

FOR A REVOLUTIONARY PROLETARIAN YOUTH LEAGUE

December 1958

Orientation and Perspectives p. 1
As presented at the Conference of
YOUNG SOCIALIST Supporters, Detroit,
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Draft Motion on Editorial Policy
for the YOUNG SOCIALIST p.10

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Allen

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Comrades;

At this season of the year, in the citadels of the so-called "Free World", we hear the hypocritical war mongers mouthe the pious wish of "Peace on earth; good will to men", and we echo it right after them, without stopping to consider the poison served up in that pious wish. "Peace on earth".... There is no peace and there can be no peace until capitalism is utterly smashed all over the world. How can we speak of peace when every day colonial peoples clash in open conflict with foreign imperialists in different parts of the world! How can we speak of peace when the United States Government, the executive committee of the ruling class, has been successfully waging a more or less open war for more than ten years against the American working class, piecemeal chipping away the gains won by workers over decades! Let us not be hoodwinked into propagating the master-class version of peace. There can be no peace until the Holy Trinity of capitalism -- rent, profit, and interest -- are totally destroyed.

Let us instead wish for and work for a new year of fighting, of working class struggle, of lifting the red banner of struggle against the wolves of capitalism! No appeasement of these ravenous wolves is possible. Their appetite is rapacious. Their foam-flecked jaws call for more and more and still more blood-sacrifices, and still their maws gape wide, demanding ever more till the whole world become a radiated ashcan uninhabitable for every form of animal life as we know it.

Appeasement of the bourgeoisie has been tried for decades. It does not work. It does not make them less greedy, but only encourages them and whets their lust. We fight the bourgeoisie and we fight the trade-union bureaucrats because they conciliate with the bourgeoisie, and fawn upon it. They are servile and gain temporary comforts and hope that by being such goody-goody servants, they will be spared when the slaughter begins.

We fight the Soviet bureaucracy because it performs a similar function on a world-wide scale instead of deepening and extending the gains of the glorious October Revolution. For a short-lived respite from the avaricious wolves, it would forfeit gain after gain of the world proletariat and colonial masses, and cede the struggle to the wolves in advance. Its great treachery to the working class and the colonial revolutions sinks to new depths with each new pact, with each new summit conference. Its participation in the United Nations Organization disorients the workers and colonial masses all over the world by fostering the illusion that the class struggle between the workers states and the capitalist states can be temporarily suspended, that they can dwell peacefully side by side, if men of good will will only work hard enough to accomplish the task. It teaches the oppressed and exploited to rely on the ability of statesmen to avert war when the Marxist analysis of history proves again and again that war is an integral part of class society and will occur as long as classes exist, regardless of how earnestly peace may be desired. Only the successful international socialist revolution can prevent wars permanently.

Both the trade-union bureaucracy and the Soviet Union bureau-

cracy disarm the proletariat by dulling the razor edge of the class struggle, by denying the existence of the struggle altogether when they can. They have no confidence in the ability of workers to organize and fight, and try to transmit their lack of faith to the ranks of the workers themselves. One of our primary tasks is to instill in ourselves and in our fellow-workers unquenchable faith in the power of the proletariat to lead itself and all other subject classes to liberation.

For let us remember, comrades, that we here today are enabled to sit comfortably and talk Socialism and debate strategy and tactics, precisely because immeasurably large masses of people are making sacrifices and fighting the good fight. Many, many are starving, we have food and nourishment; many are freezing, we are warmly dressed; many are illiterate, some of us have college degrees. They are making the real sacrifices. It is through their sacrifices and struggles right now, and the past sacrifices and struggles of generation upon generation of working men, women, and children that we are here afforded the luxury of discussing burning issues instead of being consumed by them.

We must cherish this chance and keep constantly in mind that the first steps in the building of a movement are the most important. For it is these first steps that will, in large measure, determine the character of the movement and the role it will play in the liberation of mankind from the long nightmare of capitalist dominion. History is no merciful, all-forgiving goddess — she may not graciously grant such a moment again. She is also infamous for her ability to destroy those who do not rise to fulfill the needs dictated by set circumstances, but wishfully project a different set of conditions onto the stage of history.

The historical task of the proletariat is to liberate itself and all other subject classes from the yoke of the bourgeoisie all over the world. All Socialists, and especially the young ones who have the greatest stake in the successful outcome of this struggle, must aid the proletariat to the best of their ability. In this period when economic crises loom and the danger of war lurks constantly, it becomes essential for those conscious groups who understand the nature of the class struggles in our society, to turn their faces ever more to the workers. The workers seem slow to move, and slow to understand, which perturbs thinking, active individuals, and leads them to seek short cuts. There is no other class in modern society save the organized proletariat which is capable of unifying all the other exploited classes and leading them in struggle.

Right now, individual members of the middle class, its intellectualized segment, seem to be the most amenable to the message of Socialism. Of course, it is always easier to discuss ideas with a person who has had advanced training in abstraction and generalization, the kind of training that a college education offers. But it is the rankest nonsense to assume that because an individual "understands", that is, intellectually (mentally) grasps the concepts of Socialism,

he will immediately run out and actively join the class struggle on the side of the proletariat, especially in the present period when the persecutions of the witch-hunters have barely abated and lie so fresh in all our memories.

Why does Leon Trotsky emphasize the importance of Socialists linking themselves to the most exploited and oppressed sections of the proletariat? In this country, the Negro, Puerto Rican, Mexican, and other colored minority groups comprise these segments. Trotsky knew well, and we must know it equally well, how great the ideological pressure of the bourgeoisie is, especially in "good" times, periods of economic boom. How easy then it becomes for the skilled workers, and even the many unskilled but unionized workers, to forget how miserable life can be under capitalism. How easy to overlook the fact that the concessions they have won and the relatively decent standard of living they enjoy have been made possible, first, by their unity in struggle against the bosses, and secondly, at the expense of the unorganized and vastly underpaid workers, those in this country, the richest capitalist nation, those in other less wealthy capitalist nations, and above all, those in the colonial areas of the world.

The bourgeoisie would have us think always of the best things that capitalism has to offer. We revolutionary youth must always keep in mind the lowest depths to which capitalism permanently relegates millions of the world's people, and periodically thrusts more millions into their midst. We might expect that the hardest-hit victims of wage-slavery would be the staunchest fighters for freedom from that slavery. But that is not generally the case, for their lives are so burdened, so wretched, their bodies and spirits so pulverized, that they often lose the will to fight back and the ability to organize themselves for the necessary struggle. Sheer physical deterioration due to blindness, recurrent malaria and other plagues, prolonged malnutrition, repeated uncontrolled childbearing, all contribute to sap their vitality. So we do not automatically look to the ranks of the super-exploited for revolutionary cadres. But we do look to these young people among them who have not yet felt the fullest impact of imperialism, who have not yet had their bodies crushed and spirits demoralized. They have to be reached with the message of Socialism; they will be most receptive. They cannot be fooled into thinking that there is another way out, that they can achieve individual salvation. Although bourgeois ideology permeates even here, the very material conditions and restrictions of their existence give the lie to "Life can be beautiful under capitalism."

We march together with these youth and with all other exploited people, even as they go up the scale toward the higher echelons of the organized, skilled workers and the lower echelons of the middle class. But we bear firmly in mind that the better off one is materially under capitalism, the less likely is he to, as a rule, actively fight for its overthrow, i.e., carry on a sustained, day-in, day-out, year-in, year-out struggle. The poorest, the most downtrodden are our mirror, keeping ever present before us the image of the degradation of human life under the rule of the bourgeoisie; they are our conscience and a goad to us

action, for only with the most profound and throughgoing revolution will their lot be made easier, their life not so bitter; they are the measure of the extent of our revolutionary intentions and actions; halfway measures, concessions wrested from the bourgeoisie may suffice to ameliorate the conditions of many families in the aristocracy of labor, but nothing short of the overthrow of capitalism and imperialism will suffice to give relief to the world's impoverished masses.

We are laying our main emphasis on uniting our selves first and foremost with the youth of our own class, and primarily with the super-exploited among them. Many comrades ask at this point: What about student youth? Why do you neglect to speak of them? Don't you include them in your scheme of things? Are you planning to leave them to the machinations of the Social Democrats and the Stalinists? Let us analyze the student youth of the United States and draw our conclusions from this analysis, not from empirical impressions.

Students, like all other people, fall into socio-economic classes. 90% of the young people in the United States attend high-school for at least part of the standard four-year program. From this vast majority, as well as from the fact that school attendance is compulsory up to 16 or 17 in most of the states, we must conclude that children of working-class and middle-class parents are well represented in the high-school population. But only 30% of the 90% attending high-school go on to college. Less than one-third of America's young adults are, therefore, to be found on the college campuses, and it behooves us to ask: what is the class composition of the one-third as compared to that of the non-college-attending two-thirds? The most cursory examination will easily reveal that the bulk of those off the campus are in the working class, the bulk of those on the campus -- upper, middle, and some working-class. But there is something especially important about the children of working-class parents who attend college: they hate like hell to be workers or to be identified with workers. They frantically aspire to the doubtful heights of the middle-class. The middle-class students are there, of course, to make sure they don't accidentally slip down to the ranks of the proletariat. Both classes of students are systematically and relentlessly indoctrinated with bourgeois ideology and are well-trained to become the foremost theoretical lackeys of the ruling class. They are the best apologists for the status quo for, as far as they are concerned, with all its faults, you see, capitalism still allows individuals the chance for a higher education, with scholarships yet, and the opportunity to improve one's station in life. They are living proof that freedom to move from a lower social class to a higher one still exists. They are the harshest critics of the concept of the class struggle, denying its existence altogether or ascribing its occasional very obvious expression to the devilish schemes of fiendish agitators. God forbid, if the class struggle were really a reality, their whole apple cart might be upset; long prepared-for careers might vanish and they might be reduced to a poverty-stricken state.

Students in colonial countries today are even more exclusively children of bourgeois and petty bourgeois parents than in the United

States. In this epoch of colonial uprisings against imperialism, their families and they are constrained to begin to play a progressive role in ridding their countries of the stranglehold of foreign capital. Students in these countries who desire freedom of expression, equality of opportunity, formal democracy, and other bourgeois rights, must link themselves to the struggle of the working class, for here too, it is only the working class that is capable of carrying through that struggle, which necessarily flows into the proletarian revolution. However, the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois struggle against imperialism cannot be consistent and will often be treacherous since a conclusive fight against imperialism means a conclusive fight against capitalism. The colonial student plays an altogether different role from the American student living in the center of world imperialism.

But hold on there -- we hear our comrades saying -- we get on a college campus and discuss Socialism, and the students listen to us and they're all for it. Of course, a lot of them prefer the Social-Democratic or the Stalinist version of Socialism, rather than Trotskyism, but that's because they haven't been confronted yet with really revolutionary Socialism. Isn't it significant that those brands are most appealing which have emasculated Socialism by soft pedalling class struggle and going real fortissimo on: the democratic road to social change, the evolutionary path, the peaceful coexistence of economically competing systems? But these approaches will always be popular with college students, even on the eve of revolution, for students prefer to remain armchair Socialists, arguing endlessly back and forth the pros and cons of this versus that approach. "Let the fool workers go around getting their heads bashed in; we intellectuals are too valuable, we're needed for the advancement of humanity." And they are very much interested in studying and learning and discussing; this is their habitual mode of life. Let revolutionary Socialists not be misled by the students' willingness to discuss; it is hardly to be construed as a willingness also to act. Many will discuss just as heatedly whether Shelley or Keats was the greater lyric poet, or whether Plato's philosophy or Aristotle's was the greater hindrance to the development of scientific thinking. But Marxism is not only a science to be studied and pondered and speculated upon; it is an art, which must be practised, an art which stresses the urgency of not merely contemplating the world and human society, but above all else, of changing them. The basis of that change is driving the conflict between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat to the ultimate conclusion: open class warfare. Its purpose: the revolutionary overturn of the bourgeoisie, with all its allied classes, by the proletariat, with all its allies, and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Whoever shrinks from this conclusion and this purpose delights in other brands of Socialism which reject revolutionary means, thereby also forfeiting the revolutionary reconstitution of society. Students, like other young people, are naturally quite rebellious, and they take pleasure in a philosophical and political doctrine which rationalizes their rebellion for them. But woe to that doctrine which teaches them that the lives, the careers, the professions they are preparing for, will push them, whether they will it or not, into the

ranks of the defenders of the status quo, not into the ranks of its opponents. Why, accepting such a doctrine means that they would have to leave college in the middle of their studies, or at least on graduation, not engage in their chosen life's work. That is one of the main reasons that genuine revolutionary Socialism has so little appeal for the college student, while so-called democratic Socialism or Stalinist Socialism does. The former demands a complete break with the middle-class physically and ideologically, it means a daily prosecution of the class struggle on the front lines of battle: in the factories and the fields. The latter two allow life to continue in much the same fashion with occasional skirmishes behind the lines from which one can easily withdraw or extricate oneself should the smell of gunpowder draw uncomfortably close.

Based on the class analysis of the structure and ideology of the student body in the United States, we draw the following conclusions: work among the high-school students, especially in working-class districts with a high percentage of minority youths, will gain for us permanent cadres to the revolutionary movement; work among the public (city and state) college and university students may yield some contacts who will remain bound to the working-class, but on the whole, engagement in Socialist discussions is a transient fad with them, passing from them ideologically as they graduate and pass economically and socially into the middle class; work among the students attending private institutions and the "Ivy League" schools will so rarely yield a bona-fide recruit to the revolutionary movement, that it is sheer folly, with our limited numbers, to expend our time and energies there.

The real question is: Where do we concentrate, what do we emphasize? We do not oppose working in a campus milieu, nor do we deny that there is a field for such work. But in order to keep the youth movement solidly bound to the program of revolutionary Socialism, the movement must be physically immersed in the daily problems and struggles of the proletariat. Any auxiliary work done on campus must be geared in this direction. This is the only way to gain the best, the most militant youth from the ranks of the petty-bourgeoisie, especially in periods of upsurge. Any other orientation will necessarily lead to a further separation of the revolutionary vanguard youth from the rest of the proletarian youth, and a subordination to the prevailing petty-bourgeois ideology, which leads to the liquidation of the revolutionary program.

For the winning of youth to revolutionary Socialism, the attitude should not be who can talk Socialism best, here and now, but who objectively stands in the best position to be receptive to, and to act Socialism when the upsurge comes. One revolutionary, or two, can move thousands of workers. They need to know how and when, however, and for this an apprenticeship is necessary, not just book learning. Revolution is an art, and revolutionists are not born -- they are made. The youth movement should be the training grounds, the school for revolutionists, because revolutionary conjunctures do not happen every day, and young people need to learn how to

recognize such a situation and how to take advantage of it for the benefit of the working-class. It goes without saying that such a purpose for a youth movement is completely alien to "democratic Socialists", who do not see the coming revolution at all, and alien to Stalinist-oriented youth, who do not see the revolution coming in our time, in our country.

As we have said before, the wresting of state power from the bourgeoisie, and with this act the ushering in of the dictatorship of the proletariat, is primarily the task of the working class. Leading the struggle will be the vanguard cadres of the most conscious elements of the proletariat. Its allies on the eve of revolution will be all oppressed and exploited peoples, including those in the petty-bourgeoisie, whether they be peasants or "squeezed-to-the-wall" shopkeepers and "cockroach capitalists", or college students seeking non-existent job opportunities in the professions they have been preparing for. It is to the everlasting chagrin of the petty-bourgeois intellectual that with all his sophisticated understanding of the world of nature and society, and with all his erudite interpretations, even from a Marxist point of view, of the ongoing processes around him, that the working class can really arrive at its goal without him. While it is true that the concepts of scientific Socialism were formulated and elaborated by members of the middle class, these theoreticians constantly stressed the decisive importance of the proletarian movement in the struggle for Socialism. Not only Marx and Engels and Lenin, but Trotsky, as recently as 1940, points out the auxiliary role played by the intellectual. His contention is that the radical intellectual's greatest service to the revolutionary movement consists in his being a handmaiden, if you please, of the industrial worker, a helper behind the scenes, so to speak; the star roles are played by the workers, the intellectual is the supporting actor.

Another characteristic trait of the petty-bourgeois intellectual is his inability or unwillingness to directly involve himself in the life of the proletariat. It is not enough to live in the poorer sections of the city, as many of us do, or forever be on a subsistence level and perpetually in debt. Poverty and place of residence are not distinctive features of the proletariat which differentiate them from other oppressed classes and mark them out for leadership. The distinctive trait of the modern proletariat is the massing together of workers into large workshops and workfields, their involuntarily learning the advantages of organization and discipline, the business of acting in concert against a common enemy, not just discussing in concert and then acting singly or in small groups. The largest aggregate a petty-bourgeois intellectual can tolerate, and that not comfortably, is the number of students in a college lecture hall.

In such a period as ours, when our forces are minimal and are rarely recruited directly from the ranks of the working class, it becomes imperative to guide our young comrades into the proletariat itself. We do this to gain roots in the proletariat and because of the manifold dangers of alien class forces that weigh most heavily

upon the petty-bourgeoisie. Granted that the workers are also petty-bourgeois goal-oriented: nevertheless, being determines consciousness, and their objective circumstances force them into class struggles far more regularly and directly than the petty-bourgeoisie. Hence, subjectively, they understand and are willing to fight for working-class interests much more directly and readily, albeit not understanding yet the full import and the necessity for many-sided struggles.

Socialist youth cannot stand above and apart from the working class and holler: "I am the way and the truth and the light. Come unto me all ye that suffer and ye shall be saved." In the language of the workers, working alongside of them, they explain in the day-to-day events which action is opportunistic in nature and which ultra-left. They learn to speak with people with much less education than they have, to make the workers understand them and be willing to follow their lead in struggle. They learn the value of a good newspaper, a newspaper which talks to the workers simply and yet raises their class consciousness by translating the pure and simple trade union questions into the broader framework of Socialist politics. They have no use for a newspaper which presents so many differing Socialist viewpoints, for this leads only to confusion, and takes the greatest amount of time and effort to unteach the false lines presented.

There has been a lot of talk about the necessity of independence for the youth movement, and of how stimulating to growth this independence is. We would like to pose the following questions before granting the benefits to be derived from being so independent. From what do you desire independence? From your class, the working class? Obviously, no. From the heritage of class struggles bequeathed us by former generations? Well, not exactly. From the Leninist tradition of a Bolshevik Party which excludes all other tendencies except those that accept a class-struggle, revolutionary road to proletarian power? Yes, most assuredly, that's what you want independence from. And what do you propose in its place? A hodge-podge, a heterogeneous lumping together of all tendencies in the radical youth movement. Its purpose? To concoct, we presume, a design for propaganda and action to bring Socialism to the United States and the world. We don't believe that by artificially tossing together opposing world outlooks that agree on only one thing -- and that one thing is not even a concept, but a word: "Socialism" -- that a valid doctrine can be welded from this conglomeration. We are proud not to be independent of our Bolshevik traditions, we want to learn from them and use them for the benefit of our class.

Many of us here today had to fight hard to get through to Trotskyism, to revolutionary Socialism. We came by the hard road, via the Second and the Third Internationals. We do not want to turn back to the swamp of opportunism and class-conciliation, to the morass of self-deception and class-deception, from which we have managed to extricate ourselves. We welcome into our midst all youths, those that are Social-democrats and Communist-Party-oriented, and those that are still apolitical and completely subservient to the bourgeoisie. But

we say to them: Come fight the class struggle; when you do, we will both find ourselves on the same side of the barricades. When you conciliate with the bosses, whether in your union or on the global arena, we no longer speak the same language, there is no common meeting ground. With you, we do not unite, since our goals are diametrically opposed to each other.

What! You do not wish to unite with other Socialists in our joint struggle? You must be sectarians!

Is it sectarian to ally ourselves with the working class, although it is still sleeping? Is it sectarian to work alongside of workers in order to rouse them from their slumbers? Is it sectarian to link ourselves firmly with the struggles of the colonial peoples for freedom? Is it sectarian to support the fight of the proletariat to rid itself of a shackling bureaucracy in order to widen the struggle for the world Socialist revolution? Is it sectarian to make crystal clear who are friends of the revolution and who its enemies? It is passing strange that this is considered sectarian -- we had always thought that this was the essence of Bolshevism.

"Peace on earth; good will to men"...

Peace? Yes! For our class when it has vanquished capitalism.

Good will? Yes! For our fellow-workers and our peasant allies all over the world.

Peace? No! Not to the class enemy who seeks to destroy all civilization in his attempt to hold back the armed proletariat.

Good will? Never! None at all to the bosses and the landlords and the bankers.

Over their dead system, we shall bring to birth a new world, a world of international comradeship where the coming generations of young people will begin the task of forging a really human society, a communist society.

DRAFT MOTION ON EDITORIAL POLICY FOR THE YOUNG SOCIALIST

In "The Third International after Lenin", Comrade Leon Trotsky said, "In the present epoch to a larger extent than in the past, the national orientation of the proletariat must and can flow only from a world orientation and not vice versa. Herein lies the basic and primary differences between communist internationalism and all varieties of national socialism." The leader of the first successful workers insurrection expressed the thought, at another time, that "America is the foundry where the fate of man will be forged." At first glance, these profound comments seem to be antipathetic to each other, but on a more careful consideration and examination of their very real connection, the dialectical truths imbedded in them become clearly self-evident.

Just as it would be foolish and wasteful for serious young communist revolutionists to try and construct a viable revolutionary youth movement without paying heed to the experiences of the past and the present world conjuncture of history, so, too, would it be in tragic error to project and proceed to publish a revolutionary socialist youth newspaper without taking into account contemporary examples and precedents. A cursory inspection of the Socialist youth press of Europe and Asia would quickly demonstrate the uniqueness of the conception of creating a paper which is "all things to all men." In that political hybrid, all voices are heard at little more than a whimper and the full program of revolutionary Marxism is almost totally silenced. Such a paper can scarcely hope to serve, as some have put it, as the "ideological guide" for the revolutionary communist youth. It only produces confusion and dries up the inexhaustible reservoir of youthful revolutionary idealism.

Our starting point in the elaboration of the political line of the YOUNG SOCIALIST is the entire historical epoch we are living through, the epoch of imperialism with its wars, colonial uprisings, and proletarian revolutions. The magnificent October Revolution in Russia and the great Chinese Revolution are the tremendous gains of the international proletariat. But in the past several decades there have been countless uprisings of the workers which have failed. We seek to understand their failures so that we may avoid their costly mistakes and better prepare ourselves for the final showdown with our own ruling class. We conclude by affirming with Trotsky that the present world political situation is characterized by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat and further that the objective prerequisites for the proletarian revolution have not only "ripened"; they have begun to get somewhat rotten. Without a Socialist revolution, in the next historical period at that, a catastrophe threatens the whole culture of mankind. The turn is now to the proletariat."

There is no way out for the workers under a Stalinist leadership. There is no way out for the workers under the leadership of the Social Democracy. The same applies to the youth. There can be no successful movement for workers power that avoids the class struggle. There can be no revolutionary Socialist youth newspaper that talks

and advocates the "no class struggle road to Socialism" or the "study group road to Socialism." Revolutionary invalids and socialist dilettantes will not provide the youth cadres for the coming struggle.

Following is a basic outline of our program for the editorial policy of the "Young Socialist":

1. For a relentless prosecution of the class struggle against the international bourgeoisie.
No compromise of the international proletarian revolution. Our greatest enemy is our own ruling class. Our task is its overthrow.
2. For the unconditional defense of the Soviet bloc countries against imperialist attack.
3. For the proletarian political revolution in the Soviet bloc, the overthrow of the bureaucratic caste and the regeneration of the dictatorship of the proletariat.
4. Unconditional support to the colonial peoples struggles for freedom from imperialist domination. While we offer a united front with the native bourgeoisie against imperialism, we must warn the workers of its inability to combat imperialism consistently and of its generally treacherous role. We must point to the proletarian revolution as the only solution to the colonial problem.
5. Unconditional backing of the fight for full equality of the Negro people and other minorities. The only real solution lies in the unity of all workers against the real enemy, the bourgeoisie, and the seizure of power by the workers.
6. For a proletarian vanguard party based on the ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky. For a labor party based on the trade union movement as the next stage in the radicalization of the American proletariat.
7. For the formation of a revolutionary proletarian youth league. For a Leninist newspaper oriented toward young workers.