

NEC Antiwar Report, April 16, 1968, by Lew

This will be the final report before the April 27 demonstration. Since the last report, the world has been rocked by a series of events, which have illustrated the crisis of the American rulers. In the last two weeks the confrontation between America's rulers and the black population has greatly expanded. Similarly the American predicament in Vietnam has worsened; while painted over with Johnson's so-called peace-offensive, it remains true that the United States has lost the initiative in the war. Finally, the American ruling class itself has been unable to reach a substantial agreement on who is to run the country for the next four years.

These events have had a deep impact on the consciousness of the world's population, and particularly on the American people. Anti-capitalist consciousness has risen and at a minimum there is an increased feeling of instability in the United States.

The declination by Johnson and the initiation of a negotiation probe left the impression world-wide that Johnson's "initiative" represented a step toward peace. But the government actions are fundamentally a maneuver to achieve "victory" in Vietnam and recapture world opinion.

In all likelihood this "peace offensive" will be one of the biggest frauds of the war. While peace is supposedly being initiated, more troops have been sent, the bombing has been sharply increased, the largest land operation yet was opened outside Saigon. As this escalation continues it lays the basis for a mammoth outpouring of antiwar expression, which would reflect a betrayal of a mass hope for an end to the hostilities.

It is clear that the rulers are not yet united on a war policy. No matter what the differences, though, all are interested in saving every inch they can in Vietnam. Thus, both Kennedy and McCarthy have associated themselves with this "peace offensive."

With Johnson's declination, and the Kennedy-McCarthy support to the "peace initiative," both Kennedy and McCarthy have begun to pass over, in the public's eye, from being opponents to defenders of the war policy. As this process continues it will tend to make them less attractive to antiwar activists.

On the other side of the war, the North Vietnamese have taken a position that lends itself to exposing the United States' policy. Essentially, the North Vietnamese have agreed to "negotiate" an end to the U.S. bombing -- hardly a normal "negotiation." At the same time they have pointed to the continued U.S. aggression and have stuck to their original four points: stop the bombing, reunification, implementation of the Geneva accords, and withdrawal of all U.S. troops. Also, a regular part now of all North Vietnamese statements is an appeal to the "progressive people" of America to continue to expand their protests.

With this stance the North Vietnamese have shown the hypocrisy of the American peace offensive by pointing to the U.S.'s refusal to accept a site for negotiations, while having earlier stated that it was ready to talk anywhere, anytime.

In the midst of these events the need is all the greater now for the antiwar movement to mobilize masses of Americans in the streets against the war. Such action in favor of the self-determination of the Vietnamese people is the appropriate answer to Washington's maneuvers. In a previous report it was stated that the upcoming international demonstrations can have a profound political effect on the American public. Recent events make that all the more true, regardless of the size of the actions.

In general, in regard to April 27, the preparations have not proceeded as far as at a similar point in previous demonstrations. This, in large measure, is due to the drain of resources from the antiwar organizations and the political competition by the Kennedy and McCarthy campaigns. Stemming from this, there has generally been a push towards reformist, "multi-issue" demands for April 27.

The issue of "racism" has figured prominently in recent reformist maneuvers. In general, the adult coalition has been sent reeling by the ghetto rebellions. Many, with the aid and encouragement of the Communist Party, have sought to utilize the issue of racism as an excuse to not build the antiwar struggle. Rather than seeing the eradication of racism as a function of eradicating capitalism by building mass anti-imperialist action and organizations, the CP and other seek to erase racism by soul searching and by supporting reformist politics.

It is necessary, though, to make a distinction between the "adult peace movement" and the antiwar students. Preparations and reports on April 24-27 in the student arena show that the actions planned are on a broader and deeper scale than those before April 15 and October 21, 1967. Similarly the issue of racism has confounded those preparations, but rather the student radicalization leads many students to conclusions similar to ours.

The National SMC is making preparations to hold an April 27 eve news conference to announce the size and results of the student strike and other actions as a building device for April 27. Similarly, local strikes by students should be used as mobilizers of the entire antiwar movement for April 27. Because of the widespread student actions prior to April 27, a snowball effect for building April 27 in the final week can be expected. In many respects the April 24-27 events have been organized by the SMC. This will build the authority of SMC and aid it in building future actions.

International preparations are less intensive than around October 21, largely because of Spring vacations. In Japan large actions are promised by the Zengakuren.

In the United States, demonstrations on April 27 are occurring in most major cities. The Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Minneapolis, and San Francisco demonstrations promise to be large in respect to previous local demonstrations in each city. Because a call for April 27 was not issued early enough in Detroit and because of disputes there in the coalition, no April 27 action will occur there.

In conclusion, it is important to underline the importance of an orientation toward GIs by antiwar forces. Many objective events have made such an attitude all the more timely. In addition, these objective events have caused significant shifts in the attitude of many antiwar activists. For instance, Gary Rader, a leader of Resistance, at a speech in New York indicated that he was glad the SWP and YSA had been pointing to this area of activity for so long because now it seems to him that we were right. Responses to Howard Petrick's tour show a similar conclusion by others. The NBAWADU conference in New York passed a resolution calling for propagandistically approaching GIs and rejecting desertion as ultra-left. Such a resolution would have been unthinkable three months ago in NBAWADU.

Finally, the projected Democratic Party convention demonstration is less likely now. With the declination of Johnson many in the adult coalition do not want to demonstrate there against the war for fear that it would alienate the Kennedy and McCarthy supporters. Virtually every black organization is also opposed to the demonstration on the semi-legitimate grounds that such an action would be a set-up for repressive police action.

The "new" Dellinger coalition which ostensibly was organized to build this action, has failed to offer any concrete actions of any kind and as a result is not developing. A meeting of potential supporters in New York broke down with no decisions reached.

Future action by the antiwar movement, particularly by SMC, will have to be carefully assessed in light of the April 24-27 events.