "middle-class frenzy" and enthusing over them

for expressing "the tremendous offensive of the working class."



from DAILY NEWS

RCY supporters, others, block nonstriker from entering building, Columbia University.

The National Caucus of Labor Committees was more consistently sectarian and abstentionist--it denounced the student strikes throughout, refusing, at Columbia University in New York, to join picket lines, and calling for citywide meetings of the "non-ruling-class population" to come together on a "common-interest program" as an alternative to the strike. It opposed RCY's proposals at Columbia to expand the political strike to the working class through work stoppage committees, and once such a committee had been set up under RCY leadership came to one of the early meetings to attack its existence and politics. The NCLC cannot tell working-class interests from a hole in the wall. It declares that the Vietnam war is an "irrelevant" issue for the working class, thus counterposing itself to the Leninist struggle for international proletarian solidarity. It counterposes classless, populist conferences and coalitions to the struggle to build a working-class revolutionary vanguard party that will fight for a socialist revolution--led by the working class and supported by important sections of the petty bourgeoisie.

The RCY fought consistently during the student upsurge for broadening the strikes to the working class and for a class struggle program against the war. ■

fight oppression wherever it arises, including fighting for soldiers' rights--but from this it does not follow that we should call for "workers' control of the army" as a parallel slogan to "workers' control of the factories." There will always be a need for development of the forces of production; the proletarian revolution does not need to smash them for its own purposes. The army's sole function is to maintain the dominant class in power through coercion and repression; during the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the revolutionary state will have its own army, organized to serve its own class purposes; a developed socialist society will have no need for this special repressive apparatus, which will gradually dissolve into the whole self-armed population, and then, like the state, it too will wither away. The army is not a class-neutral institution. As part of the "special bodies of armed men" which constitute the basis of the state, it cannot be a workers' army unless it is the army of a workers' state.

Similarly we do not delude the workers with slogans of "workers' control" of the police or of the prisons either, since both are at the essence of the bourgeois state. If we called for "workers' control of the prisons," the blood of Attica would be on our hands as well as Rockefeller's. The storming of the Bastille represents the only possible form of "workers' control" of the repressive apparatus of the state--i. e., smashing it utterly.

The PMP was a proposal for the unions to make the bourgeois army more democratic and efficient to prosecute the war "against fascism." But the bourgeoisie cannot fight fascism! The U. S. bourgeoisie wanted to fight the Germans and Japanese to further its own imperialist goals, not to "fight fascism."

The PMP error can be most clearly seen in the case of an unpopular war: should we demand trade union control of military training in order to better fight in Vietnam? Obviously not. But the point is the same. Only those social chauvinists who support "their" government's war aims can reasonably raise the PMP.

As an SWP programmatic demand, the PMP never took life and shortly was shelved, because the SWP did oppose the second imperialist war and therefore the autonomous social-patriotic

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overthrow the bourgeois state before they had to fight against fascism feeds directly into Cannon's ambiguity over revolutionary defeatism and the "telescoping" process of combining national defense with the workers' fight against fascism.

Trotsky writes in Some Questions on American Problems, "The American workers do not want to be conquered by Hitler and to those who say, 'Let us have a peace program,' we say, 'We will defend the United States with a workers' army, with workers' officers, with a workers' government, etc.' If we are not pacifists, who wait for a better future, and if we are active revolutionists, our job is to penetrate into the whole military machine." What is left out of this agitational approach is significant. Marxists do not defend the U. S. ! At least not until the U. S. is a socialist U. S., only after the bourgeoisie and all its institutions, including the army, have been crushed. Marxists must oppose imperialist war; World War II was being fought not for "democracy" against "fascism" but purely for re-division of the world for imperialist ends. The workers' army Trotsky writes of cannot develop organically out of the bourgeois army, but must be built up under conditions of class tension and revolutionary crisis through independent workers militias and by polarization of the bourgeois armed forces--that is, as the counterposed military arm of the working class organizing itself as the state power dual to the capitalists' government.

The PMP's thrust was that of supporting a war against fascism without making clear whose class state was waging the war. Because of the popularity of a "democratic war against fascism," the actual effect of the PMP would have been merely to make the bourgeois state's war more efficient and more democratically conducted.

Workers Control of the Army?

The logic of the PMP impelled the SWP to see the bourgeois army as only one more arena of working-class struggle, like a factory, rather than as the main coercive force of the bourgeois state. If Marxists can favor trade union control of industry, why not trade union control of military training? We agree that Marxists seek to

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STUDENT STRIKES: Opportunists in Liberal Bloc

BERKELEY--Nixon's escalation against the DRV/NLF offensive found the University of California, Berkeley campus embroiled in a major labor struggle. The building trades unions, threatened with job reclassifications meaning large wage cuts, went on strike. AFSCME and other campus unions joined the strike, bringing the striking force to over 1000 workers. The very right to organize and strike was at issue--the University refused to sign contracts with any of its employees and strikes of public employees are illegal here.

The sell-out policy of the union bureaucrats emerged in their refusal to publicly call a state-wide strike of state employees toward state recognition of campus and all public employees' unions, a demand which cannot be won locally. While adamantly defending the union against the state, the RCY has fought to expose its leadership's rotten policies.

In late April, a student strike in support of the workers' struggle and in response to Nixon's escalation began to develop. The labor bureaucrats, conscious that massive support and militant student participation on picket lines would be an encouragement to the union ranks for a real fight, spoke against a student strike. They hastily approved an "official" statement against the war, a sop to placate the students and to neutralize student hostility to the union due to its past political stances (rather than insisting from a class perspective on the necessity of active support for the trade unions). It was also intended to anticipate and defuse the real possibility of rank-and-file sentiment for labor action against the war. The RCY called for the student strike to take up the call for "A GENERAL STRIKE AGAINST THE WAR AND THE WAGE FREEZE" and to bring this demand to the striking campus workers and the labor movement as a whole. RCY formed and led the Labor Strike Support Committee and went to several unions agitating around this demand with some success--AFSCME Local 1695's vote in favor of it being an example.

Anxious to contain and depoliticize any movement among the students was the YSA/student government bloc, which tailed the bureaucrats in hopes of heading off a student strike, and insisted on phony education campaigns in opposition to militant picketing. Essentially the SWP/YSA counterposed their popular-front anti-war activities to action around the workers' strike. When the student strike became a reality, this bloc consistently voted with the Campus Anti-Imperialist Coalition (a group of Revolutionary Union members and other Maoists rapidly finding the liberal road) to insure that political discussion and alternative strike strategies were not discussed at mass meetings.

PL/SDS's total disorientation and liberal approach was revealed in their refusal to insist on priorities for the student strike, thereby capitulating to demands for student power and to anti-working class attitudes among the students. PL/SDS formed a Strike Action Group (SAG) with the International Socialists who excused the union bureaucrats by blaming the bureaucrats' strategy on "blindness" or by saying that the bureaucrats were merely following the orders of their lawyers. The SAG's strategy for the strike consisted mainly of guerilla theater and collecting food and money for the strikers. This social-work approach is an abstention from political struggle and is a tailing after the bureaucrats, insuring that the only politics or strategy to which the rank and file is exposed is that of their sell-out misleaders. ■

PROGRAM OF BETRAYAL

YWLL CONFERENCE

The Young Workers' Liberation League, youth group of the Communist Party, convened its Second National Convention in Chicago on 5 May, with about 600 delegates and observers attending. It projected grandiose schemes for the creation of a "Broad Youth Front" through control over assorted front groups and other "mass" movements which exist only in the YWLL's fond Stalinist imagination. More immediately, what is posed before the YWLL is competing organizationally with the Socialist Workers Party/Young Socialist Alliance for reformist hegemony over the student and anti-war movements. While the once-revolutionary SWP in the 1930's and '40's fought to crack the CP's reformist stranglehold over the labor movement, now both organizations pursue consciously reformist political strategies in bids to emerge as the new mass party of American reformist "socialism," taking over the political niche formerly occupied by the now moribund Socialist Party/Young People's Socialist League. The YWLL differs from the YSA in that it counterposes to the YSA's petty-bourgeois radicalism the time-worn workerist variant of Stalinist class collaboration with stress on industrial implantation and the recruitment of minority-group youth.

The program of the YWLL, present in the pre-Convention Draft Resolution, but only occasionally alluded to during the Convention discussion, is an orthodox formulation of Stalinist reformism. To the working class the YWLL advances simultaneously the most minimal of reforms and a series of "maximum" demands which include 30 hours' work for 40 hours' pay, full employment, a guaranteed minimum income, taxation of corporations and banks and "moving towards" the nationalization of basic industry (Young Worker, April-May 1972). The European Stalinist parties have demonstrated to perfection that their "nationalization" demand is to be understood as nationalization of bankrupt industries with compensation under capitalist or state control--i. e., workers' taxes pay bosses' debts!

The YWLL program's "radical" tax reform and guaranteed minimum income gimmickry strikingly parallels that of the National Caucus of Labor Committees. Implicit in such taxation programs

is the reformist concept that the bourgeois state, under the "pressure" of the working class, may be gradually forced to become the indirect and unwilling instrument for decisive encroachments upon capitalist profit and property relations. The central Marxist view of the capitalist state as precisely the armed and organized defender of the class interests of the bourgeoisie is subverted, and the socialist solution of the dictatorship of the proletariat--which will not tax banks and corporations but expropriate them--is quietly buried. These schemes are merely the pallid resuscitated program of the "anti-monopoly coalition."



New York Caucus meeting, 1970 YWLL Founding Convention.

Engels' remarks in The Housing Question (Progress Publishers, p. 37) further clarify why the demand for taxing banks and corporations does not lead to fundamental questions of class struggle and class rule, and has nothing in common with the Transitional Program. Such reformist demands can only breed illusions about the nature of bourgeois state power. Engels says, in polemic against Proudhon:

"Taxes!" A matter that interests the bourgeoisie very much but the worker only very little. What the worker pays in taxes goes in the long run into the cost of production of

class, and instead of exposing the nature of the imperialist armies, concentrated on attacking pacifism. Had the working class had such pacifist illusions of peaceful resistance to war, one could find more justification for this emphasis--however, as Trotsky recognized, the workers were "95 to 98 percent patriotic" in 1940, and thus accepted conscription into the army, because they were willing to fight fascism. Since the workers were for conscription, the pressure on the SWP to blunt a defeatist policy was strong. The SWP should have counterposed at every step the independent arming of the proletariat; but instead it undercut opposition to bourgeois conscription. Cannon attacks the fight of the social-pacifists against conscription because it "overlooked realities and sowed illusions. The workers were for conscription... a certain amount of compulsion has always been invoked by the labor movement against the backward, the slackers... Compulsion in the class war is a class necessity" (Cannon's speech at 1940 SWP Conference). Yes, of course compulsion is a class necessity--but conscription into the bourgeois army is a class necessity for the bourgeois class. The fact that the workers may have supported it does not alter the class nature of the coercion being applied. It is not the job of the proletarian vanguard to help the bourgeoisie wage its imperialist wars, to provide it with cannon fodder. Communists must call for revolutionary defeatism and the overthrow of the bourgeoisie in wars between imperialist powers--not for the working class in each country to "control" the fighting arm of its "own" bourgeoisie. The call must be to "turn the guns the other way," not to control the military apparatus.

As Trotsky wrote in 1934 in his comprehensive systematization of the revolutionary Marxist experience in World War I in application to the approaching second World War, "War and the Fourth International":

"If the proletariat should find it beyond its power to prevent war by means of revolution--and this is the only means of preventing war

labour power and must therefore be compensated for by the capitalists. All these things which are held up to us here as highly important questions for the working class are in reality of essential interest only to the bourgeois, and still more to the petty bourgeois; and, despite Proudhon, we maintain that the working class is not called upon to safeguard the interests of these classes.

In the Industrial Concentration Report, the dictum that in the monopoly era "every economic struggle must become a political struggle" was the basis for the conclusion that "We must fight not only at the point of production, but in the halls of the legislatures as well." Naturally there was no mention of the need for a workers party to fight for labor's interest in the political arena. The campaign spelled out most explicitly was building the Emergency Election Conference of the Trade Unionists for Action and Democracy (TUAD). The speaker explained:

The aim of this Conference is to influence the program of the two major parties, and to influence the selection of the candidates of these parties.

The Conference will attempt to help to bring the needs and demands of labor to the forefront in the election campaign, and to join in coalition with other peoples' organizations...

When this TUAD Conference took place in Chicago in early July, the CP/YWLL attempted to insure its reformist influence over the assembled trade unionists and to prevent discussion of the labor party demand, which would have exposed the CP/YWLL's class collaborationist electoral policy, by systematic exclusion of other left tendencies (including the RCY and Spartacist)--using bureaucratic and gangsterist methods. The CP/YWLL indeed needs a working-class base, as do all reformists, in order to have something to sell out in their deals with the capitalists.

The Second National Convention of the YWLL has importance for the revolutionary movement primarily in providing a panoramic spectacle of reformist politics. The YWLL embodies the Stalinist politics which have betrayed the world proletariat for nearly half a century. The CP/YWLL's militant verbal turn and industrialization tactic only lay the basis for further treachery, and stand as a reformist obstacle to be exposed and smashed by the revolutionary communist movement under the banner and program of Trotskyism. ■

--the workers, together with the whole people, will be forced to participate in the army and in war. Individualistic and anarchistic slogans of refusal to undergo military service, passive resistance, desertion, sabotage are in basic contradiction to the methods of the proletarian revolution. But just as in the factory the advanced worker feels himself a slave of capital, preparing for his liberation, so in the capitalist army too he feels himself a slave of imperialism. Compelled today to give his muscles and even his life, he does not surrender his revolutionary consciousness. He remains a fighter, learns how to use arms, explains even in the trenches the class meaning of war, groups around himself the discontented, connects them into cells, transmits the ideas and slogans of the party, watches closely the changes in the mood of the masses, the subsiding of the patriotic wave, the growth of indignation, and summons the soldiers to the aid of the workers at the critical moment."

(Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1933-34, Trotsky's emphasis)

The bourgeois state will only arm the workers for its own purposes--while this contradiction can and must be exploited by Marxists, it is utopian to expect that the trade unions could be able to use the bourgeois army for their own purposes. The modern imperialist armies created by the state have a largely working-class composition, but their function is directly counterposed to the interests of the world proletariat. The crucial task of Marxists is to always and everywhere smash bourgeois ideology in the ranks of the working class, to call for the independent arming and struggle of the organizations of the working class.

FOR WORKERS' SELF-DEFENSE GROUPS
BASED ON THE TRADE UNIONS!
FOR UNITED CLASS DEFENSE OF
MINORITIES AND THE UNEMPLOYED!
FIGHT FOR SOLDIERS' RIGHTS THROUGH
SOLDIERS' COUNCILS!
TOWARDS THE INDEPENDENT ORGANIZATION
OF WORKERS' MILITIAS! ■

PMP *Continued from Page 3*

implications of the PMP did not take hold. But neither was the error corrected in those years, and it has been a source of disorientation ever since for those young militants who seek to counterpose en bloc the revolutionary SWP of the 1940's to the wretched reformist vehicle which today still bears the initials SWP.

The whole authority of the state is based ultimately on its ability to successfully employ its coercive power, which rests on its standing army, police and prisons; the coercive power of the state is the very essence of its structure. This development of state power is linked directly to the development of class antagonisms, so that while the state appears to stand above and outside of class conflict, as a "neutral" third force, in reality it is nothing more than an agent of the dominant, more powerful class in society. These considerations give rise to two major premises of revolutionary strategy: (1) that the existing bourgeois state machinery, including its army, must be crushed, and (2) in order to successfully accomplish this, the bourgeois state must be unable to rely upon its own coercive power; it must be unable to use it successfully against the revolutionary forces who seek to fundamentally change the class structure upon which the state rests. It is impossible to use the bourgeois army for proletarian ends; it must be smashed. The destabilizing of the bourgeois army, turning a section of it to the side of the proletariat, is inseparably linked with, but not the same as, the process of arming the proletariat.

For the Independent Arming of the Working Class!

The SWP was trying to use the bourgeoisie's militarism for its own ends, and so it dropped entirely any fight against bourgeois militarism and patriotism as the main danger to the working