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HOW TO SELECT A LEADERSHIP

By James P. Cannon

(The following article on the election of the National Committee is reprinted from Letters From Prison.)

In our opinion the most important reason for stretching the convention out for another day is to give adequate time for a *free* and *well-deliberated* selection by the delegates of the new National Committee. This is one of the strongest guarantees of the democracy of the party. Our party has always been more democratic, ten times more democratic, in this respect than any other party. But there is room for improvement, and we should consciously seek out the necessary methods.

We never went in for any of the rigging, wangling, vote-trading and leadership-pressure devices by which, in practically all other parties (strike out the word "practically") the convention delegates are usually defrauded of a large part of their democratic freedom of choice. If one has a self-sufficient revolutionary party in mind, all such methods are self-defeating. A revolutionary party needs a leadership that really represents the party, that is really one with the party.

Without this democratic corrective, freely brought into play at every convention, centralization and discipline inevitably become caricatures and forms of abuse which injure the organization every time they are exercised. A revolutionary leadership must feel free at all times to act boldly and confidently in the name of the party. For that, it needs to be sure that there is no flaw in its mandate.

No rules exist to guide us in the technical execution of this difficult and delicate task to the best advantage of the party. The democratic selection of the primary and secondary leaders is a sufficiently important question—nobody knows how much damage can be done by bungling it—but, as far as I know, nobody has ever written anything about it. Nobody has taught us anything. We are obliged to think and experiment for ourselves.

The democratic impulses of the rank and file incline them to react unfavorably to "slates," as they feel, not without reason, that they narrow down for all practical purposes the freedom of choice. The Social-Democratic politicians, who are as undemocratic a collection of rascals as one can ever expect to meet, have always exploited this sentiment by announcing their firm, democratic opposition to slates. Of course, there was a little catch to their virtuous slogan of "no slates." They meant no openly avowed slates which would possibly be open to discussion and amendment. Instead of that, the noble Social-Democrats rig up secret slates by means of horse trades and petty bribes to

ensure their control. A good 50 percent of Social-Democratic convention "politics" is always devoted to this kind of business.

From the first days of American communism, which also coincided with the first appearance on the scene of a new type of leader with a new conception of "politics," we tried to break through the "no-slate" fraud and devise a more honest system by which the leaders would take open responsibility for their proposals and give reasons for their preferences in the makeup of the leading committee. It became rather common practice for the leading committees, in national as well as local conventions in the communist movement, to propose a slate of candidates for the new committee to be elected. We carried the practice with us in the independent movement of Trotskyism. (During factional struggles the slate-making arrangements were carried on in the separate caucuses of the factions.)

This method was, without doubt, far superior to the "no-slate" tricks of our socialist predecessors, being more honest, and in the essence of the matter, even more democratic.

But this system also was not free from negative aspects, and even dangers. I perceived some of them long ago, have thought much about the matter, and from time to time have tried to devise corrective experiments. What impressed me most of all was the quite obvious fact that while the presentation of a slate of candidates by the leadership is the most "efficient" way to get through the business of the election of the NC—usually the last point on the agenda, carried through in a great hurry—it concentrates too much power in the leadership just at that very point—the convention—where the democratic corrective of rank-and-file control should be asserted most strongly.

It is not the election of the central, most prominent and influential leaders themselves. That problem solves itself almost automatically in the interplay of party work and internal strife. The problem arises over the selection of the secondary leaders, the new committee members, the potential leaders of the future. As a rule, this part of the slate if presented by the most authoritative central leaders, is accepted, whether enthusiastically or not, by the convention; many delegates are reluctant to oppose them.

It is senseless, of course, to speak of a revolutionary combat party without recognizing the necessity of a centralized, fully empowered leadership. But this states only one half of the prob-

lem. Leninist centralism is *democratic* centralism, a profoundly dialectical concept. The other half of the Leninist formula recognizes no less the necessity of subordinating the leadership, really as well as formally, to the party; keeping it under the control of the party. The party constitution does everything that can be done in a formal sense to provide for the interaction of centralism and democracy.

The structure of the party is strictly hierarchical. Higher committees command the lower. Full authority over all is vested in the National Committee. But the NC, like all other committees, is required to render accounts and surrender its mandate at stated intervals to the party convention to which it is subordinated. This is the formal, constitutional guarantee both for centralization and the ultimate control of the leadership.

But it is also necessary to think about the spirit as well as the letter of the party constitution. A farsighted leadership should concern itself with the elusive, intangible factors which can play such a great role in determining the actual relationship between the NC and the ranks.

Some of these factors arise from the composition of the NC and the division of functions within it. Nominally, this body consists of twenty-five members, and they all have equal rights. In addition there are fifteen alternates. But the majority come to the center only for meetings of the plenum which are not held very often. Between plenums the power is delegated to the Political Committee. From this it is quite clear that one section of the National Committee is in a position to exert far more influence on the day-to-day work and interpretation of party policy than the other.

Again, some are older, more experienced and more prominent than others, and consequently wield greater authority in the committee as well as in the party as a whole. On the other side, the committee members from the districts and the younger members of the committee generally, who are active in local work, are closer to the rank and file than the central leaders of the party are, and represent them more directly and intimately. This gives them a special function in the NC of extraordinary importance.

Their presence represents a form of continuing rank-and-file control and supervision over the central leaders. They can fulfill this function, however, only insofar as they are people of independent influence and popularity in their own localities; only insofar as they are freely elected on their own merits, not handpicked.

To be sure, the central leaders cannot be indifferent to the selection of the secondary leadership. In this, as in everything else, leaders must lead. In a certain sense, the central party leaders "select" their collaborators and eventual successors. The question is, how to go about

it? It is often easy for politically experienced leaders to convince themselves that they are better judges of the qualifications and potentialities of certain candidates than the rank-and-file delegates. And, as a rule, it is not too difficult to force their selections through by means of the "slate." This may appear to be the most "efficient" way. But in my opinion, there is a better way.

Wisdom lies in "selecting" people who have popularity and influence in their own right, and whose promotion coincides with the wishes of the party members who know them best. That means to select people who are advancing under their own power.

I came to this conclusion a long time ago, and as far as I have been able to influence the course of things it has been the party method of selecting the NC. Extensive and varied experience, with every imaginable kind of experiment, has convinced me that this method, even at the cost of incidental mistakes, works out best in the long run.

The central leaders of the party who work from day to day without close contact with the internal life of the branches, need such a constitution of the NC if they are to lead the party confidently; lead it with the assurance that they know the moods and sentiments of the ranks and are in step with them. When doubt arises, or when some new important step is under consideration, it is only necessary to consult the out-of-town members of the NC by mail, or to call a plenum, in order to get a reliable sounding of the party. Approval of a given course by the plenum is a pretty certain forecast of similar action by the party.

Conversely, when the plenum finds it necessary to overrule the Political Committee—and this has happened more than once, notably in 1938-1939—it is a sign that the Political Committee is out of line with the party and requires a change in its composition. The 1938-39 National Committee rebuked the PC several times and finally reorganized it, and later tests showed that the full plenum most accurately reflected the sentiment of the party.

A serious and conscientious party leadership should deliberately aim at a National Committee so composed as to be, in effect, a microcosm of the party. When the full plenum of such a National Committee meets between conventions, to all intents and purposes *the party is there in the room*. That is far more useful to responsible political leaders than a roomful of handpicked supporters without independent influence and authority. Bureaucrats who have special interests of their own to defend against the rank and file need to surround themselves with dependent henchmen; but revolutionary political leaders need support of an entirely different kind, the support of people who really represent the rank and file of the party.

There is another, and even more important, reason the rank-and-file convention delegates should take over the election of the National Committee and be free from undue pressure and influence on the part of the national political leadership in exercising this function. The free selection of the full membership of the National Committee is perhaps the most decisive way to strengthen and reinforce genuine party democracy. It puts the political leaders under the direct supervision and control of a second line of leaders who are in intimate daily contact with the local and district organizations and, in fact, represent them in the plenum.

This control doesn't have to be exercised every day to be effective. The fact that it is there, and can be demonstrated when necessary, is what counts. Strange to relate, the professional democrats have never once in the history of our party bothered their heads about the method of selecting the National Committee from the standpoint of reinforcing party democracy. This, in my opinion, is because they tend to think of democracy almost exclusively in terms of unlimited and unrestricted self-expression and forget that control of the central leadership, which in day-to-day practices is limited to a very small group, by a larger group standing closer to the rank and file, is the most important mechanism to assure the democratic half of the Leninist formula: democratic-centralism.

Throwing the floor open for nominations on the last day of the convention is not the only alternative to a slate presented by the outgoing NC. That only throws the delegate body into disorganized confusion and facilitates the manipulation of the election by means of secret slates and horse trades, the favorite method of Social-Democrats.

There is no infallible formula, but the results of our experiments over a period of many years argue most convincingly in favor of a slate prepared by a *nominating commission*. Of course, there are nominating commissions and nominating commissions. But the best, that is, the most democratic, is not the nominating commission appointed by the outgoing NC, nor the one elected at random from the floor of the convention. The most efficient, for the purposes set forth above, is the nominating commission selected by the branch or district delegations on a roughly proportional basis—each delegation selecting its own representative—and then ratified by the convention. The nominating commission, thus conceived, is a body actually representing the rank-and-file delegations from the districts.

It would be grossly improper for individual central leaders to intrude themselves upon the commission and seek to dominate its proceedings. That would amount to a circumvention of the democratic process aimed at in the pro-

posal. It is the part of wisdom for the central leaders to leave the nominating commission to its own devices, respecting the essence of party democracy as well as the form.

The nominating commission should be selected on the first day of the convention; it should begin its sessions at once and meet at least once a day thereafter to consider the various nominations until a slate is decided upon for presentation to the convention when the election of the NC comes up on the agenda.

In my opinion, the first step of the commission at the 1944 convention should be to discard formally the ruling which paralyzed the work of the nominating commission at the 1942 convention—the utterly stupid and reactionary principle that every member of the outgoing NC was, as a matter of course, to be reelected unless good cause was shown to *remove* him. That turns things upside down. Nobody can be "frozen" in any position in a revolutionary party. He must stand for election at each convention, and the election must be free and open.

Room must be left for competition and rivalry and differences of opinion to operate without artificial restraints. Members of the outgoing NC should be placed in exactly the same status as new aspirants—as *candidates* for election. The nominating commission should adopt a rule to this effect at its first session.

The most practical next step is to take a preliminary poll to ascertain how many candidates are generally favored for election as national leaders who are not counted as representatives of any special district of the party. This will clear the road for the apportionment of the remaining places on the slate for local and district representatives. Here, again, there should be no "freezing" of old representation and no automatic closing of the door to new candidates from districts previously not represented.

The object should be to provide the fairest possible representation of the districts in the new NC; but the principle of proportional representation should be modified by other considerations: the relative importance of the district; the quality of the candidates; the special role played by certain candidates, etc.

The commission should announce the time and place of its daily sessions, and invite any delegate who wishes to argue for or against any candidate to appear and take the floor. The slate finally decided upon, either by agreement or majority vote, should be presented to the convention as the *nominations* of the nominating commission. That leaves the floor open for other nominations and free discussion before the ballot is taken.

Naturally, one would have to have some good arguments for another candidate to hope to amend the slate of the nominating commission. But if he thinks he has a strong case, there is

no reason why he shouldn't make the attempt. Adequate time and patience must be accorded for the presentation of any such proposed amendments. The heavens will not fall if a slate is amended once in a while.

One word more. The convention should not shunt the election of the new NC off till the last hurried half-hour of the convention, when impatience of departing delegations would tend to discourage full discussion and ample consideration of the various nominations. The best procedure would be to fix a definite hour and day to take up the election of the NC whether the rest of the agenda is finished or not at that time. This decision should be made demonstratively in order to call sharp attention to the vital importance of full and careful deliberation in selec-

ting the party leadership. And even more important, the convention will thus give itself time to do the job right.

All of these measures will not guarantee the election of an ideal National Committee. But they should help to provide us with the best committee that a free party can select from the material at hand by the method of party democracy. If the returning delegates go home with the feeling that this has been accomplished, the new NC will be able to begin its work with a strong authority. On the other hand, the leadership, precisely because of the care and deliberation taken in the selection of the personnel of the NC, will feel itself to be more than ever under the watchful supervision and control of the party.

WHERE THE MAOISTS STAND TODAY

by Jon Hillson, Boston local

The purpose of this contribution is to assess the present state of the Maoist forces in the United States, their perspectives for unity and growth, and to raise some ideas on our relationship to them.

The re-emergence of Maoism as a political tendency in the radical left began in late 1972 and the early part of 1973, although the roots of such a development can be traced to the Students for Democratic Society.

Since that initial stage of the intervention of Maoist groups into political activity, the publication of tendency papers and the "conversion" of the Guardian to Maoism, this milieu has undergone modest growth.

Where does that growth stand today?

The Revolutionary Union

The Revolutionary Union (RU) is the largest of the Maoist groups. It has branches in 25 cities and may have upwards of 600 members. It also runs the Revolutionary Student Brigade, which is dealt with in another part of this piece, which may have upwards of 600 members.

The RU is in the process of being isolated in the "new communist movement." Such a situation reflects a turn-about in the Maoists current, in which RU maintained effective sway for a period.

The reason for RU's isolation stems from a complete about-face it made on the national question in the early part of this year. The RU theoretically held, essentially, that it was correct for revolutionaries to champion the special demands of oppressed nationalities. They supported the right of self-determination for Blacks and other oppressed nationalities. Their actual position, however, boiled down to an ultraleft presentation of the nationalism of the oppressed, reflected in slogans like "Black workers take the lead," etc. This position was a holdover from the RU's "third-worldist" adaptation to ultraleft nationalism in the 1960s when RU was part of SDS. Such an adaptation to nationalism was the basis for RU's bloc with the Black Workers Congress, the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization and the Chinese-American I Wor Kuen group, in 1973.

This bloc was designed to form a new, multinational "communist party."

The RU's turn on the national question was to the right.

The RU was developed in a workerist perspective. This workerist outlook tended to become more and more dominant given the general ebb of the struggles of oppressed nationalities that has marked the 1970s. As such struggles declined, and as the US economy worsened, RU's Maoist workerism has led them to reject any concrete support to the special demands and struggles of the oppressed nationalities. They claim to have corrected an "ultraleft" error. In reality, they were at one time forced by the objective pressure of the nationalist movement to adapt to it--in an ultraleft and sectarian manner. In the absence of such struggle, the RU found that perspective a roadblock to adapting to the "working class" or, more precisely, backward white workers whose dividends from racist exploitation present an obstacle to embracing the demands and struggles of oppressed nationalities.

RU still maintains Blacks have the right to self-determination and separation, but now call for a "working class unity" against "narrow nationalism" and "white chauvinism." Decoded, this means the RU tail ends the racist backwardness of white workers in opposition to the independent dynamics of the struggles and rights of oppressed nationalities.

The practice of this perspective leads to the break up of the RU bloc with PRRWO, BWC and the IWK, in public and amid a continuing avalanche of lengthy polemics. The BWC has denounced the RU as "social fascist," hardly an apt description, but an indicator of the depth of animosity that now has taken the place of "unity."

The evolution of RU's line--which objectively has the same ring of anti-nationalist workerism that characterizes the Workers League, the Spartacist League and other sects--can be seen in that organization's shameful adaptation to white racism in Boston.

In the wake of a racist offensive against desegregation, the RU has crudely and fruitlessly sought a "progressive" side to the anti-busing "militancy" of the white workers and white working class youth who have sought to stop desegregation. The fact that the source of the anti-busing drive is an open attempt to preserve all white schools; that racist epithets have filled the air in Boston since school opened; that the anti-integration drive is directly organized by and serves the class interests of the capitalist, racist rulers of Boston are subsidiary features, debatable at that, according to the RU.

The Militant has carried polemical articles on this

subject, as will the YS, that amplify the logic and roots of such a perspective.

The RU has been a target of sharp polemics in its own circles as well. The Guardian has blasted them, the rival October League has characterized their perspective in Boston as racist, and virtually all other radical organizations have slammed the RU for their capitulation to white racism.

This event is a key source of RU's isolation. The past year of their turn on the national question has served two other purposes as well. First, it has thinned out the RU's Black membership, including all its Black central committee members. Second, it has provided a bridge to the most backward elements of the radical movement to join the organization, a factor that will deepen the logic of this "turn" in other areas, such as women's liberation struggles.

Accompanying the RU's posturing towards and prettifying the sexist, racist ignorance of the most privileged elements of the working class--the minority of the proletariat as a whole--is a "style of work" that flows from the group's sectarianism and isolation.

Fifty RU members "visited" the Guardian staff to "discuss" politics. Harassing staff members, they picketed the office. In Cleveland, RU members jumped and beat CP leader Rick Nagin. Threats and gutter level polemics reflect the organization's troubled situation.

The RU has called for a "new communist party" as soon as possible. Such a perspective means the RU will turn itself into a party, to the exclusion of virtually all other Maoist tendencies.

As well, the RU has embarked on a national campaign with a front group called the Unemployed Workers Organizing Committee seeking to garner one million signatures in an ultraleft campaign against unemployment outside the union movement. Such bravado is geared to enthrone its membership and is bound to result in much less than the overprojection it is.

The RU likewise has launched a series of supra-union front groups designed to "jam" or "put up against the wall" various union bureaucracies. These fronts assembled, for instance, in Atlantic City to demonstrate against the no-strike clause being discussed at the Steelworkers convention there. One of their more interesting chants was "Abel you slob, get a job."

This infantile leftism in--or, more precisely, against--the union movement also promises a short life expectancy.

As well as setting up narrow fronts dominated and controlled by the RU to involve non-RU elements, these Maoists

have breathed new life into the corpse of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War. They play a leading role in the Iranian Students Association and are a motive force in the purges racking that organization, first against Moscow Stalinists, later against some supporters of revolutionary Marxism, and now against other Maoists.

The RU, while supporting China's perspective of lauding the "anti-imperialist" Shah of Iran, calls for the overthrow of the monarch.

RU opposes the Equal Rights Amendment, abstains from and tends to oppose work around abortion rights, generally abstains from and opposes the Coalition of Labor Union Women. It has recently been scandalized by the publication of an especially vicious piece of anti-homosexual prejudice which lays out RU's opposition to the gay movement, why it bars homosexual members, etc. The Guardian featured an entire letter page attacking the RU on this position.

What RU has become is a lightning rod in the radical movement for prejudice, bigotry and backwardness imbued in the working class by bourgeois ideology.

A semi-militarist pose (when RU leader, Bob Ayakian, toured the country, he was guarded by thug-like devotees carrying bats and table legs and all attending his speeches were subject to thorough frisks) designed to impress the unconvinced about RU's "hardness" echoes the group's caricaturing of "the worker."

In my opinion, the RU faces a grim struggle for survival. An anathema to most Maoists, isolated in its own milieu, the organization is in the process of a conservative turn that includes strident sectarianism and hooliganism.

The first big domestic test the Maoists have faced is the crisis in Boston, and the RU has sided with racism against the Black community and desegregation--they have sided with the ruling class against the proletariat. A reflection of that is to be seen in the November Revolution, the monthly paper of the RU. It takes up some of the best criticism of the RU perspective in The Militant. The RU spends more time in this article on the SWP than in all of its previous issues over the last two years. The fact that our polemics have penetrated the thick, sectarian hide of these Maoists who for the sake of convenience do not consider Trotskyists "part of the left" is an indicator of the pressure they feel.

In attempting to answer our criticisms, as well as those of other groups, the RU moves deeper into the racist muck of the anti-busing movement. At a recent public debate in Boston, an RU spokesperson declared: "We are sensitive to and share the concerns of white parents for their children's

safety." The RU is in the process of seeking to form a "defense committee" for a leader of the South Boston racists who was arrested, he claimed, for attempting to stop the beating of Jean Louis Andre Yvon, a Black man being attacked by a white mob. This racist stated in Boston papers he was against busing, but disagreed with the mob violence; his fight at the scene of the lynch was with the cops, who South Bostonians despise, . . . not out of any progressive mood, but because the police have stood, albeit unenthusiastically, between them and the Black students they seek to drive from the all-white neighborhoods.

The RU has involved this thug in the meetings of the Mass Worker, its "anti-imperialist" workers paper. It sought unsuccessfully to build a similar defense for another racist "cop-hater" facing a federal civil rights violation rap.

The RU has begun, in practice, to enter the anti-busing movement, a logical process which flows from its belief that busing is a bourgeois plan designed to split the proletariat. In other words, that desegregation is a burden imposed on white workers who justifiably rebel. While the RU claims to be anti-racist--rather vociferously, lately--such rhetoric flies in the face of reality. The RU refuses to build the December 14 March, and was not present on the November 30 Demonstration of 5,000.

A key source of RU's capitulation to white supremacy--and sexism, among other backward ideologies--is its definition of an "advanced worker." The orthodox Leninist view holds that the advanced worker is one who most surefootedly grasps, works to implement, win others to the struggle, issues and program of revolutionary socialists. This is a political characterization which bases itself on the level of consciousness of the advanced worker, not that of the militant worker or activist trade-unionist. But the RU defines the advanced worker as one whom other workers "go to with their problems and look with respect to." While this worker is, according to the RU, against the bosses, what is fundamental is their popularity. Such a worker, by definition, could easily be a racist, an opponent of equal rights for women, etc. This definition conveniently allows the RU to circumvent the real relationship of advanced consciousness which goes beyond, but sees the necessity for, really building the union movement. Concretely, the RU's "advanced worker" is a gimmick, a short cut to phonily "proletarianize" the organization. This "advanced worker" in Boston, then, is the white worker who hates the boss, desegregation, and wins the "respect" of fellow workers with the militant bus-blocking tactics the RU has informally stated are justifiable. The logic of such a perspective is obvious.

New, big tests of the class struggle are sure to come. The chances are that such challenges will catch the RU still reeling from its most recent problems. This reality offers

little perspective for the group's growth and influence, although over a short period they stand to keep picking up the more demoralized elements of the Maoist milieu.

The October League/Guardian

The Guardian, while feigning the title of "independent radical newsweekly," accurately reflects the politics of the October League, an organization of perhaps 300 with branches in seven or eight cities around the country. The OL was formed about three years ago, nearly four years after the RU.

I believe that the OL-Guardian combination is the leading tendency in the Maoist milieu. It has a political perspective offering a more lengthy tenure in the radical movement than any of its rivals.

The professional looking appearance of the Guardian paper, its circulation of 21,000 and its history as a mouthpiece for a variety of ultraleft schemes over the past several years are a part of this potential.

Where the RU maintains what amounts to a dual-unionist perspective--building "anti-imperialist workers organizations" outside the union movement--the OL-Guardian calls for "moving the unions to the left." This perspective combines both an opportunist tailing of the liberal union bureaucracy and premature and sectarian struggles for power against the bureaucracy through narrow caucuses.

While the RU creates the most transparent front groups for its "mass work," the OL-Guardian states its readiness and has worked with authentic united front type formations which included the CP, the Democratic Party, other reformists and the revolutionary socialists of the SWP and the YSA--something which the RU excludes in principle.

The OL actively intervenes in CLUW--not, however, with the intention of building CLUW as a union women's organization. Rather, the OL seeks a "working class women's organization," a coded description for a decision to "take on" the union bureaucracy through "left wing" CLUW chapters. In some areas, the OL has imposed, through initiating CLUW pre-chapters, this perspective, and has thus stymied the real growth of CLUW.

The OL supports and has worked for the passage of the ERA. It maintains a more open attitude to abortion struggles, though it likewise is tenuous on commitment as a result of its subservience to the Chinese bureaucracy's glorification of the "working class family."

The OL has no bar on gay members. Its style of work lacks the look of thuggery and machismo that characterizes the RU.

In Boston, the OL has not been able to intervene in the struggle against the racist offensive against desegregation. The OL has characterized the anti-busing drive as racist. It has shakily raised the demand for troops. It has done zero work to mobilize the Black community and its allies. It has mistakenly seen the anti-busing effort as "fascist," a convenient, alarmist slogan which fundamentally misses the reality of this racist movement, which is organized by capitalist Democrats and Republicans. The OL has made public "self-criticisms" for a "rightist" attitude at the outset of the effort to stop desegregation--that is, apparently, a do-nothing attitude that tended to capitulate to "tailing" the pro-busing forces uncritically. The OL has issued empty-headed calls for "white communists" to go into the central anti-busing neighborhoods to "struggle" to win white workers to support the democratic rights of Blacks. The key test of practice takes rhetoric out of the sky. The OL was absent from nor did it build the November 30 demonstration of 5,000 people for desegregation in Boston. It is unclear if it has a similar attitude to December 14. Such shilly-shallying is a reflection of their practical confusion on the burning questions of the day posed by the racist offensive.

Its liberal, social worker's perspective in Boston denies the fundamental need for a political mobilization of the Black community--which will serve as a powerful pole of attraction for its allies among white workers and others--to defeat the racist offensive in the streets. They lack a mass action approach. They schematically separate the "tasks" of "oppressed" and "oppressor" nationality communists into private "community work" in the Black and "white" communities. The OL ends up abstaining in reality from the real struggle. They rarely sell their monthly press in general and have been able to initiate two meetings, one a tour for OL leader, Lynn Wells; the other, an in-groupish forum on busing with other ultralefts.

If the RU's position in Boston is so abysmal, it is to the advantage of the OL, which has produced no coherent strategy to influence events and is most interested, at this point in time, to utilize the Boston situation to score debater's points against the RU in the debate in the Maoist milieu.

The OL maintains a "Black belt" theory as the source of its support to the right of self-determination for the Black population. So-called because of its soil color, the Black belt is allegedly a crescent of territory from East Texas to Southern Maryland. The OL states clearly it believes secession by the Black nationality would be an error, a position that denies in reality a revolutionary position of unconditional support to the right of self-determination, including separation. If Blacks were to embark on such an "erroneous" course, the OL believes the new, Black state must be where the "historic homeland" of Blacks is--the Black belt South. This position, again, denies the right of

self-determination because it prescribes where a separate state must be.

This Stalinist, idealist notion of the "Black belt" being the historic homeland of Blacks and the foundation for the right of self-determination is an antique dredged up from the Communist Party of the 1930s. The OL believes it; in fact, on her tour speech, Lynn Wells described herself as from Atlanta, "which is right adjacent to the Black belt."

Both the OL and RU theorems on the national question are practical evasions of the reality of the combined character of the coming American revolution--a struggle which is forged in the working class battle for socialism and the drive for national liberation by the oppressed nationalities. The Maoists seek in vain for a correct appreciation of this situation because they reject the theory of permanent revolution: both the OL and RU hold to the two-stage theory of revolution in the colonial world.

If the Guardian and OL have seemed to appear more level-headed on the Boston question, it is because the RU has served to make them virtuous by comparison.

The OL-Guardian have a perspective to bring the "new party" into existence in the next year or so, it seems, based upon the rapidity of isolation of the RU. While numerical estimates are hard to make, their combination could have as many as 1,500-2,000 or more supporters at one or another level of activity.

The OL's "style of work" differs from the RU. Maintaining a very low profile, the OL has entered healthy, new formations, like CLUW. As well, it has moved into such former CP allies as the National Lawyers Guild, the Southern Conference Education Fund, etc., to assume leading positions. It has played a leading role in forming the U. S. - China People's Friendship organizations, which produce a very professional quarterly, New China, and seeks to win liberals, scholars, academics, etc., enamored of China to a support organization. China Day celebrations organized by this group have been quite sizable--upwards of several thousand in major cities. Such work around China is geared to win Peking's franchise and corner the market on China supporters. As well, the OL rather slavishly holds to Peking's foreign policy perspectives. It opposes the call by revolutionaries, for example, for the overthrow of the Shah of Iran--such a perspective, states the OL, reeks of "national chauvinism." They hold a similar view on the "anti-imperialist" president of Mexico, Luis Echevarria. They have been mildly rebuked by the Guardian for this "flunkeyism," and the RU has been able to keep a modicum of respect among unaffiliated Maoists by pointing out that "Marxists-Leninists" are in a different situation and have different responsibilities than the Chinese government--that they can call for the overthrow of bourgeois

figures. The real relationship between the OL and the RU is their fundamental opposition to a Leninist program of socialist revolution for struggle in the colonial world.

The sharpening of differences between these two major poles in the Maoist current has aided recruitment to both, though it seems clear the RU is on the losing end--and has lost members and supporters to the OL-Guardian.

The OL, however, puts priority on industrially implanting its membership, which has allowed the RU's youth front, the Revolutionary Student Brigade, an open field on the campuses. On this, the Guardian and the OL have appeared to differ. In recent months, however, the OL has written on the need for "reviving" the "revolutionary student movement" and has begun to enter the RSB--and appears to lead it--in parts of California and Florida.

We should expect an increase in student work by the OL, both through the RSB, in its own name, or through the launching of local student groups in the coming period.

The Other Tendencies

The Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization and the Black Workers Congress remain in a bloc, having perhaps 100 and 300 members respectively. Both have gone through splits, and more splits. The PRRWO is active only in New York, and has reissued its newspaper, Palante, after a year long hiatus. The Communist, the paper of the BWC, resembles Palante. Both are written essentially as internal bulletins for the Maoists milieu and are monthlies.

There is, especially among the American Maoists, a tendency for personality splits, tensions, cliques and mini-cults to play a large--not necessarily dominant--role in political life. These factors, plus a hide-bound sectarianism, are features of the troubled existences of those two organizations, who, it appears, are left with little choice as an independent tendency.

The Communist League, which for a time played a role in the Maoist regroupment, is an insignificant and byzantine group, which has turned itself into the American Communist Labor Party.

The BWC is reportedly prepared to announce a new formation reflecting its multinational character and, perhaps, a merger with the PRRWO in so doing. The BWC holds a Black belt position. This tendency has jumped on the anti-RU bandwagon. While more sectarian than the OL, it seems likely that it will move towards some sort of reconciliation with them. The OL has publically stated the need for this. Such a regroupment would bring a relatively large number of Black and Puerto Rican Maoists into a party formation. Numbers, however, are secondary in impact to

program and strategy and tactics in the real world, a factor which objectively reduces the significance of the role these forces can play in the long run. Whether the BWC formation attempts to replace the RU as the partner of the OL-Guardian in the "two line struggle" for the new party remains to be seen.

The actual logic of Maoist polemic reflects the need of the Chinese bureaucracy to limit the framework of inter-bureaucratic rivalry to the in (revolutionary road) group and the out (capitalist road) group. Such an efficient method allows the victor the spoils and the vanquished the axe because it bases itself fundamentally on the need for the bureaucracy in general against real political, proletarian opposition. The general level of attrition, demoralization, splits, fusions, etc. that characterize the Maoists flows from the need to, sooner or later, attribute to one "line" bourgeois ideology and the other "proletarian" politics. Such a narrow perspective reduces the impact a "third" tendency can have until one tendency is banished to the netherland of "capitalist roading."

Why the Maoists Grow

The emergence of the Maoist tendency and its general growth may have appeared to come a bit fast. There are several reasons why these "new" Stalinists are picking up forces. They act as a measure of currents in the radicalization as well as a barometer of the impact of domestic and international events.

1. The detente in general, and specifically, the detente with China, has served the Maoists well. Publicity surrounding and accustoming Americans--and American youth--to China represent the reality of a new, big power. Among radicals this power has a magnetic force embodied in the reality of a victorious revolution. The identification with a triumphant revolution--which, we note, has made huge strides forward--by the Maoists increased their attraction. A reflection of such impact is the sending of a solidarity telegram to China by the last New American Movement convention. NAM also petitioned the Peking regime for permission to organize a tour to China. An element of NAM has also begun to consider itself "Marxist-Leninist" although has not yet made peace with the Stalinist orthodoxy the American Maoists demand. The superficially distinguishing features between the Moscow and Peking bureaucracies as well give the appearance that China is "to the left" of the Soviet Union.

2. At the same time, the Chinese Stalinists' fundamentally and historically counter-revolutionary program of peaceful coexistence and socialism in one country has more and more shed its radical veneer of "people's war" over the past several years. The culmination of this process of cosmetic surgery is reflected in the detente. The Soviet

Union to the Peking Stalinists is the number one enemy of the people of the world--not U. S. imperialism, as was the paper statement of five years ago. The key task for the Chinese state is the direct alliance between it and any and all bourgeois governments against the Soviet sphere of influence. NATO, the Shah of Iran, the Pakistani dictatorship all have "progressive" character. This "turn" by China over the last several years from ultraleft rhetoric in the service of a counter-revolutionary political perspective to the most blatant class collaborationism and opportunism in verbal perspective parallels the "turn" of a layer of American radicals over the same period. The ultraleft rebels of the 1960s who lauded the Red Guard now echo the somber pronouncements of the Peking hierarchy who war against "ultraleftism." The American Maoists have taken a "right turn" in reality that is nurtured by the shedding of ultraleft excess baggage by the Chinese bureaucracy. Part of that baggage is the eight million Chinese rebel youth impounded in the countryside in the ruling elite's campaign against "intellectuals."

3. The "right turn" of the former SDS spontaneists, the residue of May Day and other ultraleft gimmicks flows from an adaptation to the present ebb in national mass actions that has been a hallmark of the post-antiwar period.

The petty-bourgeois radicals of the 1960s rejected revolutionary Marxism because they rejected the revolutionary potential of the working class. Their ultraleft feminism, their "third worldist," uncritical romanticism of the Black Panthers, armed struggle, etc., their confrontationalist tactics in the antiwar movement all reflected an adaptation to the prevailing level of conservative consciousness among a large element of white, male workers and the absence of direct proletarian participation in the radicalization.

The changing nature of the period, the toll taken by such incorrect perspectives, the penetration of basic Marxist and Leninist concepts into this layer posed the question of party-type organization. As well, the fact that these forces lost battle after battle to the Trotskyists--as well as their healthiest elements who joined the SWP and YSA--provided an anti-Trotskyist glue that holds them together.

These factors, the emergence of China through the detente, the "rediscovery" of Stalin, etc. all are a part of the Maoist regroupment.

4. These above forces from the 1960s and early 1970s are the backbone of the Maoist regroupment. They are the ideological backwash of that period, with each tendency--OL-Guardian and the RU--reflecting tendencies of middle-class radicalism within the SDS. They recruit, in general, from the more demoralized and conservative elements of the present period.

The Maoist milieu is a petty-bourgeois current in the workers movement. Yesterday, a primitive expression of such a current denied the revolutionary potential of the working class and adapted to the most extreme and ultra-left expressions of social layers who rebelled, in the absence of a conscious workers radicalization. Today they recognize the revolutionary potential of the working class and in one way or another reject the independent demands and struggles of the specially oppressed sectors of the working class: the oppressed nationalities, women, gays, etc. They fundamentally deny the struggles of Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Chicanos and women the immense strategic weight they have in the class struggle as whole. In 1974 they make the same mistake of 1969, but on the other side of the coin. Justifying and solidifying this perspective is their adherence to Maoist-Stalinism, its bizarre and metaphysical "dialectics" and its anti-revolutionary, anti-working class foreign and domestic policies. They politically adapt their own pessimistic perspective--a product of their inability to grasp the present radicalization and its implications, here and internationally--to the class collaborationist policies of Peking, coating it with the seal of approval of a "revolutionary" power.

5. This is not to say that sincere rebels don't become Maoists. Radicals who have no contact with our movement; those who are genuinely struck by the awe and scope of China's revolution and take for good coin the leadership that retarded its coming and threatens its existence, etc. represent healthy forces who may, over the course of struggle, be broken from Maoism. Some of them will eventually be recruited to our movement. What should, I think, be understood, is this: fundamentally, the RU--most crudely--and, because of that, the OL more subtly each objectively exploit the absence of mass political actions that shake the government. These groups oppose the character of and do not have a perspective to build such independent mobilizations, whose reality enlivens and confirms on the most concrete basis... our program. The lack of mass action breeds a generalized cynicism among young people--a key part of which is also a growing and continued rejection of the capitalist system--which lends credibility to the unprincipled, low level, anti-revolutionary politics of the Maoists.

6. On the other hand, in this period, the breakthrough of real actions, the impact of our propaganda campaign, the deepening process of a radicalization fed by Watergate, the energy crisis--inflation and recession at once--etc., produces every day a larger and larger element of angry young people who represent the best of their generation and who more and more listen to the principled, revolutionary socialist politics of the Trotskyist movement.

The best of the Maoists will be chipped away from their organizations most of all by the tests of the class

struggle, and their witnessing and agreeing with the objective political example of a revolutionary socialist vanguard in action.

The logic of the Maoists is to continue picking up such elements, including the more backward of the newly radicalized, to sift them through, and most of all, in their majority, to carry out the process of building the "new party." This is the pattern no matter how much bile their servility to Peking, the more privileged workers, or any other force they adapt to, demands.

The Emergence of Maoism in the Black Movement

Much, I think, of the view expressed so far can be applied to a layer of Black radicals around the African Liberation Support Committee and the Congress of African People, and other groups.

The process through which formerly anti-Marxist nationalists have come to see the need for more all-encompassing revolutionary perspective is contradictory.

On the one hand, as we have noted in the past, such a development represents an authentic attempt to grapple with the necessity for a strategy for revolution.

On the other, the political context in which this attempt has emerged is one in the ebb of the nationalist struggles of the 1960s and in a broader sense, over a whole period of deepening leadership crisis in the Black community.

That crisis flows from the lack of leadership which can organize the latent militancy forged by the class and national oppression of Black people. Concretely, the tasks and perspectives of independent political action by the Black community have not been realized. The nationalist demagoguery of reformist Democrats; the failure of "narrow" or cultural nationalism (which stressed whites as the enemy--and usually accompanied an inadequate perspective for significant political action) etc., have, made to some the insufficient political forms which the nationalism of the oppressed reflected itself through; synonymous with the revolutionary potential and content that has yet to realize itself in this period.

That is, many of these Black radicals grappling with Marxism have, in the process of coming to a class struggle perspective, rejected whole aspects of nationalism more or less in general.

We believe that the revolutionary socialist strategy demands not a rejection of nationalist struggle or "transcending it," but the understanding and leadership of it by the most consistent fighters for national liberation, independence and self-determination--the revolutionary Marxists.

The twists and turns of the nationalist movement in this country have produced a situation in which some Black nationalists who identify their own mistakes in strategy and tactics as nationalists with the concrete dynamic of nationalism. As these elements seek out Marxist explanations, the most attractive ones, given this predicament, are those which contain elements of anti-nationalism.

And the most persuasive anti-nationalist arguments can be found in the Maoist current, which identifies with a social revolution made by the Chinese, by a non-white people against colonialism; and, as in the OL, adapts to nationalism.

Thus, we find a situation where many Black nationalists discussing Marxism are becoming Maoists, becoming supporters of China (which provides aid to many "progressive" African states), and who, in so doing, strengthen, deepen, justify and confirm a general demoralization produced by the long term crisis of leadership in and ebb in action of the Black struggle. The revolutionary perspective we offer for the Black liberation struggle bases itself on the coming nationalist upsurge in the Black community. This struggle, which combines with and is a source of the class radicalization of Black workers may be seen by many of these forces as utopian.

This aspect of the turn towards Marxism by these elements can be seen in the evolution of the Congress of African People, headed by Amiri Baraka. A year ago, CAP was vehemently anti-Marxist and lent support to Black Democrats--while maintaining a paper position of advocacy of an independent Black political party. At this point in time, CAP's monthly newspaper, Unity and Struggle calls for "mastering Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-Tung thought." Baraka, in defending Marxism, invokes the names of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Ho, Kim Il Sung and Albania's Enver Hoxa. The articles in the paper are rife with the jargon of Maoism. Aside from such surface adherence to Maoism, CAP has flunked the test of the Boston crisis.

For every radical Black organization, for the present leadership of the Black community, as well as for all socialist organizations, the racist offensive in Boston is a key test. CAP's first response echoed the perspective of the Revolutionary Union! Since that first error, CAP has drawn back a bit... but the Maoist, anti-nationalist workerism it has all too hastily linked up to has reduced CAP's analysis of Boston to a conspiracy to divide the workers introduced by Gerald Ford. CAP states the decisive issue in Boston is why there are poor schools in "working class communities." While citing its opposition to the racist offensive, CAP liquidates the necessity for the oppressed Black nationality to struggle for its democratic right to attend any school, anywhere, against the racist offensive designed to secure white privilege.

The paper support to the concept of an independent Black political party--a correct position--has been junked as CAP has unevenly come to grips with the reality of class oppression, an unevenness that is underscored by its weak and erroneous understanding of the national crisis in Boston.

The Youth Organization for Black Unity, a key force in the ALSC, has raised the demand of "quality education for all" and has stated a muted opposition to busing and support for an undifferentiated community control approach--which includes "the right to attend a quality school in one's own neighborhood." That is, YOBU dovetails the anti-desegregation perspective of the RU--while not coming out with a blatantly chauvinist outlook.

Unlike the Maoists, we do not believe the racism of white workers will be overcome through persuasion or the propaganda efforts of "communists." Such a reversal requires a show of force by the mobilization of the Black community, which, in inspiring its allies in the working class in general, can smash any racist mobilization, and, through the process of defeating and demoralizing such a movement, in the context of social crisis, win the support of white workers in opposing the common capitalist enemy. The Trotskyist perspective bases itself on our duty to support and extend--where possible, initiate--the independent mobilization of the oppressed nationalities and their allies. Lacking such a political perspective, the Maoists both underestimate the scope of national oppression and the tasks necessary to overcome it and overestimate the grip of racism on white workers. The Black Maoist milieu links up to this by, at one level or another, withdrawing from the fight against the racist backwardness of white workers and abstaining from mobilizing the Black community for fear of "exacerbating" division in the working class. "White communists" can go into South Boston from now until doomsday, but the white workers whom Trotsky aptly called "beasts" will not be broken from racism and the anti-working class movement they are now part of in Boston until sufficient power is galvanized in the streets to crush their hopes of victory over the Black community. The Black Maoists evade this all-decisive challenge.

The general tendency to withdraw from the championing of nationalist struggle and demands by Black and other oppressed nationality militants runs counter to the direction in which the next wave of struggle of oppressed nationalities points. Such a reality that we can point to with our perspectives and program will win the ear of the most consistent revolutionary nationalists, the least soured and most serious elements. This will not be a majority of those involved in the current turn towards China. The likelihood is that this general layer will go through the experience of grappling with Marxism and, in their immediate large number who stay political, will adhere, for the time being,

to Maoism.

All the other pressures and tensions that have forged the Maoist milieu in general are part of the dynamic which make Maoism attractive to many of the nationalist minded militants.

The abruptness of the shift towards Maoism, in CAP, for instance, represents, as well, an all too hasty attempt by leading elements to force the conclusion of which tendency in the workers movement should be taken up. There are a number of references in CAP's paper about resignations, expulsions, etc. While CAP--and the ALSC--are the organizational reflections of the drift towards Maoism, such phenomena exists on a local level as well. There exists the real possibility that a too quick embrace of Maoism will have an opposite effect than one that is sought by the harder Maoists; that is, a more open, critical perspective. The successful sales of our pamphlet Maoism vs. Marxism to many revolutionary nationalist militants is an indicator of this. As well, the Trotskyists are increasingly recognized as a tendency within the Black liberation struggle. Our unavailability poses the real questions of revolutionary strategy for working class struggle and Black liberation to all but the most die-hard sectarian Maoists of the oppressed nationalities. In fact, we are part of this discussion about the direction of the "turn" towards Marxism. It is not the property of the Maoists.

Above all, it will be the living confirmation in action of the coming struggles of the Black community--including Black workers in the class struggle--that will break down the barriers of pessimism and demoralization that bind many of these militants to the anti-nationalist, petty-bourgeois, dead-end radicalism of the Maoists and Maoism.

It should also be noted that a similar development is occurring among certain Chicano nationalist elements as well in Colorado (where the Crusade for Justice, reflecting this, had its newspaper reprint articles from The Call, the newspaper of the October League) and in California.

An important way of assessing this development is that it is part of a whole historical process in which different layers and elements of the Black liberation struggle from its inception have sought out radical political explanations for the overturning of racist oppression. The "Maoist" turn that involves some militants today is an episode in that process, out of which new lessons will emerge. One of those will be, no matter the actual number that go to Maoism, the inadequacy of the Chinese-Stalinist perspective. That lesson will be conveyed in practice by the counterposed examples of our movement, and the expression of it by the recruitment to and development of some of these forces in the Young Socialist Alliance.

The Revolutionary Student Brigade

The RSB is our most visible opponent on the campus, and, through the Revolutionary Union, is attempting to regain a foothold for Maoism in the student movement.

The RSB is an unprincipled front dominated and launched by the RU. It has a "shadow" program--RU's--and is formally bound by a two point statement of unity. This statement broadly supports struggles of "oppressed people at home and abroad."

The RSB claims to have 50 or so campus chapters.

The RSB is facing a big test over Boston. It has been scandalized by the RU's outright lunge for racist white workers. On the big questions that come up in the class struggle, the RSB will be stuck holding the bag; it does not pretend to have or want a program.

It organizes itself on the basis of substituting itself, its meetings, etc., for living campaigns and genuine united fronts. This is reminiscent of the Students for a Democratic Society, on which the RSB patterns itself and whose central mistakes it repeats rather accurately.

While many RSB members are relatively new to politics, the organization itself speaks in the language of the 1960s, parrots the ultraleft and sectarian errors of SDS and fashions itself as the "anti-imperialist student movement," much as SDS saw itself as "the movement."

SDS reflected an element of spontaneist rebellion on the campuses. It drew its real strength not from its own strategy or tactics--neither of which ever came together as a serious program--but because of the mass energy and power of the Black liberation struggle and the antiwar movement. SDS's confrontation politics, its jungle-like internal life, ungoverned by a democratically arrived at program and organizational principles, repelled thousands and thousands of activists and rebets who passed through it for a period. The big mass actions of the antiwar movement, the drive of the Black student movement, the emergence of the women's liberation movement--which initially took roots in SDS through opposition to the male chauvinism which characterized much of the group's leadership attitudes--posed the question of radical organization. As well, SDS emerged over a period in which the revolutionary potential and strategic role of the working class was rejected. The lessons and examples of principled revolutionary Marxist politics had been dismissed along with Stalinism as "the old left." The prosperity of the 1950s that objectively pacified working class struggle and the cold war which based its ability to purge America of radicals as a result of it, left a legacy which sprouted in the forms and dynamics of the 1960s radicalization.

Such an objective situation--with a key part of it the smallness of Trotskyist forces--will not occur again. The RU and the RSB cannot suck from its thumb a finished political period. In fact, the hundreds of cadre the Trotskyist movement has developed from its recruitment in that period are the real gains the working class leadership in this country has made, and continues, periodically, to make, as radicals and activists from the 1960s and early 1970s join the YSA.

The RSB's schemes and campaigns--from "throwing out the bum" to narrow initiatives around daycare, tuition hikes, cutbacks, etc.--are not based on a real perspective to lead the student movement. The RSB's silence or ambiguity on international questions--the detente, for instance--or on the big questions of the Black struggle, women's liberation--abortion and the ERA, etc.--place it on tenuous ground.

The RSB is fundamentally designed as a recruitment pool for the RU, posed as an "independent anti-imperialist youth group."

The utilization of self-criticism in the organization, the personalization of political differences serves to gel an anti-political attitude. By self-criticism I do not mean the healthy process by which Leninists assess work and program to advance clarity and to move forward. That kind of attitude is forged in objective political light, in which democracy and centralism are meshed to the benefit of united decisive action. It is not a "point on the agenda" but part of a living method embodied in the norms, traditions and principles of our movement.

The self-criticism these neophyte Maoists practice is from the Stalin school, where buck-passing and finger-pointing from the leadership down root out the bumbler who must take the blame for the fundamental strategic errors of the program of Stalinism.

In Maoist China, self-criticism is the method introduced by and employed for the benefit of the Stalinist bureaucracy. It is mass control, where personal habits, attitudes, ideas--as well as the hint of political difference--are subject to social scrutiny to snuff out dissent. On an individual level, it is designed to forge a character and personality subservient to an omniscient bureaucratic apparatus.

This method, outside of China, is a crude caricature. At least--and at most--the Chinese people have a workers state, albeit deformed, as a salutary strength. The American Maoists have Bob Avakian and Mike Klonsky. For the RSB, which engages in this practice, self-criticism is a process by which the group sifts out the most inquisitive, curious and independent-minded, blunting and putting a question mark over initiative and self-confidence. The tendency is for political differences and questions to be

resolved in battles which reduce the loser to varying levels of insecurity. The organizational relationship between the RU and the RSB allows for the RSB to meekly differ because the political context in which it operates is geared towards the pushing out of healthier elements who over a period could not stomach the RU's perspective.

Part of that perspective is the political belief that socialist organization is too "sophisticated" a form for students--that "anti-imperialist unity" is adequate.

We counterpose to this a perspective for a mass socialist youth organization geared to lead the student movement and youth in general. The rubric "anti-imperialist" is itself a joke. To be consciously "anti-imperialist" in America, the heartland of imperialism, one must be by necessity "anti-capitalist"--a revolutionary, a socialist. The RSB's concept is a catch-all which never cites what sort of society a revolution--if a revolution is necessary--is geared to bring about. Vacillating between ultraleftism and opportunism, bound to the RU in a dishonest relationship--if it were open and honest, it would even more narrow the appeal of the group--the RSB lacks a principled, political foundation to stand on.

But because the lessons of independent mass action which confirm our political method and strategy have become dimmed over the past several years among students, the RSB is likely for a time, to pick up recruits and grow. Some of these forces will come in areas where the RU does not exist and the directly debilitating influence of a Maoist-Stalinist's presence does not exert itself. These layers--a minority, it should be added--will be more open to our program and perspectives.

But among another layer, whose fundamental backwardness and conservatism seeks to "left cover" in the 1960s lingo and style of the RSB, plus the hint of identification with China--the RSB does not consider itself Maoist--this organization has a different appeal. It is among this formally uncrystallized, but real opponent layer that the RSB is providing an organizational framework. The logic for those who remain in it is to harden up, to find ideological and organizational expression for their disagreement with the perspective of the revolutionary socialist politics of our movement.

This process is exacerbated by the busing crisis in Boston.

The RSB has shouldered up to the racists; the semi-voluntary gag rule of the RU is no excuse for their pandering to white backwardness. In the November issue of Fight Back the article describing the situation in Boston never once characterizes the anti-busing offensive as "racist." They are abstaining from building or endorsing

December 14, as was the case on November 30. It appears, however, all the Maoists may group around an "anti-imperialist" contingent, the "Fred Hampton Brigade," through which they hope to indict the "Black bourgeoisie" involved in the action. The Guardian has called for such a perspective while endorsing the 14th.

As a modest, but nonetheless important part of our work to explain the plight of and defend the Black community of Boston against the racist anti-busing offensive we should make a point of posing the question to the RSB: whose side are you on?

Whether through letters in campus papers, seeking out united front type activities around the busing crisis, through sales of our press or campus forums to explain the situation, we should utilize the position of the RSB to explain the fraud of "democratic" rhetoric which surrounds the "anti-forced busing" movement. The RU and the RSB are the loudest echo of bourgeois ideology in the left on this question. They reflect the pressure of the racist, capitalist offensive against the accumulated gains of the civil rights movement.

Our job of winning allies to and helping to lead and organize the struggle for Black liberation requires a merciless expose of the "radical" elements that give "revolutionary" legitimacy to the ideology and practice of the enemy class.

We draw the sharpest line of demarcation on this question. Such an attitude on our part is an indicator of the refusal of the YSA to bow an inch to the campaign of racist mobilization and terror in Boston. It is a reflection of our confidence in the need for and capacity of the Black community to struggle against the racists and our profound belief that such a struggle, in the process of deepening economic crisis, must and will win white workers to its side. This confidence is in stark contrast to the frenzied middle-class pessimism that marks the RU and RSB's groveling before the bluster of Boston's bigots as a bridge to "working class unity."

While get-rich-quick schemes may win some initial gains to the RSB, as an organization they have no real future in the United States. While some sincere rebels will be momentarily drawn in by the group--through its initiatives, etc.--the best of them will not be kept long, under the hammer blows of the class struggle and when confronted with our political example.

The period of general demoralization among many students--who continue to radicalize and rebel at the same time--is the period in which the RSB can grow. The tests of program--which the RSB flunks daily--are demonstratively revealed in the major struggles, in the big mass actions and

campaigns that are now prepared by the increasing and rapid decay of the capitalist system. Boston is one such struggle. The corner out of the "lull" has not yet been turned. But the economic crunch that is coming begins to forcefully break away parts of the cynical crust on the student movement. That crust, the "lull," the adaptation to its moods, is the cement that holds the RSB together.

As that crust breaks, so too will the minimal attraction of the RSB--not, of course, without struggle, splits, or inevitable violence directed at radical opponents.

Our attitude to the RSB is one of both seeking out genuine united fronts in real actions and campaigns; of attempting to win the most healthy elements away from the pole the RU has provided--and through seeking and utilizing all tools available for the clash of ideas, to isolate their perspective and curtail their limited influence, both of which exist as an objective obstacle in the path of the forward motion of the student movement.

We should likewise be watchful of any sectarianism towards the RSB, especially newer members with whom serious discussion and joint work may make some impact. On some campuses, RSB initiatives may lack the tendency towards ultraleftism and sectarian ingroupishness which are their hallmark. The RSB at this point in time seems to be groping for a campaign. Such a campaign may emerge, as it has on some campuses, around daycare. With RU sympathizers in the Union for Radical Political Economists--as well as unaffiliated radicals in that organization--the RSB has sought to initiate teach-ins on the economy. As well, the group has attempted to launch narrow fights around cutbacks. All of these general areas bring them into contact with the YSA. Our political program, sense of outreach, our press (a comparison between Fight Back and the YS speaks volumes about the seriousness of the group), etc. are great sources of strength in the contention with the RSB for campus leadership in these, and any other areas.

The Perspectives for a New Maoist Party

From our experience over the past couple of years, we know the Maoists are a growing force. Such a growth, we note, exists in a certain period and responds to both the needs of limited, well-defined layer of radicals and reflects key international developments. The ability of a party to form remains, though clearly even the hollowest of unity between the major tendencies is most unlikely.

Emerging from sect-like obscurity as the mass movement ebbed, the Maoists increasingly attempt to pose themselves on a political plane.

A first wave of the regroupment process has bitten the dust. The RU appears to be following, as its Maoist foes

state, the path of the Progressive Labor Party into anti-nationalist sectarianism amidst a spectrum of miniature front groups. The completion of such an evolution may take several more years, but the RU's dogmatic refusal to side with the Black community in Boston is the clearest indicator of this trend.

In reality, this leaves the Guardian-October League and some former Black nationalist groups as well as some Puerto Rican, Chicano and Asian elements turning towards Maoism as appearing to form the nucleus of a "real" Maoist party in the United States. How long that creation will take remains to be seen, although the process set in motion by CAP's rapid embrace of Maoism, the calls for the quick formation of a new party by the Guardian and the OL, and the pressure to do so before the RU calls its party into existence are factors that should be kept in mind.

Such a party would probably be larger, numerically and momentarily, but not in authentic, seasoned revolutionary activists, than our movement. It would face the potential chaos unleashed in China by both Mao's death and the fight for power, as well as the eruption of turmoil as result of the long term affects of anti-working class bureaucratic domestic policy.

They face the constant tests imposed by Peking's seeking out of "progressive bourgeoisie" in the most unlikely places. They face the attrition of the American class struggle; for instance the expulsion from unions, the price paid for juvenile adventures in the labor movement. They face the rise of women's struggles, the unfolding revolutionary dynamic of nationalism. They face an unprecedented radicalization whose inexorable drive towards the question of power does not afford the 40 years of seasoning in the politics of class collaboration that is the heritage of the Moscow Stalinists. They must forge from the raw a bureaucratic method and a party apparatus in the real world, not in the editorial offices of the Guardian and the living rooms of neophyte October Leaguers.

Try as they may, they cannot deny the new historical relationship of forces between themselves and the Trotskyists.

They are babes in the wood compared to the American CP. And as China continues its "right" turn, more and more of their revolutionary veneer is dulled by the reality of such a posture.

On an international plane, the Maoists have no real communist parties, just ultraleft nuclei at best. They are a generally declining tendency in Europe, Latin America and Asia.

The Chinese bureaucracy competes for favors directly with the bourgeoisie, not through the intermediary of the mass CP--or American CP--which seeks to give it aid and comfort.

These are just some of the reasons--along with, importantly, the great industrial strength of the Soviet Union compared to China--why the Moscow Stalinists remain the most serious, consistent and dangerous foes of the revolutionary perspective. They are some--among many--reasons why in the United States the CP and Young Workers Liberation League, our major opponents, are the force to whom we pay the most political attention.

It is in this context that we view the Maoists, that we should familiarize ourselves with their press, especially the Guardian, their ideas, their perspectives, etc.

The YSA, I think, should step up its local and national educational efforts in polemically dealing with the Maoists.

We should have classes not only that deal with their evolution as a current, but take up some key positions. Most importantly, I believe, among these questions are those of strategy and tactics for the struggles of oppressed nationalities. We should familiarize ourselves with how the Maoists view their politics and how we understand what it all really means.

We should up-date through a YS pamphlet our arguments with the Maoists--specifically the RSB; what the student movement really was and is, and what a revolutionary strategy and organization really is.

When RSBers or other ex-Maoists join the YSA, we should encourage local campus forums on such a transition, articles in the YS about the differences between the two perspectives, etc. Contact classes, where appropriate, can take up a variety of questions raised by Maoist strategy.

There is a general, healthy curiosity among young people about China and its revolution--a curiosity, it should be added, that asks the very familiar question of "is bureaucracy inevitable?" This curiosity is open to revolutionary socialist defense of the workers state that calls for the overthrow of the system of deformations which have characterized it since birth.

We identify with the victory of the Chinese revolution and solidarize with its gains. We grant no monopoly to the Maoists whose slavish adulation of the bureaucracy en-

dorses a perspective that held back the revolution's victory and shapes its possible doom. We should be familiar with the history of the Chinese revolution to date as well as the more glaring anti-Marxist aspects of Maoist "philosophy."

We should be wary of speculation, of course. The evolution of the period we are in is unpredictable as are the international events which mold it. Chronological bets are unwise. But of this we can be certain. No matter which strain, the Maoists have hitched themselves to a political perspective whose unconditional servility to a counter-revolutionary bureaucratic elite merely underscores their lack of perspective for or confidence in domestic and international revolutionary possibilities. Given that, we should take them seriously, as they are attempting and have some forces to build a party. But dedication is nothing without a revolutionary perspective.

The big events which confirm our program in the tests of action in the eyes of the masses will also defeat, demoralize and disqualify the Maoists. On the day-to-day hurdles of the class struggle, against which the most serious rebels measure all tendencies, our record is spotless. The question of impeachment, the fight for democratic rights, revolutionary electoral activity, etc., we stand alone. The Maoist's record anticipates their crumbling in the decisive battles to come, as does the shoddy sloganeering that passes for theory and perspective on any number of issues.

The 1976 socialist election campaign combines a whole set of tests faced by revolutionaries in general and puts forward our movement in the public eye, more than ever before. Such an opportunity to advance the perspectives for the relief of human misery stands in sharp distinction to Maoist mindlessness about the dangers of "electoralism." They fundamentally lack the political confidence in their own program necessary to bring it to the masses. They become incidental in the real, political world. Such an objective pressure, however, may link the Maoists to some sort of coalition campaign or "critical support" to a "progressive" bourgeois third party.

Against the Maoist-Stalinists, the Moscow Stalinists and others who fraudulently claim to be the practitioners of Leninism, "we must assert as a matter of course that our party is going to lead the revolution," as James P. Cannon stated in 1946.

For us, that means the forging of the best elements of this generation into the ranks of the Young Socialist Alliance.

December 1, 1974

A SUGGESTION ON BUILDING THE YSA

by Rick Mitts and Connie Mitts, Cincinnati local

Although these are hard times financially for almost everyone (ruling class excluded), for revolutionary socialists the opportunities before us certainly make these exciting times. People in Cincinnati are more open than ever to socialist ideas--students and workers alike. The results of the '74 SWP election campaign is confirmation that as capitalist society continues to rot, more and more people will choose the socialist alternative. The YSA should have the perspective of taking full advantage of these opportunities for new growth.

In Cincinnati the YSA has won six new comrades this fall. Three of these recruits are students at the University of Cincinnati. The YSA now has an active fraction there. All of these new comrades, as well as the rest of the local, are anxious about the upcoming YSA convention. One of the reasons for this is that, as a regional local, we sometimes feel isolated and out of the main stream of the struggles comrades read about each week in The Militant. At the convention new comrades, and old ones too, feel the collective excitement and strength of the YSA. Winding up the convention with fists raised high as we sing The Internationale reinspires us for the tasks we've helped to outline, discuss and decide upon.

Carrying out the tasks of the YSA is always an uphill fight, but in Cincinnati the size of our opponents makes our work even harder. There breeds in Cincinnati every variety of Maoist sect. And in the woodwork always ready to come crawling out are the Moscow Stalinists as well. Southern Ohio is also a strong hold for the KKK and other right-wing opponents, which include the Birchers, Nazis and the NCLC.

These opponent groups and grouplets pose a problem when we approach contacts about joining the YSA. Comrades often confront not so much disagreement with our politics, but disbelief about the YSA's ability to ever change the world. Being new, all contacts see is the Cincinnati local's small size and means. If new comrades and contacts could get a feel of the vitality and strength of our movement nationally, then they could more easily grasp the YSA's potential for achieving our goals.

Not a single comrade in Cincinnati has ever seen our

national center, which is another aspect of this problem. Many comrades have never been to a national educational conference, and some have not even seen our regional center. They have no sense of the YSA as a national organization with an international program. It's difficult to explain this if YSA comrades themselves lack this understanding. New contacts see only Cincinnati, and it's very hard to tell them about all the YSA's activities. Comrades must rely heavily upon The Militant and the YS for recruitment work, which is good, but we believe there is a need for something more.

An excellent recruitment tool we used a couple of years ago was a movie called How to Make a Revolution. Cincinnati used this movie precisely because of the problems we've described. This film, however, soon became dated. What we have is a suggestion for a new project which is similar to a film in some ways, but is less expensive and more versatile, in that it could easily be changed--either added to or updated. We suggest that the YSA produce a comprehensive slide show and script. It, too, could be entitled How to Make a Revolution.

A good slide show could possibly be put together with pictures on hand. If not, then it would be worth the effort to send a comrade around with a camera. Pictures could be taken of the N.O., the printing works, and much more. Pictures could also be solicited from locals around the country, and from cothinkers around the world, showing our movement in action. Old pictures could be turned into slides to explain the continuity and history of the socialist movement since Marx. Accompanying this slide show presentation should be a written tape recorded script.

We believe this idea would prove to be a valuable recruitment tool. During the antiwar movement there were several slide shows we used with success. Other comrades will hopefully speak out in favor of this suggestion. We think it would be a good way to kick off the new year. Cincinnati would waste no time putting a new slide show presentation like this to work.

December 3, 1974

MILWAUKEE YSA'S STUDENT GOVERNMENT WORK

by Steve Johnson, Milwaukee local

It is impossible to stress how important student government election campaigns are. Here in Milwaukee many people, who are now comrades, came into contact with the YSA through the campaign last spring. A contact who ran on our slate was elected as a student senator. It was through him that we were aware of what the Student Association (SA) was doing. It also was through him that myself and later another comrade got into SA as senators.

What happened was that there were a number of vacancies on the senate due to people leaving school and our YS senator informed us of this. So the executive committee assigned me to student government work, provided I could get in (all vacancies are filled by presidential appointments with senate confirmation). I applied and had no trouble getting appointed and confirmed. Soon I became an entrenched and an active member of the senate. A couple of weeks later we were able to get another comrade on the senate. So presently we have three senators in the SA-- two comrades and one contact.

I don't suppose that the University of Wisconsin--Milwaukee (UWM) Student Association is too much different from others around the country. That is, they many times have a very petty and narrow perspective on things. But this is changing, slowly but surely, at UWM. They have been forced into taking some very good stances. For example, in Wisconsin the governor signed into law a bill that merged the Wisconsin State University system with the University of Wisconsin system. In this merger law there is a section that delineates student responsibilities. What this section does is give students "... primary responsibility for the formulation and review of policies concerning student life, services and interest." In effect it gives students the right to take over areas such as the library, financial aid, dorms, student union, athletics and a number of other areas.

The university administration is of course opposing this, so the SA has taken them to court. What the YSA has done is to initiate a coalition called the Student Authority Coalition to build support for SA's position.

Also the SA came out and endorsed the Ray Mendoza Defense Committee. Ray Mendoza is a Chicano who has been framed-up for the killing of two Milwaukee policemen.

Probably the best and most surprising stand that the SA took was on Boston. Not only did the SA endorse the national mobilization, but they also allocated \$250.00 to send the other comrade in SA and myself to Boston for the demonstration.

The UWM Student Association has taken a dramatic and noticeable "left turn" because of the presence of YSAers in the senate.

We are in an extremely good position for the next student government election next spring. There has been a lot of talk among comrades on what we will do when we win.

Conclusion

As I stated before, a well-organized student government campaign will work wonders in terms of recruitment. Also it is very helpful to get people elected (for financing, office space, etc.). Comrades on campus should check out the procedure of the student government in filling places that are vacant due to senators-elect dropping out, transferring, etc. Comrades should really push and be aggressive in trying to get in.

December 5, 1974

ON INDIVIDUAL TERRORISM AND REVOLUTIONARY MORALITY

by Albert Cassorla, Boston local

To the real and rhetorical question of whether good political ends justify any means, Leon Trotsky answered: "That is permissible. . . which really leads to the liberation of humanity." Since those words were written in 1939, and before then as well, the process of determining what really aids humankind's liberation, and more specifically, what abets the victorious outcome of the class struggle, has been our common preoccupation as revolutionaries.

When dealing with the bourgeois oppressor, we evaluate what means of struggle may be permitted in the sense of which means work effectively. When a section of the Fourth International or a faction of the Young Socialist Alliance "goes astray," conspires, or just takes a wrong tack, we say, "What you advocate will lead to defeat." And then if after voting, the deviation persists openly, we say, "That is not allowed. Change, or leave us." We do not often pause when condemning tendencies and other movements on the left with whom we disagree and judge that what they are doing is fundamentally bad or base. For us it is usually sufficient, and justifiably so, given the scope of our tasks, to say of our opponents that they are wrong, explain why, and move on. Most times the mistakes of our opponents appear to us as inevitable misjudgments based upon historical evolution, be it in the force of Maoism on the American left, the subjective example of the Cuban method of struggle, or any number of other instances. When room for discourse is available, we couch our language and propaganda in the terms of persuasion, making "efficacy" rather than "value" judgments. Conversely, when discourse has been closed by the slammed door of history, we speak in angry, morally aroused terms, i. e., "The Stalinist betrayal of the Vietnamese Revolution was perfidious."

Such flexibility of stance is not only desirable, but appropriate to the contingencies of different and changing political situations. What I should like to argue, to come to the point, is for the extension of the realm of moral judgment into the area of certain kinds of individual terrorist actions against particular types of unarmed civilians. Once these perpetrators have been successfully identified, I would like to see them condemned harshly and exactly in our press.

Examples that come to mind are the actions of the Black September group against Israeli athletes at Munich, and of the "Red Army" against passers-by in the Lod Airport massacre. At the time of the Munich killings, The Militant performed an admirable propaganda role in the

U. S. by being one of the few, if not the only news source, to come out strongly against the capitalist press's hypocritical double standard in judging Middle East violence. We all know that to the New York Times and to Walter Cronkite, one dead Israeli athlete is ten times more important, and hence more newsworthy, than the deaths of Palestinian children in Lebanese border towns hit by Israeli air raids.

The Militant also attacked the method of individual terrorism for its sowing of illusions in the Palestinian masses as to their potential for liberation by the hands of a few feyadeen saviours acting in their name. All fine and good so far.

But given the fact of tactical impropriety, where was the condemnation of the actions of these terrorists on common sense moral grounds?

Already, I can hear objections thought and pronounced that, "Oh no, we don't make value judgments on the basis of common sense. As dialectical materialists, we applaud and condemn solely on the basis of what is effective for the revolution."

Once again, fine and good. No one wants us to run out and take a position on every kind of moral question, from attributing blame to plaintiffs in divorce suits to determining the virtues or faults of child molesters. There is no eternal moral reality--let's not mistake what I am saying for that. Yet common sense is part of the dialectical equation of everyday life. Every step a revolutionary takes is informed by common sense, even when he or she analyzes, rejects, transcends or supplements it with the veil-piercing methods of historical materialism.

The Munich killings thus told us at least three things:

1) The Israeli athletes killed had as their only "guilt" citizenship in an oppressor state. Even given their subsidiary role as normalizers of Israeli international relations, they were neither direct representatives of the state, ideological agitators, nor armed servants of the Israeli bourgeoisie.

2) The wanton killing of civilians of an oppressor state in a non-military and non-strategic situation promotes an indifference to the value of human life. While this value is not a fixed essence, its trampling can have harsh consequences on the personalities of revolutionaries and hence, on the quality of life of the future revolutionary state.

3) The bourgeois press has firm control in this country and can pick among the sundry massacres available for public consumption. Those they choose to focus upon fit their own propaganda needs. In this case, the Munich killings were used to shore up Zionist forces in this country.

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Of these three lessons, the last is to be generally countered by the revolutionary press, the first two, I would say, to be acknowledged and incorporated in our analyses. We expect The Militant to be just that--unyielding in its condemnation of the duplicity of bourgeois news practices.

However, we need not go over to the side of the Palestinian terrorists of this instance, merely to show our leftist stripes, or to impress Arab student groups in this country with our committed stridency. I do not ask that we stand up and spend most of our time condemning terrorists of this sort as immoral, to the exclusion of other propaganda requirements. I do ask that the heinous nature of such actions be mentioned in the text of any editorials in a similar future situation.

The matter at hand should not be confused with the attempted erection of an ironclad rule against the use of terrorism by revolutionaries against civilians. One lesson of the Russian civil war taught precisely the opposite. In fact, Trotsky believed that if more rather than fewer, sympathizers of the White Army had been incarcerated by his decree of 1919, a greater number of lives would have been saved all told. The people he referred to were conscious sympathizers caught up in the midst of battle, however, unlike the Israeli athletes riding along for the prestige and love of sport, and also unlike the Lod passengers who were merely en route to various destinations. These people do not resemble the innocent civilians killed accidentally in cross-fires and aerial bombardment in the course of any legitimate war. Those casualties are often by-products of attacks on military or strategic targets.

The primary moral category must always be political--will this or that particular action help the revolution? Once the answer is established as negative, other subsidiary value systems, those governing our daily perceptions and sociologically received mores, come into play. These values are common sensical, humanistic and personal, and will admittedly differ somewhat even from comrade to comrade. But these differences must not inhibit us from coming to justifiable general conclusions. Generalizations made in answer to the question, "What is humane?" when understood in the light of the interdependence of revolutionary means and ends go to the heart of any attempted socialist morality. Such evaluations are imperative in "Munich" type reportage because we stand, by not condemning these terrorists, even if only in a one sentence morally grounded

denunciation in the middle of an editorial, to lose the sympathies of many of the people we are trying to reach. And all possibly otherwise without any compromise of principles.

Though "neutrality" is the opposite of a scientific comprehension of the Middle East situation, we must not dehumanize the Israeli Jew in our effort to understand and aid the Palestinian. Though it is possible that almost every Israeli Jew will fight to the last child to prevent the establishment of a democratic secular, socialist Palestine, we hope and build toward a different reality in which the Israeli worker will see the wisdom of multi-nationality. We stand ready to sweep him or her aside if at the last moment he or she reneges on the revolutionary proposition. But until then, the Israeli Jew, like the burgher of Dresden during World War II, is to be understood as a person whose relationship to the oppressor state is subjectively and objectively in flux. Therefore, his or her needless death is a manifestation of evil, in the secular sense of that which is reprehensible in human behavior.

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The psychology of the American reader, even those so "non-average" as to pick up a copy of The Militant is nonetheless steeped in decades of Zionist miseducation. He or she can more readily understand a vitriolic attack on the less than even-handed establishment news practices than a proclamation of sympathy for a nonsensical, bloody, televised act. The common ground of minds is where we ought to meet that mass audience The Militant seeks.

To "understand" the oppressed Palestinian and to side with him or her is not to countenance his or her every act, even when motive may appear noble. Though none of us are deists, we would probably agree with the old saw that "The road to Hell (or the White House or Kremlin) is paved with good intentions." If an armed burglar menaces us for money and we happen to be armed ourselves, we shoot, despite the anguish of the "culture of poverty that spawned him," etc., etc. Similarly, with certain kinds of civilian-armed individual terrorism (I am aware that the analogy is only rough), we ought to shoot down oppression-based rationalizations for abominable conduct.

Though I am indeed making a "big case" of it, my expectation is not that organized Trotskyism will or should take so much pain to be as complete in its week-to-week analysis as I have tried to be here. A small part of what we say, but a part of it nonetheless, should say, "Though these guerrillas probably acted with intentions they believed good, their results were monstrous. This should not deter us, however, from the primary and chiefly ignored crime in this situation--Israeli imperialism..." and so on. Any similar formulation would, of course, do.

Some comrades may agree with the substance of my objection, but find themselves saying that Israeli crimes far outweigh any Arab errors and that time spent on the latter, even peripherally, will be wasteful, add needless complexity, and cause deviation of attention from the genuine propaganda needs of the moment. Some may even feel that I am against generally offensive formulations

(not obnoxious), again mistakenly.

To this I say: Reality is indeed complex! Let's recognize this, and not be so fearful of the paralysis of self-examination that we fail to examine at all.

December 7, 1974

A LETTER TO THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

by Daniel Sabo, Buffalo, N. Y., At-Large

Buffalo, New York
December 7, 1974

Boston. However, a longer period of pre-convention discussion should have been held in order that it is truly full and democratic. Also, as stated in the YSA Constitution, this period is set to last for ninety days.

Dear Comrades,

The Democratic-Centralist Tendency is currently engaged in discussing with various locals our position on the IT method of expulsion. However, due to the limited time available before the national convention, we believe a full exchange of ideas has been made difficult. The reason for this is the late notice given by the National Office on pre-convention discussion.

We are aware of the great deal of time that was needed to carry out this year's election campaign and the important work of building support for the national demonstration in

We, therefore, request a clarification of the reasons why the discussion period has been limited to a brief length of time.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Comradely,
s/Daniel Sabo
Democratic-Centralist Tendency

P. S. : The Democratic-Centralist Tendency requests that this letter be reprinted in the next discussion bulletin.

A LETTER TO THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

by Kurt T. Hill, Buffalo, N. Y., At-Large

Buffalo, New York
December 7, 1974

a caucus meeting would allow us to personally meet with supporters for the purpose of mapping out strategy to press for the adoption of our three resolutions.

National Executive Committee
Young Socialist Alliance

We request that the NEC provide us with facilities for such a caucus meeting at the national convention.

Dear Comrades,

The unusual delay in publishing the YSA internal bulletin, coupled with the delay in organizing oral discussions has somewhat hampered our Tendency's goal of creating support groups throughout the country which favor the adoption of our three resolutions.

We are urging all comrades who agree with the Tendency's positions to attend the convention and caucus meeting, so that a full democratic discussion can take place, and that an authoritative decision can be made on these issues by the national membership.

Because of the difficulty of contacting and corresponding with Tendency supporters in the relatively short period remaining in the pre-convention discussion, we feel that a caucus meeting of DCTers at St. Louis is necessary. Such

We request that this letter be printed in the next discussion bulletin for the information of the membership.

Comradely yours,
s/Kurt T. Hill
for the Tendency

A COMMENT ON TWO LETTERS TO THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
BY MEMBERS OF THE DEMOCRATIC CENTRALIST TENDENCY

by Jose G. Perez, Lower Manhattan, N. Y. local

In his December 7 letter to the National Executive Committee, Comrade Daniel Sabo, a member of the Democratic Centralist Tendency, asserts that "due to the limited time available before the national convention... a full exchange of ideas has been made difficult." He gives as the reason for this, "the late notice given by the National Office on pre-convention discussion." Comrade Sabo's letter, however, is based on what seems to be a misunderstanding.

On September 25, 1974, a letter was sent out by the National Office to all members, stating: "As determined by the July National Committee plenum, the pre-convention discussion period for the YSA's Fourteenth National Convention opens September 29, 1974--90 days prior to the St. Louis convention, December 28, 1974 - January 1, 1975." The letter also explained that the written discussion bulletin was open to all members and specified a format for contributions in order to facilitate the preparation of the bulletin.

In his December 7 letter to the NEC, Comrade Kurt T.

Hill, also a member of the Democratic Centralist Tendency, asserts that there has been an "unusual delay in publishing the YSA Internal Bulletin."

The National Office, however, was only able to publish the Young Socialist Discussion Bulletin as contributions were received. This year, sufficient contributions to fill the first bulletin were not received until November.

Comrade Hill asks that as a result of the "unusual delays" the NEC make available facilities for a Democratic Centralist Tendency caucus meeting at the YSA convention. The question of delays aside, it is part of the YSA's tradition that declared tendencies may meet to discuss how best to put forth their point of view. This includes making available meeting rooms at national conventions when these are requested by tendencies.

December 8, 1974

YSA WORK WITH THE ORGANIZATION OF ARAB STUDENTS AND THE IRANIAN STUDENTS ASSOCIATION

by Denis Hoppe, East Lansing local

On campuses where foreign students have branches of such groups as the Organization of Arab Students (OAS), or Iranian Students Association (ISA), or Ethiopian Students Union (ESU), a major effort should be made by YSA comrades to study the situation in these countries and work with these organizations.

In working with these organizations, our central aim is not to recruit from them--that is impossible because of the repressive nature of the U. S. immigration department--but to help them publicize and champion the liberation of their countries from imperialism.

At the present moment, the Organization of Arab Students is by far the most impressive of these various foreign student groups. Through long work at the important task of countering Zionist propaganda, they have developed into a superb organization dedicated to the defense of the Arab revolution here in the USA and Canada. OAS also has a social function of bringing Arab students together for parties and festivals, but this function does not concern us here, except insofar as these social activities help to build the OAS.

This report deals with YSA relations with what might be called the political arm of OAS and ISA; the YSA in East Lansing has had some good experience working with these organizations.

At the last convention of OAS, a point on the agenda was: "relationship of OAS with the American Left." Significantly, the OAS resolved to work with all groups on the left who want to work with them. The OAS does not favor one group above another; the best defenders of the Arab revolution are its best friends. As YSA locals work with OAS chapters, many demands will be put upon them: OAS members are activists; they are full of energy. They are proud of the successes they have had in countering Zionist propaganda in this country, but they want to extend those successes even farther, reaching more and more Americans. They like to sponsor forums, speakers and movies on the Middle East. They also like to develop the resources of each chapter--giving new OAS members an opportunity to speak. In fact, their main criticism of the American Left is that they do not approach the OAS often enough for cosponsorship of speakers! After our last forum here on "Inflation and Middle East Oil," cosponsored by the OAS and the YSA, one OAS member suggested we start an intensive study series on Marxism and the Middle East, as a way to bring more Americans to Marxism and to an understanding of the Middle East!

The OAS frequently approaches the YSA to get endorsements for speakers on the Middle East, and consult with us on other groups or individuals willing to endorse the defense of the Arab revolution. Similarly, the OAS can endorse certain aspects of YSA work--for example, the East Lansing OAS endorsed the emergency forum to publicize the events in Boston in October (surrounding the anti-busing drive of the white community) on the single issue of the importance of bringing out the facts on Boston. One of the reasons YSA can work so well with the OAS lies in the nature of OAS.

The difference between the OAS and the Iranian Student Association (ISA) illustrates the different natures of foreign student groups. The ISA has become extremely restrictive in its defense of the Iranian revolution since its last convention, where several students were expelled. The differences centered around the defense of the Shah's political prisoners. The people who were expelled believed that the best way to wage a defense case was to wage it in a way that would win--thus involving liberals, influential writers, etc., to support the case. The Stalinists in the ISA only wanted to defend Iranians who were known Marxists, preferably Stalinists. How a person under extreme torture is expected to get his correct Marxist line out for the ISA to defend him is beyond comprehension; however, the ISA claims that the liberals that some students in ISA were defending had made statements after their release supporting the Shah, and that the ISA should not have defended such "reactionaries."

While, on the surface, the fact that several students were expelled from the ISA may seem a minor point in the overall nature of the ISA, the expulsion was coupled with a motion that broke off "any kind of collaboration" with the YSA or SWP. Members of the East Lansing ISA have told me personally that they disagreed with this motion, but that they must abide by it if they wish to stay in the ISA (they were all prepared to participate with YSA and OAS on the Middle East oil forum until they read the fine print of their last convention proceedings). This motion by the Stalinists in ISA to limit ISA work with the YSA was obviously designed as an attempt to limit the discussion of Trotskyism within the ISA, and, as such, makes it more difficult for us to work with the ISA.

What can be done about the unfortunate position of the ISA? YSA members should talk to ISA members personally and explain the dangers such restrictive actions will have on the ISA itself, especially in the face of SAVAK (Iranian political police) repression--which extends right into this

country. The way to stop that repression is to build the ISA as broad as possible. The Organization of Arab Students should be pointed out as an organizational example for the ISA. Neither the OAS or the ISA in the United States can become revolutionary organizations, although the ISA seems to have some idea that it can. The best service they can do for the Iranian revolution and/or the Arab revolution is the defense of the Iranian revolution or the Arab revolution from imperialism. Through unity on certain demands-- self-determination for Palestine, or freedom from the Shah's repression in Iran--Iranian and Arab students of many different political affiliations can work together to mobilize the most effective ways of defending revolutionary struggles taking place in Iran and the Middle East. If some members of ISA or OAS are convinced of the necessity for a socialist revolution, they may decide to join a revolutionary group; however, it is ridiculous to think that the majority of foreign students studying in the USA are prepared to take that step. The Stalinists in ISA apparently think they are. While this is a noble ambition, we do not feel that thus limiting the scope of ISA in the U. S. -- supposedly waiting for the day when the ISA members will return to Iran--is very effective, in comparison to what the ISA could be doing right here and now through its defense work to make the situation better for revolutionaries in Iran.

This is not to say that ISA is completely moribund: its old traditions of powerful defense of political rights in Iran are still strong. Its magazine, Resistance, is dedicated to the defense effort. YSA members should actively support the various defense cases of the ISA: they are in no way counterposed to the CAIFI (Committee for Artistic and Intellectual Freedom in Iran) defense case. In fact, the defendants CAIFI is placing most emphasis on, Vida Hadjebi Tabrizi and Ali Sharyati, are being defended by the independent efforts of the ISA, as well. In addition, the ISA compiles current information on a great many other political prisoners in the Shah's jails. The only difference between the ISA defense case, and the CAIFI defense case seems to be in the emphasis placed on the liberals. The ISA seems to think that the liberals in the Shah's prisons are the least important; however, the mere fact that they are there on the ISA lists of prisoners-to-defend indicates that the Stalinist leadership of the ISA still has not been able to carry out a typical Stalinist defense case, where you only defend Stalinists. The CAIFI defense case per se is not counterposed to the ISA defense case at all in the eyes of Iranian students in the ISA, much as the Stalinist leadership of ISA would like otherwise.

I have dealt at some length with the Stalinization of the ISA; however, I must emphasize that the ISA is not a Stalinist organization. For Iranian students who are opposed to the Shah, it is still an extremely attractive organization. It carries out important work in defense of the Iranian revolution. The YSA should not cast off the ISA as uselessly

Maoist. We should approach the ISA on the basis of how best the ISA can be built as broad as possible.

Unfortunately, the YSA had no direct control over the process whereby a foreign student group becomes politically restrictive, like ISA, or open, like OAS. We should encourage the ISA and other foreign student groups to follow the example of OAS. OAS itself is eagerly seeking allies in other foreign student groups and can be of help in getting anti-imperialist political positions within other foreign student groups on a given campus.

The YSA must be careful in dealing with these organizations to make it clear that we do not want them to be restrictive. They are most effective and active when they do not limit political discussion to only one point of view. That is why we must reserve our specific revolutionary analysis of the Middle East to our internal relations with OAS. At public forums with OAS, we should limit our comments to the defense of the Arab revolution against Zionism and imperialism. The OAS is critical of the YSA for speaking about the evils of Stalinism at public forums on the Middle East. Furthermore, since many members of the OAS are outright supporters of the countries and regimes who sent them to this country on scholarship (Iraq, Libya, etc.) we must be careful to avoid alienating them by excessive criticism of the Arab regimes at events cosponsored with OAS. As I mentioned earlier, the OAS's effectiveness is largely due to the fact that large numbers of Arabs of differing political views can unite around the task to be done in the U. S. : defense of the Palestinian and Arab revolution. Since the YSA agrees with this, we unite with them on that issue. The specific expression of Trotskyist ideas must be reserved to informal discussions. Actually, since the Arab students have seen that the YSA and SWP are the best defenders of the fight against Israel in the U. S. , it is they who will come and ask us about our politics to find how we reached our position of the Middle East.

OAS locals will often be interested in setting up mutual educational series with the YSA. Students in the OAS are eager to talk with revolutionaries about the latest developments in the various Palestinian resistance organizations. YSA members can learn much from them. At the same time, Arab students are interested in learning the politics of the organization which they see as the most uncompromising anti-Zionist organization in the USA. Many Arab students will be interested in reading For Lenin in Arabic (order from Pathfinder) on the crisis of leadership of the working class in the Middle East, as well as our Education for Socialists Bulletin on Israel and the Arab Revolution.

In the face of attempts to exclude the YSA from working with the ISA, it is important that we step up our efforts in defense of the Iranian political prisoners and the struggles of the national minorities of Kurdistan, Baluchistan, etc.

We must be ready to talk to members of the ISA and have literature available in Persian (order from Pathfinder) for Iranians who have chosen not to join ISA because of its leftist image, but who are nonetheless highly political. More literature in English must be made available, and YSA comrades should learn more about the problems of the Iranian revolution so that we can carry on a fruitful dialogue with Iranian men and women in the ISA against the poison of their Maoist leadership.

Already, I think the CAIFI defense case is making an impression on members of the ISA. They can see how much more effective the CAIFI is, compared to their own Maoist leadership's running of the ISA defense cases. If we make it clear that the YSA is not trying to raid the ISA--as the Maoist leadership falsely claimed it was--but rather to help it defend the Iranian people against repression, we will be seen as allies of the ISA once again.

For an Arab or Iranian student, living in the U. S. can be an extremely radicalizing experience. Organizations like OAS and ISA are involved in serious political debate specifically on the politics of the "homeland," but also--to an increasing extent--on the effect of the U. S. on their countries. While the discussion in the ISA centers almost exclusively around bourgeois nationalism and Stalinism, the debate in OAS encompasses a whole range of ideologies from outright capitalism to revolutionary Marxism. It should not be forgotten that the experience of Arab and Iranian students in the U. S. not only develops radicals (who realize that the only way to break from U. S. domination is through socialist revolution), it also develops skilled public relations with ministers and bourgeois economists like Ahmed Zaki Yamani (Saudi Arabia's oil minister). In working with the OAS and ISA, the YSA, obviously, tries to encourage development of the former, not the latter. This can be done through forums, educational series and informal discussions on many aspects of Marxism which are relevant to the Near Eastern situation: the role of national struggles and colonialism,

the Bolshevik concept of the rights of oppressed national minorities, the role of women in the combined character of the revolution, the role of students, the nature of imperialism in the higher stage of capitalism, etc.

In the coming year, the YSA should be particularly attuned to the increasing radicalization of Arab women in the U. S. The role played by women in the various Palestinian liberation groups has revitalized the movement for women's liberation in the Near East, particularly in the large cities like Cairo, Alexandria, Damascus, Beirut and Tehran. At the last convention of the OAS, this trend was reflected in a special workshop on Arab women's liberation. Arab women in OAS are seeking to involve more women in the political arm of OAS (at the present time, most Arab women on U. S. campuses are wives of students, and only participate in "social" activities of OAS). Comrades in the YSA can encourage their efforts by inviting Arab women to speak at internal YSA educationals and at public forums on the Middle East. Often the wives of Arab and Iranian Students in the U. S. can speak much more frankly about politics. The increased involvement of women in the OAS and ISA will help ward off harmful Stalinist influences on these organizations.

The YSA's "red university" strategy is a particularly good medium through which to relate politically with foreign students, who have frequently participated in student strikes in their own countries, or have friends in Iranian and Arab universities with whom they are in touch. YSA comrades who may not understand in detail the politics of a given foreign country, can easily relate to such student struggles, and explain how important they can develop. Most other American left tendencies are caught up in a workerist fetish, and cannot explain why it is that students are taking the initiative, especially in the semicolonial countries.

December 8, 1974

THE YSA AND YOUTH SUPPORT FOR THE 1976 CAMPAIGN

by Rick Berman, Portland local

The Socialist Workers Party 1976 election campaign will provide a big opportunity for the YSA to expand. As the NEC Draft Political Resolution points out, the continued spread of radical ideas is making larger numbers of young people open to our socialist program.

The major criterion the YSA should use to plan a youth support strategy for the 1976 campaign should be to determine the best way to use the campaign to make the YSA grow in these favorable circumstances. There are two considerations that should be central to our approach.

One is to think big.

The Yankelovich survey just begins to indicate the opportunities we will have on campus. Twice as many college students as non-college youth, for example, characterized themselves as being actively interested and involved in political matters.

While only five percent of college students defined their political views as radical, we should be careful not to misinterpret this. It should be clear that the term "radical" has taken on a new meaning for young people.

When 60 percent of American youth believe that this society is undemocratic, 61 percent of college students feel that the two major parties should be reformed or eliminated, 80 percent of all young people are critical of U. S. foreign policy, 63 percent of college women feel that women face discrimination, and 64 percent think that "Women's place is in the home" is nonsense, it is apparent that many of the ideas that were generally held only by the radicals like those who joined the YSA in the late 1960s, are now the common property of hundreds of thousands of students.

Our audience for the 1976 SWP campaign is much bigger than the "radical five percent." Our political program is more and more in tune with the mood and political aspirations of a majority of the college and high school population.

Our experience with youth work in the 1974 state and local SWP election campaigns, in particular, demonstrated that a fighting, aggressive socialist election campaign can attract young people into their first radical political activity and into the YSA.

YSA and Youth Support Groups

The second consideration is something we have been

grappling with for some time. That is, how do we project the YSA to young people through the vehicle of the SWP election campaigns.

Since the June, 1972, YSA National Committee plenum, we have tried to open up the YSA to make it easier for young people to join.

We have moved from a concept where the YSA had a candidate program in many locals for prospective members through most of the 1960s, to the concept that every young person who is a socialist and wants to contribute some time to building the socialist movement should be in the YSA right now.

In the fall of 1972 we re-established the Young Socialist to make the YSA's views and activities better known and to help establish our identity as an independent youth organization with our own sphere of activity.

We have encouraged the Socialist Workers Party to include YSA leaders in its slate of candidates in local elections.

In short we have been more and more acting like the mass youth organization that we are trying to construct.

In my opinion, the next step in this process should be to shift our emphasis in youth support work from building youth support groups like the Young Socialists for Jenness and Pulley in the 1972 campaign, toward projecting the Young Socialist Alliance as the national youth organization building the SWP campaign.

There are three motivations for this change.

First, it would tremendously boost our ability to get the YSA's name, program and activities out to a very wide audience as we could in no other way. It would further the process of creating an image of the YSA as the mass youth organization that we hope to become.

Second, it would help to focus our campaign work directly on YSA recruitment. In the past, carrying out the full range of YSA activities in the name of a youth support group has often served to dampen an aggressive recruitment attitude in the YSA by tending to push the YSA into the background.

Third, it would help make the YSA seem more accessible to independent campaign supporters. It would help clear up the confusion of having all of these socialist

organizations that are part of one movement-- YSA, SWP, Youth Support Group, Socialist Workers Campaign--by making it absolutely clear that the organization they should be part of is the YSA.

Instead of launching a national youth support formation to build the 1976 campaign, we should designate some YSA national leaders as spokespeople for the youth support effort and use the Young Socialist and special "Join the YSA" materials to publicize the YSA as the organization coordinating campus and youth support.

In local areas where we think that we can involve broader forces outside of our movement in campaign work best through the form of a campaign support group, we should not hesitate to initiate one. This may be particularly useful on campuses where we have no YSAers and where, for one reason or another, campaign supporters don't want to join the YSA.

This approach is consonant both with the expanding radicalization and the direction the YSA has been moving for the past few years. Most important it can help put the focus on building the YSA.

Arguments for Youth Support Group

It seems to me that there are two arguments for continuing to have a national youth support formation.

One is that we would miss the chance to work with independent activists who would feel uncomfortable working directly with the YSA, unless we have a youth support group that has an aura of independence.

I think there are two holes in this argument. One is that it doesn't reflect the relationship of forces in the student movement. The YSA is hardly an isolated, or insignificant organization on many major as well as minor college campuses around the country. Not only do we have a good-sized campus base, but we have won quite a bit of respect through our consistent activity.

The other problem with this argument is that it doesn't reflect our recent experience. Most independent campaign

supporters haven't viewed themselves as YSAers, but as people who work with the YSA and SWP. During the recent fall speaking tours, many of the people who signed up on mailing lists to "Join the YSA" were mainly just indicating an interest in helping out on local election campaigns. They didn't feel uncomfortable about identifying with the YSA.

Besides, anyone who wants to work on an SWP election campaign for even a minimum of an hour or two a week should be in the YSA. In a situation where we know a layer of "independent radicals" or a group of Black or Chicano students, or a campus organization that would be uneasy about close identification with the YSA, we should be flexible and set up a support group. I think these situations will be the exception, not the rule.

The second argument, that the absence of a national youth support formation will make campaign work more difficult on regional campuses where there isn't a group of YSAers, I think may be true. On these campuses where the YSA is not as well established, we may find it necessary to initiate support groups more frequently. A national formation with its own authority and materials would be very effective.

Although this is true, the YSA has enough experience in regional work and a strong enough regional apparatus throughout the country that I think that this problem can be tackled in each region individually and solved in a satisfactory way after we have more experience with it.

More Discussion Needed

If we are going to adopt this approach it will signify a big shift for the YSA. It will be important to have a discussion at the convention or shortly after the convention to see if this orientation makes sense in light of the varied experiences the YSA has had with youth support activities in different parts of the country.

This discussion around how to put the YSA forward during the campaign is more important because neither of the SWP national candidates are YSA members.

December 9, 1974

SOME COMMENTS ON THE YOUNG SOCIALIST AND ITS SIDE-LINE CRITICS

by David Ellis, Indianapolis local

In Vol. XVIII, No. 3 of the Young Socialist Discussion Bulletin, I was pleased to see two contributions on the Young Socialist: one by Comrade Brian Johnson of the Upper West Side local, and one by Comrade Steve Millen of the Bloomington YSA. Both articles contained what I consider to be a number of valid criticisms of our monthly newspaper. Especially welcome were the suggestions by Brian Johnson that the YS needed more articles on concrete manifestations of alienation in capitalist society, and by Millen that the YS needed to "focus in and highlight on issues from a different angle," and thus "provide 'something you can't get in The Militant'."

It is essential for criticisms and suggestions like these to be voiced more often. I feel, however, that some of Comrade Millen's contentions were wide of the mark, and require a response.

He writes, for instance:

"... from the Michigan-Indiana region, ... I have noticed that the locals with exemplary YS sales have had poor recruitment records, while Bloomington, with its abysmal YS sales has had an exemplary recruitment record (11 since the national educational conference) and none of it in any way from sales of the YS. Granted, the other locals have 'exceptional circumstances' but I think it should be pointed out that the YS is only one of several recruitment tools the YSA has and its real record has been mixed."

Implicit in this paragraph is the notion that in the Michigan-Indiana region, "exemplary sales of the YS" have not aided the local in recruitment, as evidenced by the region's statistics. And furthermore, this is true even though some misguided comrades maintain that the paper is an "excellent recruitment tool." In other words, if the YS is such an effective tool, why haven't these locals who sell the paper well, recruited more comrades? Why has Bloomington, "with its abysmal YS sales" had such striking growth? (No thanks to the Young Socialist.)

Let's take a step back, catch our breath, and look at the situation with our eyes wide open. As our point of departure let's start with the Indianapolis local, where, on occasions we have had "exemplary sales of the YS." At the same time, however, our recruitment rate has been relatively slow. But wait, Comrade Millen, before leveling an accusing finger at the YS, consider the entire process

of recruitment and integration; an intricate process to be sure.

It is not enough to stick a YS into a contact's hand, then sit back and wait for his or her maturation into a skilled leader of the Trotskyist movement. If a local has had a slow rate of recruitment it can be the result of any number of factors, not the least of which is inadequate propaganda dissemination, i.e., sales of the press, literature, etc. It can also be the result of "exceptional circumstances" such as an absence of a "movement" tradition in a particular city or area; a shortage of active comrades; inexperience in political organization; or a whole series of external conditions which comrades have no control over. Usually, it is a combination of one or more of these factors along with inadequate follow-up work on initial contacts. Such is the case in Indianapolis.

We have not always in the past, placed the proper emphasis on recruitment to the YSA, often subordinating this key task to a sort of mad frenzy to outsell the next local. While sales of the press play an invaluable role in reaching out to radicalizing layers and thus broadening our periphery, total emphasis on sales at the expense of one-to-one (single-jack) contact with individuals, is unquestionably detrimental to a local's growth. Consequently, in Indianapolis as just one example, recruitment has been slow in spite of high YS sales, not because of it.

In Bloomington, the fact that recruitment has been "exemplary" is largely the result of an extremely well-developed educational apparatus; well-attended and regularized forums and classes; well-planned recruitment work by a large percentage of the local and coordinated by the executive committee; relatively good sales of The Militant; and a large milieu of radical students on a campus with a long movement tradition.

Yet, there is little question in my mind that were the Bloomington local, (or any other local for that matter) to increase their YS sales in a coordinated fashion with sales of The Militant and literature, the periphery would be enlarged, particularly at high schools, and a new layer of budding young militants would be attracted to the politics of the YSA.

No one has ever claimed, to my knowledge, that without "exemplary sales of the YS," a local could not recruit, but rather as Comrade Millen himself states:

"... the YS is only one of several recruitment tools

the YSA has and its real record has been mixed."

The Young Socialist can hardly be expected to fulfill its function as a recruitment tool without the concomitant tools at our disposal, such as classes, forums, discussions, and of course, actions. Not even sales of The Militant, International Socialist Review or Intercontinental Press are alone sufficient in this regard. Nor can the YS be an effective weapon in our propaganda arsenal if it is discretely shelved under The Militant bundle as is so often the case in many locals.

It is true that the YS can be redundant, and of lower overall quality than The Militant. It is also true that there

is a pronounced tendency to make a pastime out of denigrating the YS. At the risk of sounding trite, I would like to propose that comrades take the time to write well-thought-out, in-depth articles, for the YS rather than always writing frantically to meet The Militant deadlines. This is an offense of which, I am convinced, most of us are guilty. This is one course fundamental to adding a steady flow of fresh ideas to our monthly organ.

Again, it is indeed a welcome sight to see an increased interest in making the YS an even more valuable tool than it already is. And Comrade Millen, despite his logistical shortcomings, is to be commended for bringing us one step closer to that goal.

December 10, 1974

DEFENDING SOVIET DISSIDENTS

by Mike Taber, Chicago local

The defense of the victims of Stalinist repression inside the Soviet Union and the other bureaucratically-deformed workers states has always been a task of central importance to the revolutionary socialist movement. From the time of the Moscow Trials and the defense of Leon Trotsky through the Czechoslovak events of 1968 and up to the present, we have pointed to the need for revolutionaries all over the world to solidarize with the fight for socialist democracy. We view this struggle as an integral part of the world socialist revolution.

In the recent past, there has been a revival in the organized dissident movement inside the Soviet Union. While surfacing in many ways, it has been best manifested by the rise of underground samizdat publications which seek to reveal the truth about conditions inside the Soviet Union: the oppression of national minorities, the economic conditions facing the working class and the political persecution of dissident intellectuals. The influence of these publications has far exceeded their relatively small circulations, which are largely confined to small intellectual circles. In response to them, the Kremlin has gone on a campaign to step up and intensify its repression. Many dissidents are sitting in jails or mental asylums, while others are living in exile. The Kremlin recognizes that the dissent among the intellectuals reflects, to one degree or another, the real discontent among the broader sections of the Soviet population and is, therefore, seeking to quarantine the dissidents,

The defense of Soviet political prisoners is one of the most important contributions we can make to the fight for socialist democracy and the movement to get rid of the Stalinist bureaucrats. Already international defense campaigns have been launched around the cases of several prisoners. At the present time, these efforts are being focused around Valentyn Moroz, a Ukrainian dissident, near death from a hunger strike in protest of the inhumane conditions he faces in jail. Several other individuals such as Vladimir Bukovsky and Leonid Plyusch are also the targets of international campaigns. The successful campaign to free Pyotr Grigorenko serves as an example of the power and potential of such an international defense campaign and points to the vulnerability of the Stalinist leaders in the face of massive international protest.

Defense Activities in Chicago

A public defense campaign on behalf of Soviet political prisoners has been functioning in Chicago for several months. It is centered around the Committee for the Defense of Human Rights in the Soviet Union, a Ukrainian-American

organization which is attempting to get out information on the conditions inside the Soviet Union and the Ukraine, as well as to organize support for political prisoners there. Its members are predominantly young people with radical views, and some have been active in other movements for social change. They have a bookstore which serves as their center and carries many publications relating to the Soviet Union and the dissident movement. Several Pathfinder titles are also included in the selection.

Last spring, the Committee, in collaboration with the YSA and Socialist Workers Party, organized the first major public action: a rally at the University of Illinois campus in support of Pyotr Grigorenko. Attended by about 60 people, it was addressed by speakers from the Committee and the YSA. Since that time, a number of other activities have been carried out through a Coalition to Defend Soviet Political Prisoners, in which the Committee and the YSA have played active roles. A rally was held June 1 in support of Moroz and Vyacheslav Chornovil, another Ukrainian dissident. In addition, Karel Kovanda, a former Czech student leader spoke about Czechoslovak dissidents to a meeting of 75, cosponsored by the Committee and the Militant Forum. This fall, a tour of Phil Berrigan was organized to publicize the case of Moroz. He spoke to several campus meetings, a city-wide forum, and several radio shows. In total, over 350 people attended one or another of the meetings.

The amount of press and other publicity these activities have received has been steadily increasing. The Berrigan tour was covered in several daily newspapers as well as campus and community papers. One of the key elements in this has been the success in getting prominent endorsers of the campaign. These have included media figures, professors, civil libertarians and various organizations, and have helped to give the campaign a broader dimension. One very interesting and important aspect of this effort has been the ability to corner and isolate the Community Party and Young Workers Liberation League by getting some of their more prominent periphery to endorse the campaign. Several PCPJ-type figures endorsed, including a staff member of the Chicago Peace Council, an organization that the CP and YWLL have been very active in. They were especially embarrassed by the Berrigan tour and the amount of support it amassed, to the point that when members of the Committee would leaflet activities that the CP and YWLL participated in, some of their leaders would become literally incoherent--shouting insults and attempting to scatter the literature all over the ground.

One of the most important reasons for these successes has been the broad-based united front character of the coalition. It has been able to draw in independent forces while avoiding any confusion with right-wing anti-communist forces whose only goal is to back up imperialism and roll back the gains of the workers states. While not everyone in the Committee accepts our analysis of the Soviet Union, they clearly recognize that their activities and the activities of the right-wing are incompatible.

Opponents

The organizations and currents on the left have taken different approaches to the campaign. While the Stalinists of the CP and YWLL are obviously opposed to it, the Maoist Stalinists of all shades have completely abstained. Their confusion is understandable, for although they believe the Soviet Union is "social-imperialist" and capitalist and should, therefore, logically support an oppositionist movement, they also recognize the anti-Stalinist nature of the dissident movement, which, of course, they are afraid of. They have resolved this contradiction in typical Maoist fashion by taking no public stand in relation to any of the Coalition's efforts.

The different sectarian grouplets--Revolutionary Socialist League, Spartacists, Workers League, etc.--generally have not participated in building the campaign. True to form, they reject the very conception of a broad-based defense. They do, however, attend all the events hoping to "intervene" in them--that is, to attack the YSA and the Defense Committee.

One other important current has been the social democrats. Both the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee

and the Socialist Party have participated to one degree or another in the campaign. This current's ties to the trade union bureaucracy, as well as its opposition to the Russian revolution in general give it importance, and we will probably want to keep an eye on them as time goes on.

Role of the YSA

The YSA can play a central role in this campaign. We will want to build it on the campuses where the interest is greatest, and to project united front activities wherever possible. While helping to publicize the campaign and build activities, we can also explain our ideas on Stalinism, socialist democracy and the political revolution. The role of our propaganda, especially The Militant, Young Socialist and Pathfinder are indispensable not only as a source for accurate information, but also as a way to provide answers for the thousands of young people wanting to find out about the Soviet Union and what happened there. More and more of these people will be attracted to our analysis of the Soviet Union and our program for socialist democracy, and will see that the YSA is the organization they should join.

While having groups such as the Chicago Committee obviously is an advantage in organizing defense activities, forums, teach-ins and other such activities can be organized in other areas, and often these things bring us into contact with fresh forces that we can work with. While not yet a "mass" issue in the sense of involving thousands of people, Soviet dissident defense work can bring valuable results and can be instrumental in organizing support for the Soviet oppositionists, thereby aiding the fight for socialist democracy.

December 10, 1974

THE LESSONS OF OUR WOUNDED KNEE DEFENSE WORK

by John Linder and Jeanne Stevens, Twin Cities local

The YSA's role in supporting the Wounded Knee defendants is an impressive and educational chapter of our work in 1974. This contribution will outline the evolution of the defense case and the YSA's role in supporting it, drawing the lessons that we learned in the process. As comrades read this, you will notice a developing understanding on the part of the YSA members participating in Wounded Knee defense activities. We began our support activities knowing much less than when we finished, and we hope to outline our own educational process, so that YSAers can use these lessons in participating in other defense struggles.

Very little support activity took place from the beginning of the Wounded Knee liberation in February, 1973, through September of that year. In the Twin Cities, the home of the American Indian Movement (AIM) and a center of the Indian struggle, AIM built several small and unpublicized picket lines. The Twin Cities YSA was out of touch with Wounded Knee during the "occupation" and, finding AIM unwilling or unable to build a major defense action, we didn't take the initiative ourselves. The YSA was able, however, to organize a highly successful tour for Clyde Bellecourt at the end of "Wounded Knee 1973."

No visible defense activity occurred until October, 1973, when a symposium on Wounded Knee at the University of Minnesota drew 4,000 people. The symposium, largely built and arranged by the CP, and supported by AIM, was built on extremely short notice, keeping all other groups from participating.

Speakers at the symposium included Russell Means, Clyde Bellecourt, Angela Davis, Mark Lane and others. The focus of the symposium was the upcoming trial of over 200 Wounded Knee participants. Several speakers, primarily Clyde Bellecourt, called for a national educational campaign on Wounded Knee. Bellecourt emphasized the role that the National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression (NAARPR) would play in this. Angela Davis, speaking as the head of NAARPR, called for a mass action oriented defense campaign to win the upcoming St. Paul trials of Dennis Banks and Russell Means.

The symposium began a discussion within the YSA and SWP on our possible participation in the defense. Five factors made these trials important, in our estimation:

1. The scope of the trials. An entire layer of Indian activists were facing heavy charges, posing a tremendous challenge to all Indians and supporters of civil liberties.

2. The charges involved. American Indians were on trial for exercising their right to self-determination.

3. The political conjuncture. In the midst of the post-Watergate furor, important openings existed to explain the real role of the U. S. government, and to show political activists how to defend themselves.

4. Potential mass support. 51 percent of the American people supported the Wounded Knee liberation. The size of the symposium showed that this support continued.

5. The immediate opportunities for the YSA. This defense case represented a big chance to make contact with the Indian movement, and to build the YSA.

While all these factors suggested major participation, several other factors were unclear or negative. First, we were unsure of the relationship of forces doing defense support work, and what attitude the CP and AIM actually had towards building a broad-based defense committee and campaign, and carrying out a serious legal defense. The YSA also had extremely limited forces to participate in the defense, and we were unsure of what real work other groups and individuals would put into the defense.

The next three months (through December, 1973) were a formative stage, both for the defense effort and for our support to it. Several weeks after the symposium the founding conference of the Minnesota Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression (MAARPR) was held, at which a workshop, chaired by Vernon Bellecourt, established an independent Wounded Knee Defense Committee. This committee held meetings of between 20 and 45 through November, in which the YSA participated. The Wounded Knee Legal Defense/Offense Committee (WKLDOC) as it came to be called, was totally disorganized; no political organization took responsibility, and little was accomplished.

In December, an office was set up in St. Paul and the Defense Committee became somewhat organized. A number of semi-religious pacifist types appeared from various parts of the country to help out. We assigned two leading comrades to work in the office nearly full-time. AIM had several leading members in and around the office, but did little in giving the office political or organizational direction.

In fact, no organization, including the CP, the

pacifists, and AIM gave any political direction whatsoever to the defense, which left the committee floundering. We projected a January 7 rally-teach-in, timed to coincide with the opening of the trials. The proposal split everybody: the YWLLers couldn't make up their minds, and the pacifists were for putting it off. Finally, the AIM leadership agreed to the action. January 7 drew 2,000 people and raised over \$1,000. It showed us three things:

1. The CP and YWLL, despite their talk about the need for demonstrations, dragged their feet and in fact played an obstructive role when it came to planning and building the actions.

2. The size of the January 7 action, which was primarily built by the YSA and SWP, signified continued mass support.

3. The AIM leadership was open to political suggestions from our movement.

Following the January 7 action, the Defense Committee expanded. The opening of the trials attracted national and international press. A Native American Speakers Bureau was set up to raise funds from touring the defendants and lawyers and many large speaking engagements were held. A large number of independents and AIM members began helping in the Defense Committee office and on campus.

Based on the January 7 success, we proposed a demonstration at the U. of M. on February 27, the anniversary of the liberation of Wounded Knee. For the first time, we held a formal meeting with the defendants and won their full support for the proposal. But again, the Defense Committee office staff dragged its feet and showed an unwillingness to significantly build the action. Consequently, the YSA made a shift of our forces. Unable to direct the Defense Committee as a whole towards mass action, we realized that we would have to shift the center of our support activity from the WKLD/OC office to where our strength lay--the U. of M. campus, where we had a campus fraction of 20 and a growing group of defense activists, and where the two major defense actions had taken place.

February 27 was a tremendous success. Over 1,500 extremely spirited people demonstrated in the first clear-cut support action, and this was recognized by the defendants and other activists as a major step forward. Throughout the day, educational activities took place and over 100 suburban junior high school students walked out of school to attend the demonstration at the U. of M.

Following February 27, the YSA re-evaluated the relationship of support forces in the Defense Committee. By that time, three forces had clearly emerged: AIM, the CP

and YWLL, and the YSA and SWP.

The defendants, i. e., AIM, had no clear-cut defense strategy at all. At the same time, AIM saw the necessity of a broad defense effort and an independent defense committee, and was open to any suggestion for action.

The CP lacked a clear defense strategy. Their activity consisted of mass action in words and handling organizational details in practice, i. e., leaning on the courtroom and invisible "public pressure."

As a result, a political vacuum existed, which allowed our movement to play an important role in defense activities. In fact, our role in this defense case was greater than any defense case of such stature in many decades. In most past situations, the defendants and/or a particular political group (usually the CP) have stamped the character of the defense, sometimes excluding us, always excluding our proposals.

In this case, by taking our proposals directly to the defendants, and by using our campus base to initiate activity, we established the U. of M. as the acknowledged center of mass action and ourselves as the accepted organizers of all mass activity. In addition to the major actions we helped organize, the YSA built six courthouse picket lines of at least 100, the only pickets built during the trials.

Given this favorable and unique situation, we considered the possibility of proposing to the defendants that a national action be held in the Twin Cities, which would have meant a significant expansion of our participation in the defense efforts.

However, at the same time, a number of negative factors were emerging.

First, the Defense Committee began to stagnate. The office continued to be disorganized; contact work and fund-raising were hardly done at all. The lack of a focus, i. e. mass action, kept the office de-centralized. Most importantly, the Stalinists effectively prevented the Defense Committee from having any open meetings after mid-January, playing on the hostility of AIM members to the do-nothing New Leftish meetings that the Stalinists and pacifists were responsible for. This ended the possibility of democratically deciding to carry out a unified effort to build a particular action. In addition, the whole sad picture eventually led most activists to drop away from the office, leaving a staff and little more.

The second negative factor was the legal strategy employed by both the legal team and the defendants. This factor was less important when the trials began: the wave of support sparked by the opening of the trials overshadowed

what actually happened in the courtroom; the prosecution's bungling put the government on the defensive immediately, and the courtroom strategy of the defense was better.

But as the trials moved on, we recognized the growing importance of what happened in court, which through the media became the public's only day-to-day contact with the case. Two highly publicized actions of Banks and Means seriously confused the public.

The first incident occurred in March following a motion by the defense attorneys to drop the charges, when the defendants publicly stated that they did not want the charges dropped, rather, they wanted the trials to continue in order to have the issue of treaty rights decided on in court.

The YSA and SWP saw this as a serious mistake. We sometimes make use of the bourgeois courts to win victories for the working class and we use every political frame-up trial to defend our ideas and our rights from inside and outside the courtroom. The Wounded Knee trials were and are a major attack on the civil liberties of the Indian people. The job of AIM and its supporters was to: 1. Win freedom for the activists on trial. 2. In the process, use the trials to establish in the public's mind, and if possible legally, the civil and treaty rights of American Indians. A dismissal would have meant freedom and a clear statement that the government, not AIM, was guilty at Wounded Knee. Calling for dropping the charges was the logical demand given AIM's recognition that the trials were an attempt to destroy AIM, that the wrong people were on trial, etc. Calling for a continuation of the trials contradicted this recognition, implying that the trials were a victory for, rather than an attack on Indians. Eventually, Banks and Means reversed their position, but only after doing considerable harm.

The second such incident occurred shortly after this, when Banks and Means fired their lawyers in a legal stunt designed to win them the right to self-representation in the courtroom. Despite the possible legal validity of this action, it caused significant confusion.

A third negative factor in the evolution of the defense was the CP's decision to push the Minnesota Alliance. Previously, the Alliance has a low profile. Some Alliance members were responsible for putting out the Defense Committee's trial newsletter and the Alliance published a brochure on Wounded Knee which we have never seen distributed, but otherwise the Alliance had done little as an organization. In April, Charlene Mitchell, the head of NAARPR came to town and explained to the local Alliance members (all YWLLers and CPers except for two independent chairpeople) the need to build mass actions. Rumors began circulating that the next round of defense activity would be built in the name of the Minnesota Alliance. Eventually,

the Alliance called a May 11 rally, refusing to let the YSA and SWP endorse it because we did not belong to the Alliance. Rather than building May 11 as a Wounded Knee defense action, it was built around the slogan "We have the solution--the solution is unity," and made no special feature of the Wounded Knee defense. Due to this political mistake and organizational narrowness, May 11 flopped, drawing only 200 people despite an impressive list of speakers. Under the slogan "the solution is unity" this sectarian action served to divide the defense activists in the city, making a large-scale national mobilization impossible, when combined with the factors already mentioned.

So, because of certain negative factors we decided that projecting a large-scale local or national action just wasn't realistic. We decided to continue our work on the campus and with the agreement of the defendants, built a large outdoor rally at the U. of M. on May 22nd. The action was successful, drawing about 1,000 people to hear the defendants, lawyers and Jane Van Deusen, SWP gubernatorial candidate. We evaluated that support for the Wounded Knee defendants wasn't growing. People weren't withdrawing their support, but new people weren't being drawn into activity. We saw mainly two reasons for this. One was the fault of the CP and YWLL for consciously preventing the defense from becoming as broad and massive as possible. The second was the fault of AIM, particularly its leaders. Neither Banks nor Means understood the necessity of building visible support on their behalf, or the role they could play in doing that. In the many speeches, throughout the U. S. they rarely encouraged defense activities. And locally, they never built an action in conjunction with news conferences, speaking engagements, etc. Occasionally we were able to change this through news statements, but on the whole it was a major problem. And, although AIM exists as a national organization, it did not take up Wounded Knee defense work as a campaign.

After the May 22 action we looked the situation over. The city-wide defense committee was almost non-existent. Only the skeleton of an office staff remained, as a result of the CP's strategy. After the 22nd, school at the "U" was nearing an end, and we slowed down our activities. Over the summer, however, on our initiative two more actions were organized. One was a picket of 150 at then-- Vice-President Ford's appearance in town. And on the closing day of the trial, as the case went to the jury, we built a large picket outside the courthouse, demanding the charges be dropped. Again, our initiative was responsible for the continued action-support for the defendants.

Through our participation in this defense effort we learned a number of things which should be helpful to comrades with similar opportunities. Because no group on the left in this country has hegemony, we can expect openings like this to appear around other defense cases in other

areas. The most important thing to stress from the outset is the need for a broad, united front defense. The more clear-cut the defense approach, the easier it will be to mobilize support and win victories. Our basic strategy is to unite all forces around the defense of certain people, on a concrete issue. We will encounter the Stalinists and ultra-lefts and we'll find ourselves in similar discussions as when we fought to keep the antiwar movement single issue. But, we should be able to deal a blow to our opponents and their strategies of reformism and ultraleftism.

One problem we did encounter in these trials were certain limitations that the YSA had no control over. As mentioned before we had no influence on what happened with the legal side of the defense, and that's why many mistakes were made. Because a cohesive strategy was never put forward or discussed out many contradictory things occurred. There was the U. of M. where there was a clear mass strategy and many successes and then there was the city-wide office which folded. We often discussed putting some comrades into the city-wide office, but because of our small size, we simply weren't able to.

Through this defense we got a taste of what the CP and YWLL's defense strategies are all about. I think in other situations we can expect them to act in a like manner. In the beginning stages of the defense, we kept expecting the CP to let the cat out of the bag--to counterpose a multi-issue defense committee or the Alliance to the Defense Committee; to put forward an alternative strategy to our mass action, united front approach. As time went on, and the CP just drifted along with no internal cohesion and no real direction, we were more and more perplexed. After thinking about it, the CP's seeming lack of a defense strategy becomes clear. The YSA, as a revolutionary organization determines our strategy in a defense case on the basis of how to win, realizing that every court victory is a victory for the class struggle. Because the CP is a reformist organization it determines its strategy from its long term goal of peaceful coexistence. This doesn't mean the CP wouldn't like to win the case. But it does mean that the CP is willing to sabotage the building of mass defense efforts, despite the risk of a loss. This is particularly true in light of the detente; the CP's reason for existence for the last 45 years has been the detente and it certainly doesn't want to rock the boat now.

As far as the CP's NAARPR, we saw it as an almost inept organization. Although they wanted to use the Alliance to suck people into their movement, they had no successes we could see. We see this Alliance as the CP's new front group, differing from the NCAWRR and PCPJ only in that it totally ignores international politics, which in the era of detente makes perfect sense. This group is exactly what we saw in the People's Coalition for Peace and Justice, a multi-issue organization which stands in the way of

effective mass mobilizations and unified struggle. The Alliance also has inherent contradictions. One of these contradictions lies in reality. At this time there is not the objective basis for a group like the Alliance. Although coalitions around defense to certain political prisoners, or certain instances of repression can be very successful, there aren't the forces to build an umbrella coalition that could encompass all cases, similar to Cannon's United Labor Defense. This has already been shown; although the Alliance promises to give everyone support, it can't possibly do it. A scathing letter from Gary Lawton, published recently in the VVAW--Winter Soldier paper, accused the Alliance of making promises to help and not coming through on them. And there are other instances too. Perhaps the most striking contradiction about the Alliance is that while it claims to be a defense organization it is not. It is simply the most current CP multi-issue front group. At the founding conference of the Alliance one and one half years ago, Wounded Knee defense work was made its number one priority. We can point to the Alliance's miserable record in defaulting on its responsibility to organize mass support locally and nationally, in explaining our attitude towards this organization. Also, from all appearances, the Alliance hasn't been growing. Its second convention, projected to draw 2,000, was attended by 300.

During the course of the defense we used The Militant newspaper and the Twin Cities Militant Forum as effective tools. We used them as public vehicles to get out information on the trials. The Militant consistently gave supportive, better and more coverage than the local papers. Nationally, The Militant, Young Socialist and Akwasne Notes were the only papers to cover the trials consistently. In Minneapolis we gave it widespread circulation as a way to build the defense and support actions. We also gave the defendants and defense lawyers complimentary subscriptions. We found them using Militant articles, as well as referring to The Militant by name in their speeches. Needless to say, it helped sales in general and opened up new opportunities in the Indian community for sales.

Through our participation in the Wounded Knee defense we gained a number of things. One, we played an invaluable defense role, and consequently won the respect of some left forces and AIM. We have established an excellent relationship with AIM and during the SWP disclosure fight Dennis Banks came to a hearing in support of our right to an exemption. AIM also released statements of support. Two, we educated a whole layer of activists on how a defense case should be carried out. And three, we recruited five people to the YSA and learned from experience how to think out correct tactics from day-to-day.

Lastly, I want to bring comrades up-to-date on where things stand as far as the Wounded Knee and Custer cases. Although the charges have been dropped against Banks and

Means, the government is indicating that it plans to appeal that decision. Nothing concrete has been done yet, but the government has issued statements to that effect. The cases of Banks and Means are central. They are leaders of the Indian movement in this country and are important to that movement. Also contingent on the results of their cases, are those of over 100 other native people on trial in Lincoln, Nebraska stemming from their participation at Wounded Knee. Although 35 people have been acquitted or had charges dropped against them, over 100 still face trial in Lincoln. Three people, Sarah-Bad Heart Bull, Bob High Eagle, and Kenneth Dahl, have been convicted on charges stemming from arrests at a demonstration held in Custer S. D. (Native Americans were protesting the whitewash of local authorities in refusing to investigate the murder of Sarah's son, Wesley

Bad Heart Bull, by a white man.) These trials have been tied closely to the Wounded Knee trials by AIM and a small Sarah Bad Heart Bull defense committee has been set up to build support for these Indian activists.

Our role right now is uncertain. Because of a lack of public knowledge about the Custer and Lincoln cases (thanks to the bourgeois press) it is difficult to build support activity around them. The Militant should be able to play an important role in getting the information out. We want to continue looking for openings and being aggressive about initiating activities whenever and wherever we can. A total victory in this fight is the only thing that can guarantee a future for the Indian struggle.

December 11, 1974

YSA REGIONAL CONFERENCES AS A TOOL TO DEVELOP REGIONAL LOCALS

by Patrice Gajewski and Denis Hoppe, East Lansing local

There are many comrades in the YSA who belong to the many regional locals across the U. S. Regional locals have special problems that are unique to only those locals just because they are regional. YSA regional locals have many problems, but by far the most obvious and the hardest to resolve is the inexperience of these comrades.

As members of a regional local we are particularly sensitive to the YSA's position on regional work. We think the YSA should work hard at helping all comrades whether regional or center develop politically. The faster comrades develop the easier it will be for these comrades to contribute politically to the YSA and thereby making the YSA stronger.

One of the problems which confronts regional comrades is that they lack frequent contact with experienced comrades, a problem which center comrades never have to deal with. Also every regional comrade is isolated and knows virtually nothing about what other regional locals are doing.

The purpose of this document is to offer one suggestion which we think would help facilitate the independent development of comrades in regional locals. At the same time this document's suggestions are particularly directed toward Detroit, because that is East Lansing's regional center local, but we also think it could apply to other regional centers as well.

The suggestion we would like to make is that Detroit sponsor regional educational conferences. Right now Detroit has educational conferences every fall and spring. The main purpose of these conferences, however, is to recruit to the YSA. Detroit encourages regional comrades to come to the conference and bring contacts along. Even though these conferences are the only times when comrades from the whole Michigan-Indiana region are together in the same city for a weekend, there is no emphasis on regional work. There is sometimes a regional meeting scheduled at these conferences, but it is merely squeezed in between the main public forums.

We do not think these educational conferences are wrong or should be stopped. They are excellent recruitment meetings and that is their function. What we do think Detroit should have in addition to the educational conferences, are regional educational conferences. The difference between the two would be that the former would continue to act as a recruiting vehicle for the YSA, while the latter would focus specifically on regional work. The educational conference would be open to the public, while the regional educational conference would be open to only

comrades and invited guests.

The structure of such regional conferences could be patterned after the national educational conferences, with a class series and workshops. The workshops that would be set up would deal with some of the problems that regional comrades have. For example there could be workshops on selling the press, finances, recruitment, opponent organizations, press work, PRDF strategy, etc. These would all be extremely useful to comrades in the region.

These workshops could be run by a comrade who has special knowledge on a particular area. After a presentation by a comrade, the workshop could be opened up for discussion, which would allow all the comrades present to exchange ideas and explain how they've handled a certain area. This would give all the comrades a chance to get a few new ideas and motivate them to step up work in different assignments.

The proposed "mini-national educational conference" class series would be designed to educate regional comrades in revolutionary Marxism. They would serve as a continuing education for regional comrades, who do not have the chance to participate in weekly forums and educationals at an SWP branch, such as Detroit. There could be classes in Marxist economics, inflation, how to organize unions, the history of socialist defense cases, the history of the YSA, the history of the national and international student movement, Maoist currents, etc. These classes represent the general stock of knowledge of YSA members living in center locals, because they are exposed to experienced party members on a day-to-day basis. The regional conference class series would give regional comrades a chance to learn this very basic information, which is not available in the stock of upper Michigan and lower Indiana.

In addition to the workshops and classes there could be a regional meeting in which a Tasks and Perspectives Report for the region could be given. This would establish a cohesiveness among regional locals, something which we don't think exists now.

One of the best things about regional conferences is that they wouldn't cost Detroit anything, because all the workshops and classes could be given by comrades in Detroit and comrades from the region. There would be no need to have speakers brought in from outside the region, because this region has many capable comrades who could do the job.

The exact structure of the regional educational conference should be decided by Detroit and the regional locals. Regional locals must be consulted, because they are the ones that know better than anyone else what they need help in.

The YSA spends a great deal of time integrating new comrades into our organization. Fundamental classes are always necessary for new comrades, but fundamental classes aren't enough. Comrades need to know how to organize areas of work, and develop their own locals into centers of revolutionary leadership. The regional educational conference, as we propose it, will be a tool to develop regional comrades and thereby build each regional local, and enhance recruitment.

We think the YSA is composed of hundreds of very experienced comrades, who should be sharing their knowledge with the rest of us, especially with regional comrades. The regional educational conference could be a beginning in the long process of teaching regional comrades how to best build the YSA. In the YSA we have to teach each other, because no one else is going to do it.

December 11, 1974

THE WEAKNESSES OF THE DRAFT POLITICAL RESOLUTION ON GAY LIBERATION

by Don Fortenbery, Atlanta local

The Draft Political Resolution is an excellent guide for our political activities in the coming year. In particular, the "Development of the Current Radicalization" is very well-written and contains valuable analyses of the current positions of the different segments of the working class. The authors cover every aspect of the radicalization in some detail. Black liberation, women's liberation, Chicano liberation, the Indian movement, the Puerto Rican movement and the problems of young workers are given full discussion. However, one struggle that is very important to many people in this country and others is virtually ignored. That movement is gay liberation.

Even the difference in the size of the resolution's subsections reveal the relative importance the writers attach to each struggle. For example, Black liberation covers two and one half pages and 34 paragraphs, the women's movement one and one half pages and 17 paragraphs, the Chicano movement two pages and 25 paragraphs, and gay liberation one fourth of a page and three paragraphs. Even more revealing of the lack of importance given to gay liberation as a movement and as an issue within the YSA is what is said and not said in the different subsections in the resolution.

The subsection on Black liberation covers a major, if not the most important, struggle within the working class movement. It goes into considerable detail and carefully reviews the many facets of the Black struggle. It reviews the current situation in Boston and our work there, analyses the social and political weaknesses of the traditional Black leadership and offers a socialist strategy for Black liberation.

The subsection on Chicano liberation is also extensive in the range of its discussions. It reviews the roots and consequences of the oppression of the Chicano people, takes stock of the political efforts of Chicanos, like the Raza Unida Party, and focuses attention on the plights of the undocumented workers and the farmworkers in general. In each aspect a socialist perspective is presented as a solution to their problem.

The subsection on women deals with topics similar to those discussed in previous subsections. It reviews the progress of CLUW, the campaign for the ERA and the other political activities of women in America. It offers goals and perspectives for the women's movement and relates their struggle to the general struggle for working-class liberation.

Then we come to the minisection on gay liberation.

It points out that Detroit and Minneapolis have passed gay rights bills, but it mentions nothing about the campaign for these bills, the organizations involved, the YSA's role in these campaigns or any Marxist analysis of the victories. It does not explain that such reformist paper victories mean nothing in the long run unless they are the starting point for larger struggles on the state and national levels. Even then mere paper protection of legal rights is not an adequate weapon in the fight of gay workers for liberation from double and triple oppression. It does not tie in these issues with the larger issues of women's liberation and socialism. Nor does it state that it is the duty of all socialists to support actively the demands for democratic rights by all segments of the working class unconditionally. It has been said many times that the coming American revolution will have a combined democratic and socialist character. But when we get to gay liberation, we seem to forget that.

The minisection also mentions that Elaine Noble was the first avowed gay woman to be elected to state office. But I ask you: Is this the YSA's answer to gay oppression? How can the presence of one gay person undermine the long centuries of ingrained sexual prejudices, Victorian prudery and bigotry and the relentless physical terror that gay men are subjected to by hooligans and police? How can this person overcome all the social ostracism and psychological mutilation that gays have endured throughout history?

And we are told, the New York gay rights bill, Intro 554, went down to defeat because of the opposition of the Catholic hierarchy and the Uniformed Firemen's Association. Again we must ask: What role did the YSA play in this campaign? Did we actively intervene on the basis of a principled united front with the gay groups involved to build mass actions around this important issue? If we did, then why didn't our press aggressively report these actions? For that matter, why didn't we become involved in the recent mass actions in Los Angeles around police harassment in the parks?

We were given no information in the resolution about the number of people who took part in these actions, the groups they represented, their goals or slogans, any idea of their impact on the gay movement in this country or others, or their relationship with the working-class movement. We are not given any background information on the development of the current gay radicalization. Indeed, if I were to listen to my comrades, I wouldn't even be aware of a gay radicalization, because they have consistently denied its existence. Yet, the scanty information in the resolution easily disproves that notion. We are not given any appraisal

of the weaknesses of the current gay leadership. We do not take notice that many politically conscious gays are afraid to become activists because open political activity would cost them their jobs, their apartments or home, their credit status and even familial support. Nor do we take notice of the harmful role that so-called gay churches play in undermining gay militancy or the corrupting influence of gay mysticism in the shaping of political ideas in the gay community. Most importantly, we have not tried to evolve a Marxist analysis of gay liberation or of the roots and consequences of gay oppression within our capitalist society.

All we have is a bland statement that any good liberal could make. "We oppose all forms of discrimination and oppression facing homosexuals." We have not even evolved to the point that we recognize "homosexual" as a straight-defined role that is just as offensive to us as "Negro" is to Blacks and "lady" is to women. Compare our meaningless liberalism with the following statement from the platform of the People's Party: "We demand the immediate repeal of all anti-homophile laws and an end to the state of police terror that hangs over the heads of the gay community." Now, when a hodgepodge of petite-bourgeois radicals, liberals, laissez-faire capitalists, anarchists and right social democrats can produce a better principled statement on gay liberation than revolutionary Marxists can, then something is wrong.

Ever since I joined the YSA, I have been told that the YSA supported gay liberation, but we could do nothing right now because the gay movement is inactive. But we can learn from these little tidbits of information (none of which appeared in our press all year), that it is obvious the gay movement is not inactive. It has simply not been worthy of our attention. Maybe if gays erected barricades in Times Square, then the YSA would pay us more attention. The problem is, we feel obligated to support the political objectives of the gay movement to be ideologically consistent, but we still find publicly supporting gays to be embarrassing and compromising. No wonder so many gay comrades won't come out of their closets. No wonder so many gays turn to reformism or become nonpolitical.

Some comrades may seek to refute my arguments by saying, in effect, that we can't create social movements out of thin air. No one said we should or could, but we can prepare our press and literature with a principled stand on this issue based on a complete understanding of the nature and roots of gay oppression. In other words, we can and must take the initiative if we are to be prepared for any new movement from the gay community.

This "taking the initiative" is well supported elsewhere in the resolution. We see it in the subsection on Black liberation, the subsection on women's liberation ("the Georgians for the ERA," a group the YSA and SWP helped to

initiate), and "initiating campus protests." Now if we can take the initiative on these issues, we can take it on gay liberation more often than we have in the past. Indeed, we must support the democratic demands of all segments of the working class if we are to be loyal to our revolutionary principles. The only alternatives are totally unprincipled opportunism or ultraleft sectarianism.

We in the YSA must remember two things Comrade Novack told us in Democracy and Revolution. On page 200 he tells us, "The state of democracy is most accurately measured, not by the freedoms enjoyed by those at the top and in the middle sectors of society, but by the circumstances of the very bottom layers." I agree by saying: while the Black people are the most superexploited part economically of the working class, gays have the least protection from legal and extralegal violence, are the most isolated and least understood part of the working class, and are the only social minority within the United States that still have not gained the civil rights enjoyed on paper by the rest of the working class. Gays have no legal protection from discrimination in housing, employment, education and social services. We are the only people you can attack physically and have "protection" from the authorities. And that brings us to some other words of Comrade Novack, who tells us on page 214, "Militant struggle for democratic demands can accelerate the advance of the class struggle..." Clearly then, the campaign for democratic rights of gays is compatible with our party's other demands.

We said earlier that one of our main complaints about the subsection on gay liberation is the vagueness and meaninglessness it presents. A more concrete set of demands was set out by Michael Maggi in the SWP Bulletin of September, 1972:

"The democratic rights being raised in the demands of the gay liberation movement fall into this general approach... The four central democratic demands are: (1) abolish the sodomy and solicitation laws; (2) amnesty for gays convicted of victimless crimes held in prisons and mental hospitals; (3) end police harassment; (4) end job (and other types of) discrimination. These demands, and the uncompromising assertion of dignity they require are powerful fuels for the mass revolutionary gay liberation movements."

So we can see that the Draft Political Resolution's subsection on this issue can be greatly improved. And to those comrades who would insist on "the working class first," let me quote the following two sentences from one of our movement's founders:

"Working class consciousness cannot be genuinely political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to all cases of tyranny, oppression, violence, and abuse, no matter what class is affected.

"Those who concentrate the attention, ob-

servation and consciousness of the working class exclusively, or even mainly, upon itself alone, are not Social Democrats." (Lenin's emphasis.)

Thus Lenin argued in What is to be Done?

December 12, 1974

THE FIGHT FOR STUDENT-FACULTY CONTROL OF THE PUERTO RICAN
STUDIES DEPARTMENT AT BROOKLYN COLLEGE

by Robb Wright and Mark Friedman, Brooklyn, N. Y. local

Brooklyn College has been the scene over the past year of several different forms of cutbacks in education. Last spring, financial aid was cut for hundreds of students, primarily Black and Puerto Rican. Cuts in services like day care, tutoring, remedial courses, book loans, etc. have been occurring at a steady rate.

This fall the administration decided to move against the Puerto Rican Studies Department. The PRSD has been the most radical department in the school, being involved in on and off campus struggles--from fighting cutbacks to supporting the struggle in District 1 for community control. In an attempt to stifle this radicalism and oust the openly socialist members of the staff, the administration attempted to impose a chairperson on the department. Puerto Rican faculty, staff and students democratically chose Maria Sanchez, while the administration vetoed their choice and appointed Elga Lubo.

The struggle at B. C. involved the right of the department to decide upon its chairperson.

Whereas a number of different groups were involved in supporting the struggle, the primary organization that appointed itself the leadership, was the so-called "steering committee," which was dominated by the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization (PRRWO). PRRWO is a Maoist sect that comes out of the disintegration of the Young Lords Party in 1972. The strategy of PRRWO was to organize small numbers of students into actions that would bring them to an "anti-imperialist consciousness." It did not concern itself with winning the support of thousands of students, but was using this issue to recruit at the expense of the future of the PRSD. In line with their sectarian and ultraleft strategy they rejected support from the African Studies Department, the student government, and other campus organizations because they were not "official" supporters. As a sop to students and groups that wanted to support this struggle, the steering committee created a support committee whose task was to support, not to think or suggest, but to do what was ordered by the steering committee. PRRWO was very small in the beginning of the struggle but gradually grew in numbers and periphery as they attracted all the Puerto Rican ultralefts and even members of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party.

The Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP) and their youth group, Federation of Puerto Rican Socialist University Students (FUSP), are centrist organizations with their major orientation to the island. They had a great deal of support

among the Puerto Rican faculty and students and had a "representative" on the steering committee. Throughout the entire struggle PSP and FUSP projected no independent line, but tail-ended the ultraleftism of PRRWO. While in private they would agree with our mass action perspective, in the meetings they would buckle under because to oppose PRRWO "would divide Puerto Ricans on campus." Their inability and unwillingness to challenge PRRWO politically enabled PRRWO to gain influence among Puerto Rican students, and by the end of the struggle the PSP was crushed.

None of our sectarian opponents participated in the struggle, but the YSA's major opponent in the radical movement, the YWLL, did intervene. Our attitude toward the YWLL was open and friendly. For the most part they followed our lead. They took their cues from our comrades, did a minimal amount of work to "look good," and then in the end lined up with the PRRWO against us and other groups on campus who wanted to organize mass action. This was the first time, however, that the YWLL came out in the open at B. C.

Throughout the entire struggle the YSA sought to apply our strategy for the campus revolt. We explained again and again the need for united front activities involving all those individuals and groups who wanted to participate. We used the lessons of our participation in the antiwar movement to campaign for mass action, democracy in the movement and non-exclusion. Our concept was to use all of the facilities on the campus to build this struggle for student-faculty control. Since the steering committee was closed to us and most other organizations, we entered the support committee and turned it into a weapon against the steering committee. We issued statements in the name of the support committee that we got dozens of campus organizations and prominent individuals to sign. We forced the steering committee to call actions that it was opposed to. We initiated mass picket lines, classroom tours, faculty-support work, demonstrations and ultimately the student strike and mass rally of 2,000. Many of our actions were answers to and counterposed to the ultraleftism and sectarianism of PRRWO. To the building take overs by 15-50 "anti-imperialists" (44 of which were arrested for trespassing), we built demonstrations of 600-2,000 newly radicalizing students. Throughout the struggle it was clear that there were two lines being projected--but as long as the two major Puerto Rican groups pursued an ultraleft course, it was impossible to save the struggle from defeat.

The YSA made special efforts to expand the support

committee both to provide as much pressure as possible on the steering committee and also to cover ourselves from Maoist slander. We were able to involve, through our efforts and in spite of the sabotaging efforts of PRRWO, the student government (getting them to call for a strike and mass rally), Caribbean Students Union, Haitian Students Association, Umoja Society, Dominican Student Movement, International Students Organization, Department of Educational Services, United Farm Workers, B.C. Women's Liberation, Women's Center, Day Care Collective, Dance Group, Gay Group, fraternities, sororities, B.C. Independent Democrats, etc. Through the call for the strike and rally we won important city-wide and national support from Dave McReynolds, Dave Dellinger, Angela Davis, Conrad Lynn, activists from District 1, Professional Staff Congress (union of faculty members) and others.

As YSAers we distributed statements from the Socialist Workers Party election campaign (Robb Wright was the SWP candidate for Congress from the district including B. C.) supporting the struggle, sold Militants and Young Socialists, Pathfinder literature. As an organization we threw the entire Brooklyn local into the struggle and also received help from the Brooklyn SWP. The YSA members were seen as the best activists in the support committee, and in fact, the real leadership and moving force for all the mass actions. The student government turned over its offices to the support committee and we became the organizers for all of the mass support work. We organized the mass rallies as well as organizing the student government for the struggle. Brooklyn College YSAers had hundreds of individual discussions with activists, organized socials with people interested in the YSA, and held a "Join the YSA" meeting on campus featuring the YSA film To Make a Revolution. After the film we had a discussion on the lessons of the film--specifically the need for mass action and a revolutionary youth organization. Through this struggle and the close relationships we developed with other organizations, it put us in good stead for building the Boston demonstration. Through the fall the result was an increase in the fraction from eight to 17 and the addition of four active sympathizers, totaling 21 (as of December 15, 1974).

The attitude of the YSA to the PSP and FUSP was particularly important and deserves special attention. These groups are not opponents like the YWLL, but we do compete with them for Puerto Rican members. Our political disagreements with them are great, but we saw the need to have a very friendly and non-sectarian attitude toward them and without their support it would be extremely difficult to confront PRRWO. Some FUSP members were in the support committee. There they were won over to our perspective. However, they met a brick wall when they went back to the PSP and tried to get them to take on PRRWO politically and fight for mass action. The result was that FUSP was in political opposition to the PSP. Some FUSP members no longer work with or associate with the PSP as much, or at all.

To organize an ever increasing number of comrades on the fraction, and to get YSA supporters closer to joining, we held open fraction meetings on campus--on almost a daily basis. Some FUSP members were also invited and wanted to attend, but were physically removed from the meetings by the PSP. At these fraction meetings we discussed the day-to-day needs of the struggle and the role that the YSA would have to play to make it successful. We organized our sales, campaign literature distribution, recruitment activities and actual recruitment out of these meetings. All YSAers learned very rapidly how we participate in mass struggles, the need for an organization like the YSA, and the need for team leadership in the YSA.

Quite clearly, the Brooklyn College YSA "took the lead" in organizing the campus support for this fight for student-faculty control. The only factor in keeping us from breaking the stranglehold of the PRRWO was that we only had three Puerto Rican comrades on campus. Thus the central lesson of the defeat of this struggle was the need to recruit to the YSA and to continue strengthening our campus base and orientation.

December 12, 1974

FOR MORE EFFECTIVE PROPAGANDA WORK

by Steven Forgione, Upper West Side, N. Y. local

In our constant drive to improve our already on-going activities, the experiences of the Upper West Side, N. Y. local in over-all literature (propaganda) interventions should be of use for other locals.

The UWS takes in Columbia University, City College (CCNY), Bronx Community (BXCC), plus Music and Art, Brandeis and Walden High Schools. All are attended by comrades and naturally where the YSA carries out political work. In the past, Columbia and CCNY were the two places where we have had active fractions, but our literature sales were considered "so-so." After reviewing the reasons why they were in that state, we zeroed in on some of the more obvious weak points.

The most essential starting-point is having a defined division of labor within the literature committee (in our case the areas were: finances, publicity, consignments and director-coordinator--one from the YSA and one from the SWP). We understood from the very beginning that this would be essential for allowing a significant expansion and improvement of our work and cannot be overemphasized from the beginning as crucial to our success.

What's also important is to "think big" and take on an ambitious goal. One aspect of our past literature interventions was that we were content with card tables and the same "big ten titles" selection. Comrades must realize that we are the only ones to publish timely material and that people are increasingly looking for answers and for discussion on many problems and issues. The larger and more varied the selection the better. Remember also that other publishers do have interesting titles which round the selection out. Flowing from this is the need for larger tables and better locations for setting them up. Just the visual effect attracts people--nothing's worse than a card table dwarfed in the corner somewhere. This may sound minor, but critically observe how your tables are being set up and re-consider it.

Likewise, consistency is essential. This requires comrades to carefully consider the table as a central assignment and assign comrades regularly to it accordingly. The more times the better, but never sporadically or haphazardly.

The YSA's books and pamphlets compose a major (but not the only) part of the table. Also carried are The Militant, the YS, ISR, IP (proved very successful with international students), leaflets, campaign literature, other periodicals and also a mailing list (for anyone interested in the YSA). The tables became "mini-radical centers" where

not only one could get a book, etc., but also find out what's happening on campus or just stop to talk and get our position on various subjects. Again, this is not something new to our movement, but it is to what degree that it is carried out that is open to criticism. The table must integrate all phases of our work; a table with just leaflets, etc. or one with just literature attracts fewer people and is on the whole less fruitful (politically and financially).

On all campuses the YSA witnessed a greater political prestige since September. Many new people were met and are on mailing lists and/or participate in various areas of our work (as well, several have joined, starting as "table contacts"). Likewise, "old friends" have begun to come around again and reinterest themselves in our activities. All this can be safely attributed to a more visible appearance on our part (which a well organized table allowed).

On the financial side, our total sales for Columbia last year were \$60.25. This summer we sold \$135.50 there, during September \$260.24 and during October \$277.70. At CCNY sales for last year were \$95, but have already exceeded that figure since September. (One must also remember that Columbia is Ivy League and CCNY serves to keep the unemployment rate a bit lower for the Black and Latin community.)

Another important factor in our sales and aid in our political work was the stocking up of non-English material. The UWS has a large Spanish-speaking population and we can now boast the best selection of radical literature in Spanish for the whole area. Considering the quantity of Spanish literature Pathfinder can distribute now there is no excuse for not carrying some. The classics can be ordered through your local distributor of Moscow publications (in N. Y. C. it's Universal). This has opened all new channels for us in reaching the hall's "neighbors" and international students at the various schools. (This was mostly accomplished on Saturdays with a table--similar to the ones on campus--in front of the hall which is located on a shopping street.) We also carry Arabic, Persian, and French (for the Haitian community) all bringing the same results. Naturally, these are not in equal numbers and all orders should be based on real needs and potential for the area.

Again, last spring (five months) we sold only \$40 worth of Spanish-language literature, during the summer (two months) we sold \$30, and in October alone we sold over \$100. The better selling titles were La Guerrilla (35), Fuentes' pamphlet (21), State and Revolution, Lenin (13), Communist Manifesto (12), plus over 60 books by Trotsky

(Transitional Program being number 1). Land or Death, Introduction to Marxist Economic Theory and Chilean Tragedy also sold very well. Likewise we improved our stock on Latin America in English which compliments our Spanish-language selection.

Added to these "permanent" consignments, the same approach was taken to openings often not directly connected to the YSA or the SWP (conferences, workshops, etc, where our literature relates to them). Again this gave us a chance to intervene and get our ideas out in a very effective way.

Hopefully what the UWS has done in a matter of a few months will show some concrete examples and results from applying some of the ideas that came out of the national educational conference workshop on literature and propaganda. Our literature can only but enhance our political work and with a little effort any local can be comparably successful. The UWS literature committee is eager to provide more information and receive feedback from those interested.

December 13, 1974