



Discussion Bulletin

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REPLY TO COMRADE CHERTOV

By Derrick Morrison

In Comrade Chertov's contribution, "On the 'Transitional Program for Black Liberation'", he takes a quote from the Freedom Now resolution of 1963 and builds his entire analysis around it.

The quote states, "In 1939, we foresaw the possibility that the Negro people, as part of their struggle to end centuries of oppression and exploitation, might some day decide that they want a separate nation, controlled and administrated by themselves. We said that if this happened, it would settle the long theoretical dispute about whether or not Negroes are a national minority as well as a racial minority, and that we, as supporters of the right of self-determination, would support the Negro demand for a separate nation, and do everything in our power to help them obtain it."

This quote is actually one of the weaker points of that resolution. It is weak because it tied the question of being a national minority to the quest for a separate state.

Much more in keeping with the thrust of the resolution is the following quote from Part III that is entitled, "Negro Nationalism Today." It states, "It [Negro nationalism] is expressed in various ways -- most commonly in the stimulation of racial pride, declarations of independence, the desire for Negro leadership and control of the civil rights struggle, mistrust of whites -- and it is present to varying degrees in most Negro tendencies, both integrationist and separatist."

"Viewed in this light, Negro nationalism, as it now exists, should not be equated with Negro separatism, the tendency that advocates creation of a separate Negro nation. The two are not the same thing. All separatists are nationalists but not all nationalists are separatists. Nationalism expresses the desire of Negroes to decide their destiny, including, among other things, their attitude toward the question of a separate nation. Nationalists want the right to decide their destiny, and to create an independent movement and other conditions that will make it possible for them to decide their destiny. But so far they have not made a choice in favor of a separate nation."

And I would pepper this quote with another from the same section. It states, "General definitions of nationalism are inadequate for understanding and explaining Negro nationalism in the United States today. While it has resemblances to the insurgent nationalism in African countries, and to the nationalism of op-

pressed minorities in the old Russian Czarist empire, American Negro nationalism also differs from them in certain respects. Moreover, Negro nationalism is still in an early stage of its development and will surely undergo changes in the future."

So much for quoting.

Comrade Chertov's viewpoint is a throwback to the 1930's. He doesn't actually believe there have been any changes in the struggle from 1939 up to 1963, and by inference, 1969. He clings to the view that Afro-America is still a racial minority, not a national minority. In other words, in spite of all that has gone down between 1954 and 1969 -- the evolution of the civil rights struggle, Malcolm, and the growth of nationalist consciousness greatly accelerated by the ghetto rebellions of Watts, Newark, and Detroit -- Comrade Chertov sees no reason in 1969 for qualitatively changing whatever was adopted in 1939. Such a viewpoint is very hard to fathom.

Just to take up the 1963 resolution. It is a qualitative leap forward compared to anything ever written by the SWP on the black struggle since 1939. And the reason that this is so is because the struggle itself differed from that of 1939. There were no mass outbursts being unleashed against racial oppression in the South in 1939. The black struggle for the most part was tied to the then burgeoning union movement.

In 1939, the idea of nationalist consciousness rising among black people had to be impressed upon the SWP from the outside by Leon Trotsky. In 1963, the Freedom Now resolution was indicative of the fact that the SWP had begun to assimilate Trotsky's analysis.

But in addition to this glossing over of time, Comrade Chertov asserts, "The only ones who have the right to call themselves 'black nationalists' are the separatists." Which means that Comrade Chertov either didn't read, doesn't understand, or simply glossed over the resolution, picking up what was useful to him.

For one of the central points of the resolution was to get across an understanding of the difference between black nationalism and black separatism. Without a comprehension of this difference, the party would not have grasped the development of Malcolm X.

The definition that the 1963 resolution gives to nationalism can be summed up as self-determination. And the concretization of self-determination is

expressed somewhat in the demand for black control of the black community. Once control of the black community is achieved, then the black masses can decide their destiny in toto. The realization of black self-determination will take place upon the ashes of capitalism. This makes the question of separation remote for the time being, except for some as in the Republic of New Africa.

Thus, if Comrade Chertov does not agree with the terminological difference established by the 1963 resolution between nationalism and separatism, then he should not tote around the assumption that he agrees with it.

But I think we have to go deeper to get to the bottom of Comrade Chertov's contribution. I think that Comrade Chertov is not able to dialectically grasp the class radicalization of the 1930's and the nationalist awakening of the 1960's. I think that Comrade Chertov sees black nationalism as just a transitory thing, a thing that will die down as soon as the white workers awaken to class consciousness. Then everything will be hunky-dory. And black and white will get together, a la 1930's, and all that type of stuff. So much for that.

To dialectically approach the problem, we have to see the national question and class question as inseparable. North American capitalism was built upon the free labor of black slaves. This was done by denying the slaves any knowledge of their past heritage and culture. In other words, by denying their blackness and forcing them into embracing whiteness. Therefore, for black people to regain themselves and overcome a very

alienating existence, they must identify with themselves as black people and overturn the 20th century slave system known as capitalism. To begin to fulfill either one of these tasks leads to fulfilling the other. Right now, the nationalist awakening is increasing class consciousness. Witness the rise of black caucuses in the labor movement.

If Cannon's "Coming American Revolution" thesis had proved correct in terms of the pace of development at that time, in 1946, the class radicalization would have brought to the surface the nationalist awakening.

In Asia, Africa, and Latin America, one can clearly see that the task of national liberation is inseparably bound up with ending class exploitation. This should be much more obvious in terms of Afro-America and other peoples trapped up in the United States.

To understand how the class struggle can detonate nationalist sentiments, I suggest Cuba as an example. While we were down there, we learned about the embryonic cultural renaissance being experienced over the African heritage of Cuba. Part of the process of black Cubans identifying with their blackness flowed from the black consciousness being exhibited in the U.S., as well as from the liberating effects of the Cuban Revolution.

I think that this is a better way to understand the class and national questions than taking an opinion poll among your friends.

August 14, 1969
New York

BLACK NATIONALISM, CLASS STRUGGLE AND PARTY HISTORY

By George Breitman

Some of the questions discussed by Comrade Morris Chertov ("On the 'Transitional Program for Black Liberation'") are so important that it is regrettable they could not have been raised earlier. If they had, the discussion would probably have been fuller and richer. But they are so important that even a partial and hurried discussion before the convention is justified.

As I see it, Comrade Chertov is concerned about two kinds of questions -- one kind political-analytical, the other procedural-formal. Since the latter are subordinate, we will start with the former.

I.

Comrade Chertov says our 1963 convention resolution analyzing the black struggle was well conceived and requires no basic changes, and wants us to adhere to it fundamentally. But at the same time he says, "The only ones who have the right to call themselves 'black nationalists' are the separatists." He thereby forgets or would have us discard one of the important distinctions made in the 1963 resolution -- that the tendency known as black nationalism includes both separatists (advocates of a separate black nation) and non-separatists. If this distinction is discarded, then much of what we have thought and said during the last six years would be incomprehensible (instead of being the most useful analysis of the black struggle made by any group in this country).

At any rate, the 1969 resolution is entirely in accord with the 1963 resolution on this point: When it refers to black nationalism, it is referring to the inclusive definition made in 1963; when it speaks of the growth of black nationalism, it means the growth of both its separatist and non-separatist wings. If anyone is proposing an innovation or revision on this point, it is Comrade Chertov and not the authors of the 1969 resolution.

But let us restrict ourselves to the question of separatism. Has that been growing or declining? Comrade Chertov says, "Except for leadership groups, I don't think there exists among the mass of Afro-Americans a consciousness of nationhood." Exactly what he means by consciousness is not altogether clear, but let us examine some evidence of what the black people want, or say they want.

Newsweek has taken three polls in the last six years -- one in 1963, when our convention resolution on "Freedom Now"

was written; the second in 1966, just as the slogan of "Black Power" was first being raised; and the most recent in the spring of this year (reported in its June 30 issue). Unfortunately the same questions were not used in all three polls (partly because the pollsters as well as the people being polled were thinking about different things during each of these polls).

In 1963 there was no direct question about a separate nation; one has to gauge the pro-separatist sentiment expressed then by the response to a question about the goal of the Black Muslims, which Newsweek didn't even bother to restate for its readers, giving only a paraphrase about "a separatist, black-only state." Many people did not know much about the Muslims, but of those who responded, according to Newsweek, "a resounding 22 to 1 majority of Negroes score this as another form of segregation."

In 1966, again there was no question about a separate nation, but there was one, somewhat vaguely worded, about whether blacks should "give up working together with whites and just depend on their own people." Eleven percent agreed, 81 percent disagreed. It is reasonable to assume that the number agreeing would have been smaller if the question had been about a separate nation.

In 1969, the question of a separate black nation was directly posed (there's some significance even in that). The result: 21 percent said blacks should have a separate nation, 69 percent said no. And 12 percent "quite seriously expect it."

That is not all. In the North, among blacks under 30, "more than a fourth favor setting up a separate black nation within the U.S." (No figure is supplied for the percentage opposed in this crucial category.)

Newsweek says, "The separatist streak in black America today is stronger than in the two previous Newsweek Polls -- and quite possibly stronger than at any time since the pioneer nationalist Marcus Garvey's gaudy back-to-Africa crusades of the 1920s." To which we can add that because of the population increase in the last 50 years the number of blacks favoring separatism is quite probably larger than in Garvey's day.

Despite Comrade Chertov's opinion, then, black nationalism, even in the narrow definition that he would use, has experienced a remarkable -- some would

say startling -- growth in the last few years; and there is absolutely no sign that this process has ended; on the contrary. The same can be said about black nationalism as a whole, using the 1963 resolution's definition, except that it began earlier among the non-separatists and has had broader influence. (Newsweek reports that blacks "recoiled from the slogan" of Black Power when it was first raised in 1966 [37 percent against, 25 percent for], "but they favor it, 42-31, today." Among Northerners under 30, "they like it, 68 to 16 percent.")

Now the years during which black nationalism, however defined, has been growing at a very rapid tempo and has become a mass phenomenon among black people are precisely those years in which black radicalization has reached the highest point in the history of this country.

This leads us to ask ourselves certain questions: Is it an accident that the growth of black nationalism and the growth of black radicalization occur simultaneously, or almost simultaneously? Or a coincidence?

I am not sure what Comrade Chertov would answer, but I am sure that the great majority of the party, and almost the complete cadre of the party that has joined since 1963 (many of them partly in response to this phenomenon), would answer, "No, it is not an accident or a coincidence; it is a causal relationship." And most of those who have read our press and literature since 1963 (which is where we develop our positions and analyses too; that's not done only in formal convention resolutions) would probably add, "Black nationalism is a specific form of black radicalization; it is also the dominant form in which radicalization has occurred among black people in the United States in the 1960s; and there is little sign that it will be different in the 1970s."

Comrade Chertov might agree with parts of this statement. but I gather, from the final part of his article, that he would not accept the final part of the statement, concerning the future. I gather this because there he attributes black nationalism (what he calls "the very question of nationhood" arising today) to "the quiescence of the class struggle" and apparently counterposes the resurgence of the class struggle to the continuation of black nationalism and separatism.

This view, which some younger members of the party find hard to understand or take seriously, is not just a dogmatic aberration; it has a history, a certain kind of logic, a certain amount of validity. There is no doubt that the

rapid rise of black nationalism in the last decade, and the specific forms it took, are in part the result of the previous and continuing ebbing of the class struggle. That is the logical and valid part of the view expressed by Comrade Chertov. If the class struggle had continued to rise after World War II, if the working class had been able to continue the radicalization started in the 1930s, had created its own party and started out on the road to power, it is possible that the way in which the black people radicalized would have been different.

But the radicalization of the working class was thwarted and declined, and the black people did not continue to wait for the working class -- they began to radicalize in their own way. (A damned good way, too; and a damned good thing for all of us that they did.) This created a new situation. This new situation is going to affect the future, including the forms in which the working class will radicalize; already has affected it -- beneficially. To expect that when the working class begins to radicalize, everything and every relationship will revert to what it used to be 10 or 30 years ago is worse than undialectical; it is unintelligent. Black nationalism is here to stay -- from now until well after the socialist revolution. And that's a good thing too because it is one of the assurances that the revolution will be successful. (Whether black nationalism will take on a predominantly separatist character is a different question; and a subsidiary one.)

In the 1930s Trotsky tried to teach the party, and especially its Chertov-Breitman generation (which, according to this year's membership survey, represents less than 6 percent of the party), that the most profound expression of black nationalism might well occur at the time of the revolution, that is, at the time of the most acute class struggle. (He was talking about separatism.) For historical reasons it was difficult for some members of that generation to grasp Trotsky's position; and some never grasped it even six years ago, when black nationalism as a mass sentiment was no longer just a theoretical possibility, but becoming a fact; and some who grasped it then did it only partially or tentatively or empirically: Yes, they thought, black nationalism is an undeniable progressive factor today, but perhaps when the class struggle revives....

We have learned a lot since 1963, or we should have. One of the things we should have learned (and which most of the new members have learned -- not because they are smarter than the old, but because they came on the scene at a different time) is that there is no necessary contradiction between class strug-

gle and black nationalism, or between class struggle and whatever you call it: the national struggle, the racial struggle or the national-racial struggle of the black people to liberate themselves. Trotsky did not see any contradiction when he examined the situation in the United States in his discussions with our representatives in 1933 and 1939. And he even wrote, three months after those discussions in 1939, (see page 76 of the completely unreviewed and widely unread Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1939-40), that the national struggle is "one of the most labyrinthine and complex but at the same time extremely important forms of the class struggle."

Although he was not referring to the black struggle in this country, it would be useful for us to pursue and think through that concept, and then apply it to the black struggle. A lot more useful, a lot more revolutionary, a lot more conducive to the advancement of the class struggle than a sterile, historically outdated counterposing of class struggle and black nationalism.

II.

Other of Comrade Chertov's points revolve around terminology and the history of certain concepts used in the party. Specifically, he objects to the use of the terms "black nationality," "national minority" and "national oppression" when referring to Afro-Americans because of implications he sees in these terms:

"'Nationality' is a term that can only be drawn from a concept that the black people are now a nation. 'Nationality' cannot derive from a nation coming into being, or a view that a process now developing will someday produce a nation. It has to refer to an existing nation."

The reason he is concerned about this is that he thinks that designating Afro-Americans as a nationality or national minority (which he equates with designating them a nation) represents a departure from or reversal of that part of our 1939 resolution on self-determination which was summarized as follows in our 1963 resolution: If the black people decide they want a separate nation, "it would settle the long theoretical dispute about whether or not Negroes are a national minority as well as a racial minority...."

It is impossible in the space and time now available to discuss fully all the ramifications of the development of our views over more than three decades during which both objective and subjective conditions have changed drastically; it has indeed been a long dispute, and it would take too long to do it justice

here. But certain aspects raised by Comrade Chertov can perhaps be clarified briefly.

I don't at all see why "nationality" or "national minority" has to refer to an existing nation; in fact, a distinction is usually made between a nation and a nationality both inside and outside the Marxist movement. (On the other hand, "nationality" and "national minority" are often used interchangeably, except when the group involved is a majority rather than a minority; for example, it would be absurd to call the blacks of South Africa a national "minority.")

Four years ago, when we lived in different cities, George Novack wrote me a letter about an article in the Summer 1965 Science and Society, "Worker and Fatherland," a study by Roman Rodolsky (who has since died) citing passages from Marx and Engels in which they clearly distinguish between nationality and nation. In the following four paragraphs of his letter, the first two represent a summary of the views of Marx and Engels and the last two are Novack's application (at that time) of these views to the question of black nationalism:

"The concept of nationality refers to a community of people with joint traditions of various sorts (descent, language, condition of servitude, territory, culture, etc.). The nation is the population of a sovereign state.

"Nationality, the essential mark of a national minority and its movement, is the product of common historical conditions which bind together a specific set of people. It need not culminate in the constitution of a nation. That depends upon the life history of the given nationality.

"Thus the Afro-Americans have distinctive and separate features which make them into a nationality within the framework of the present capitalist white-supremacist United States. But whether or not they ever arrive at the point of becoming a nation-state depends upon future developments of a still indeterminate nature.

"What is important to ascertain is the main direction of the process of growth of nationality at each specific stage (is it waxing or waning?) and ultimately, if the movement is extended and intensified enough, when the ascending nationality is ready to go over to the national state form. That would mark the crucial point of qualitative change in the nationalist movement."

It seems clear that black Americans can be called a nationality or a national minority on the basis of the Marx-Engels

approach summarized above. Comrade Chertov cannot find any support in that approach for a definition that excludes a group from being called a national minority or nationality before it has become a full-blown, existing nation.

How about the Lenin-Trotsky approach? Here I will quote myself from the party discussion bulletin of September, 1954:

"Can we call an oppressed minority a 'national minority' if it does not demand a separate state? If we accepted that as the decisive criterion, we would have to devise a new term to describe many of the groups and movements that we have characterized as 'national' up to now. In fact, as Trotsky says in his discussion of the problem of nationalities in The History of the Russian Revolution, it took the February 1917 revolution and the great social upheaval that followed it before several of the most oppressed minorities became aroused enough to formulate self-determination aspirations, and some of them didn't do even that until after the October Revolution. The Marxist practice up to now has been to refer to these as national minorities just the same. Are we now to revise that characterization for them? We would have to if the criterion of a demand for a separate state is made paramount [in deciding whether or not a group is a national minority]."

Many other passages could be cited, but they are not really needed. Comrade Chertov's premise -- that if we call Afro-Americans a national minority, it means we are calling them a nation -- is manifestly wrong. And all conclusions flowing from this premise are wrong too.

But if black Americans are a national minority, why haven't we used that term before in our resolutions? And don't we have the duty to show, in Comrade Chertov's phrase, "how and why the change from a racial minority to a racial and national minority took place"?

Why hasn't the term been used before? There are various possibilities: Perhaps we thought it was a wrong term to describe the reality in the past; perhaps it was the right term in the past but we didn't realize it; perhaps we weren't sure and therefore postponed a decision until we were sure; perhaps some of us thought it was the right term and some of thought it was wrong and others weren't sure, and the decision represented a temporary compromise -- not to use the term for the time being -- until further developments clarified the question. Perhaps we didn't adopt the term "national minority" in a resolution until now for the same reason that we didn't adopt our position on self-determination until 1939

-- that is, because we know more now than we did in the past, because our thinking and our insight have been sharpened both by the unfolding of events and a firmer grasp on theory.

In a certain sense the 1939 convention formulation did represent a compromise -- between Trotsky and his supporters, on one side, who had no doubt whatever about the nationalist direction of the struggle, and on the other side J.R. Johnson (the author of the resolution) and those who shared his doubts about the future. The compromise was acceptable to Johnson because it left certain questions open, and it was acceptable to Trotsky because it took a firm and correct stand on the essentials. (After their discussions in April 1939, which are transcribed in Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination, Trotsky said to Johnson: "I suspect that you are just a little opportunistic on the Negro question, but I am not quite sure." Fourth International, January 1941)

But it was a legitimate and fruitful compromise, which enabled the party to take several long steps forward in theory and practice; and it laid the groundwork for our ability without too much trouble to grasp the new stage in 1963 -- the nationalist stage.

Because the question of whether the blacks are a national minority was left open in 1939 (it did not say they were not a national minority), it has come up several times in our history. In our second major resolution on the black struggle, the one adopted at our 1948 convention, of which Johnson was a co-author, we spoke about the "racial and national" aspects of the movement and about the "maturing Negro racial and national consciousness" and the growing up of an "embryo 'nation within the nation'." (FI, May-June 1950) Fraser objected, but most of the party thought such statements warranted because we were trying to follow developments closely and see what changes were being germinated even at a time when black nationalism was apparently almost extinct. In answer to Fraser in 1954, I suggested that perhaps the best term to express the uniqueness of the situation was "racial-national" minority. (Years later I noticed that Trotsky, writing about South Africa in 1935, had referred to "the solution of the national [racial] problem.") Perhaps by 1963 we should have drawn new conclusions about the national minority question, instead of recalling what we had said in 1939, but the new stage of nationalism was just opening and many of us were still not sure.

I mention some of these episodes of the last 30 years to indicate that the compromise was never intended to last indefinitely, nor until the day when some-

body could prove that 51 percent of the black people wanted a separate nation; we continued to watch and try to learn. Our 1939 resolution said the question would be solved in practice. Well, some of the older party cadres now think that has happened -- that nationalism has become a distinct mass tendency, that even separatism has the support of perhaps a quarter of the black population, and that whether or not Afro-Americans choose and achieve a separate nation, the term "national minority" fits them today in every reasonable sense. Most of the younger cadres, who matured politically after the rise of nationalism, never doubted it.

How and why did the change from a racial minority to a racial and national minority take place? (Usually "when" is included in such questions.)

Before undertaking to say how and why such a change occurred, it would first have to be demonstrated that such a change did occur. But did it? The possibility exists that Afro-Americans have been a national minority all along, but that its nationalist characteristics were hard to discern, and that for various reasons, good and/or bad, we were unable to discern them with certainty until the present decade. If this is so, and I for one tend to think it is, then we cannot answer the questions Comrade Chertov poses.

I do not mean there have not been changes -- we have been publicly tracing the changes in the consciousness of the black people for the last six years, and we think those changes have definitively clarified the question left open 30 years ago about the nationalism of the oppressed black minority; at least by any reasonable standards accepted by our party and the Marxist movement as a whole.

So I think it suffices for us to state that we view Afro-Americans as a national minority entitled to the right of self-determination, and to leave it to the historians or posterity to decide whether we were right or wrong in not having reached that conclusion before this.

III.

I have a measure of sympathy for Comrade Chertov's complaint about procedure. It certainly would have been neater and in closer keeping with our general norms if the Political Committee had submitted a special resolution on the national minority designation. But I have tried to explain some of the problems that would arise in the drafting of such a resolution, and I should add that it did not occur to anyone on the P.C. that there would be any objection to the terminology employed in the resolution, which has become pretty much the common usage of the party in the last few years. All I can suggest is that if at the convention he is still unconvinced of the correctness of the formulation, he should avail himself of his right to introduce an amendment along the lines he considers correct. There are two places on the convention agenda where that can be done -- not only in the discussion of "A Transitional Program for Black Liberation" but also in the discussion of the main political resolution, "The Course of U.S. Imperialism and the Revolutionary Struggle for a Socialist America," which also designates Afro-Americans as a national minority. That way he will at least have the satisfaction of having a vote by the convention on his point of view.

New York
August 16, 1969

WOMEN'S LIBERATION

By Della Rossa

The number of women in the work force in the U.S. continues to increase. Yet in spite of this, there has been a retrogression in the last 20 years in this country in the relationship of women to society. Only recently has a women's liberation movement developed to counteract this trend.

Women's share of professional and technical jobs is declining. Women now account for only one half of one percent of all U.S. engineers, 3 percent of the nation's lawyers and 6 percent of its physicians. Less than 10% of all professionals are women.

More than 41% of women 16 years of age and over are in the civilian labor force, in fact, 37% of all workers are women.

The median wage for a fulltime working woman in 1966 was \$3,973, and for men \$6,848.

The relative median earnings of women in relationship to the median earning of men declined from 1939 to 1964 in every major industry group in which the number of women employees is significant. The situation now is that women do one-third of the work and make one-fifth of the income.

Yet the 1969 political resolution does not even mention women, either as workers or as an oppressed group.

U.S. women led most of the world in the fight for the vote for women, but now are a minority of the voters and fail to organize politically for women's rights. In 1967 there were 10 women members in the House of Representatives, compared to 17 in 1957.

Many women enter college but they fail to graduate. At the beginning of the century, 19% of the college degrees went to women. Just before World War II it went up to 41%, but slid back to 38% by 1964.

* *

The basic demand of women must be for self-determination; that there be no difference, on the basis of sex, in women's relation to society. Being a wife and mother must have no more urgency or importance than being a husband or father. These must be secondary to being a human being in the whole sense.

All jobs and professions must be open to women. There are some areas where women will choose not to work, just

as a small man would avoid these areas. But the important thing is that women must demand the right, and be encouraged to enter fields which require responsibility, leadership and special talent.

Women must immediately demand equal pay for equal work -- in practice, not just on paper. Unorganized women workers must be organized. There are approximately 30 million women in the labor force but only three million in the organized trade union movement.

Children must be the responsibility of society, not primarily the mother or the family. Women must demand 24-hour child care centers so that children will not be a handicap for them in either getting an education or in working.

All organizations must be open to women. Segregation by a dominating section of society means discrimination.

If any organization does not have women participating throughout its leadership on an equal ratio with men, that organization is, in fact, discriminatory. It has failed to counteract the effects of society to develop the potentials of women. Every organization, even those which were organized precisely to fight for human rights, must have women's committees to fight for the development and full participation of women. An important measure of that participation is the ratio of women in the leadership.

The overthrow of the equality of women began with the introduction of private property combined with an oppressive form of marriage which insisted on monogamy for women only. Women must demand the same sexual freedom now granted to men in our society. Birth control and abortions must be easily available to them. An important effect of sexual freedom will be a sense of self-determination, which can be broadened to include all aspects of society.

Reparations, to counteract the centuries of discrimination and oppression, in the form of special considerations and encouragement, must be given to women in the transitional period until they win full social equality. This is necessary to counteract the constant pressures of society, including pressures on their own consciousness.

This demand corresponds to the black nationalists' call for wage reparations for the 300 years of unpaid slave labor, and the college "high potential" programs for blacks and Chicanos.

Some women will at first resist supporting this demand, confusing it with paternalism. They want to stand on their own feet. They feel that they can prove themselves on their own merits. But the atmosphere of prejudice in American society today is society's problem and society's sickness -- the woman is the victim. A man is encouraged and admired when he develops beyond routine work. But a woman must not only bring the same abilities and disciplines to her field but she must fight the obstacles of indifference and outright prejudice every inch of the way. It's an enervating, deadening fight. Usually she is defeated. Only through special women's committees making aggressive demands in every field can this be overcome.

Women themselves must fight for their rights. Not even revolutionary males can give us equality within this society, partly because of the nature of society and partly because society has affected even their consciousness. I even heard one male movement leader say, in discussing women's rights, "That's your problem!" -- meaning it was not essentially a problem for a revolutionist.

What is necessary is that the SWP give conscious support to the demands of women, as it does for the black and Chicano movements. The political resolution fails to indicate this support. The problem of any oppressed group is a problem of the revolutionary party, and all revolutionists.

A women's liberation movement began in this country about two years ago, with the National Organization of Women one of the organizations formed. The movement has grown, particularly on the

college campuses, and has even reached the Chicano movement. Students for a Democratic Society passed a comprehensive resolution on the question this spring.

This year, the SWP has at last given special and valuable attention to the question in two excellent articles by Mary-Alice Waters and Evelyn Reed. Merit Publishers, on the tide of the movement, has published a pamphlet on the women's liberation movement.

As women fight for their demands, they can win many of them, just as trade unions have won many demands even within the capitalist system of class exploitation.

In the process, women will develop their most powerful weapon, a new consciousness. They will become aware of the scope of the oppression and the justice and urgency of fighting for their equality as human beings. They will also come to recognize that not all their demands can be won in this society and that their oppression as women grows out of a class division and a class oppression.

When women are convinced that the capitalist class system itself must be overthrown they will become the best revolutionary fighters. Because then they will not only be fighting to overthrow class oppression but they will be fighting for the right to develop into fully equal human beings. It is the responsibility of the revolutionary party to be in the forefront of this struggle.

August 16, 1969
Los Angeles

AGAINST THE DEMAND FOR A GUARANTEED ANNUAL INCOME

By Herman Porter

The demand for a guaranteed annual income has been raised for the first time in a resolution of the party or in a draft resolution of the Political Committee in "A Transitional Program for Black Liberation." It is included as point 4 of "Domestic Policy" in "Key Planks in a Party Program":

"Put an immediate end to hunger and malnutrition through a guaranteed annual income which can assure everyone, including the old, sick and disabled, adequate living standards."

The demand is not to be found in the Transitional Program of the Fourth International. Rather, our movement has raised in various forms the related demands of: jobs, a minimum hourly wage, a sliding scale of wages to meet rising prices, unemployment and disability insurance, and old-age pensions.

In 1964 the demand for a guaranteed income was raised by a group of intellectuals who constituted the Ad Hoc Committee on the Triple Revolution, and it has been supported by some black radicals. The demand grew out of a false economic perspective for American capitalism. The Ad Hoc Committee had concluded that automation made human labor obsolete. Ever-growing unemployment was the result they anticipated. They proposed the guaranteed annual income as the answer to the social problems that would result.

Baran and Sweezy in Monopoly Capital argue for a similar economic point of view. They believe that the basic problem of capitalism now is how to dispose of the growing economic surplus which is being generated -- at least in part -- by rising productivity of labor.

Publicity about the guaranteed annual income dwindled as the unemployment

rate fell consistently below 4 percent from 1966 on.

Why then does the demand now appear in the draft resolution? Perhaps because of a certain sloppiness in writing the document. In concretizing a transitional program for black liberation it is not only legitimate but necessary to incorporate demands raised in the course of the struggle by black people. The demand for a guaranteed minimum income has been expressed in the ghetto on occasion. It has apparently been added to the program for that reason.

Those are not adequate grounds for its inclusion, however. The Transitional Program is a tightly knit, logically consistent document. It is the model we should emulate in working out a transitional program for black liberation.

Instead of the demand for a guaranteed income, more specific demands should be included to provide for the economic needs of sections of the population not otherwise covered. For example, the demand for free federally-financed nurseries, controlled by the community, should be included to provide an alternative to permanent welfare for families without fathers.

Another difference between the demand for a guaranteed income and the set of more specific economic demands that have been raised is that the former guarantees an income to those who refuse to work -- it would be supported enthusiastically by the hippies. If it were adopted by a black party it would be used by the enemies of that party to stigmatize it as a party for those unwilling to work.

Portland
August 18, 1969

THE ROLE OF THE SWP IN SUPPORTING THE ARAB REVOLUTION

By Joel Aber

Other than Vietnam, the Arab world is currently the most active area of the colonial revolution. This fact alone would be reason enough for us to devote increasing attention to the Arab revolution. In addition, there are special factors permitting the Socialist Workers Party to make a far greater contribution to the Arab revolution than to many other sectors of the colonial revolution.

For the past half century, there have been mass Arab upsurges against colonial rule, beginning with the Arab Revolt of 1914 and reaching a new intensity today with the Palestinian liberation struggle. The present rapid motion of the Arab masses is dissimilar to the situation in many Latin-American countries, where there is a vanguard in motion but little mass consciousness.

We are presented with a unique opportunity for propagandistic intervention here in the U.S., since there are about 15,000 Arab students and intellectuals on campuses across the country -- mostly at the major colleges and universities where the YSA is likely to be influential. No comparable opportunity has existed for us to influence the thinking of Vietnamese intellectuals or the leadership of the Cuban Revolution.

In addition, the current nascent stage of the Arab revolution means that many of the Arab intellectuals on American campuses today are likely to be future leaders of the struggle; we can have a powerful impact on the thinking of the coalescing leadership of this section of the world revolution.

Any comrade who has been in contact with foreign students of various nationalities on American campuses can corroborate the fact that the Arab and Iranian students as a whole stand out as the most revolutionary-minded and most receptive to Trotskyist ideas.

Both the nature of the guerrilla movement and the attitudes of other working-class tendencies toward the Arab revolution increase the potential for the influence of Trotskyist thinking.

Among the four most significant guerrilla organizations -- Fatah, Saiqa (associated with the Syrian Ba'ath Party), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PDFLP) -- our Stalinist and social democratic opponents appear to have little influence at present. The guerrilla organizations are internationalist in perspective, emphasizing that they take their inspiration from the Vietnamese,

Cuban, Algerian and Chinese revolutions. They reject the Soviet Union's attempts to establish a four-power accord and impose "peaceful coexistence" on the Palestinians.

Although organized influence from the Cubans does not appear to be great, the largest guerrilla organization, El Fatah, is Castroist in two respects: They are anti-ideological, believing it necessary to submerge all political differences including any discussion of whether they are Marxist; and they emphasize above all else the primacy of armed struggle.

It would be dangerous -- and tricky -- for us to speculate about the exact nature of the differences between the guerrilla organizations or which is most deserving of our support, given the fact that we have little information and the rapid rate at which changes occur; it is probable that there are elements of what is correct in each of their positions. Suffice it to say that important theoretical questions being discussed by Arab intellectuals in the U.S. and by the various guerrilla organizations revolve around (1) whether a Marxist vanguard party is necessary to lead the revolution and (2) how to build a united front in which different political tendencies are able to cooperate. The building of the revolutionary party and the effective use of the united front tactic in mobilizing the masses in struggle are two questions on which our expertise can enable us to fruitfully contribute to the interchange of ideas occurring among Arab students. The intensive discussion among Arab intellectuals on these questions testifies to their high level of political consciousness and has resulted in their asking for our opinions on these subjects.

Our unequivocal support to the Arab revolution and our campaign to educate the radical movement in the U.S. about the Middle East stand in sharp contrast to the attitudes of our opponents.

The July 25, 1969 issue of New America, the organ of the Socialist Party, reports that the high point of the recent 11th Triennial Congress of the Socialist (Second) International was a speech by Israeli premier Golda Meir urging unequivocal support to the state of Israel. The article says that Mrs. Meir's speech was rousinglly acclaimed by the audience and admits that perhaps no Arab "socialists" had been invited to attend the congress. So much for the position of the Second International.

While the Communist Party nominally

supports the "Arab side" against Israel, it never emphasizes support for Arab self-determination. The CP's position is one of support for the existing Arab states, not for socialist revolution. Indeed, it would be a surprise if the Stalinists in this country took any other position, partly because of their fear of antagonizing Zionist sympathizers in their own ranks and periphery, but more importantly because of the characteristically miserable position of the Soviet bureaucracy.

Not only does the Soviet government collaborate with the U.S., British and French imperialists to attempt to impose a settlement in the Middle East and to get the Nasserites and Ba'athists to cool it, but even more scandalous are recent statements in the Soviet press condemning the Arab guerrilla organizations for daring to upset the prospects for "peace" in the Middle East. The guerrilla groups are accused by the Kremlin of being influenced by "Trotskyites." Thus the Soviet position is to the right of that recently taken by Nasser, who is obviously under intense pressure to aid the guerrilla struggle.

Of our various Maoist and ultraleft opponents, only Workers World-YAWF has much to say about the Arab revolution. As consistently sectarian as on every other question, Workers World makes no attempt to educate the broad layers of the radical movement. Instead they have initiated a front group, the Committee to Aid Middle East Liberation, in which they have tried to involve no tendency other than themselves. At the Columbia University Arab liberation teachin last spring, the one cooperative venture that Workers World was forced into, they used the occasion and their role as "defense guards" at the meeting for a typical display of the ultraleft conception of "militancy"; this time they achieved their orgasm by starting fistfights with Zionist sympathizers, almost causing the event to degenerate into a brawl.

The Progressive Labor Party has had little to say about the Arab revolution and did not take advantage of the opportunity to have a speaker at the Columbia teachin, to which they were invited. While they have not launched any outright attacks on the Arab revolution, their position on nationalism of oppressed peoples would make it impossible for them to enthusiastically support the guerrilla movement.

Meanwhile, the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance, through our pamphlets, speaking engagements and forums, have begun a serious effort to get to know Arab revolutionaries and to educate the American radical movement about the Arab revolution.

Our efforts have not gone unnoticed. In a recent issue of Arab World, the journal of the Arab Information Service, an article by Abdeen Jabara (the editor of Free Palestine, put out by the supporters of Fatah in the U.S.), surveying the attitude of the American left toward the Arab revolution singled out the SWP for praise as one of the few American organizations giving unequivocal support to the struggle. We have been invited to the convention of the Organization of Arab Students. Some of the most prominent Arab intellectuals in the U.S., who have shared the platform with us at teachins organized by the Arab students, have been singularly impressed by our presentations.

None of these gains, however, should be taken as an indication that we have been ambitious enough. There are very few comrades sufficiently versed in the Middle East to speak on the subject. It would be useful for each party branch to assign at least one comrade to make contact with the Arab revolutionaries in each region, to arrange for speaking engagements and to follow up initial contact with attempts to recruit to our political perspective.

In addition to contact with Arab students, effective support for the Arab revolution should be viewed as a prime task for us within the American left. Just as we have enlisted broad support for the Cuban Revolution, we should attempt to enlist such support for the Arab revolution. We can be infinitely more effective in this regard now than was possible at the time of the June 1967 war. Today it is possible to recruit radicalizing youth on the basis of the inspiration provided by the Palestinian liberation struggle.

Two years ago it was difficult to convince even radicals that (a) Israel is not a utopia and (b) yes, Virginia, there is an Arab revolution. Given such a climate of opinion, many comrades viewed our support for the Arab revolution as an uncomfortable but necessary political obligation.

And even today, this uncomfortableness lingers among some comrades, a feeling for which there is no excuse. There is every reason for us to be taking the offensive in our discussions among radicals today. The deepening understanding of imperialism and the nature of colonial wars that has resulted from the youth radicalization and the antiwar movement makes it easier today than ever before for radicalizing youth to comprehend the struggle in the Middle East. Furthermore, the two hurdles necessary to overcome two years ago -- the reactionary nature of the Zionist state and the existence of the Arab revolution -- become immeasurably

easier to explain with each passing day.

Today we can put the discomfort on the other foot -- on those radicals who cannot provide a cogent analysis of the napalming of Jordanian villages, the indomitable resistance of the Palestinian masses under occupation, the rampant racism in Israel and the consistent U.S. support for the Israeli government. We are the only ones who can provide a cogent analysis, and we must take advantage of this fact to the hilt.

We must take advantage of the close interconnection between the questions raised by the Arab revolution and those raised by the antiwar movement and Third World liberation movement in the United States. The fact that the Arab and Vietnamese revolutions are both parts of one worldwide anticolonial, anti-imperialist struggle is obvious. Almost equally apparent are the abundant parallels between the national struggle of the Afro-Americans and the national struggle of the Arab masses: the racism, the role of the cops and occupying troops, the attempts by the educational systems in Israel and the U.S. to obliterate national identity, the parallel roles of slumlords in Harlem and Jewish colonizers in Israel as medi-

ators of colonial oppression (a point driven home by the New York teachers union bureaucrats and by organizations like B'nai Brith with their charges of black "anti-Semitism"), the "urban renewal" of the Afro-American and Arab ghettos, and the rising militancy of the oppressed nationality.

It is evident that any further Middle East war or simple intensification of the current struggle between the Arab masses and the Zionist oppressors will magnify our opportunities for intervention. And intensification of the Arab revolution is on the order of the day.

Just as our support for the Cuban Revolution distinguished us from all other radical tendencies and permitted us to recruit radicalizing youth in the 1960s, our support for the Arab revolution will have a similar effect today. It's important that we become known as the best and most effective defenders of the Arab revolution, just as we're known as the best defenders of the Cuban Revolution.

New York
August 18, 1969

AN ANSWER TO "ON CONFRONTING SDS"

By Larry Seigle

I. What Is Involved in the Barzman Document?

John Barzman's document, "On Confronting SDS," is worthwhile examining in some detail as a means of clarifying our attitude towards SDS. In the course of such an answer it will be necessary to correct the errors of fact in the Barzman document as well as point out the differences we have with him in our political evaluation of SDS.

The dispute as seen by Barzman can be summarized in four points:

(1) Prior to the YSA convention in November 1968, the YSA had a policy that was totally consistent with working inside SDS as SDS members, and this tactic was carried out in "several exceptional areas," among them Boston. This policy was correct.

(2) At the YSA convention, the YSA leadership called for a "turn," to the surprise of some of the delegates, and laid down a tactically inflexible policy prohibiting work in SDS.

(3) The split in SDS has rendered the whole dispute moot because SDS is "no longer what it used to be." SDS "has already lost all its best elements" and it is "very unlikely that SDS will continue to serve as a channel for radicalizing youth as it has in the past."

(4) Although there is at present no difference of opinion -- "tactical flexibility would be incorrect presently" (!?) -- the discussion is relevant because "it remains valid in the case of similar formations which may arise in the future."

Why then, one might ask, does Comrade Barzman go to all the trouble to write up for the party pre-convention discussion a tactical disagreement of the past, of primary concern to the YSA, which is now rendered moot by events? Are we in danger of succumbing to a terminal case of tactical inflexibility? As preventive medicine must we agree on a tactic for some unknown, but presumably similar situation in the future?

The answer to this question, as Barzman knows, but never clearly states in his document, is that Barzman holds a different evaluation of what SDS is and how to build the YSA. He also misunderstands what the YSA position was with regard to SDS and what was decided at the YSA convention.

II. Setting the Record Straight

In 1968 the YSA experienced a tremendous spurt in growth. We were recruiting many SDSers. Many SDS members indicated that they were coming to the YSA convention (and many did come). It also became increasingly clear that some comrades did not understand our policy in regard to SDS.

We therefore decided that the political report should recapitulate and clarify our political approach to SDS, as it related to building the YSA. Because Barzman either fails to understand or disagrees with our political approach, he thinks the convention decision was simply opting for tactical "inflexibility."

The political report at the YSA convention did not mark a turn from "tactical flexibility" towards SDS to "tactical inflexibility." We have always been and will remain tactically flexible in our approach to SDS and all other radical youth organizations.

We had no objection -- in fact it was correct before and it is correct now -- to YSAers going to SDS meetings to keep tabs on them, to argue with them, to propose united actions, to sell literature, to recruit to the YSA, to make contacts, etc. This approach has been carried out by many locals and is the approach taken in our national interventions at SDS conventions and National Council meetings.

What was incorrect before, and is incorrect now, is for YSA members to function as SDS members. It is this not the secondary question of formal membership in SDS that is important. The YSA has never had a policy of entry in SDS; we have never carried out the tactic of entry, as has PL. If Barzman thinks that we did, then he did not understand the YSA's position.

Our political evaluation of SDS indicated that there was little to be gained anywhere from an entry tactic in SDS, and that this approach would limit our ability to build the antiwar movement and the YSA in the most effective way. The YSA's practical experience showed that there was no organizational barrier to recruitment of the best SDS members or engaging SDS in united front actions. In fact, our opportunities were enhanced by the policy which we followed. We have recruited significant numbers of SDSers to the YSA and have involved many SDS chapters in the actions initiated by the Student Mobilization Committee.

At the YSA convention the political report spelled out our approach towards SDS as follows:

"What is our relationship to SDS? We seek to collaborate with them whenever possible on concrete actions. We recognize that SDS is a significant force in the student movement, and that there is the objective basis for united action because we agree with them on many of the important issues. But we do not accept SDS' attitude that SDS is the movement. We are opposed to the concept, for example, that people interested in carrying out antiwar work should join SDS and operate through a subcommittee of SDS. There are many people who are willing to carry out antiwar work but are opposed to joining SDS. Some of them for very good reasons.

"While we want to work closely with SDS we are absolutely opposed to the tactic of YSAers working inside SDS as SDS members. We're opposed to an entry tactic into SDS. In some areas where there are only one or two comrades they may want to participate in the SDS meetings and under some conditions even hold formal membership in the SDS. But the key to our work, and the key to our recruitment of SDSers is continuing to carry out independent socialist activity continually as we've done in the last year, in our name.

"We don't want to be members of SDS taking responsibility for anything that SDS does or says or thinks. We can learn from this by the mistake of the Progressive Labor Party, which has operated as a tendency or faction in SDS to the complete exclusion of public independent work. Now it's true that they have recruited within SDS. There's no doubt about that, but by being submerged within SDS they've lost, even for them, the widest possible potential recruitment among the new wave of young radicals who are willing to accept socialist ideas, and are looking for a serious and disciplined organization."

The report pointed out that "our main point of opposition to the SDS leadership has been over the antiwar movement. Since their call for the 1965 March on Washington, the SDS leadership has continually retreated from the task of organizing a correct campaign against the war in Vietnam." As a result, most struggles by the great bulk of radicalizing student youth were organized independently of SDS. It is true that SDS grew into the largest radical youth organization. But SDS was by no means the sole, or even most important "channel for radicalizing youth." Most SDS actions, especially in the most recent period, were conducted in an ultraleft fashion and accomplished very little. Given the politi-

cal orientation of SDS, it would have been a mistake for YSAers to function as SDS members.

We were never impressed by the SDS leadership's verbal radicalism and increasing use of Marxist terminology. That we characterized as a verbal cover for SDS' continuing retreat from anti-imperialist action. This use of revolutionary verbiage was also an adaptation to the ultraleftist pressure exerted by PL. Despite its rhetoric, we did not see SDS moving towards Marxism, towards the political line of the YSA.

We therefore saw that our greatest opportunity for reaching the radicalizing youth lay outside SDS. The objective conditions made it possible to build mass antiwar actions, engage in other united front struggles and recruit to the YSA. The existence of a large SDS was not the main obstacle to our growth. Our own limited cadre and resources to begin with were the main obstacle. Our major problem was to utilize our forces to maximum advantage in a political situation offering us tremendous opportunities.

We were able to involve the healthiest SDS members and chapters in antiwar struggles and to gain recruits to the YSA directly out of SDS. Where the YSA grew, and where we carried out our antiwar line most effectively, SDS tended to weaken.

Moreover, one of our main objectives in the education of recruits from SDS was to help them break from the stagnant and stifling political and social milieu that often exists around SDS chapters. We wanted to offer an alternative to them, not ask them to stay submerged in the SDS school of politics.

III. The Lessons of Experience

The Barzman document is permeated with the notion that Boston was "exceptional" (although later we learn that it was only "perhaps exceptional"). What is this notion based upon? How is it defined? Harvard, says Barzman, has a very large SDS chapter. But so do a lot of other schools. At Harvard, says Barzman, many SDSers considered themselves Marxists. The same at many other schools. But in most other areas we didn't feel that we were therefore "forced to hold formal membership in SDS." The only exceptional thing about Boston, it appears, is that some YSAers decided that the way to fight SDS was to join it.

And what was the concrete experience we had from the SDS entry in Boston? What were the "exceptional" results of this "exceptional" policy? Was SDS weakened or strengthened as a result of our intervention? Was PL? How many recruits were made to the YSA? If this

example of "tactical flexibility" was such a success, then the entire YSA should have known about it. And we should know about it now. The entire organization could benefit from the experience.

Barzman, however, remains silent on this point.

We hear so often in the Barzman document that the Harvard situation was exceptional, that one is tempted to reply: methinks the comrade doth protest too much. Surely exceptional and extenuating circumstances could be found elsewhere. The "exception" might prove to be the rule. If so, the logic of Barzman's line would have been to argue for a national entry tactic into SDS.

The YSA has had considerable national experience with SDS, although not of an entry nature such as in Boston. The results of our basic orientation can be seen in the growing YSA membership figures and the mass antiwar demonstrations. Our national experience has shown that the best way to recruit SDSers is to clearly differentiate the YSA from SDS, both politically and organizationally. In fact, the greatest attraction that the YSA has for many disillusioned SDSers is that we are not part of SDS and do not get drawn into the political quicksand of the normal SDS-type activities. We can offer an alternative to SDS politics and organizational procedures through the antiwar movement and the YSA directly.

This is more important now than ever. This year we have our best opportunity to recruit SDSers directly into the YSA as they become disillusioned by the insane political gymnastics that are the norm in SDS. The Student Mobilization Committee can involve large numbers of SDS members and chapters in united mass action against the war, in sharp contrast to the sectarianism and ultraleft adventurism that the SDS national leadership is projecting.

IV. What the Document Reveals about Barzman's Attitude towards SDS

On further examination we learn that Barzman's attitude towards SDS reveals more than tactical disagreements. There is a difference in political evaluation of SDS.

Barzman seems to think that SDS is/was a real high level "theoretical" outfit. In Boston, he says, after PL's entry, "political differences were being discussed and theoretical discussion was almost continual in SDS." This is a rather generous way of describing what most YSAers saw as a degenerating situation of permanent factional warfare inside SDS which paralyzed the organization's ability to engage in action. But never mind. Barzman isn't so concerned with what SDS did. Their discussions were on a high level!

Barzman contrasts the high level of SDS to the "politically virgin" potential recruits to be won outside of SDS. These virgins, one assumes, are just as desirable as the advanced SDSers, but are naive, modest and inexperienced.

What Barzman does not see is the fact that a "virgin" antiwar activist who agrees with us on the necessity of militant mass action against the war is on a level infinitely more advanced than the theoretician of SDS who has had years of "experience" with the thought of Chairman Mao, the grotesque sectarianism of a Klonsky, or the hooligan tactics of a Rudd.

But, protests Barzman, the "best elements in SDS considered themselves Marxists and saw the working class as the main agent of social change." PL was winning these "best elements."

Not so. The best elements of SDS were not those drawn into PL's orbit, but those who engaged in action -- like the mass antiwar demonstrations -- in which the YSA played a leading role. And because of that, it was the YSA, not PL, that won the best elements of SDS.

The theoreticians of Harvard SDS who "considered themselves" Marxists but never considered engaging in revolutionary mass action had a lot less in common with Marxism than those so-called "virgins" who wanted to act on their convictions. Marxism has always considered action, not words, the decisive test of anyone's moving towards a working-class perspective.

V. And What Was the Nature of the Harvard YSA's Intervention into SDS?

There was a basis for PL's entry into SDS, Comrade Barzman explains, "in that both SDS and PL had a community-organizing perspective." But this, "the party and YSA rejected." On what basis, then, did we function as SDS members? With SDS' "community-organizing perspective"? If not, then what revolutionary action were we able to generate?

"The five comrades did a minimum of critical work on some worthy but peripheral SDS projects...." What was the purpose of this activity? If the projects were peripheral, even though "worthy," why did we bother to allocate resources to them?

The only answer seems to be that the comrades felt the need to establish themselves as "good" SDSers in order to gain the respect of the SDS membership. Then, it seems, we would be able to argue for our positions in the continual theoretical discussions going on. This is the logic of entering an organization whose

central (as opposed to peripheral) pre-occupation is with rhetoric -- however "high level" it might be.

What about "worthy" projects like building a Student Mobilization Committee at Harvard? Did engaging in SDS' peripheral and "occasional" antiwar work help or hinder our national task of building the SMC? The comrades "argued for our antiwar line" and tried to get SDS to participate in the national antiwar actions. Did they succeed? Even though they were SDSers? Even though they had done "a minimum of critical work on some worthy but peripheral SDS projects"?

The YSA nationally has been arguing for our antiwar line -- with SDS and others as well. The key to our success has been the fact that our arguments have been more than theoretical. They have been buttressed by vigorous, determined and successful antiwar action, organized primarily through the SMC. Those were the type of arguments that enabled us to win over large numbers of SDS members and chapters to our position. The YSA nationally was not a part of SDS, but we gained a good hearing for our line because we showed in action what we meant. It was this approach that enabled us to gain a hearing for our position on other political issues as well.

The Barzman document, in fact, does not even mention the Student Mobilization Committee! How is that to be explained? The SMC has been the central organization nationally through which student antiwar actions have been organized. How is it possible to consider our approach to SDS members without taking the SMC into account?

The Barzman document states that the YSA is "posing itself as an alternative to SDS." This is not entirely accurate. The majority of SDS members and the majority of radicalizing youth are not in political agreement with the YSA. They still reject Marxism. We cannot become "the mass socialist youth organization" at this time, if by that term is meant the organization involving the majority of radical youth. Our aim is to recruit the revolutionary-Marxist-minded youth, to build the YSA into a mass revolutionary socialist youth group.

But the majority of radicalizing youth, including the majority of SDS members, do want to engage in militant mass action against the war in Vietnam. The SMC is the organization which can be and has been the channel for them.

We pose a two-fold alternative to SDS: (1) We want all SDSers to engage in the antiwar actions organized by the SMC (and form other action united fronts to struggle on other issues); (2) we want to recruit the healthiest revolutionary-minded SDSers to the YSA.

VI. The Question of PL

Barzman explains that "the main idea of the SDS entry was to force the PLers to confront us politically." According to Barzman, PL had entered SDS and made "enormous progress." The end result was that "at the Chicago convention of SDS, PL took the best elements who were committed to SDS."

Thus Barzman reveals that the tactic of entering SDS was motivated primarily by fear that PL would win the best elements. How to fight PL? "If SDSers the best elements? refuse to read our press and our literature, do not come to our forums and demonstrations, then we had to use other methods to force them to deal with us." We were thus "forced" to hold formal membership in SDS, to engage in some "worthy but peripheral" projects -- all so that we could gain a hearing in Harvard's PL-dominated SDS (with its abundance of theoretical discussion, if nothing else). The main idea, evidently, being to throw a few theoretical arguments into the hopper. As presented by Barzman, this approach amounted to nothing more than tail-ending PL, adapting to their projects, competing with them on a purely abstract level, and on their terms to boot.

Barzman almost implies that PL-WSA was the left wing of SDS to which we should have oriented. After all, PL was winning the "best elements" who "considered themselves Marxists" and "saw the working class as the main agent of social change." PL "attacked the New Lefters" and "PL's success was not based on hiding their politics."

Barzman vastly overestimates the gains that PL made as a result of its entry tactic. PL did recruit a number of good people, less through their own abilities than through reaction to the policies of the SDS national office. Even so, however, PL's relative gains from SDS were offset by a relative weakening of its position compared to the YSA within the general youth radicalization.

If we had followed the policies advocated by Comrade Barzman the YSA would have found itself trapped in the swamp of SDS factionalism and ultraleftism. The experience of the past period has conclusively demonstrated the effectiveness of our tactical approach to SDS. The growth and development of the YSA, especially in those areas where our antiwar work has been carried out seriously and enthusiastically, is testimony to this fact. The escalating rate of degeneration of the SDS factions stands in sharp contrast to the political and organizational gains of the YSA.

New York
August 21, 1969

THE BOSTON EXPERIENCE IN SDS

By Linda Sheppard

The issues raised by Comrade Barzman in his document "On Confronting SDS" are of national importance. The Boston experience with SDS can provide valuable lessons for comrades across the country. In this document he outlines his misconceptions of the YSA's past policy towards SDS and the "exceptional" conditions in Boston which led the Boston local to formulate and carry out the tactic of entry work in SDS. This tactic and the theory of Boston exceptionalism were not unanimously agreed to in the Boston local. In fact, as the intervention progressed, it became clear to more and more comrades that the turn that was made locally into SDS was done at the expense of our national perspective of building a mass, independent antiwar movement on a coalition basis and building the independent student wing of that movement, the Student Mobilization Committee.

The turn towards SDS began in the summer of 1967 when the local sent a number of comrades into the PL-dominated labor committee at Harvard which was carrying out a typical SDS- and PL-type adventure in hospital organizing. We sent about six comrades to work in the hospitals for the summer. The reasons given were either (1) to take advantage of what was called a genuine opportunity to do trade union organizing or (2) to traipse around after the "healthy elements" in the labor committee. They were called healthy because they claimed they were pro-working class. It was never clearly decided which of these perspectives was the real one as the comrades disagreed on the perspectives for this work. After this union organizing drive collapsed, the comrades at Harvard and Boston University continued to work in the SDS chapters at those schools.

John states that the work done in SDS in Boston was a "minimum of critical work on some worthy but peripheral projects," which did not cut across the independent activity of the YSA or building the antiwar movement. This was not the case. In fact the five comrades assigned to work in SDS as SDSers constituted the entire Harvard and BU fractions, which were our two strongest campus fractions at the time. After a year and a half of entry, the net result was: (1) the effectiveness of our antiwar work declined as compared with the early years of our work in Boston -- 1965-1966; (2) we failed to recruit one person as a direct result of our work in SDS. The YSA grew, of course, in this period. But this growth was not a result of the entry work in SDS.

The work in SDS became our central,

not peripheral, arena of work in those schools. During this initial period that the local went into SDS the campus antiwar committees began to suffer and then were virtually abandoned. Prior to that time we had had good, functioning antiwar committees on a couple of campuses and a

CEWV which mounted a series of very effective campus actions and built the mobilizations. Throughout the duration of our work in SDS, and for a period after we ceased to work in SDS, we did not have one functioning campus or city-wide SMC. This crippled our work in the city coalitions as we had no independent lever to help get actions off the ground and mobilize students and no vehicle to coalesce the independents we brought around through the mobilizations.

When the SDS chapters either failed to endorse the national antiwar actions or did nothing more than give token endorsement without actually doing anything to build them, the work was left to the comrades as individuals to hand out leaflets, etc. The comrades in SDS argued that as long as we passed out leaflets to build the demonstrations that we were carrying out our line in the antiwar movement. They failed to realize the key role that the SMC could play in determining the size and effectiveness of the actions by involving the support of independent antiwar activists in the work and in mobilizing support for the actions.

Working solely in SDS and failing to build the SMC cut directly across our national perspectives because it left the student movement in Boston without a single-issue antiwar alternative.

The main reason given for the necessity of going into SDS was that the comrades had made a number of attempts to build the SMC on campus but that it was simply impossible to build the SMC. The reasons given for this were that the student movement had gone on an ultraleft binge, that it had gone beyond single-issue, that the SMC was never more than a paper organization, that SDS was recruiting all the healthy radicals on campus and had the potential of becoming the mass revolutionary socialist youth group, that we should not become isolated from that process by creating unnecessary organizational barriers to SDS, that SDS was in fact a coalition of student radicals who did antiwar work, consequently there was no real need for the SMC, at least locally, that building the SMC would be sectarian and unrealistic.

The claim that a very strong and influential SDS in Boston excluded the possibility of mobilizing students around the antiwar issue was completely refuted by

experience. Because SDS did not organize mass antiwar actions, others did. For example, the fall of 1968 saw the mushrooming of The Resistance around single-issue mass antiwar protests. This was not because the masses of students wanted to refuse the draft but because the absence of the SMC meant that some other organizational vehicle became the means of mobilizing students in antiwar action.

The Resistance, at its peak, was able to mobilize 10,000 students April 3, 1968 on the Boston Common in what was predominantly a demonstration for the withdrawal of troops from Vietnam. If there had been an SMC at the time we could have forced the Resistance leadership to collaborate with us in forming a real coalition for the action which would have increased the potential of its size and effectiveness. At the least we could have taken a good section of those activists into the SMC. We missed opportunity after opportunity for building the SMC when Dow recruiters, Humphrey and Nixon came to town and it was left to others to organize and claim the students who came to those actions.

Another good example of the objective situation in the city for mobilizing students against the war was the campaign mounted by the Science Action Coordinating Committee at MIT which kept that campus in a continual ferment around campus complicity issues. We did not even have a citywide SMC which could relate to that development in the absence of a functioning MIT fraction. Students whom we failed to organize through the SMC organized on their own a number of Vietnam-type graduations which were not dominated by SDS. These examples show that objective possibilities in Boston did exist for organizing mass action against the war.

Was it objectively possible to build an SMC at Harvard where PL and SDS were perhaps stronger than anywhere in the country? The problem was that the comrades were orienting to the ultraleft elements in SDS who completely rejected our position on the antiwar movement and not towards the independent activists on the campus who wanted to organize against the war. In fact when the majority of SDS refused to build the April 26 Strike in 1968 our comrades refused to go ahead and collaborate with other elements who wanted to build a strike at Harvard for fear of alienating the "good elements" we were supposedly working with.

It must be admitted that in one sense Boston is "exceptional." Boston has one of the largest student populations in the country. In addition to five major campuses at MIT, BU, Harvard, North-

eastern and Brandeis there are scores of smaller colleges and schools, almost any one of which would be fertile ground for building the YSA and SMC. There is no objective reason why the antiwar movement in Boston shouldn't be the largest in the country. In fact, before the majority of comrades in the local developed differences with our national antiwar perspectives (as manifested in the document presented to the YSA national convention in 1967) we had one of the most viable antiwar movements in the country with active city and campus committees and a healthy city coalition. At that time we were able to bypass the SDS, which was then strong, or force them to come along with actions which we projected. The YSA was unquestionably stronger than PL in the Boston area everywhere other than Harvard.

Throughout the intervention there were actually contradictory reasons given for this work. The Barzman document says the reason for the work in SDS was to force a political confrontation with the SDS and PL "Marxists." It is true that the comrades did intervene in SDS meetings to urge support for mobilizations and our antiwar line. However, political confrontations do not come merely from making points at SDS meetings, by pointing out how the YSA is anti-imperialist and pro-working class, but from concretely confronting the abstentionism of SDS from the antiwar movement in action through building the SMC. It can only be done by demonstrating the correctness of our line and exerting the pressure of a large independent antiwar movement upon the healthiest elements in SDS. When we had carried out that perspective in Boston we made serious inroads into SDS.

The Barzman document states, "The main idea was to force the PLers to confront us politically." Were we successful in confronting PL? Were we able to pose the YSA as an alternative to PL's Mao Tse-tung-Thought "Marxism"? True, we made the record at meetings, but we did not have the organizational medium to back up our arguments in action. After the year and a half period of our entry in SDS, whose purpose was to confront PL, PL actually grew stronger. They may have grown even with the correct tactics by us, but the tactic we used did not minimize their growth.

Were we able to gain a sympathetic hearing from SDS because of our work as good SDSers? Throughout our entire intervention we remained an isolated minority at Harvard. We failed to build any significant periphery which would follow our leadership on any question. This is because we tried to counteract PL only on the abstract plane of theory.

The comrades were operating in an impressionistic manner. They were affected by PL's rhetoric about being "anti-imperialist and pro-working class" and saw PL and its periphery as the "healthiest" section of SDS. They were operating upon the impression that SDS was the mass movement and that the antiwar movement was dead. All this mounts up to an approach in contradiction to the conjunctural analysis and the line of the YSA for confronting SDS and PL. Our line is and has been that the way to confront SDS and PL politically and organizationally is through building the YSA and the SMC in action, and not on their own territory in projects which carry out a counter line to ours.

The correctness of our national perspectives was borne out very quickly when the SDS split into two warring factions, when thousands of students were

alienated last spring by the ultraleft adventuristic policies of SDS, and whole new layers of independent students were brought into motion independently of SDS in the campus struggles, including the Harvard strike. The success of the April 5th demonstration and revitalization of the antiwar movement, the GI antiwar movement and the split in SDS have to a large degree dispelled those illusions and impressions that some comrades held locally and we are now proceeding with the building of the Student Mobilization Committee in Boston for the first time in two years. This is how the YSA confronts PL and SDS. The tactic remains valid locally and nationally, for our past work and for the immediate future.

Boston
August 22, 1969