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YOUNG SOCIALIST

REVIEW

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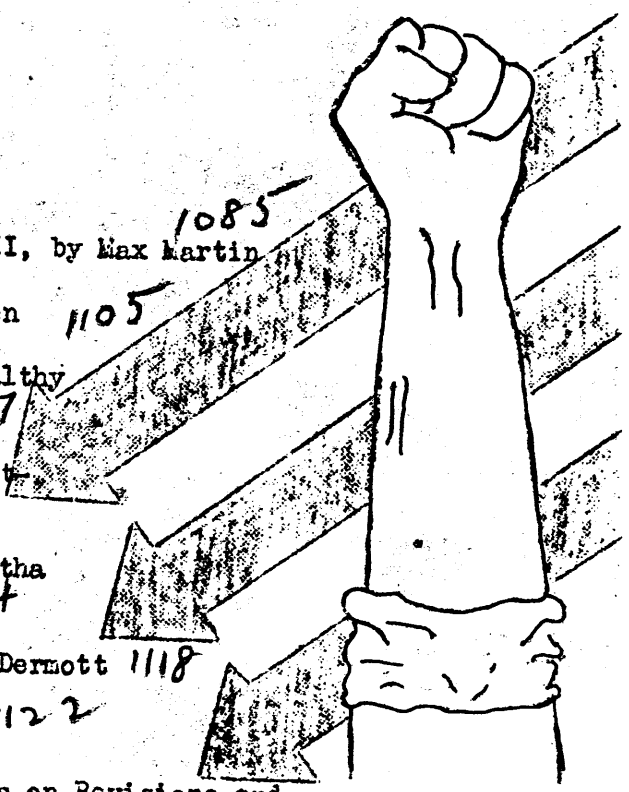
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Information And
 Discussion Bulletin
 of

The YOUNG SOCIALIST LEAGUE

1083

EDITORIAL NOTES

What the YSR is

The Young Socialist Review is the information and discussion bulletin of the Young Socialist League. It is prepared by the Chicago unit of the YSL.

The aim of YSR is to constitute a forum for the expression of all points of view within the YSL and is open to all members. Contributions from non-members will be accepted if of sufficiently high interest.

Articles signed by individuals do not, of course, necessarily represent the views of the YSL; "official" material will be clearly labelled as such.

The YSR is published at least bi-monthly, or more often when there is sufficient material. So, PLEASE SEND COPY AS SOON AS IT IS READY to 1343 E. 50th Street, Chicago 15, Illinois. Send it stencilled or typewritten.

The circulation of YSR is not restricted to YSL members although it is issued primarily for members. Members should make every effort to get copies into the hands of all other interested persons. For information write the editor or the YSL National Office at 114 W. 14th Street, New York, New York.

This issue

This is the 6th pre-convention issue, and the next to last before the convention. The deadline for the next issue is June 20th - in other words probably before this issue reaches most of the membership - and will be put out from New York. After that date the National Office will only mimeograph resolutions and amendments that are sent to the NO in stencilled form. The NO will be busy preparing for the convention and trying to produce a complete set of all pertinent documents for convention delegates. However delegates should try and bring all pertinent YSRs for their additional information.

This issue contains numerous articles, including two especially long ones. Comrade Martin's article constitutes the first half of an article in reply to Comrade Mage's discussion on Stalinism. Also contained in this issue is an "official" exchange between the American Youth for Socialism and the Young Socialist League.

We remind all members that unless the fund drive is completed in better condition or units can raise special funds YSR will have difficult going after the convention - it's not the cheapest task putting out and mailing this organ. However we hope that after the convention we will continue to receive material of both a theoretical nature and also on organizational and elementary educational topics.

Otherwise - you can expect copies of the 7th pre-convention issue within about ten days (copies for delegates will be sent 1st class), followed by the 3rd National YSL Convention July 1st to 3rd, followed by probably two post-convention issues containing the final amended resolutions and motions, followed by a regularly appearing and we hope more technically readable, attractive and useful YSR.

Til then.

--Debbie Meier, editor
June 15, 1957

p.s. The AYS-YSL correspondence, appearing at the end, is not page numbered.
p.s. 2 For collectors - the last issue should have been vol. 5. no. 1 - sorry.

SOCIALISM AND DEMOCRACY: A REPLY TO SHANE LAGE

by Max Martin

I

The appearance of Comrade Shane Lage's articles (The YSL Right Wing and the "Crisis of World Stalinism" and Miscellaneous Comments Concerning the NAC "Draft Resolution on the Crisis of World Stalinism") should be welcomed by every member of the YSL. The pre-convention discussion to date has almost exclusively been centered on the question of socialist regroupment; by and large it has ignored other matters which will occupy the convention's attention. To be sure, the "unity" question is the most important one presently confronting the League, for the rebuilding of a democratic socialist movement in the United States is the most urgent task facing American socialists. Hence, it is both understandable and necessary that socialist regroupment receive top priority for consideration and discussion in the YSL.

At the same time, the convention agenda will contain other points, since other questions require resolution. Foremost among these is the revolution against Stalinism in Eastern Europe and the developments throughout the Stalinist empire which preceded the October Days in Hungary and Poland. The events in these countries raised a number of problems, both theoretical and practical, which socialists must consider, for important questions of fundamental socialist policy are involved. Shane Lage's articles permit the opening of the discussion on the issues in dispute between the NAC Draft Resolution on the Crisis of World Stalinism and its "Left Wing" critics. We have refrained from discussing the amendments proposed to that Resolution by Comrade Wohlforth until this time because there has been nothing to discuss up until now; in the absence of argumentation for Wohlforth's amendments by their protagonists, without a theoretical framework and some political motivation having been set forth, discussion would have been sterile. Lage's articles introduce the necessary basis for commencing the discussion.

We shall endeavor to treat this question without reference to "socialist regroupment", insofar as this is possible. Not that the views of the NAC majority on regroupment are unrelated to its views on the revolution against Stalinism. Nor that the views of the "left wing" on the former question are unrelated to its position on the latter. On the contrary, political logic tends to create a harmony in the "Left Wing" between its views on the one question and on the other, and likewise with us. On this we are certain that Comrade Lage will agree, although the exact nature of the connection between the two sets of views in each group will be vigorously disputed. But about this, more below.

Despite the connection between these two questions, we will try in the main to treat only one of them - the anti-Stalinist revolution - here. We shall make this attempt because that will make more likely than otherwise would be the case a clear analysis of the issues involved in this dispute over the road for the Hungarian revolution. It will also make it possible for us to discuss some important theoretical conceptions about the road to socialism and to make explicit ideas which have heretofore been implicit in our approach to this question. Consideration of these matters is important for the YSL, even apart from the current discussion and the necessity of replying to Lage's articles.

The crux of the dispute between comrade Lage and the NAC majority lies in the differing conceptions held on the relationship of socialism to democracy. This article shall therefore deal, in the main, with that question. Before getting into this all-so-important aspect of socialist theory and policy, however, we wish to

consider a number of other points made by Mage. Some of these bear on the main question, and will illuminate it when we discuss it directly. Others provide important insights into the methodology employed by Shane in approaching the anti-Stalinist revolution, and for that matter, insights into the methodology used by the "Left Wing" in its argumentation on all aspects of the current discussion in the League. Methodology, we are certain Comrade Mage will agree, is of vital importance.

As for Gomulka...; As for Kethly...

Modeling himself on a crack by Trotsky during the 1939-1940 faction fight in the S.P. - a remark which (together with several other statements made by Trotsky during that dispute) represents the low point of Trotsky's history as a polemicist - Shane sneers at the Draft Resolution's statement that the Polish workers should "press forward until they have...established socialist democracy." He asks, "You mean to say that the future course of the Polish revolution should be decided by the Polish workers, and not by the inspired revolutionists of 14th Street? (Emphasis added)". He answers: "...not only should it be, it will be."

We are led to believe, then, that among Comrade Mage's recent political acquisitions is the trait of modesty. He objects to the Draft Resolution's expression of opinion on what the strategic orientation of the Polish masses should be, even on so general an aim as working for the establishment of socialist democracy. Very well, we have no objection to modesty, nor to complaints about "armchair theoreticians" and "inspired revolutionists of 14th street" being presumptuous in daring to "prescribe"* for revolution in Eastern Europe. Modesty is frequently a commendable virtue.

Alas, Mage is not very consistent in his newly-acquired humility. As even a cursory glance at his articles demonstrates, he advises the YSL to refrain from presumption and to be modest only in regard to ... the "polish way" and a "Gomulka-type development." He criticizes the MAC Draft Revolution for its immodesty only with reference to opposition to Gomulka. In relation to Hungary, his criticisms are of a different - indeed, of an opposite - nature. He condemns the Resolution for its failure to "prescribe"* for the Hungarian workers the strategic orientation of "All Power to the Workers Councils," for its failure to urge them to create a "revolutionary party," for its failure to explain to the Hungarian people the inadequacy of the Social-Democratic Party and the perfidiousness of Anna Kethly, and the like.

Is Shane's modesty in regard to Gomulka and his immodesty in respect to Kethly an accident? Are we faced with a case of the inconsistent application of a newly-gained trait, which, after all, is to be expected? Perhaps. We ourselves do not like to engage in analyses of motivation, when it is avoidable. But in the absence of a clear statement of Mage's views on Gomulka and the "Polish way," it becomes necessary. Given his strictures against Kethly and his silence on Gomulka; given the general approach of his article to the question of the anti-Stalinist revolution, we would suggest a different explanation of Mage's uneven application of his humility. Namely, that on the one hand we are dealing with a variety of national-Stalinism, and on the other, with Social-Democracy. Kethly: there is the enemy! Gomulka: well, Shane undoubtedly has his criticisms, but let not the "inspired revolutionists of 14th Street" presume to "prescribe"* to

* "The placing of prescribe in quotation marks is not meant to allege that it occurs in Shane's text. Unlike instructions (below), which does, it is not to be found there. But Shane clearly implies that the Draft Resolution does prescribe for the Polish workers."

to the Polish workers that they "press forward until they have ... established socialist democracy."

No "instructions", says our humble comrade, to the Polish workers to "press forward." Lots of "instructions," however, to the Hungarian workers, and not merely to "press forward," but to create a "soviet system" as the organ of state power, to build a "revolutionary party," to proscribe bourgeois parties, to look askance at the de-nationalization of collectivized land, and above all, to beware of Anna Kethly. After all, Shane implies, "capitalist restoration" is a grave danger - with admirable restraint, he refrains from regarding it as the main danger - and therefore, certain things follow: As everybody who has read Kethly's request for UN aid - military? observers?, what does it matter? - must know, she would lead Hungary straight back to Horthy. On the other hand, say what you will about Gomulka, you must recognize that to date he has prevented the return of capitalism to Poland. Hence "instructions" to the Polish people on an "anti-Gomulka" course, never! "Instructions" to the Hungarians to fight Kethly, by all means! Our resolutions should bristle with them.

Mage goes so far as to imply that the Draft Resolution is indifferent to the possibility of a "massacre" in Poland and to "Hungarian blood," and that we favor a "rising" this spring - if not sooner - in Hungary. To be sure, he has noticed in the resolution that we recognize the necessity of the Polish workers taking the danger of a bloodbath, the strength of the enemy, etc., into consideration in regard to their tactical application of what should be their strategic orientation. But somehow or other, for Shane, the statement of that general aim "negates" the tactical considerations he - and we - point to. What are we to make of all this?

Shane, I am certain, is ready to declare that the American workers should "press forward the class struggle." If some new member were to ask him, "Do you mean that regardless of specific circumstances we favor strikes by workers in every factory every week?", he would patiently explain that he does not. He would make clear the distinction between a general aim and the tactical application of it. He would inform such a new comrade that when and where the workers should strike depends upon the relative strength of the two forces, capital and labor, on the solidarity of the workers, on the position of management, and the like. However, should this question be asked of him by someone who had been recruited to the movement not yesterday, but had been "around" for a number of years, we suspect that he would reply by shrugging his shoulders, and that he might even think, "what demagogery!" We trust, therefore, that we will be forgiven if we react to Mage's sarcasm on this point in a similar manner, especially since the Draft Resolution does not even require that the ABC's on the relations of tactics to strategy be "understood" or "taken for granted," but spells them out.

After a page or so of sneers at "inspired revolutionists," Mage lamely concludes as follows: "Obviously, the resolution could easily be amended to say something like: 'The Polish workers should press forward wherever they feel able to do so without precipitating a showdown fight with the Russian army and secret police if they cannot expect to win such a struggle!' Is that all you want? Then what was all the fuss and sarcasm about? Speaking for myself, I have no opposition to such an amendment. I go further, I favor it. After all, this idea is already contained in the resolution. You wish to make it clearer. OK, no objection.

Will this "concession" on our part satisfy Comrade Mage? Perhaps, but we doubt it. We doubt it because we are convinced that his concern is with something else, namely with the conception we discussed in our analysis of Shane's thinking above. This conviction is strengthened, when we see that his "armchair Theoreticians and Hungarian Blood" section is followed by one on "Anti-Semitism," during the course of which he discovers that the Resolution's treatment of anti-Semitism in Hungary

is correct, but that its views on anti-semitism in Poland are not. Indeed, on the latter point, it "displays a truly lamentable ignorance..."

The Resolution "completely distorts the actual situation" when it asserts that the pro-Stalinist, Katolin group utilizes anti-semitism against the revolutionary forces. According to Shane, who buttresses his view with reference to dispatches by Handler of the NY Times and ignores both Handler's pro-Gomulka bias and the evidence which refutes him, "...anti-Semitism is a live and virulent force in Polish life precisely... (in) the anti-Stalinist camp. (Emphasis added)."

And what is the point of this section of Shane's article? It is not made explicit, but it is there: One has to hesitate before opposing Gomulka and before "urging" the workers to "press forward" the struggle for socialism and democracy, one has to be a little modest about issuing "instructions" to the Poles. The result might be the restoration of capitalism, and a clerical, authoritarian, anti-Semitic capitalism, at that. So, let's be cautious about being against Gomulka. Fortunately, we can balance this "compromise" with a revolutionary intransigence in Hungary, where no such considerations apply. So, "Down with Kethly!"

This "platform", however, runs into difficulty because, among other things, Kethly is not in power, while Gomulka is. That defect is however balanced by this strength of the view: Gomulka is merely a national-Stalinist, Kethly is a perfidious Social-Democrat!

Is our sarcasm exaggerated? Possibly. We await Mage's further elaboration of his views on Poland, promised to us for after the convention. We shall see then. In the interim, we must deal with what is presented to us. (We refrain, incidentally, from discussing here the necessity of supporting Gomulka, against both the Russians and the Polish Katolinists, and from commenting on the progressive significance of Gomulka's national struggle against Russian imperialism, since these are not in dispute, and are clearly expressed in the NAC Draft Resolution.)

"Systematic Ideological Liquidation Into Social-Democracy"

We stated above that there exists a connection between the views on the anti-Stalinist revolution and the position on socialist regroupment in both the YSL majority and in the jocularly-called "Left wing" Caucus. (The minority calls itself left-wing by mistake; it represents the conservative, stand-pat, pro-status quo position on regroupment, refusing to respond to the new opportunities facing U.S. socialists, and contenting itself with repeating out-lived formulas. And not even our—the YSL's—out-lived formulas at that.) We added that we were certain that Comrade Mage would agree with this, but that we would dispute exactly what the connections are. Let us examine the "Left-Wing" view of this relationship.

Our Draft Resolution on the Crisis of World Stalinism, writes Mage, "is a fitting theoretical expression for a political tendency which once based itself on Marxism but today wants nothing more than its own organizational liquidation into the social-democracy, and to that end is engaged in a 'systematic political adaptation to social-democracy,' a systematic ideological liquidation into social democracy." And further on, he very wittily expresses the same idea this way, "the YSL right wing (sic) has ... an orientation of cap... pardon me, an orientation of systematic adaptation toward the international social-democracy."

The news that the "Left wing" sees the relation between the regroupment position of the NEC majority and the views of the majority of the YSL on other questions in this way will probably startle no one. As a matter of fact, we have been hearing this idea expressed day in and day out for some six months now. Sometimes it is put the way Shane expresses it, and on other occasions it is expressed more crudely

- "Aw, you are just trying to please Norman Thomas" - but the thought is more or less the same. This charge has become the principle stock-in-trade of the "Left wing," trotted out on all occasions despite its patent demagogery. It was a bad joke to begin with; and now they have raised it to proportions of an "Epic." It has become The Method by which they live politically.

It has become impossible lately to repeat practically any commonplace idea which our movement has acquired, and which it has held firmly for a good number of years now - whether it is repeated in casual, informal conversation, in a talk, an article, or in a resolution - without being told: "You are revising our ideas, betraying Marxism, trying to placate Thomas, or systematically liquidating yourself ideologically into social democracy!" The most elementary conceptions of our movement produce this reaction. The reason for this state of affairs need not be sought too long. The fact is that our "Left-Wing" comrades have revised our ideas, and in a considerable way, or rather, when they accuse us of betraying "our" ideas, the "our" refers not to the independent socialist tendency, but elsewhere. To this meaning of the charge, we yawningly plead guilty. Indeed, there is nothing to "plead," we proclaimed that "revision" many years ago.

When a comrade who has been in the YSL for just a short time, and who has blundered into the "Left-Wing" caucus, accuses us in this fashion, we can believe in his honesty, for he may understandably be ignorant of what we stand for on this, that or the other question. When Comrade Wohlforth, who has been in our movement for some two-and-a-half years, and in a leading position, moreover, hurls such charges, when he indicts us for some "horrendous betrayal," when he states that he is "flabbergasted" at the latest "capitulation" of the "right-wing," we hesitate over whether to ascribe it to ignorance, or to demagogery. But when Comrade Mage makes such a claim and gives as evidence views we have maintained for years, we find it impossible - charitable as we are about the motives of people in general and comrades in particular - to credit him with ignorance, given the fact that he has been in the YSL (and in one of its predecessors, the SYL) for some six or seven years, has been a leading member for some time, and is fairly well-read. (In all fairness, we should point out that in the most recent "Left-Wing" bulletin Wohlforth has changed his tune somewhat. He no longer speaks of "our ideas," but rather, of "Trotskyism," "Trotskyist views," etc. It is these that we are revising. Needless to say, for Wohlforth "Trotskyism" is incarnated in some of Trotsky's worst mistakes, and in the positions of the S.P. Note to Comrade Arden and others: no comrades, we are not slandering you nor your "caucus". If you regard this as slander, protest to your leading co-thinkers Mage and Wohlforth, for they are slandering you.)

The Method employed by the "Left-Wing" Caucus, then, is based on a mixture of duplicity and ignorance, or more accurately, duplicity feeding on, or hoping to feed on, ignorance. We ask the comrades, why not stop this pretence? Why not simply say that you no longer - or that you never did - agree with the ideas held by the YSL, instead of pretending that your new views are the ones maintained by the YSL all along, which the "right-wing" is revising? Disagreement is no crime, nor is it incompatible with membership in the YSL. It won't, to be sure, change anyone's opposition to your views by as much as a hair's-breadth, but at least it would then be possible to respect you as honest opponents.

None of the foregoing should be taken by anyone to mean that we have not modified our views in any respect during the past years, and that we are unlikely to modify them in the future. Such a claim, in our eyes, would do us no honor. Every living organization changes and modifies its opinions, as time brings new problems or new aspects of old problems to the fore, or as it reveals that certain concepts have become outmoded, are in need of new clarification or were indeed wrong to begin with. If we thought that our tendency held today the identical ideas, down

to the last detail, that it proclaimed a decade ago, we would be gloomy indeed, about its value for the socialist cause. We leave to the possessors of the "finished program" - among whose brilliant points can be found the aphorisms, "strike while the iron is hot" and "Trotskyism means business" - the dubious distinction of claiming their unalterable fidelity to every last word written by Lenin and Trotsky, and to the latter's most mistaken ones at that. Those who claim they do not deviate an inch from every pronouncement of the "masters" of socialism approach the condition best described by a word that our "Left-Wing" friends are so fond of - "goat-se". Does one have to explain in our movement that scientific socialism is not a set of "finished" dogmas, but a methodology, a guide to the resolution of problems?

During the last decade and a half the independent socialist tendency has indeed discarded many ideas held by the Trotskyists and other socialists during the 1930's, and modified others. We are proud that we have substituted for the mistaken, or out-moded, views once held, since our "revisions" comprised substantial theoretical contributions to socialist thought. While the good professors of Cannon University searched the pages of Pravda and Izvestia for evidence that some Russian peasant somewhere in Siberia owns his own cow, as confirmation for Trotsky's view that Stalinism in Russia was a "centrist" tendency capitulating to "right-wing" capitalist restoration, and while the Militant analyzed the Czechoslovakian Stalinist coup of 1948 as a further capitulation by Stalinism to capitalism, and while that paper was announcing, a few days before the Chinese Stalinist armies crossed the Yagtzé River on the drive which threw Chiang out of China, that Mao would never cross the Yagtzé, since his greatest desire was to capitulate to Chiang, our tendency was deepening and enriching its analysis of Stalinism as a new social phenomenon - an analysis representing a major theoretical acquisition for the movement.

While the SWP was proclaiming the "unconditional defense of the Soviet Union" even as the Russian armies were preparing to over-run Eastern Europe, and later, analysed the Cold War as an international class and civil war, with Russia representing the camp of the international proletariat, we were expounding and applying our Third Camp views of opposition to both imperialisms and to their war aims.

While the SWP proclaimed its "finished" - ugh, what an odious word - fidelity to the incomplete appreciation of democracy which characterized the Communist International during even its best days and not necessarily Trotsky's ideas at that, for an inner-party democracy, Cannon is a Zinovievist, more than he is a Trotskyist - we were enriching our conception of the inseparability of democracy from socialism, a concept of which we can indeed be proud, and one, parenthetically, which is precisely the heart of the dispute between Comrade Shane and ourselves on the question of the Hungarian Revolution.

Our fundamental ideas are those set forth by such titans of the socialist movement as Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg, Trotsky, Debs and others, as we have applied them to the problems of our day plus the contributions that our movement has made itself. We are not revising these ideas, let alone abandoning them, either in our resolution on the "Crisis of World Stalinism," or in our position on socialist regroupment. On the contrary, we are furthering them. And we wish to advance them still further, by abandoning all of the sectarian vestiges from the past, all of the out-moded concepts of work, all of the habits that result from "sect" existence which stand in the way of re-establishing the socialist movement in this country, and which stand in the way of our contributing our fruitful ideas to that movement.

To be frank, we are getting a little tired of hearing from those who never understood or never agreed with our views and from those who have just decided that they hold different position, as well as from people who were yesterday recruited simultaneously into the YSL and into the "Left Wing" Caucus, that it is "we," the YSL "right-wing," that is to say, the overwhelming majority of the YSL, who are "breaking" with our views. It has become wearisome to be forced to watch our "Left-Wingers" hold up a set of ideas which our movement never held, or discarded as false a dozen years ago, views which happen (?) to resemble in many respects those of the S.F., and then proclaim: "You, the YSL 'right-wing' (i.e., the YSL's overwhelming majority), you are deserting these ideas and systematically liquidating them."

Come, come, comrades! Isn't it about time that you rang down the curtain on this boring farce?

As could be expected, Mage's articles are full of expressions of horror, amazement, surprise, etc., at various conceptions expressed in the Draft Resolution on this, that, and the other question. These clearly, are the points on which he thinks that our "systematic ideological liquidation into social democracy" finds expression. It goes without saying, that these are ideas that our movement has held for a long time, some for as many as a decade and more. Considerations of space and time prevent us from undertaking an exhaustive examination of the exhibits in Mage's "Chamber of horrors," but it will be instructive to look at some of the more important items.

1) The Infamous Paragraph 25 or Which Side of the Barricades Is Shane On?

Paragraph 25 of the Draft Resolution states that "Even if, as concretely history has precluded, the democratic anti-Stalinist revolution were under bourgeois leadership, or under the leadership of forces aiming to restore capitalism, socialists would be duty bound to give support to and participate in the revolution, so long as it was a genuinely democratic one." Shane quotes this sentence.

In the next sentence, which Shane does not quote, the Resolution spells out the nature of this support: "In giving such support, they would not support the bourgeois leadership of the revolution politically, but would urge the working-class elements in the revolution to organize themselves separately on the basis of a socialist program and to contest for the leadership of the revolution." What is envisioned, then, is critical support to the revolution, without political support to its bourgeois leaders.

Mage reacts by throwing his hands up in the air. He "cannot take this seriously" since it is a betrayal of the Third Camp. The "NAC majority simply didn't know what they were saying (hardly a unique event) and...voted down Tim's amendment out of pure habit." Mage with great generosity, expects us to "repudiate this idea of (our) own accord" and magnanimously informs the NAC that he will not stand in the way of this "repudiation." (Alas, there is little gratitude in politics, as elsewhere in life...Speaking for myself, I must decline to accept Shane's gratuitous offer, and decline it without even thanking the donor. For you see, there is nothing that needs to be repudiated.)

Clearly, The Infamous Paragraph 25 is to the "Left Wing" one of the glaring signs of the headlong flight by the YSL "right-wing" towards "social democracy," a part of that "systematic political adaptation," a step towards that "systematic ideological liquidation," one of our efforts to have the Resolution be "acceptable to the SF-SFP." Alas, Comrade Mage, this was the position of the independent socialist tendency long before anyone thought of unity with the SF,

some 11 or 12 years ago in fact.

In 1945-1946 there existed a broad, popular democratic opposition movement to Stalinism in Poland, under the leadership of the Peasant Party leader, Mickolajczk. The then Workers Party, predecessor to the Independent Socialist League - whose youth section, the then Socialist Youth League, is one of the two predecessor organizations of the YSL - declared for "critical support to the Mickolajczk camp." Subsequently, at the time of the CP coup in Czechoslovakia in 1948, the ISL declared that had there been a democratic movement resisting the CP, even if that movement were under the leadership of Benes and Masaryk - the political spokesmen of Czech capitalism - the duty of socialists would be to support that movement. And while we are not acquainted with its position in detail, we are certain that the YPSL-SP of those years held a similar opinion.

To be sure, the fact that the ISL-SYL and the YPSL held this position a dozen years ago does not settle the question of the correctness of the policy, either then or now. But what it should dispose of, once and for all we trust, is this absurdity about it being some new line thought up this year in order to "liquidate into social democracy." Of course, Mage has the privilege, if he wants to so decide, of thinking that the "liquidation" took place a long time ago, long before he even joined, in fact. All we ask is that he acknowledge that he has changed his views, or that he never agreed with the views of the movement he joined - whichever is the case - and that he stop pretending that the movement is departing from its original views while he remains true and holds fast to them. We have no right to expect any more than this, we have the right to insist on no less.

What of the question itself, however? Would support to a democratic anti-Stalinist revolution led temporarily by a capitalist leadership mean abandonment of Third Camp socialism? Where did Mage ever get the notion that being a Third camp socialist involved refusal to take sides in any struggle - including presumably civil wars, colonial wars, trade union struggles, political struggles, etc - unless one side were socialist? That's not what the YSL taught him, nor what he learned in the SYL. Our Third Camp position, we have made abundantly clear, refers to international imperialist (imperialist on both sides, that is) rivalries and wars, and not necessarily at all to civil wars between democratic forces and totalitarian ones, and other struggles of all kinds.

Lenin, Mage will remember, supported neither side in the imperialist First World War. Though neither he nor anyone else at the time used this phrase, it can be said that he had a "Third Camp" position with respect to that war. Yet this did not prevent him from supporting in the sense indicated above Kerensky against Kornilov. During the 1930's Trotsky held what may be termed a "Third Camp" position with respect to the looming imperialist Second World War between Berlin-Rome and London-Paris (although his views on "defense of Russia" introduced complication into that position, complications that we need not consider here for they do not affect the question we are now concerned with). That did not prevent him from supporting -/the sense we have indicated - the Loyalist camp against Franco. Were Lenin and Trotsky also "liquidating ideologically"? That is precisely what some of the sectarian groups to the "left" of the Trotskyist movement that existed in the 1930's said about Trotsky's Spanish position.

Or, to abandon the past and examine a contemporary problem, what if there is an anti-Fascist revolution in Spain tomorrow, led by bourgeois democrats? Will not Mage support it, in the manner we indicate? Or will he be neutral, claiming that this is the "Third Camp position"?

And why should it be different in Hungary, assuming that the Hungarian Revolution, as was not and could not be the case, was led by pro-capitalist leaders? We hope that Mage will not reply by telling us that such a hypothetical case would be the beginning of World War III, since as is well-known to him, if that is what it were, our position would accordingly be different. We are talking about a situation in which an imperialist international war does not overshadow and absorb the civil war. In Spain, to be sure, the class content on both sides would be the same: capitalist on the democratic side, and capitalist on the fascist side. In Hungary it would be different, capitalist in the democratic camp, bureaucratic collectivist in the totalitarian camp.

Is that the reason for the difference in position? But if so, then it must be that for Mage totalitarian bureaucratic collectivism is by virtue of its social character more progressive than democratic capitalism, since we hope that Mage agrees that the political regime of democracy is to be favored over the totalitarian political regime. We would like to hear the theory behind this view. It will make interesting reading. and, incidentally, Comrade Shane, where would you stand in the hypothetical struggle we have outlined? Are we to infer that you would be neutral, that you would hold what you call a "Third Camp" position in such a struggle? You don't exactly say. For that reason and since you appear in general rather lukewarm towards the ideas of the "Third Camp," the suspicion arises that while you reject supporting the democratic camp in such a case, you don't exactly mean to be neutral either. We will be delighted, of course, to have this suspicion allayed.

For our part, we declare ourselves ready to support (in the sense we have indicated) every popular, democratic struggle against Stalinism, even if it be under temporary pro-capitalist leadership. We hold this position, not because of our attachment to capitalism over bureaucratic-collectivism, but because of our firm attachment to democracy as opposed to totalitarianism, and our conviction as to its progressiveness as compared with dictatorship. (Not to speak of the fact, that in Russia's Eastern European satellites, such a struggle would have a second progressive significance, that of a colonial struggle against imperialist domination, a factor which should raise the question of such critical support in any case!)

Some comrades have inquired in respect to this paragraph as follows: since this hypothetical case you envision was historically precluded in Hungary, why refer to it in the resolution? Our answer precisely because it makes clear our view of democracy, its role in the anti-Stalinist revolution, its function as the unifier and definer of the struggle against Stalinism. and, moreover, precisely because Comrade Shane objects to it. This, not because we are mean and just wish to create additional antagonisms between ourselves and him. Not at all. But because it distinguishes in a crystal-clear fashion his views on the various questions relating to democracy and Stalinism from ours; because it presents ours, therefore, in the sharpest form.

2) On the Bankruptcy of U.S. Foreign Policy and Other Bankrupts.

Our formulations on the bankruptcy of U.S. foreign policy, Mage informs us, are "radically false." While Shane does not charge that "the MAC majority holds these illusions, yet" it is obvious to him that we are adapting ourselves politically to these "social democratic ideas." Thus we have another instance of our revision of our ideas.

Is Mage troubled at all by the fact that the formulations contained in the Draft Resolution on this subject are part and parcel of the slogan of "A Democratic

Foreign Policy" which our movement has held for some years and which we thoroughly discussed at the last convention. That is no reason, of course, for Mage - or anyone else - to agree with our conceptions on this matter, but need he pretend that they constitute "adaptation, etc" based on our desire for unity with the SP-SDF.

It would take us too far afield in this article to attempt to discuss the question. All we wish to do, therefore, is to advise new comrades who did not participate in those discussions that they will learn precious little about this subject from the remarks in Mage's articles, and that they should read the old material, as well as discuss the matter with comrades who did participate in the discussions, both those who agree with the concept, and those who disagree.

3) On Free Elections for All Parties

Mage has himself a good laugh at the Resolution's declaration of "opposition to all those who took a dim view of the reappearance of the old capitalist or peasant parties, or who advocate the restriction of political rights in revolutionary Hungary to working-class or pro-socialist parties." He lists some of those we are therefore in opposition to: 1) Lenin, 2) Trotsky and the entire Fourth International in 1938, including Max Shachtman, 3) Some of the Hungarian workers. Patently, another anti-Marxist revision on our part.

Let us leave aside for the moment Mage's distortion of Lenin's views, the type of thing that one hears all the time from professional anti-Bolsheviks, since we will deal with it at some length further on. OK, we disagree with Lenin, Trotsky, and the Shachtman of 1938 on this question. This does not disturb us too much, however, since we are not icon worshippers. The fact is that this disagreement has existed for some time now, and has been widely known to all who cared to inquire. Our movement will not exactly be surprised to discover that it differs with Trotsky on this question. And since Shachtman announced his change of position on this point some 15 years ago, he likewise will probably not be too shocked to learn that he differs with Trotsky. We shall let you in on a secret, Comrade Mage, hold fast to your seat, lest the shock topples you. Shachtman - and the YSL - differ with Trotsky, whom we honor as a great revolutionist and as a great socialist theorist, on many other questions as well, and have been expressing these differences for at least ever since two days before we decided we were for unity with the SP-SDF. Would you care for a glass of water, Shane, or have you recovered from the surprise?

Mage informs us also that some working class elements in the Hungarian revolution apparently did not hold our view. He ignores the fact that all evidence indicates that the bulk of the Hungarian revolutionists did. But this aside, we are not too dismayed to discover that some didn't. Those who didn't, were wrong, Shane. That is all we have to say on this point. We'll survive the understandable fact that not everyone participating in the Hungarian revolution had the clearest democratic conceptions, just as we'll survive despite the fact that you, a member of our organization, don't have them either.

The question - in and of itself - of free elections and rights for all parties, including pro-capitalist ones, we shall discuss below when we deal with the essential point in dispute.

Miscellaneous Fakery

1) In connection with the "bankruptcy of U.S. foreign policy," Mage writes: the essence of our views is not just a matter of sloppy formulation, but of "adapting

...politically," this being proven "by the unanimous rejection by the NAC of an amendment offered by Comrade Tim which stated the elementary Marxist truth that 'The U.S. cannot take any truly non-imperialist, progressive, action...until such time as the workingclass comes to power in this country.'" Looks pretty bad for the NAC, doesn't it?

The reader who does not have the text of our Resolution and Wohlforth's amendment in front of him will think, because Mage doesn't bother to inform him otherwise, that our Resolution doesn't say a word on this point, and that Mage's quotation contains the whole of Wohlforth's amendment (except for the words left out where Mage places three dots, which incidentally are only the words "in such a situation"). The facts, however, are these: The resolution of the NAC contains the following sentence already in paragraph 42; "The existence of a genuinely democratic foreign policy would require a workingclass government in America, instead of the present one." And the sentence quoted by Mage from Wohlforth's amendment is not the whole of the amendment, but a sentence in a much lengthier one, which in addition to the quote used by Mage, contains many other nonsensical formulations.

2) Mage says that the Resolution affirms our theory that Russia is a bureaucratic-collectivist society and that the struggle in the world today is a three-cornered fight between three social forces, capitalism, Stalinism, and the international working class and colonial peoples. Here he is accurate, the Resolution does affirm our views (surprise!). He goes on to state that we "claim" that these positions of ours have been borne out by the developments of the past year. Here, he is actually inaccurate. The fact happens to be that the Resolution repeats our previous views on these questions without saying anything about their being "borne out." But this is an inconsequential point. Speaking for myself, I am ready to say that developments have borne out our theories; certainly they have corresponded to them more exactly than to any others that I know of. Certainly, developments have raised no obstacles to our theories, that I can see. To be sure, Mage thinks otherwise, and promises a thorough-going analysis after the convention. I will read it with interest. Until it appears (and in all likelihood, afterward too) we will hold to the views which we have developed, until such time as they are proven wrong, for in our view, they have been proven right so far. We trust that we will be forgiven for this. (Incidentally, Comrade Mage, what IS your theory on Russia these days? Do you still regard it as "state capitalist?" Or do you now think it a "degenerated workers state?" Or do you hold another position? We don't insist that you must rush into print at once your "thorough-going analysis," but how about letting the membership in on what your position is, even if you do so in a few words now, and expand on it later??)

Mage raises certain questions which he says are problems for our theories, or which are in "at least seeming contradiction to them", and asserts that we don't seem to have the "slightest awareness" of them, let alone try to cope with them. Come now, Shane, you may disagree with our answers, but don't pretend that we haven't examined these questions and given answers to them - every one!

Some of the problems posed by Mage are old ones, to which our movement has supplied answers (adequate or not is up to others to judge) years ago. Others are new - they came into existence in the last year or so. But these also, we have dealt with in the pages of Challenge and Labor Action. To be sure, they are not all dealt with in the Resolution, but then, who ever said that a Resolution has to cover everything. There are some comrades who feel it is too long as it stands now. It is impossible to take up all of these questions in this article, with respect to most of them we have to advise comrades to read what we have written elsewhere. We would like to mention a few points here, however.

Mage informs us that serious difficulties are created for our view that the world struggle is a three-cornered affair between capitalism, Stalinism and the "forces of all the oppressed" by the fact that the oppressed of China "have lined up with the Stalinist camp." We feel under this blow!

Does not Mage know that the oppressed of the United States "have lined up with American imperialism? Have we not patiently explained over and over again that when we speak of the "Third Camp" force in the world, we speak of a force an sich (in itself), and not necessarily of one fur sich (for itself). That is to say that we speak about a force which has social existence because of its social character (and in regard to the colonial peoples, in part because of their national character), and not necessarily about a force which has already attained consciousness of itself. Is this elementary idea, which we have explained a thousand times, so difficult a one for Mage to grasp? That a newcomer to the movement doesn't understand it, we can believe. But Mage? Are we really dealing with ignorance and a failure to apply intelligence, or with demagogery? Again, we would like to be charitable. But...

A liberal student asks Mage: "You say that the fundamental struggle in the United States is between the two fundamental forces (classes), workers and capitalists. But the workers don't think that way. They all want to become businessmen--they line up with capitalism, don't they? What about that?"

Does Comrade Mage fall flat on his face and concede that Marxism has been "refuted"? We doubt this. He explains to our liberal friends the difference between social existence and the consciousness of that existence, between the existence of classes, and class consciousness. Can't he see it in China? What's wrong with him, anyway?

He further indicts our position, specifically the view that the Russians "aimed at world domination" with the fact that Russian policy has "consistently sold out powerful Stalinist-led movement" in "Spain, Greece, France, Italy, Iran, Guatemala, and many other countries." We are aware of this fact, and have discussed it at great length, Comrade Mage, or don't you know that? We have explained that Russia does so whenever this is to its interest, including the interest of imperialist expansion, and not because it aims to capitulate to capitalism. And that while the various Communist Parties are adjuncts to the Russian Foreign Office, and can be "sold out" whenever this suits the aims of Russia - among which is the aim of world domination - they also are parties aiming at establishing bureaucratic-collectivist rule in their countries. You disagree - fine. Only, don't pretend we haven't discussed the question.

You disagree, fine. Only tell us what your view of it is. All you write is that this "sell-out" of the CP's by Russia has been in the "interests of a deal with Western imperialism." What has been the nature of the aims of such "deals" (we know that they have taken place, too.) we say; at least ever since 1939, to serve Russia's imperialist ambitions and needs. Your opinion? Silence! We shall have to wait for your "thorough-going analysis," which you shall give us after the convention.

In the interim, permit us to ask a few questions. Have the Russians made such deals - in your opinion, as distinguished from our view - because it is dying to capitulate to capitalism? Is the role of the Russian Stalinist bureaucracy that of capitulation to capitalism? Internally, in Russia? Internationally? Did it capitulate to capitalism in Eastern Europe? Did Mao capitulate to Chiang? Or is it that they wanted to capitulate, but the masses did not let them, and forced them to carry through workingclass revolutions that resulted in "deformed workers

states," much against their wills, to be sure?

Are these your views? Let us know. To be sure, these are the views of the S.P. But we hope that it isn't this fact which has deterred you to date from expressing yourself. Are you afraid that your answers will provide ammunition for the charge that your politics are similar to those of the S.P., and that it is you and not we who have sharply altered our politics? Have no fear, we have known the accuracy of this "charge" for some time now.

But let us turn now to the essential difference between the views of the NAC Draft Resolution, and the views of its "left-wing" critic, Comrade Mage, the difference over whether the road to socialism must be a democratic one, or not.

II

"The YSL rejects the concept that state ownership without democratic controls represents socialism; or that socialism can be achieved without political democracy, or through undemocratic means, or in short, in any other way than the conscious active participation of the people themselves in the building of the new social order."

From the YSL Statement of Aims
And Principles - Article II of
the YSL Constitution.

"The fight for democracy and the fight for socialism are inseparable. There can be no lasting and genuine democracy without socialism and there can be no socialism without democracy."

From the ISL Program in Brief

(Emphasis added in above quotes)

The question in dispute between the NAC Draft Resolution and Comrade Mage appears to be the following, for this is how Mage poses the problem: In Hungary do we stand for "democracy in general," as the NAC does, or do we orient towards workers democracy (the "dictatorship of the proletariat," as Mage puts it despite the fact that the history of the last thirty years or so makes it incredible that anyone would still use this phrase)? Mage stands, he tells us, for the latter. And corresponding to these strategic orientations, do we call for a parliamentary system - as Shane alleges the NAC does - or, for a soviet system, for "All Power to the Workers Councils" - as Mage does?

In Mage's articles, the difference appears to be this:

Mage stands for a workers state, for the domination of the state by the working-class and consequently he favors the "soviet" system as the organ of rule by the workers. This and this alone would have been the road to socialism in Hungary, had the revolution been victorious.

The NAC, on the other hand, Mage alleges, favors a "general," "classless" democracy, and in accordance with this aim, calls for a parliamentary system in Hungary. But this road leads back to capitalism, since there is no animal as "classless, general democracy." It "is necessarily bourgeois democracy," from which would flow "a huge number of economic and social changes" that would add up to a long stride toward capitalist restoration. Moreover, it was "theoretically.."

..possible for the Polish and Hungarian revolutions to result in the restoration of capitalism...", the MAC's rejection of this possibility to the contrary notwithstanding.

We have no way of knowing whether any YSL members who feel that in general they prefer workers councils to parliaments, and who have read the Draft Resolution, Wohlforth's amendments, and Mage's articles hastily have, on the basis of these surface appearances, decided that Mage and Wohlforth are right and the MAC wrong. But if there are any whose view this is, we would wish to suggest to them this cautionary word: the reality is very different from the appearance. Involved is something different, and indeed, something more important, namely; must the road to socialism be a democratic one? and since we are dealing with Hungary, not with England, a second question arises; If so, how is this principle to be applied to countries which are "backward" and have a non-workingclass majority?

Shane poses the problem falsely, in the first place, in that he misrepresents the Draft Resolution position at least on the question of a "council-system" versus a "parliamentary system." The fact is that the resolution nowhere calls for support to the latter as opposed to support for the former. To be sure, neither do we call for "All Power to the Workers Councils." We shall discuss this question, the problem of the nature of the organs of state power, further on. For the moment, however, let us ignore Mage's mis-representations on the MAC position on this point. Let us even assume that his way of posing the problem is more or less accurate, and proceed to examine what lies behind even this formulation of the dispute. Such an examination can most fruitfully begin with an attempt to follow Mage's thinking on the question.

Mage commences by reading us a lesson in Marxism. There is no such thing, he explains, as "plain, unqualified democracy," as "democracy in general." There may be "bourgeois democracy," or "workers democracy," or even "peasant democracy," but never "democracy," not so long as class society exists. Now in the crude form in which Mage puts this, the statement is open to objection. There is obviously a sense - and a scientific one too, not just an agitational one - in which it is correct to speak of "democracy" without adding a qualification as to class character. To develop this point, however, would take us afield, and would even be regarded as caviling. So for purposes of this discussion, let us say of Mage's statement, "so far, so good," and follow his thinking further.

What, he asks, is the inevitable class nature of "pure," "classless" democracy, and he answers: it "is necessarily bourgeois democracy." He explains why this is so, and not merely once, but twice. Each time a different explanation!

1) "Any form of 'pure' 'classless' democracy 'in general can only express the domination of the economically strongest class, i.e. is necessarily bourgeois democracy." (emphasis added)

2) "The 'classless' parliamentary forms of democracy, in a country with a peasant and petty-bourgeois majority represents bourgeois democracy." (emphasis added)

Take the second explanation first. Clearly, Mage argues that what will establish "pure democracy" as "bourgeois democracy" in Hungary is the fact that the peasants and urban petty-bourgeoisie comprise a majority in the country. Could greater confusion be possible? This is Marxism! If the class character of "pure" democracy is determined by the answer to the question, "Which class is in the majority," then how is it that in the United States "pure democracy" is bourgeois democracy? As Mage knows, the capitalists comprise a small minority of the population, claims to the contrary by the fact notwithstanding. Why isn't American "pure"

democracy then workers democracy?

Can it be Mage's point that the Hungarian peasant and petty-bourgeois majority would have placed the bourgeois stamp on "pure" democracy in that country because they would have organized - or been organized by the Catholic Church - for that purpose, while the American workers do not give "pure" democracy in this country the character of workers democracy because they have not yet organized themselves with this aim, but support a capitalist party? But in that event would not Mage have to maintain that to exchange bourgeois democracy for workers democracy all the U.S. workers have to do is to organize a socialist party, any old socialist party, even - heaven forbid - a broad, non-revolutionary, Debsian-type party - and win the Presidency and a majority in Congress? And does not every member of the YSL know that Mage would instantly label such a thought as "systematic ideological liquidation into the social democracy," and that Wohlforth would hysterically hurl less elegant and more inan e charges at anyone who even breathed, even in his sleep, such an idea? And that if some hapless member of the YSL "right wing" were ever, in an off-moment, to even say something that sounded, or could be made to sound like - or from which could conceivably be inferred - which of these it was would not matter - the above idea, two fat issues of the "Left-wing" Bulletin would instantly appear, brandishing denunciations.

To merely raise these questions is to at once show that Mage does not really mean this second explanation, it is something he thoughtlessly wrote down. We had best turn to his first explanation. That one we will find to be false, but not totally nonsensical.

"Pure" democracy, writes Mage, "...expresses the domination of the economically strongest class, i.e., is necessarily bourgeois democracy." The first part of the sentence, everything up to the "i.e.," could, it is true, be expressed in better and more generalized form, but it is more or less correct. How about the "...i.e., is necessarily bourgeois democracy" part of Mage's teaching on this point? "Necessarily?" Was the "democracy" of ancient Greece - let us leave aside for the purposes of this discussion the fact that the slaves did not exactly enjoy democratic rights - necessarily or even accidentally, or for that matter at all "bourgeois democracy"? Because "pure" democracy expresses the domination of the economically strongest class?

Thus even in the context of Mage's teaching, it is obvious that "pure" democracy is only necessarily, or even possibly "bourgeois democracy" when the bourgeoisie is the economically strongest class. And, that whatever class may be dominant under "pure" democracy, the capitalists are not, when they are not the economically strongest class, and are certainly not, when they do not exist. Isn't this commonsense, Comrade Mage? Not only that, it's also Marxism. And since not even Mage goes so far as to claim that the bourgeoisie would have been the economically strongest class in Hungary, or even that it exists there, do not his various "Marxist" lessons turn out to have - how shall we put it? delicately, if possible - a few imperfections? And that his charge about "abandoning" Marxism is - again we search for the delicate word or phrase, since we do not wish to offend - at least premature. That Mage does not, let us say, entirely understand the Marxist position on class rule and state power?

When we say that in a given society a given class is the ruling class, we mean that it rules socially. The distinction between the social rule and political rule must be kept firmly in mind, for if it is not, one can easily go astray, as did so many ex-Marxists over Nazism, and even over the New Deal. Some classes can rule socially even though they do not rule politically. Some classes - some, not all - can rule socially although they are not merely deprived of political rule but also of every political right. This, indeed, was roughly the case in

Hitler's Germany. The capitalist class ruled socially, i.e. was the ruling class, despite the fact that Hitler and the Nazi bureaucracy expropriated their political rule and most, if not all, of their political rights.

In what sense then, so many ex-marxists asked, were the capitalists the ruling class in Nazi Germany? What does this social rule mean anyway? Here, Mage's answer, though limited, is useful. They ruled because they were the economically strongest class, because they owned the property in the means of production, because they owned capital in other words, and in a capitalist system, the ownership of capital confers social domination on its owners. The class rules which owns (or controls) the decisive means of production and the surplus created by them. According to Marxism, the prevailing mode of production and exchange, and the concomitant production and property relations classes enter into, form the basis upon which the prevailing social organization and all other aspects of the "super-structure" arise. Under the capitalist mode of production, the capitalists by virtue of their ownership of property in the means of production rule socially, even where, as is the case under certain circumstances which we need not examine here, they have no political rights.

Can the workers rule socially even though they are deprived of their political rights, the way the capitalists can? Absolutely not. This has become abundantly evident as a result of our experience with Stalinism, and the contribution of our tendency on this question is of fundamental value. (Unlike us, the SWP believes that the workers can. Hence, despite the fact that the SWP states that Russian workers live "in a jail" so to speak, for them, the Russian workers still rule socially and Russia is a workers state, albeit degenerated. Indeed, for them, the "dictatorship of the Proletariat" - believe it or not - prevails in Russia - and not merely there, but in Hungary under Kadar as well.)

We say that the workingclass is not like the capitalist class in this respect because, not being a property-owning class, its social rule must be bound up with political rule, and certainly cannot exist where it has no political rights.

Earlier in this article we examined Mage's statement that "any form of 'pure' 'classless' democracy 'in general' can only express the domination of the economically strongest class, i.e., is necessarily bourgeois democracy." We pointed out that the last part of it, the section beginning with "i.e." has to be qualified by "where the bourgeoisie is the strongest class economically" and, by "where it exists" - although, actually the latter qualification is unnecessary, being predicated in the former. Aside from this, however, we stated that the first part of Mage's formulation - the part about the "economically strongest class" - though correct, could be stated "in better and more generalized form." What did we mean?

Simply this: that the formulation clearly applied to bourgeois society, but was not general enough to apply to all societies. A better, more generalized formulation, which would subsume under its head Mage's statement, would run as follows: Under democracy, or in the absence of democracy, a given class is the ruling class, i.e. rules socially, when the entire economic and social structure - the "socio-economic conditions," as contemporary sociologists would put it - is compatible with and in conformity with its mode of production, and its social domination, and is not compatible with the rule of any other class. The bourgeoisie ruled socially under Hitler, though politically disenfranchized, because the decisive "prevailing mode of economic production and exchange, and the social organization necessarily following from it" - to use Engels' phrase - remained capitalist and was in conformity only with the social rule of the capitalist class.

Let us return to Hungary, 1956. Had the revolution triumphed, i.e., had it not been crushed by the Russians, the workers would have ruled socially, would have, in other words, been the ruling class, precisely because the decisive mode of production and all of the "socio-economic conditions" would have been compatible and in conformity with its social rule and its alone. And this Comrade Mage, despite (really because, in a sense) of the existence of "pure" democracy "in general." (The decisive mode of production - the socialist mode - would not, to be sure, be in a "finished", developed, mature state. But that mode would be in the process of being constructed, or in other words, steps towards it would have been taken. And as for the "socio-economic conditions," one of the most important, perhaps the most important, among these would be the socialist consciousness of the workers and of other elements in the population, including: the students, intellectuals, and many, many petty-bourgeois and peasants. We are aware of this as you are, and contrary to what you say in your article, the Resolution points to this factor as one of those which define the revolution as socialist.)

To anticipate our more detailed discussion of this problem further on, let us ask, the rule of what other class would they have been more compatible with and in conformity with? The bourgeoisie? But even Mage knows there is none in Hungary. The urban petty-bourgeoisie (small handicraft producers and domestic, retail traders)? The rural petty-bourgeoisie (the peasants)? Would the means of production (and trade) which these classes own and control be decisive as compared with the weighty statified industries that would be under the control of the workers primarily? Or would the latter socially outweigh all of the retail shops, small-scale industrial enterprises employing a few workers each, and the privately owned farms put together? Among other things we must bear in mind that Hungary of 1956 was not Russia of 1917. While exact statistical information is not available to us at this moment, and may not - given Stalinist rule in Hungary - be available at all, we do know that approximately one-third, and maybe more, of Hungary's 1956 population was engaged in industry or mining, as compared with 5 to 10% in Russia in 1917, and that the proportion of industrial production to total production in Hungary in 1956 probably bears a similar ratio to that proportion in the Russia of 1917.

Especially given this fact, we can definitely feel certain about which sector of the economy would prove to exercise greater weight and be decisive. The statified "socialist-in-type" sector, of course. We do not mean to give the impression that all would be "smooth sailing" for a development toward socialism. Not at all. Problems there would be many. Mage points to some of these. We are as aware of them as he is. The difference between us lies in how we would respectively attempt to solve them, and this difference - as we shall show when we discuss these problems further on - relates to the question of whether one stands for the democratic road to socialism, or whether one stands for a road which is not democratic and which, whatever Mage's democratic feelings may be, takes long strides toward Stalin's conception of how to "build socialism" - and which in our opinion, cannot lead to socialism.

What about class rule and the state, the class character of state power? Most often, we know, the capitalist class wields the state directly, "runs the government," to put it in popular language. How about in Nazi Germany, however, it may be asked? In what sense did the Nazi state constitute a bourgeois state? After all, the Marxist concept of the state is not some fluffy piece of mysticism. The state power consists of the instruments of coercion and repression, of the military and the bureaucracy, of those "special bodies of armed men" and their "material appendages, prisons and repressive institutions of all kinds." "This power arising out of society, but placing itself above it, and increasingly separating itself from it, is the state." (Engels)

In Nazi Germany, this power was wielded, not by the capitalists, but by the Nazi bureaucracy and Hitler. Why then do we say that it was a bourgeois state? Because in the ultimate analysis, it was used not to undermine, but on the contrary, to defend, the social rule of the German capitalists. It was an instrument used not to aid the workers in their struggle against the capitalists, but to aid the capitalists in their struggle against the workers. It was not wielded by the capitalists, but it was wielded in the service of the social rule of the capitalist class. Thus, ultimately, it remained the "instrument of exploitation of wage-labor by capital" (Engels).

In this fundamental sense, that the state would have defended the social rule of the workers, we would have had a workers state in Hungary. In this sense alone? Do we mean that some bureaucracy, or that some other class or combination of classes would have "run" the state in the interest of the social rule of the workers? Not at all. There would have been a workers state because the workers would have ruled politically. But ruled how? Here the important difference between our view and that of Mage arises.

For Mage means that the workers, as a minority in the population, should have ruled as a minority, surrounded by a sea of hostile peasants and petty-bourgeois (who comprise the majority), and ruled in opposition to that majority through its repression. Whereas we say that the workers should have ruled in an alliance with that non-workingclass majority of the population, based on the democratic participation of it - of "the people" - in political rule. This is our firm conviction, not merely because we do not wish to violate our "ideal" of "pure" democracy, but because: whatever would have developed out of the situation envisioned by Mage it would not be socialism. If we have not learned that from our experience with Stalinism, we have learned nothing from it.

Do we distort Mage's view? We expect to be charged with doing so. But then ask our critics to conduct an examination of Mage's prognosis of the developments which would have ensued if the workingclass "dictatorship" and the "soviet system" had not been established in Hungary, and to tell us what he wants the "dictatorship" to do about these problems. We shall undertake such an examination ourselves further on. Meanwhile, let us ask another question.

As Mage, who undoubtedly read, and does not merely quote from, Lenin's "The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky" must know, "dictatorship" is not some vague notion, but something very concrete, to wit: "violence." "One cannot do away with the fact," explains Lenin to Kautsky, "that a dictatorship means a 'state'...of revolutionary violence of one class against another." This revolutionary violence must be directed against (and) for (the repression of) that minority - exploiting capitalists and landlords - who resist the revolution, and not merely platonically, but with guns in hand. The Russia of 1918, it will be recalled, was in the midst of a civil war.

Against whom does Mage wish the "dictatorship" used in Hungary? Who is to be repressed? The remnants of AVH men, who alone could be found to defend the Stalinist power? How long would they have been a problem, three days, a week? It does not matter, for Mage is not concerned with them. Against the capitalists and landowners who would have returned, in the case of some from the grave, in that of others from Vienna, New York, London and Paris, to reoccupy the factories and the land? If that is what Mage means, then he comes awfully close to Foster's slanders against the Revolution. No, we do not accuse Mage of allying himself with Foster on this question, for Mage knows that there is no bourgeoisie and there are not landlords to worry about.

Against whom, then, is the "revolutionary violence" that the "dictatorship" represents to be wielded? Read Mage's articles, comrades. The peasants, obviously, who, as Mage direfully predicts, will want to decollectivize the land, and will demand consumer goods from the statified industries. Against the urban petty-bourgeoisie, who will wish to reopen their peanut stands and their shoe repair shops and their "ladies-ready-to-wear" stores and who will also want consumer goods. They will have to be repressed. The Catholic Church will have to be repressed. Who else is there?

We, on the other hand, do not favor a policy that requires a "dictatorship" to repress them, for we do not favor a policy that leads to irreconcilable conflicts - that's why a state arises in the first place - with the peasants and petty-bourgeoisie over these questions. The peasants, we say, have the right to decollectivize the land. Woe to any socialist government that tries to prevent this. (Have you heard of Bela Kun's policy, Comrade Mage, and of the disaster that it led to, and of Lenin's condemnation of that policy? This is a germane question, because after all, we are talking about Hungary, and there once was a Soviet government there.)

The peasants and urban petty bourgeoisie will legitimately and rightfully demand consumer goods - and not they alone, the workers too - and woe to any socialist government that does not seek to satisfy this demand. Does Mage advocate "super-industrialization?" Then a surplus will have to be sweated out of the hides of the peasantry. Then, indeed, will a "dictatorship" be needed to repress the peasants when they resist. And later, to repress the workers too! But we will look more closely at these matters further on.

We stated that an alliance of the workers and peasants (and urban petty-bourgeoisie) is required. Will this be an equal alliance? Will the peasantry predominate in it? Or will the workers? The MAC Draft Resolution answers this question, during the course of its discussion of the workers councils, by pointing to the "working-class leadership in the democratic rule of the country." (emphasis added) The workers will be the leaders of the alliance, and in that sense too, we would have had a workers state. One can use the formulation, referred to by Mage, as the scientific description of what would have resulted from the revolution, here: there would be "a workers state and a workers and peasants government."

Why will the workers play the leading role, and exactly what do we mean by this statement? Simply this, that in all modern countries - including those which like Hungary combine modernity with "backwardness" - the social weight of the workers is "naturally" (socially) greater than that of the peasants and the petty-bourgeoisie. Because of the greater weight of cities as compared with the countryside, because of the greater weight of industry as compared with agriculture, because of the more concentrated condition of workers in factories as compared with peasants on their plots of land or shopkeepers in their stores, because of the greater power of cohesiveness and organization enjoyed by workers as compared with other sectors of the population, the workers will "naturally" (socially) exercise more influence and play the leading role.

Now anyone who wishes to may bemoan this fact of social life and say that it is unfair that peasants can not play the same kind of role as workers. Alas, nothing can be done about it. The point to be made is that there is nothing undemocratic in this state of affairs, or that, even if one wants to think there is, there is nothing that any class, party or individual (with or without state power) can do about it. Under socialism, this condition of the peasantry will ultimately disappear, but that because the peasantry will ultimately disappear.

That's on the one hand. On the other, we are faced with proposals to augment the "advantages" of the workers and to increase the "disabilities" of the peasants by political intervention, through restricting still further the "restricted" role in political life and society generally that they can "naturally" (socially) perform. Such restriction (or abolition), whether in the form of disenfranchisement, prohibition against the organization of political parties, exclusion from political life, or whether through direct police or military repression, or through a combination of both - that is undemocratic, and that we oppose.

We oppose it because it violates our democratic ideals; we oppose it because it is not the road to socialism.

(To be continued in the next issue of YSR)

Another Open Letter

George Rawlings

June 4th, 1957

Dear Comrade George,

In your article in the current YSR ("Some Observations on the Prospects of the YSL", Vol. 5, No. 2, June 1st, 1957) I note the following:

"...at a meeting at which I was recently present when the organizer of the unit, a supporter of the Majority, asked for aid in an important campus activity, the Minority comrades did not even give her the courtesy of listening to her proposal. The Minority reserves its talents it seems for the 'theoretical' problems of the organization."

The above section appears in a paragraph charging the Minority with having no "desire to build the YSL" -- as an illustration, or example.

The Unit in question is clearly Chicago. The meeting you mention was last week's business meeting which was both long and exhausting. Near the end of this meeting Comrade Nancy briefly reported on a new campus organization, probably worthy of YSL support, in which she is participating. She urged that other comrades work with her in this arena and she asked for volunteers. If I remember correctly no one volunteered, at least not audibly.

Also, she raised this point just after an exhausting item had been finished and everyone, or almost everyone, was relaxing, stretching, etc. Her report was "half-heard" by just about everyone and the general response, Right and Left, was pretty much the same... negative.

Further, and more important, only two members of the LMC were at this meeting. It is particularly unfair (and inaccurate) of you to cite either Ed or myself as examples of comrades who "reserve" our talents for "theoretical" problems. I doubt that you can correctly cite any member of the LMC in this regard but that is not what we are now discussing -- just as we are not discussing anything else in your article except the above passage.

The two members of the LMC you have chosen as examples, it so happens, do "desire to build the YSL". At the very meeting you are discussing two new applicants for YSL membership were present, both recruited by us. Also, we have both been, and are, engaged in regular YSL-building, Unit approved, work. Including work in other organizations. The two of us, together with Nancy, constitute the three most active members (YSLers) in the Unit's main campus arena... and I'm not even a student on campus. In addition I might mention that I am our most active member in what the unit has designated as our main off-campus arena, an activity which consumes a considerable amount of my time. In addition to these, and other, unit activities I attempt to write a little and read a lot... as a minor consideration I might add that I hold down a full-time job as well.

I only go into this detail to show you why I didn't volunteer for work in an additional arena.... I just don't have any more time to allot -- it's all allotted. Ed can speak for himself but his reasons are similar.

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The Unit is well aware of these facts and it was therefore unnecessary to mention why we didn't volunteer for the work in question, just as it was unnecessary for supporters of the Majority to explain their like failure, and since the report was a brief one and the call for volunteers almost ritualistic (in terms of the response expected) no one even bothered to pay much attention to the proposal.

Should the Unit change its present evaluation of the Chicago scene it would then be an entirely different matter. In the meantime the Unit's evaluation remains that the "important campus activity" you refer to is not as important as the two organizations (one on campus, one off) which the unit has designated as our two major arenas -- and in both of which members of the Minority are outstandingly active on behalf of the YSL.

In view of these considerations I suggest that your Chicago example is inaccurate and fails (completely) to substantiate the point you are attempting to establish -- that the members of the Left have no desire to build the YSL.

I term this a "slander" as well because the effect of your inaccurate example can only be to create a false picture -- a picture which will serve to "dis-credit" supporters of the LWC in the minds of those ignorant of the facts involved.

I assume that you were unaware of the main considerations stated above and that you simply made an honest error. You saw, or thought you saw, something that substantiated a generalization which it would be in the interest of your "tendency" to establish a factual basis for -- you therefore included both the example and the generalization in an article which you were writing under the press of time. The likelihood that such is the case is re-inforced by the fact that you were only "passing through" Chicago and probably lacked precise information about local activities.

Though the point involved may seem relatively minor, it is not. The atmosphere in the YSL is already so fouled with mis-information, distortion and slander, both personal and political, that it is difficult for any of us, whatever our position on Unity, to breath without inhaling or exhaling (consciously or unconsciously) some of this poison. Each new addition only makes the total atmosphere worse for all of us.

As a member of the MAC and as an official public spokesman of the Majority it would seem that you should be especially aware of this and especially careful.

I therefore request that you publically retract or correct the section (quoted above) of your article which clearly falls into this category... however unintentionally. *

Fraternally,

Scott Arden

* An "advance copy" of this Open Letter was forwarded to Comrade Rawlings prior to the publication date of this issue of YSR. This "advance copy" was a "first draft" hurried off in the hope that it might reach Comrade Rawlings in time for him to reply in this issue -- only minor changes, however, were made in the "finished draft", above, and it is in no major respect different from the copy sent to Comrade Rawlings. --S.A.

CONSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS FOR A
HEALTHY SOCIALIST UNITY

by George R. MacKenzie

Events on the international scene have made many more elements of American radicalism susceptible to the position of third camp socialism now than has been true heretofore. At the same time, domestic conditions make advisable at this time the exploration of possibilities for a merger of existing socialist sects, aimed at creating a nucleus for a future labor party.

If, within a unified socialist organization, third camp socialists are free to disseminate their views, a healthy and fruitful process of cross fertilization of ideas seems assured, with international events facilitating a spreading of the third camp position. While merger with the SP-SDF appears to be the most likely course of action at this time for further dissemination of our views, it should not be regarded as necessarily the only course available. If it appeared that third camp socialists inside a merged organization would be subject to bureaucratic repression, we would probably be better off remaining in our own organizations, attempting to appeal over the heads of the SP-SDF leadership to their rank and file, and to susceptible elements outside the SP-SDF.

In my opinion, any merger of socialist sects which is to serve as a nucleus for an all-inclusive socialist regroupment must include firm constitutional guarantees of complete freedom for all tendencies and affiliated organizations to maintain their own publications and complete freedom to dissent, both internally and publicly, from the leaders of the parent organization and their political program. Proponents of unity have asserted that if the SP-SDF leadership decided in favor of merger, it would automatically mean that they were prepared to grant such freedoms. This I will not dispute. However, desirable as such comradely feelings of tolerance and good will are, of themselves they guarantee little or nothing of a permanent nature. There would appear to be little basis for assuming that the attitudes of the present SP-SDF leadership at the time of a merger would necessarily be those of the leadership of a future merged organization, which would presumably contain many new elements and therefore a political coloration which is difficult to predict. Comradely feelings of tolerance and good will are, unfortunately, apt to be rather transitory commodities, especially in the radical movement, whereas constitutions have an assuringly--or exasperatingly--permanent character about them. Assuming that such comradely feelings of tolerance and good will exist at the time of merger, it appears exigent to concretize such positive attitudes into firm constitutional guarantees, rather than blithely disregarding all consideration of future contingencies, as many unity proponents appear to do.

Specifically, with regard to a new youth organization, proponents of unity have stated that such an organization should have closer ties to the newly created parent organization than exist presently between the YSL and the fraternally affiliated ISL. Since the immediate net result of an ISL merger with the SP-SDF will be an organization which is more conservative than the present ISL, and since with the influx of new elements it is difficult to determine what the character of the merged organization will be later on, if the youth organization is to have less independence than exists presently, it appears exigent that constitutional guarantees of the right to dissent be provided, so that the youth organization can be free to assume a more militant role than the adult organization, should this be warranted by future circumstances.

It has been stated that the attitudes of the present SP-SDF leaders are such that, by the use of correct phrasology and punctuation, minorities in that organization and YPSL members now in substance enjoy complete freedom to dissent, that constitutional guarantees are therefore unnecessary, and that to demand these might be to "rock the boat" in unity negotiations. I reiterate: it is hazardous to assume that the attitudes of the individuals comprising the leadership of the present SP-SDF will necessarily be those of the leaders of a future merged organization. Furthermore, if the raising of such elementary demands would "rock the boat", third campers may wish to give more searching thought to the prospect of climbing aboard.

It has also been objected that to raise demands for constitutional guarantees would be to "bind the hands" of the unity negotiators. I find it difficult to conceive of such elementary and obvious demands as comprising an encumbrance. Any such "binding" is fundamental to the future preservation of freedom! Those entrusted with formulating a unity proposal will do well to consider which they find more distasteful, a minimal and debatable "binding" of the hands of negotiators now, or the possibility of being very concretely bound from taking effective political action five or ten years hence.

Nor can I consider seriously the contentions that constitutions are merely scraps of paper, and that existing relationships of power are the sole effective factor governing freedom to dissent. I suffer from no illusions about constitutions comprising an impervious bulwark against pressures in a living, breathing political movement, nor would I minimize the significance of power relationships. Nevertheless, it appears obvious that prudently written constitutions can at least act as a brake against hasty and ill-conceived majoritarian actions, and therefore serve as an important, if hardly invulnerable, protection for minorities and affiliated organizations. Were constitutions merely scraps of paper, I believe the witchhunting which we have witnessed in the last decade would have been

unleashed with even greater fury. I feel certain that many individuals are today thankful for the existence of Constitutional protections, however badly compromised, without which they might have undergone far greater persecution than did actually occur.

Unity proponents have stated that such matters as the third camp position should not be "up for grabs"--that is, not subject to further discussion within our tendency. I can think of no more important area than that of freedom to dissent for minorities and affiliated organizations to which the yardstick of "not up for grabs" should apply. Concretely, I believe minority rights should require considerably more than a simple majority to amend or abrogate.

A healthy unity would be more desirable than our present separate existence, an unhealthy unity much less so. A philosophy of "unity at all costs" should be avoided--at all costs--, and the demands for constitutional guarantees of complete freedom to dissent for minorities and affiliated organizations should in no wise be regarded as a maximum demand which would be expendable in the process of unity negotiations.

Merger with the SP-SDF is a gamble, and one which is probably worth taking. Undoubtedly it will not be possible to foresee all future contingencies and to eliminate all areas of risk. However, the provision of firm constitutional guarantees of the right to dissent will go far toward reducing one large area of risk and will increase by that much the soundness of the unity proposal.

The passage of some form of unity proposal at the coming convention seems assured. It is to be hoped that the bulk of delegates will not be stampeded into a "unity at all costs" perspective, either as a response to the raising of such a perspective by the YSL leadership, or as a reaction, however understandable, against the deplorable level at which some spokesmen for the Left Wing Caucus have conducted their campaign. Rather, it is to be hoped that the delegates will decide the issue of unity on its own merits in a calm and judicious manner, aimed at achieving a formula in which the elements of risk can be minimized, thereby laying the foundations for a healthy and fruitful socialist unity.

APPENDIX

(Being an utterly useless something which sometimes becomes worse than useless and is removed, thereby replacing the worse than useless something with a useless nothing.)

What Constitutions Constitute

I have no fancies
about constitutions.
Rather I fancy that I fancy
just exactly what constitutions
constitute.
Constitutions are pieces of paper
which are brakes
which make swift actions by swift multitudes
slow.
Good founding fathers
can found good constitutions
that are bad for bad for bad multitudes
but are good for good multitudes.

YSLers
should be good founding fathers
and help found a good constitution
that will help our good multitude
take good political action
and help found a good society
in which living will be good
and
in which bad multitudes
will become
good.

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BRIEF NOTES ON BUREAUCRATIC COLLECTIVISM

(The following, which constitutes Part III of "For a Continuation of the Revolutionary Course," is an abbreviated attempt to clarify some of the theoretical bases for Parts I and II; it should have preceded the other parts, but polemical haste forced a reversal of the usual procedure.--M.O.)

1. The notion that the fall of capitalism automatically assures the rise of socialism received its death blow in November, 1917, its coup de grace with the expulsion of the Left Oppositions from Communist Parties throughout the world prior to the first five-year plan in the USSR, and its autopsy with the formation of the Workers Party by Shachtman, Burnham and Abern in the Spring of 1940. One cannot understand the world today, much less do anything about it, without understanding these events. To understand them properly is to reject once and for all notions that the USSR is simply a "totalitarian" state, or the notion that what has gone wrong is simply the result of "mistakes," "serious errors," or even "crimes," and it is to reject above all the over-simplified, Vulgar "Marxist" notion that Russia is any kind of workers' state, degenerated or otherwise.
2. Burnham was by no means the first to discover that there is a third alternative to the development of a modern industrial society. But (in the Managerial Revolution) he mistook a similarity of surface phenomena in Fascist Germany, New Deal USA and Soviet Russia to indicate an inevitable wave of the future; it is as if he had said A produces A'; B produces B'; C produces C'. A', B', C' all resemble X rather than S. It is the X, says Burnham, that has become essential, not the Aness, Bness or Cness of the particular historical phenomena. Since S has never appeared, it never will; X is barbarism. The only way to prevent all society from proceeding to X is to stop society from proceeding at all. It is a hopeless task, but we do what we can; we write for the National Review.
3. But the theory of Bureaucratic, or State, Collectivism, did not originate in Burnham's typewriter. Anton Ciliga has pointed out (Politics, August '46) that he encountered forms of the theory in a Soviet Prison in political debates in the early '30s. The idea can be traced directly to the Workers' Group in the early '20s, still out of prison, and Rosa Luxemburg indicated similar theories as early as 1918. Further, it has recently cropped up independently in Poland: writers in Poprostu have discussed "the socio-political system called Stalinism" in terms of "a relationship of economic dependency of the popular masses on the group of administrators." (Dissent, Spring, 1957) Ciliga hit the core of the problem in saying that "the organization of production on a national scale began (in Russia) to become the business of the apparatus of the nascent bureaucracy." Likewise, Luxemburg, (The Russian Revolution, Wolfe translation, pub. 1940) said:

"In place of the representative bodies created by general, popular elections; Lenin and Trotsky have laid down the soviets... But with the repression of political life in the land as a whole, life in the soviets must also become more and more crippled. Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion, life dies out in every public institution, becomes a mere semblance of life, in which only the bureaucracy remains as the active element. Public life gradually falls asleep, a few dozen party leaders of inexhaustible energy and boundless experience direct and rule... Such conditions must inevitably cause a brutalization of public life..."

Thus the development of bureaucratic or state collectivism is neither the result of "mistakes," nor alone the result of mistaken policies such as "socialism in one country;" nor is the development inevitable. It is the result of particular historical phenomena which can be altered and fought against by a conscious working class and by socialists aware that the revolution only ushers in the arena for the development of socialism--with the revolution the fight only begins. It is for this reason above all, Luxembourgeois pointed out, that we must have democracy, for only those who possess all the answers can do without democracy. Socialists can point out what is wrong with capitalism and how to get rid of it, but any socialist who has the answers as to what will replace capitalism in a blueprint is either naive or a charlatan. Thus we need democracy to create an arena for hammering out, criticizing, discussing the road that lies ahead.

4. The accusation that the concept of bureaucratic collectivism does not fall into the scope of Marxist theory is false. By Marxian definitions, a class is defined by its position within and its relation to a system of production. In all historical epochs since primitive communism classes have been characterized by the fact that one is able to appropriate the fruits of another's labor. And behind the smoke of inequality in the Soviet Union there burns the fire of precisely such a relationship. In Russia the role of the working class within and in relation to the system of production is their absolute lack of individual or collective power over it. They have no voice in what is to be produced, how, where, or how it is to be organized, distributed or priced. There is another social class, by Marxist definition, which does decide all of these things: the exploiters which control not only the economic but the political and social life of the country--the bureaucracy, which has grown since 1917 and has been consolidated in its class power (not necessarily individual power) since the first five year plan. Mobility between classes has been severely cut, in addition.

5. Russia cannot be reckoned a workers state of any kind simply because industry is state owned or because state ownership was set up by the great October Revolution. If the socialism of Russia is degenerated, it must be degenerated to something; according to Trotsky's formulation, the end of World War II was to bring either a proletarian revolution which would overthrow the Soviet bureaucracy and make the problem of "class" or "caste" unimportant, or, no revolution taking place, imperialism either from without or in the form of a bourgeois Bonapartist revolution from within, would sweep away the victories of October. Trotsky's deadline has long since passed. Russia's state ownership is not swept away; there is no nascent capitalism at all. The bureaucracy, even after Poland and Hungary, is stronger than ever, and more consolidated in its power. The nascent workers state of 1917 has not degenerated, it has generated a new social class.

6. In a different form state collectivism has appeared incipiently elsewhere, not only in the Soviet bloc but also in the social-democracies of the West. It is this latter development which leads many of us to our attitude toward labor parties and parties of social-democracy. It is not that they capitulate to capitalism that deeply worries us, although this has in the past played an important role. It is that they can easily develop, as they have in at least two places (Labor Britain and Israel) strong tendencies toward bureaucracy and bureaucratic collectivism. In Israel we have the astonishing phenomenon that one small group of leaders controls at once the political party of the workers, the trade unions of the workers,

the state-owned industries ("of the workers") and, through a coalition government, the government (also "of the workers"). Thus a striker faces the peculiar situation that he is striking against "himself" because Ben-Gurion controls the industry; approval of the strike is denied by Ben-Gurion who controls the Trade Union Federation; Ben-Gurion the party boss refuses to intervene and Ben-Gurion the prime-minister calls in the army to break the strike. But for the fact that there are still opposition parties and some degree of freedom for (non-Arab) minority opinion, here is the Soviet Union itself, in a different historical and cultural context.

7. The Labor Government of Britain, according to our comrades of the IIP, showed "no inclination to allow the working class any real control or even a share of control in the Nationalised industries." Government-appointed Board which ran the nationalized industries often were composed of representatives of the capitalist class. Changing signs on the outside of the shop apparently did not change the conditions of the workers much; the strikes, put down by the Labor Government with army help in some instances, testify to that. We have learned something by that lesson, we have learned the slogan of "Workers Control," raised at about the same time as the English strikes by the Libertarian Caucus of the Socialist Party-USA.

8. Those who recognize the alternatives facing capitalism: war, depression, fascism, socialism, also recognize that another alternative exists: bureaucratic collectivism, whether in its Stalinist form or in a Labor bureaucratic form is far more dangerous to the hope of humanity than anything else, for this alternative means the Garrison State of 1984. Wars and depressions, even fascism as we have known it (although perhaps victorious fascism may have developed into Bureaucratic collectivism--we don't know--do not solve the contradictions inherent in capitalism. State collectivism creates other contradictions, but it solves the contradictions of capitalism. With the technological forces at the disposal of the State, we do not know if such other contradictions could lead to a revolutionary alternative, a dialectical opposite of any effectiveness, to the bureaucratic state. It is a situation which we do not propose to wait to find out about. It is for this reason that we do not blindly rush into the arms of a Labor Party or of a social-democratic party--we join such a movement only in a certain way, guaranteeing for ourselves first the right to raise the slogan of Workers Control against bureaucracy, the right to fight for our aims and views without recriminations and expulsions, in a fraternal and comradely way. And it is because we oppose the bureaucratic collectivist tendencies not only of the Soviet Union (where it is no longer a tendency) but everywhere else as well that we stand opposed to the theories of democratic centralism and the vanguard party. These are the antitheses of real democracy, and when we say socialism we mean democracy, for socialism without democracy becomes not the state of the workers, but the graveyard of the workers. Socialism without democracy is a contradiction like "the socialist state"--for a state is always the instrument of coercion of a ruling class, and what class rules over another in socialism? In the Soviet Union we know what class rules, and over whom. But that is not socialism.

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M. Oppenheimer

KNOW-NOTHINGISM IN THE YSL

By Martha Wohlforth

The monster of know-nothingism has arisen in the YSL and is threatening its very existence. Several expressions of this sentiment appear in the YSR (Vol. 5, No. 2), and there is no reason to doubt that it has gripped the minds of many comrades.

This know-nothing ideology is formulated in its most blatant manner by Faith Wallstron. Although her piece, "How Things Look from the Back Row", expresses the sentiments of know-nothingism openly for the first time, the basis for them has been prepared since the very beginning of the present factional struggle. Since the September plenum and the electoral controversy, the right wing has made no effort to discuss political issues in a serious manner with the left wing; hysterical accusations, slander and ridicule, and threats of expulsion have prevailed. Although granting the left wing its formal democratic rights (with a few exceptions), the right-wing leadership of the YSL has made a mockery of all its talk about "democracy." The most "democratic" constitution in the world cannot guarantee a democratic organization. Only when a member of an organization feels free to get up and criticize the leadership on any point without fear of a vicious retaliation, without fear of being laughed at and heckled, only then can there be any talk of "democracy."

From the start of this fight the right-wing leadership of the YSL has been "bored" with the discussion. From the first our comrades were labelled "hostile", "disloyal", "not part of the Independent Socialist Tendency." And naturally, what self-respecting person could be expected to waste his precious time discussing with such riff-raff? The right-wingers have more important things to do: they have many pressing matters to attend to. After all, the search for a tiny social-democratic sect is not easy; and when you have found it, it requires great effort to persuade it to allow you to crawl into its back door. The SP-SDF, at its recent NEC meeting, voted 11-4 to disapprove, not unity with the ISL, friends, but joint action and political collaboration of any kind with it. So you see that there is a great deal of bowing and scraping, of flattery, of courtship, of political adaptation, to be done; and no sectarians, die-hard revolutionaries, dogmatists, paranoids, hot-heads and liars are going to be allowed to interfere with this great task.

The impatience of the right-wingers with the left wing, and their anxiety to get rid of it, have existed from the beginning. Some of the more hysterical right-wingers (viz. Arlon) wanted to expel Shane 'way back in the fall, and the only reason they didn't bring up charges then was that it would have looked bad to the SP. A little later, at the time when Tim's article "Unite for Unity" was first submitted to the MAC, George and Bogdan called for his expulsion, but changed their minds after being convinced of the tactical stupidity of such a move. But after the Left-Wing Caucus was formed, after it was shown that our comrades were serious, dedicated people, after it became obvious that our politics could attract militant young people and that, if given a few months to recruit to the YSL on our politics, we could easily gain a majority of the membership — in short, after it was seen that the left-wing threat was real, involving more than just Shane and Tim — then Harrington, Debbie, and many others swelled the ranks

of the pro-expulsion tendency.

The tactics of impatience with a minority tendency, of going through the barest formalities of a discussion, of trying to isolate the minority and make it appear to be an enemy alien, are the stock in trade of all bureaucratic leaderships, from the CP to the labor unions, and now the YSL.

After the atmosphere has been poisoned for months, and the right wing has succeeded in preparing the minds of its followers for an expulsion, if necessary, along comes Faith Wallstrom with an innocent appeal to "seriously concentrate our efforts upon building the YSL." It saddens me greatly to realize that Faith, who doubtless is a well-meaning person, is able after more than a year in the YSL to express such an outrageous contempt for politics. She attempts to excuse this contempt by humbly referring to herself as a "not generally vocal rank-and-filer" and appeals for sympathy by stating that perhaps she is "betraying a lack of political zeal and 'hardness'".

Faith has revealed such an impatience with any deviation from the "line" that her appeal for "real, creative thinking" is nothing but pure hypocrisy. She, and others, according to her, dread to go to YSL meetings for fear that Tim may express some disagreement with the right wing. Tim has, it seems, "made a principle of opposition for its own sake." He has dared to conjure up, or in Faith's own words, "dream up" his own unique point of view on such a minor and unimportant question as labor racketeering, just to obstruct meetings. Has it never occurred to you, Faith, that Tim (and I myself) has a legitimate point of view on labor racketeering which reflects a serious difference within the labor movement itself? Aren't you aware that Stellato, Bridges, and Rarick, to mention a few, have opposed the Senate investigations, while Reuther, Meany, and others have supported them? Don't you know that this question is one of the most vital facing organized labor today? Do you think that such a question should be discussed in the socialist movement? Or do you think that Tim should keep his opinions to himself so that you may attend meetings in peace, and poke fun at our comrades from your vantage point in the back row?

You say that the discussion bores you. You "don't find it educational, this re-hashing of old arguments and invention of new ones ... for the sake only of getting one's voice heard — again." Now I understand that perhaps you, and others, are tired of hearing Tim speak. I consider it very unfortunate that Tim is the only articulate left-winger in this right-wing stronghold of New York City. Sherry, Danny, and I have made an effort to alleviate the situation somewhat and give Tim some support from the floor. However, since we are, like you, not politically "hardened" people, and since we are unaccustomed, as you are, to speaking on political questions, it is difficult for us to speak in the midst of giggling and even open heckling from you and your cohorts in the back row. It would be a great deal easier in your opinion, I imagine, for us to keep our mouths shut. But we can not in good conscience refrain from expressing ourselves against a policy which we believe will bring our movement to ruins.

You, however, do not believe in expressing basic differences or discussing them; and if you yourself have done any of the "creative thinking" which you advocate, I have seen no evidence of it. In fact, your conception of the "homogeneous party" seems to be shared by virtually all of the right-wing comrades. They seem to feel that the differences between themselves, which we know exist,

can not be discussed until the YSL is purged of its "rotten elements", namely, the Left-Wing Caucus; for until then, any difference of opinion in the right-wing monolith might be "taken advantage of" by the left wing.

You have not found the present discussion "educational." You consider it "boring." If you found the discussion on the crisis of Stalinism in Eastern Europe "boring", I am afraid I have little hope for your political future in any movement. This subject was discussed in the unit for the first time; a fundamental attitude of the "Independent Socialist Tendency" — a Leninist analysis of revolutions — had been drastically revised by the NAC majority. Yet this new line was swallowed in toto by the right wing without a peep. Is this what you mean by "creative thinking?" Or by "creative thinking" do you mean the creation of a mythical tendency in the YSL against which you can struggle without answering the real arguments of its adherents, and by ignoring the facts which they bring up? Did you take the trouble to read Shane's brilliant and penetrating analysis of the Eastern European revolutions? Can you dispute any of the factual material which he cited? Can you find a flaw in his argumentation? After reading it and giving it serious consideration, are you still able to swallow the right wing's line and keep it down? Or do you feel that you must keep quiet about any doubts or questions that you may have for fear of "disturbing the peace"?

If you have failed to find anything "educational" about this factional struggle it is your just reward for the intellectual complacency which you seem to enjoy. I, for one, have learned more about politics in a few months than I had in a few years. I have become seriously interested in politics for the first time, and I have become convinced that the fight for socialism is the most important thing in my life. I suppose that to some these will seem dubious rewards.

Comrade George expresses this know-nothingism in a more subtle way, and I must commend him also for avoiding in the written word the hysteria which so often characterizes his speech. George, at least, recognizes that for an organization to get busy and peddle its "line" to the outside it must first discuss internally and decide what its "line" shall be. If the differences within the organization are great enough to necessitate a factional struggle, then, regrettable as it may be, that struggle must be carried out. However, like Faith, George expresses the same impatience with the discussion, the same eagerness to get out and build the YSL, and has the same opinion (implicitly) that the opportunities facing the YSL cannot be fully realized until the Left Wing is smashed.

A great deal of boasting is being engaged in by George and other rightwingers on the ability of the right wing to recruit. Before I am very impressed with these claims I want to know on what type of politics these people will be recruited. For the YSL right wing is offering a package deal to its potential recruits: "You join us and we'll join the SP-SDF," or, better yet, "Join the SP-SDF and we'll join you." It can only be the politics of the SP-SDF, therefore, on which the right wing expects to recruit anyone. I can not get very enthusiastic about a movement built on those politics.

As Comrade Scott indicated in "The Pros and Their Con — Part #2" (YSR, Vol. 5, No. 2), the left wing is doing very well recruiting to the YSL on its politics. That is precisely what scares the right wing and why it is more determined than ever to get rid of us.

The ideas expressed in Faith's and George's articles, and elsewhere, of impatience with the internal discussion, a desire to purge the movement of its

"disloyal" elements so as to be able to reach the masses that are banging on our door, are strikingly reminiscent of those characteristic of another political movement, a movement which Faith and George consider, and rightly so, as inimical to socialism. The YSL has during the past six months undergone a change in line as fundamental and as sudden as many which have occurred in the Stalinist movement. A minority of the movement has been opposed to the new line on the grounds that it is disastrous for the movement, and have wanted to continue more or less on the same course as previously. The majority has accepted the new line as one body and has called the minority "disloyal"; the leadership has sought to impede the discussion and finally to get rid of the disruptive elements. This bears no resemblance to that "democracy" which is talked about so much these days. It resembles nothing so much as the attempt of the hard-line Fosterites to stifle the present discussion in the CP.

Perhaps a rousing song might shake Comrade Wallstrom and her cohorts from their boredom:

OUR LINE'S BEEN CHANGED AGAIN

Shachtman's handed down the line,
Our line's been changed again,
The SP now is mighty fine,
Our line's been changed again.

Trotskyism is passe,
Our line's been changed again,
Down with every old cliché,
Our line's been changed again.

CHORUS:

I knows it, Shachtman,
I knows it, Shachtman,
I knows it, Shachtman,
Our line's been changed again.

Bow and scrape and lick we shall,
Our line's been changed again,
Dissolve and enter, or we'll fall,
Our line's been changed again.

We must appear to be sedate,
Our line's been changed again,
The revolution it can wait,
Our line's been changed again.

(CHORUS)

With Muste's group we can't agree,
Our line's been changed again,
It might annoy the dear SP,
Our line's been changed again.

We're simply Shachtmanites devout,
Our line's been changed again,
We're not sure what it's all about,
Our line's been changed again.

(CHORUS)

REPLY TO COMRADE BONE

By Gerry McDermott

In a recent issue of the Review, Comrade Bob Bone puts forward the slogan, "For a Third Camp Regroupment." He puts this forward as an alternative to both the position of the NEC and that of the Minority. I use the term minority rather than the term "Left Wing Caucus" because in actuality the Wohlforth tendency is the extreme conservative tendency in the YSL. Confronted with a new situation and new opportunities, it has recoiled by demanding, not simply that the independent socialist movement stand still, but that it revert to its ancient past, namely the SWP. It is no accident that Tim quotes Trotsky like an orthodox religionist quoting scripture. He is a spokesman for the past of the movement, for comrades confronted with a new situation they do not understand and cannot cope with, and therefore comrades who take refuge in Holy Writ. Fortunately, we have very few of such comrades actually in the YSL; the bulk of them are in the True Church of the SWP, and they recoil from the new opportunities before the movement precisely because their years in the stultifying atmosphere of that monolithic sect have left them unprepared to analyze and draw useful conclusions from the present situation of the movement. Bert Cochran was absolutely correct in characterizing the SWP as the new SLP of the American radical movement. It makes no more sense to characterize a pro-SWP faction as "left" than it would to characterize a pro-SLP faction as "left." Neither have any appreciable relation to reality. On the regroupment question, the SWP and the Wohlforth tendency are Fourth Camp socialists—they are all by themselves, and they are destined to remain that way.

Comrade Bone does not propose to return to the past of the movement as does Wohlforth; he is not that conservative. He merely intends to stand still. This is a better position, but not much.

First of all, Comrade Bone criticizes the Minority because he says it is oriented toward the Gatesites. This is not the major criticism to be made of the minority, however. It is true that the SWP, which Tim represents in at least an ideological sense, has no greater ambitions in this period than trying to win a few Stalinists, Gatesites or otherwise. (After all, this is what Holy Writ prescribes for them; they feel comfortable doing it; it is all covered by chapter and verse; and if they get a half dozen people (who will be the "Leninist" wing of the CP) to go with their half dozen "Leninists" from the YSL, they will count it an epochal year.)

The truth of the matter is that the Wohlforth-SWP will get no one or next to no one from the CP. If there is one conviction which grips all the thinking elements in the CP today it is the absolute necessity for abandoning sectarianism. As a matter of fact, they are in headlong and precipitous flight away from it, as all their literature shows—too much so, as a matter of fact. If you sat down and worked out scientifically and mathematically, with a Skinner Box and a battery of IBM Machines, the political position best designed to repel the Gatesites, it would not be very different from the position of SWP-Wohlforth. One of the values of the majority position is that it offers the likeliest

chance of "saving" many of the Gatesites for democratic socialism. Anyone who doubts this need only go to the library and read the yearnings of Gates, Stovel Nelson, and others, in Political Affairs, for an organization such as the SP-SDF-ISL could become.

Comrade Bone is just as pessimistic about the SP as he is about the Gatesites. The party of Debs, he tells us, is dead. This I am willing to grant out of hand, and so, I suppose, are most SPers, but it is beside the point. We do not pretend that the party of Debs still exists; we propose to try to recreate it, or more properly, something like it.

As an alternative to regroupment with the SP-SDF and to any attempt to win over the Gatesites, Bone proposes regroupment with the Dissentites and the Musteites around Liberation, that is, a "Third Camp Regroupment." He seems to think that the real barrier between the ISL and the Dissentites is the "sectarian hostility" of the ISL towards these comrades. While it is true that the attitude of some leaders of the ISL towards Dissent has left something to be desired, this is entirely beside the point, and is really an insult politically to the Dissentites, who are political people. Howe did not leave the ISL because of subjective reasons, and he does not remain outside because of subjective reasons. Howe left the ISL because he wanted a kind of "opening to the right," in this case, an opening which would make it possible for him and his friends to work with some of the independent radical intellectuals who would not, for good or bad reasons, join a propaganda group. Howe left complaining that Shachtman was not able to come up with a formula which, in Howe's view, opened the way to less limited opportunities than were available at the time. What Bone should understand is that the road to re-uniting with the Dissentites (and I am one hundred per cent in favor of winning the excellent comrades and old friends of Dissent back to the organized socialist movement) is through regroupment via the SP-SDF. The Dissentites are not going to rejoin the ISL, with or without Muste; they would, however, join a new, broad movement which showed promise of breaking out of sectarian isolation. They might even say, in a joking way, that the ISL had come around to their point of view. I wouldn't agree, but I wouldn't quibble about it. Bone complains that the majority promises that via the SP-SDF, two plus two equals five; among other things, the Dissentites are exactly what we are talking about! Only I personally believe that two plus two equals more like seven.

In arguing for a Third Camp Regroupment, Bone points to the success of the YSL as a Third Camp regroupment. As I have already pointed out, such a regroupment for the ISL is impractical because the Dissentites would not join, but there is another point to be made here. The principal success of the YSL has come, I believe, not from its Third Camp line, although that has been important, but from two other factors.

1. It has argued for just plain socialism in the arena where it has operated.

2. It has had no serious competitors. It has been the organization in its field.

This is the opportunity offered to a hypothetical SP-SDF-ISL-YSL-Dissent-Liberation-Bund-American Socialist (and maybe even by that time, the SWP--I hope so) plus a whole lot of people who are non-party today. It would agitate for just plain socialism and it would have no serious competitors in the field. (I hope no one will agitate me that there is no such thing as "just plain socialism"; I know that. But that is not the point here.)

In the above sense, I agree with Bob that the ISL should follow the example set by the YSL. It is not a new idea, by the way; Comrade Saul Berg, a leading member of the ISL, proposed it two years ago.

On Propaganda Groups.

Comrade Bone, the stand-patter, is for continuing as a propaganda group. Comrade Wohlforth, the reverter-to-the-past, is, whether he recognizes it or not, for a propaganda group existence. I am for getting away from being a propaganda group because, among other reasons, I know what it means and was around when the ISL decided to become one. It might be worth noting a few facts about this.

1. The ISL became the ISL and became a propaganda group because it was driven to it. We didn't want to; we wanted to be a party of the working class, an agitational party; we wanted to lead the working class, or part of the working class, in political struggle for socialism, or for goals which would lead down the road to socialism. We finally quit trying because we found we were too little to do this.

2. We recognized the necessity of becoming a propaganda group, but we didn't welcome it and we didn't look forward to staying that way. Furthermore, we didn't expect to make much progress as a propaganda group in that period (the period just behind us) and we said so at the time. It was a temporary refuge, to be abandoned as soon as practicable.

3. We recognized at the time that it was primarily objective conditions which drove us to become a propaganda group, and that the chief of these objective conditions was the strength of world Stalinism. The resolution stating this (in 1949) is worth quoting. (By the way, it is worth reading, too.) It said:

It is the strength of Stalinism that has primarily determined the weakness of Marxism. The latter can be restored as a powerful force if Stalinism is decisively defeated. But this holds true only if Stalinism is defeated by a progressive or revolutionary force, that is, one based upon the working class and operating in its interest. (Bulletin of the WP, Vol. III, No. 10, p. 14.)

It is precisely this most important of the objective conditions that has changed since 1949. If Stalinism has not been defeated, it has been at least challenged and threatened by the working classes

of Hungary and Poland and, insofar as destalinization reflects the pressures of the class struggle in Russia, it has been challenged by the working class of that country. It is now no longer historically necessary for us to be a propaganda group.

Comrade Bone thinks the Hungarian events increase the viability of a third camp propaganda group. In an historic sense, this is true; but in an immediate sense, the opposite is true. A few years ago, when the Korean war was on and war in Indo-China seemed likely and World War III seemed not unlikely, the third camp position presented as such was striking and arresting and meaningful. Now that the Korean and Indo-Chinese wars have been quieted, and now that depolarization has set in to an extent, and both of the two imperialist war camps have internal difficulties (Suez and Hungary, Poland and Algeria, destalinization and Montgomery), the third camp appeal is not nearly as dramatic to Americans! It is true that the Hungarian events have started the "pro-Russian Socialists" moving in our direction. Will they move faster or more slowly if we open up the possibility of their being in the same broad organization with them? American imperialism will have its Hungaries, too. And when it does, the "pro-American socialists" will move in our direction, too.

In the meantime, I think that I, as a convinced third-camp socialist, can fight as effectively against American capitalism by aiding the Negro struggle now being waged in this country as I can be propagandizing rather abstractly against NATO, for example. I am for taking such organizational steps as will make it possible to participate to a maximum extent in the Negro struggle.

I am confident that this will eventually make it possible for me to do something more than propagandize abstractly about NATO.

L'audace, Comrade Bone, l'audace!

A Look at the Back Row

By S.A.

Under the title "How things Look from the Back Row" the current issue of the Young Socialist Review (Vol.5, No.2, June 1st, 1957) presents us with the views and attitudes of a comrade new to its readers -- Faith Wallstrom.

As her title indicates she considers herself a "rank-and-filer", a comrade who occupies the "back row" at meetings and discussions and is "not generally vocal".

From this we can only conclude that writing and submitting an article to YSR represents an advance on her part, a step toward a more active vocal "front", or at least "second", row level of political activity. As such we welcome her article since we are only too glad to see any YSL member develop toward a more meaningful participation in the serious work before the socialist movement in this historical period.

We must, however, show Comrade Wallstrom the courtesy of dealing with her political ideas and arguments in exactly the same way we would had they been presented by a more experienced comrade. We trust that she will understand this and that she will be in no way offended (or retreat to the "back row") if we consider her article from the point of view of its more obvious errors and inaccuracies.

Let's examine her article...

She begins by making it clear that she occupies a specific position in the "back row" -- that of a supporter of the present MAC Majority. She deploras, if we may paraphrase, the "hampered activity and growth" of the YSL, and its "failure to educate" newer members, "due to" the current struggle which she feels requires so much of the energy of our "best people". She "blames" this, in N.Y., on the Left-Wing Caucus which she says has "succeeded in immobilizing that Unit's outward growth and development with endless, boring, factional arguments".

If we look this over, even casually, we find at best an occasional half-truth lost in a maze of unsupported assertion.

Is the activity and growth of the YSL really hampered? If so, why? It is true, in terms of growth, that the position of the MAC Majority, which Wallstrom supports, makes recruitment difficult. Not only does it bar recruitment of a large section of those youth already socialist (those in the SP-SDF and SWP), the MAC Majority's very position on the Unity Question handicaps its supporters in recruitment work. It is not an easy task to recruit to an organization which considers its own speedy dissolution into another organization its most primary task.

Why should contacts join the YSL on such a basis? If they agree with the Majority position on Unity then they might, and from their point of view perfectly logically, join the SP-SDF youth directly. Why go through the YSL, a less certain route, to get into the only group (as they are told) which has a future and can play a significant role? Besides, it might occur to them, by joining the SP-SDF now they can... help the YSL's entry move by exerting

a pro-unity pressure from within the SP-SDF. We would be surprised if this sort of notion hasn't occurred to at least some of the brighter of Comrade Wallstrom's contacts.

We don't claim that she, and others who support the Majority position, can't recruit. But exactly what argument for YSL membership she can offer her contacts is at best ambiguous. We suspect that it may be easier for her to "explain" the Right's recruitment difficulties by consigning the "blame" to the LNC and the "internal" situation than it is for her to face the facts of her political position -- which, right or wrong, clearly handicaps her recruiting work.

Of course we know that the Left, on the other hand, can recruit -- and is still doing so despite all efforts of the NAC Majority. We are not now discussing whose position on the Unity Question is correct. The only point we are trying to make is that the LNC's perspective, right or wrong, is a better basis for recruitment ("growth") than is that of the NAC Majority.

Even from the above brief discussion we see that the question of "growth" is a "mixed" one and certainly not accurately, much less adequately, handled in Comrade Wallstrom's article.

As to other activity the question is again "open". Comrade Wallstrom herself mentions some of the external activity the N.Y. Unit has maintained during this period, and there is more which she fails to mention -- The Enrol For Freedom Campaign and Anvil sales, just to cite two quick examples.

But would there really be more, or much more, "outside activity" if there were less internal discussion? If the "experienced people" were not "in the back office, pounding out documents, YSR articles, conferring on factional strategy" what exactly would they be doing?

It might seem uncharitable to suggest that some of them would be doing just what they were doing right up to the very day this "internal" dispute began (i.e., nothing) so we will restrain ourselves and only point out that most of those who were active in an external way still are -- and most of those who were relatively inactive still are. Comrade Wallstrom's knowledge of the N.Y. situation may be more exact than ours but we know that this is the general picture nationally.

If we can take Chicago as an example of sorts we find that one supporter of the Majority spends a fair amount of her time in "the back room" -- as do two members of the LNC. That's only three out of the whole unit and even these three are probably more active in external work now than they were a year ago. Other members of the Unit are by and large as active or inactive as they were before the Unity dispute. The Unit's level of activity, internal and external, has not dropped despite the special work burden (publication of YSR) the unit now carries. Membership attendance at business meetings has improved, if anything, even though the discussion is as exhausting in Chicago as elsewhere.

This is not to say that there is no aspect of truth in what Comrade Wallstrom says on this matter -- we are only demonstrating its "speculative" character and somewhat debunking the notion we hear expressed at almost every meeting by supporters of the Majority to the effect "Boy, would we be active if you weren't around to louse things up." Coming, as it sometimes does, from those who almost always (in the past and present) zoom-off for home as soon a meeting formally ends, regardless of the number of contacts around to be talked to, its amusing.

It is true, by and large, that far more time is spent on discussion and in reading (and writing for) discussion bulletins.... but this comrade Wallstrom, strangely enough, posites in opposition to "education".

We can only be a little confused since, however harmful in other ways, this discussion is far more educational than any other in the YSL's history. Consider for a moment the poverty, the paucity, of theoretical discussion and education generally in the YSL prior to the current dispute. Then consider what has come up in the course of this discussion. The Role of the Party, the Nature of the State, Social-Democracy, Democratic Centralism, National Stalinism, the Union Question, and one-hundred-and-one other important and serious questions. Though much of the discussion has been conducted on a low level it is still obvious that never before in the history of the YSL have so many comrades seriously examined, considered and discussed (pro and con) so many basic questions of socialist theory.

Further, comrades who have never before spoken or written (Comrade Wallstrom herself, to take an example at hand) are now speaking and writing. Others who "occasionally" wrote in the past are now doing so regularly for the first time. In short, in spite of the harmful aspects of the struggle, whatever the demoralization, etc., the last thing we can say is that it is not educational.

Wallstrom doesn't see this and describes her attitude in the following passage:

"And the open meetings and the business meetings -- our members are getting more and more creative at thinking up excuses for staying away from them. Because no imaginable subject can come up at either a business or an open meeting but Tim, who has made a principle of opposition for its own sake, feels obliged to speak against the view presented -- on labor racketeering, for instance, he could dream up a basis for a view-point contradictory to the one presented, thus enabling him to take the floor and our time. Then somebody, or usually several, from the majority feels obliged to speak against Tim. Meanwhile, the rank and file, or what there is of it present, drowns uneasily on those hard chairs."

She goes on:

"Is this educating our new members and winning our contacts? I assure you, most of us don't find it educational, this re-hashing of old arguments and invention of new ones, not for the sake of serious and honest discussion but for the sake only of getting one's voice heard -- again. The differences within the majority, which are as yet only implied, promise to be educative. I look forward to that discussion, but we know, oh we know so well, what Tim has to say. And we've rejected it." etc.

Can we take Comrade Wallstrom seriously? Here we have a comrade, presumably a somewhat educated socialist, who believes that Tim's position on the Labor Probe was contrived, invented, manufactured, just to be contray, to take up time, to gain the floor.... Perhaps Wallstrom just doesn't know that a number of YSL, and ISL, members, independently, were amazed by the line Labor Action adopted on this question. Perhaps she isn't aware of the fact that this reaction would have been even more wide-spread if there were no Unity discussion.

The fact remains that LA's line on this important subject is something new and clearly requires an educational discussion, pro and con. How Comrade Wallstrom could possibly "know", much less "oh...so well", in advance just what Tim would have to say on this new never-before-discussed question is a mystery equalled only by that of the trinity.

This is neither an "old question rehashed" nor an "invention"... it is rather a subject recognized by all serious socialists, whatever their organizational affiliation, as worthy of careful examination and extensive discussion. If it is true, as Comrade Wallstrom tells us, that the "rank and file" of the New York Unit "drowns uncasily" when a discussion of this sort opens up for the first time then we must doubt the seriousness of such comrades in terms of their interest (or lack thereof) in socialist ideas and must wonder why they are members of a socialist organization at all.

As to "re-hashing" old arguments we will concede that Comrade Wallstrom may well have been around for so long now as to be bored by a discussion of such elementary questions as the Nature of the State, etc, but we might successfully bet that such "old-hat" matters are brand-new to many of the "newer members" and "contacts" she is concerned with "educating".

Even among "older", "experienced", comrades we all know some who pass for "educated" mainly on the basis of their ability to remember "catch-words" and repeat simplified formulations. That is they know "the line", generally, and can recite it parrot fashion. They seldom read more than the current socialist press because this meets their needs almost completely -- if they read a pamphlet or two (never a book, of course) by Marx or Engels then they have scaled the heights of socialist theory. Of course these "educated" comrades (and, indeed, others who haven't read anything besides an occasional LA and Invil) then poke un-gentle fun at those who do read and study the "socialist classics" and apply past socialist theory and experience to the problems now facing the YSL. Little wonder that these "educated" comrades and their followers are "bored" when confronted with any discussion of fundamental questions of socialist theory.

But let's return to our "quote" from Comrade Wallstrom. We certainly don't disagree with her when she says that a discussion of "the differences within the majority, which are as yet only implied, promise(s) to be educative" -- quite the contrary! We would suggest, however, that here Comrade Wallstrom reveals what she means by "education"... This is confirmed a little further on in her article when she says "we in the YSL especially should be thinking more about our relations with the SP, about the realities of what life in the SP holds in store for us. Permitting our newer members to go in full of illusions and un-prepared would be a real threat to the survival of our politics, and to ourselves as a tendency."

....We are forced to conclude that this is what Comrade Wallstrom means by "education" -- this and no more.

Of the additional points that her article brings to mind only one is of especial interest. This is the reflection in her article of the attitude that the Left must either be silenced or expelled from the YSL.

We see this when she says "But, comrades, please let the convention be the end of it for a while! Once the convention has voted in favor of unity, and Tim and Shane's point of view is finally repudiated..." The "it" she wants ended "for a while" is nothing less than free discussion in the YSL.

Again, "I understand that we can free ourselves of this intolerable burden simply by enforcing the discipline which the YSL constitution demands. Then, by all means, let us do so!" The "intolerable burden", of course, is once again nothing less than free discussion and expression of different points of view.

Along the same lines she says "they" (the LMC) "are the worst sort of sectarian, and have theorized themselves right out of any rightful place in a democratic socialist, third-camp organization."

The logic behind this remarkable formulation is a wierd one. Since when is there necessarily a contradiction between being "the worst sort of sectarian" (which, fortunately, no member of the LMC is) and membership in a "democratic socialist, third-camp organization". We can see that Wallstrom is disturbed by "theory" but can anyone explain how we of the Left can possibly have "theorized" ourselves out of our membership rights? Perhaps one of her "leaders" will go to the trouble of explaining to Comrade Wallstrom that a "democratic socialist, third-camp organization" generally (and the YSL specifically) does not expell members for "sectarianism" and allows its members to devolope all kinds of strange "theories".

We can only view her statements as a distorted, politically irrational, but accurate, reflection of the Right Wing's increasing desire to split the YSL. We hope, for their sakes, that if and when Comrade Wallstrom's "leaders" do attempt to expell us they will manage to invent a more tangible pretext.

In conclusion we might call Comrade Wallstrom's attention to one other major flaw in her "approach". She sees the N.Y. Unit, not the YSL nationally, to the extent she sees anything -- and we have already indicated some instances of defective vision on her part. Tim, to her, is... the LMC. The N.Y. Unit is... the YSL. She seems totally unaware of either side, left or right, of the national picture and completely ignorant (in the sense of "un-informed") of the whole discussion that has been taking place on a national level in the YSL. This would not be a fatal defect, perhaps, if she confined her discussion and "conclusions" strictly to N.Y. -- but she doesn't.

Comrade Wallstrom seems to suffer from a severe case of political myopia and it would definitely be in order for her to move forward a few rows....

NOTES ON 'REVISIONS' AND 'CAPITULATION'

by J. WORTH

I. INTRODUCTION

The two articles which follow are written to correct some exceptionally gross misrepresentations of the so-called "cannonite" position on 'democracy' and 'socialism' -- with particular reference to the satellite revolts -- presented by Meier and Harrington. Harrington's article, "Political Revolution: Social Revolution" simply continues a well-established tradition of irrelevance and inaccuracy. A fairly substantial literature now documents this fact. Comrade Meier's recent 'description' of the SWP's position on events in Eastern Europe is, to the best of my knowledge, pure imagination. Neither, unfortunately, provide any sort of documentation --- so judgment is restricted to internal evidence alone.

In most of the following discussion I am attempting to present the orthodox Trotskyist position in as straightforward a manner as possible. Since both Meier and Harrington think that they are dealing, in their repudiation of "cannonite" theory, with "fundamental differences on democracy and socialism" or "respect for basic socialist ideals" it seems worth while to point out the discrepancies which exist between their versions of "revisionism" or "capitulationism", and the actual theory which they are attacking.

This does not mean, of course, that the writer agrees with Trotsky's position as stated. For reasons which I shall present in an article following the convention, I find Trotsky's analysis inadequate as an expression of the key developments in the USSR following the consolidation of Stalinist power. Trotsky, for example, took the great purge to be the first of a series of convulsions, inherent in the contradiction between bureaucracy and nationalized property forms -- a prediction which does not seem to be borne out by the facts. Trotsky puts the theoretical end of a process of degeneration at the point in which nationalized property forms give way to the more xxx usual bourgeois types. The state capitalist position, with which I agree, places the end of the process of degeneration at the time of the Moscow trials. While somewhat arbitrary, this is a convenient date, beyond which we would not expect to find even a vestige of workers' control. The SWP takes the convulsions in East Europe to be an expression of the same instability which Trotsky had in mind for the earlier period -- in a new context, of course. The state capitalist position suggests that the intensity of class struggle is a decisive feature. Obviously, a careful and systematic investigation of the salient features of the whole process must precede absolute conclusions about the validity of any analysis -- or its political consequences.

Unfortunately, there is little indication that Harrington or Meier have even begun a serious investigation -- to say nothing of concluded one. The level of abstraction, therefore, is not an especially complex one.

With these considerations in mind, I shall discuss, first Harrington's opinions on "revisionism"; then Comrade Meier's paraphrase of the "cannonite position."

II. HARRINGTON'S 'FOOTNOTE ON REVISIONISM

Harrington's notions on Marxist theory can be dismissed in a short discussion of the issue which he chooses: political revolution or social revolution in the Soviet sphere. In "Political Revolution, Social Revolution, A Footnote on Revisionism, (cannonite variety)" he analogizes the positions of Trotsky and Bernstein. Harrington's temerous approach before the word Trotsky -- because it is Trotsky's position which is involved -- is no doubt justified in view of the content of the attack. The fact is that the SWP, in its description of the social organization of the USSR is "orthodox Trotskyist". If Trotsky's analysis of the USSR is correct, the SWP's position on the satellite countries follows. A single historical process, beginning with the October Revolution is involved. In short, we deal with no important revision of Trotsky's methodology when we discuss the "cannonite theory" of stalinism.

"Bernstein", says Harrington, quoting Rosa Luxemburg, "repeats and repeats the Marxist formulation that 'before any class wins political power, it must first succeed in conquering the economic power", to which he appends the cryptic "Does this sound like the Cannonites, et. al?"

Does it?

According to Harrington's own reference: "The revisionists, like Bernstein, put forth their notion of the 'socializing' process within capitalism. They argued that it was only necessary to wait until this had reached its complete fruition, and there would be socialism."

Is this, in the least sense, analogous to Trotsky's position? No. In the first place, Trotsky dealt with a country in which the social revolution against capitalism had occurred! Workers and peasants, under the leadership of the Bolshevik party, had seized the state, and in a single revolutionary sweep, uprooted the material base of the old regime. This is an elementary fact and cannot be dismissed with statements about Bernstein. Events in the USSR, therefore, proceed on an altogether different level, whatever the ultimate outcome of the whole process.

The destruction of bourgeois and feudal property forms; the elimination of the financial interests of the foreign imperialists; the nationalization of the means of production -- laid the material base for a classless society. For reasons which are analyzed in essentially the same vein by the SWP, and by the ISL, the working class was driven from the political organs of the new workers state by the encroaching stalinist bureaucracy. The real debate about the social character of the USSR proceeds from the point at which political power --- the state apparatus --- was securely in the hands of the stalinist bureaucracy. I shall not, in this discussion, however, invoke any analysis except that developed by Trotsky -- the theory of the degenerated workers state itself.

The process in which the workers and peasants lost political power was called by Trotsky a period of degeneration. "Degeneration," wrote Trotsky in "The USSR at War"* "must inescapably end at a certain stage in downfall."

* In Defense of Marxism, Pioneer Publishers, 1942. Whether one agrees with Trotsky or not careful examination of this essay is indispensable for intelligent understanding of the meanings which Trotsky gave to the terms used in the dispute. It is an extremely brilliant summary of Trotsky's position vis-a-vis the principle alternatives suggested at that time.

But the process of degeneration, the actual overthrow of the workers' state, would not be definitive until bourgeois property forms had been restored: either by the bureaucracy, through open counter-revolution, or by the world bourgeoisie, through a combined imperialist assault on the USSR.

In short, the process described by Trotsky is anything but "socialism growing without the active participation of the workingclass." The USSR is, in Trotsky's analysis, moving toward capitalist restoration -- not socialism! The struggle between the bureaucracy and the workers and peasants centers, in the first instance, about the institution of nationalized property. The task of revolutionary socialists, however, is not to watch--but to intervene. Within the USSR itself, wrote Trotsky, the primary task of revolutionary socialists was to organize the political "overthrow of the Thermidorian bureaucracy" which, if it occurred before the restoration of bourgeois property forms would be called a "political revolution". The task of revolutionary socialists outside the USSR was to defend, with the weapons of class struggle, the conquests of the October Revolution against their overthrow from outside. "Whether one agrees with the whole position, ~~the~~ the terms selected by Trotsky are completely consistent and complementary. The tasks of revolutionary socialists, with his terminology or without it are, as he himself points out, absolutely identical. Far from "fundamentally different attitudes" modification of Trotsky's ~~xxxxx~~ analysis leads only to the rejection of the "defensist" slogan. In practice, this means that our attitude toward a "struggle between the US and Russia" would be simple opposition to an imperialist conflict. Unless Harrington, or his co-thinkers, intend to take sides, their "fundamental difference" cuts political analysis very very fine.

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A concluding note. The single element of documentation in Harrington's attack on the SMP is the sentence, in the second paragraph of the article in question: "Thus, for example, Harry Weiss' analysis in the October 29th Militant."

Does the article, which is called "First Stage in the Polish Political Revolution" document a "curiously symmetrical relationship to Bernstein and the revisionists"? Let us examine the first paragraph (though the remainder of the article no way contradicts us.):

"A workers' revolution is taking place in Poland against the rule of a Kremlin-dominated bureaucratic caste. The movement that broke out in a general strike and workers uprising in Poznan last June 28 has obviously not receded. It has, instead, gained enormous scope and swept across all of Poland. The entire working class and the student masses have been brought to their feet...." (emphasis added)

Is this the end product of the "socializing" process -- "socialism growing without the active participation of the workingclass." It is the outcome predicted by Trotsky -- the outcome which is inescapable in his analysis. Or is it Bernstein that we have so grossly "misinterpreted."?

III. DEBBIE HEIER AND THE THEORY OF "CAPITULATIONISM"

Debbie Heier's discussion "Social Democrats and 'Stalinoids'" unquestionably exceeds in crudity and theoretical ignorance anything that has been written on political questions in this dispute. On absolutely no authority, except her own imagination, Heier writes, in reference to the Hungarian and Polish Revolutions that "Both the SP and the SWP, for example, are also willing to defend an oppressed nation under the yoke of one or another of the two great imperialist powers, as long as said nation does not choose to adopt the social system of the other. That is, the SWP will not defend a satellite which in breaking from Stalinism 'reverts' to national capitalism."

A similar demonstration of incapacity to analyze the most primitive elements of the revolution in East Europe would be difficult to discover in any article --- with the possible exception of some predecessors in the same organ: YSR.

We can ignore the question of the SP's policy on colonial revolution. With Comrade Heier's assent, we can concede that it is, in general, superficial and pro-imperialist in content.

The first question that we pose, in the context of the section quoted above is --- in what sense do we treat Hungary or Poland as nations? Let us accept, provisionally, nothing but the national boundaries, and treat all conflicts which take place within them as conflicts having to do, somehow, with nations. What, then, is a Polish revolution? How do we define the Hungarian revolution, which flared up and has not died? Simply as Hungarian revolutions? Polish revolutions? This, possibly is good enough for sixth grade histories of the 13th Century. It is insufficient as an analysis of the great class conflicts which dominate the death agony of capitalism.

What occurred in Hungary? First, a revolution against the Russians. Good enough as a shorthand term. Why did a revolution occur in Hungary? This question is more difficult, because it forces us to analyze, first the general matrix of world development in which Hungary is a single, partially isolated, element; secondly, to focus our attention on the particularities of Hungarian development.

Examining, particularly the events which succeeded the occupation of Hungary by Russian forces, after WW II, we note, first, a transition period, during which the antagonism between Soviet and Western blocs developed into the Cold War; next, the reduction of capital within Hungary to the productive system of the USSR (entailing, incidentally, the destruction of the great land-holding and bourgeois classes); finally, the development of a struggle between, on the one hand, the social forces which control capital in land and industry -- the Russians -- and the actual producers: the workers and peasants. In general, we cannot be greatly mistaken if we agree to regard this as a class struggle. (Trotsky's theories simply suggest that the 'rulers' will not stick with us long enough to be considered a 'class').

The position of Hungary, as a political and economic subsidiary of the USSR, produces peculiarities which are not evident in the structure of the 'nation', which we call, for convenience, the USSR. First, the national product is manipulated as an appendage of the Russian industrial machine --- becomes an integral part of the larger flow of goods which marks the soviet economy. Next, the control of the means of production is vested, primarily, in the Russians through their control of the Hungarian state; finally, the entire exploitative system is upheld by the military forces, not of Hungarians, but of the Russians, as demonstrated in the suppression of the recent revolt. In this sense, while we can say with some accuracy that it is 'Hungary' which is being exploited, we know nothing about the situation which provoked revolt until we integrate an 'Hungarian' economy within the general 'Russian' system of production.

Economic oppression, in this instance, is also expressed as national oppression.

More scientifically, the primary exploiters, the 'owners' of the means of production, are not Hungarians, but Russians. This has the consequence that Hungary cannot be regarded from the standpoint of its economic organization as an economic unit at all, but as a section of the larger economic unit, the economy of the USSR. With this we have the further consequence that the struggle between exploiters and exploited -- the class struggle! -- is posed, if we insist on the more superficial terms, as a struggle between 'nation' and 'oppressor nation'. In reality, we make a serious mistake if we differentiate the two in discussions about the Hungarian revolution of 1956.

These elements, which are absolutely indispensable to even the superficial analysis of the struggle which took place in Hungary, forces us to look at the satellite revolutions with a somewhat different mental perspective than that taken by Comrade Meier. If comrade Meier were not a socialist, then the manner in which she treats the question would not be remarkable or, in the same sense, 'wrong'. But she has asserted her confidence in Marxism. Consequently, she will forgive me if I treat her position from that point of view.

The first conclusion which we draw from the events which occurred in Hungary is that we deal with an eruption of class struggle -- not with simple, abstract phenomena that come under the heading: "revolutions." The roots of the class struggle, which resulted in revolution, are the methods by which the Hungarian productive apparatus has been reduced to that of the Russians. (The organization of economic oppression is called politics.)

Now, while the Hungarian revolutionists -- the workers and peasants -- might conceivably have lost their senses to the degree that they demand a bourgeois restoration ("reversion"?) in Hungary, Marxists should know that systems of exploitation are not called into being -- particularly by the classes which will be their victims, but develop out of systems of ownership, and the growth of technology. If the Hungarian workers and peasants were to call for the return of capitalism, it would be an obvious demonstration of their own class power. In this instance, they would be the ruling class -- in process of abdication! -- in Hungary. Now, if

the Hungarians, who would be obliged to organize production and circulation temporarily -- while the bourgeois collected his wits, and his whips -- persisted in this particular form of idiocy, it is conceivable that some kind of capitalist restoration might ultimately result. Not, however, with the influx of Northites from Portugal and Austria, however. As Shane lucidly points out in his examination of the NAC R solution on the Crisis of World Stalinism, the possibility that a bourgeois form of exploitation could emerge from the overthrow of Stalinism in East Europe, would depend, not on the whim of the workers reduced to lunacy, but ~~xxx~~ on the fact that the working class failed to take the lead as the organizers of a new system of production; on their inability to prevent the petit-bourgeois (not bourgeois!) forces -- the peasants and shop-keepers -- from getting the upper-hand.

Right or wrong, we have at least turned the discussion into a discussion about the forces which do decide these conflicts -- the class forces, and the political relations which modulate them. Now, let us reexamine Comrade Meier's dictum which, though posed in terms of the SWP, is likely to find wider application if someone with an even more blunderbuss approach to these questions picks it up: viz; "That is the SWP will not defend a satellite which in breaking from Stalinism "reverts" to national capitalism ."

The use of the term "reversion" is, in the context which must be described for Hungary, absolutely meaningless as Meier uses it. To achieve some sort of content, however light, we cannot possibly dispense with an analysis of the classes involved in conflict.

Now, the principle problem, from the standpoint of Marxist analysis, is to create a revolutionary working class, and achieve its victory as the outcome of the general process of class conflict. The aim is eminently practical. The need for a revolutionary vanguard party in the more advanced stages, similarly, is an expression of the need for organization and conscious direction of revolutionary working class forces. It is the failure to apprehend the elementary reason for the existence of socialist parties and politics that creates, in Meier's writing, such absurd and nonsensical statements as that under discussion.

The purpose of a revolutionary party is to end exploitation, by destroying the oppression of the working class. The policy of a revolutionary party is not to lead to the subordination of the exploited to any force but itself. If, while holding power, the working class takes a mistaken position, does the revolutionary vanguard turn against the class? That is the real gist of Meier's query. But it can be posed only by isolating oneself, as an analyst, from the working class movements, the direction of which will be assumed at the end of the process of struggle -- not at its beginning. The working class is obviously going to make mistakes, while it is learning to organize and express itself as a class. Some of its mistakes can be, from its own point of view, disastrous. But it is the working class which is the victim -- not the abstraction "democracy."

Before concluding, we can examine one final example which, while purely hypothetical, is so for purely empirical and practical reasons. Suppose that the revolution against the stalinists develops as a coalition of all national forces, including the bourgeoisie -- and that the latter has the upper hand? This would pose, in real form, the possibility of "reversion". Or would it? If a bourgeoisie existed -- what is its material base? Clearly, classes do not exist in a vacuum, or because individuals regard themselves as 'bourgeois', but because they own and control elements of the means of production. That is the base of political and social POWER. Thus, we do not have the question of reversion, but the question of the outcome of a transitional period. What, in this complicated situation, is the advice which we give to the workers. There are two possible answers: the first, a priori, is provided by the right-wing of the socialist movement --- oppose the stalinists at all costs. The bourgeoisie is preferable. This may be so -- but in each individual situation it must be proved.

The sole useful method of analysis is that in which, first, we ascertain that our advice will have an influence, however minor (otherwise the question of what the workers ought to do is irrelevant.); next, we must determine the relationship of forces on a world scale, and attempt to determine the consequences of an alliance one way or another. Finally, we develop that strategy which is, if heeded, most likely to achieve a victory which, like Marx's, must be world-wide in scope.

Suppose our advice, though scientifically accurate, is not heeded?

To pose the question in this form is simpleminded. If we are watching a struggle from outside we still understand that we are working for the victory of the working class --- not of one of its oppressors. Unless working class struggle can bring some solid advance to revolutionary struggle in general, we advise neither alternative. If we participate in a movement which takes a mistaken line, we continue to work, still within the movement, for victory -- not of a hypothetical socialism, but of the people who will create it. This must not be forgotten. Our purpose is to lead a class to victory -- not to invent forms of social organization which must be accepted by it. It is only when we begin to substitute, for the struggles which really take place, abstract statements about them, that we reach the incredible stage exemplified by Meier's articles ---- where she seriously believes that the simple dichotomy: stalinist--bourgeois, is the only, or even the principle, issue involved, or that any statement about socialist policy whatsoever can be made on the basis of that generalization.

While I do not wish to suggest that the outcome of this line of thought would, in practice, be carried to its logical extreme, I do suggest that it is this manner of thinking which is least likely to lead to "democracy everywhere!". Democracy is not a thing -- an abstract "relation" -- but the way real people behave toward each other.

Democracy, at any rate, is impossible short of the victory of the working class on a world scale. It is this victory which we hope to be the eventual outcome of the struggles which are taking place in East Europe.

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REVIEW OF "THE VANGUARD PARTY" *
BY BERG AND MEIER

J. Worth

Although it purports to be an attack on the concept of the vanguard party the article by Berg and Meier drives much more deeply than that. The concept of "revolutionary pluralism" with its recognition of the fact of plural tendencies should not ~~ix~~ mislead any reader into thinking that the fundamental discussion revolves about organizational form. The key point, and it can be stated quite succinctly, is that, while a vanguard party should be composed of "trained, educated, experienced, qualified, scientific socialists" --- scientific socialism is impossible. The statement on page 32, therefore, is crucial:

"If we will but recognize that valuable as Marxist theory is, most of it (certainly in its application) is still in the realm of theory in a field -- the field of social science -- that has not come anywhere near the point where it can really be called a science at all, in the sense of a science with exact, verifiable laws."

In short, Berg and Meier reject the concept of a vanguard party until the vanguard presents sound, exact, detailed, empirical SCIENTIFIC laws in the "field of social science." Up to that point we should be content with a modest "interplay of various types of left wing tendencies" -- presumably similar to those which, to follow Comrade Berg's chronicle, functioned so brilliantly in the collapse of the socialist movement in the 20s and 30s.

Let us look at the argument again.

Berg and Meier begin with the assertion that the concept of the vanguard party advanced by the CP is a "perversion of Leninism" (pg. 29), from which the ISL, noted for its acuity, clearly, if not too consciously, has departed. The Leninist parties which were founded in the wake of the October revolution were not perfect. The revolutionary movement generally -- failed! Excellent. Up to this point we can agree that what is needed is an intelligent, loyal, disciplined, trustworthy, and effective cadre -- evaluation of the past assisting in the fulfillment of the final condition.

But exactly at this point Berg and Meier slip in the inconsequential observation -- but a vanguard party is impossible. Social science does not exist. Marxism is not law.

Now, this is the key point of the article. Right or wrong Berg and Meier should have dealt with the collapse of Marxism as a theory of class struggle -- not the collapse of Leninist parties as parties of class struggle. Given the insight of 1957 we can, obviously, predict -- in retrospect, and without analysis of any event -- the failure of the vanguard parties of the 20s and 30s.

What are the principle characteristics of Marxist theory?

First, the position that social convulsions, class conflicts, mass move-

* "The Vanguard Party," by Saul Berg and Debbie Meier, YSR, Vol 4 No 4
May 19, 1957

ments, and vanguard parties, are anything but the outcome of a theoretical position. The Marxist movement, it is true, attempts a scientific analysis of the society which produced class conflict, revolutionary movement -- the chaos of modern times. The attempt may not altogether succeed. What is our conclusion? That class conflict, exploitation, revolutionary struggle, the need for revolutionary leadership, will be tossed in the same waste-basket as our theory?

To put the question more specifically: do comrades Berg and Meier, while dismissing Marxism as a science, simultaneously dismiss its evaluation of the class character of society, the fundamental role of class struggle, the bourgeois domination of the state? If so, on what grounds? by what method?

But the confusion runs deeper throughout the article. The vanguard party was conceived, not as the outcome of theoretical rumination, but as a practical organizational measure to pose a practical resolution to the crisis of world capitalism -- a socialist resolution. In general, the failure of the revolutionary struggles in China, Spain, Germany, etc. is attributed to the treason of the revolutionary leadership -- not the fact that a 'plurality' of revolutionists contested the leadership.

It is anticipated by revolutionary socialists that class struggles of the deepest and most fundamental nature will recur -- not only in Russia, Germany, and China, but in Britain, the United States, France, Italy, Japan, South America, to begin the list. Given our analysis of the failure of the revolutionary parties in the earlier epoch is our conclusion to be -- to abandon the concept of the vanguard?

In effect, this discussion of the vanguard concept is of the most insipid variety. While the techniques that revolutionary socialists use may not be totally effective, it is obvious that the 'laws' that they discover are not given in dispassionate scientific investigation. The laboratory of the Marxist is society. His data are the strikes, class struggles, witch-hunts, wars, dictatorships, revolutions; the people in struggle -- not in thought -- for a decent human life. Scientific or not the socialist cannot drop his ~~xxxxxx~~ his tools, ~~xxxxxx~~ without picking up new ones. But it is a question of weapons -- not tools.

As the general tenor of this article no doubt indicates, the crucial assertion of the Berg-Meier article is, to put it mildly, slighted, in favor of the complaints which Comrade Berg wishes to lodge against the Trotskyist leadership of the last revolutionary epoch.

LA'S Re DEMOCRACY AND THE REUTHER MACHINE

John Worth

The amazing stand of Labor Action on the labor rackets probe is unquestionably the strongest evidence of the role which the ISL is prepared to play in the American labor movement. In political terms, the ISL's capitulation* before Reuther's drive to eliminate the last vestiges of opposition to a bureaucracy -- the section in which his role has been constantly greater and grander -- is much more significant than the "tactic" of the all-inclusive party.

The plea for "democracy" -- not class democracy, but democracy in the abstract; the noun 'democracy'; the 'democratic state of affairs' -- sums up Labor Action's response to the most serious challenge posed the American labor movement since the inception of the witch-hunt. Not only does Labor Action refuse to condemn the Senate Committee's intervention in clear, unequivocal terms; it has tacitly accepted its role in "cleaning out" the union racketeers. Finally: it has not printed a single word in opposition to the bitter blow against the Fifth Amendment, launched by the AFL-CIO executive committee, which now wishes to replace the courts as interpreter of the American Constitution, though it has attacked Beck for shielding himself with its use.

The contribution -- sole and ultimate -- of Labor Action to an understanding of the struggle (aside from the insipid plea for a "truly democratic set of rules" -- rules! mind you.) has been to gently chide the "bureaucratic attitude" which fears the rank-and-file above all else.

The tone is not incidental. The ISL's role in the labor movement for more than a decade has been set by its participation in the Reuther caucus, from the first stages of Reuther's march to Presidency of the CIO, through the present, in which the enormous power of that office, under Reuther's inspired dictamen, moves the combined forces of the AFL-CIO. Reuther's words, not Meany's, attract the major headlines. Reuther, not Meany, is the big voice of American labor. The recent attempt to build Meany as something besides the bureaucrat that he is -- probably entailing a considerable expenditure on his part -- cannot succeed short of a miracle, in destroying the pre-eminence of Walter Reuther in AFL-CIO.

This man, from the standpoint of labor's needs and perspectives, is the most dangerous man in the American labor movement. The hold which Reuther exercises on his own cadres, stemming from a genuinely militant role in the 1930s, and protected by a 'militant' vocabulary today, can prove disastrous, because Reuther, great man of labor, is engaged in the total domestication of the American labor movement---its reduction before monopoly capital. His real power today rests there -- not on the militant strategy of the 30s. As Sid Lens puts it in a recent article

* "capitulation" is used advisedly. The rationale employed---to put the rank-and-file in motion---is worthless. To attack xx Reuther in the labor movement is to lose ones 'respectability.' --- in the eyes of Reuther.

"If he (Reuther) had remained a radical as he was 20 years ago, it is doubtful that he would have risen as high as he is..." "Doubtful" is the cautious phraseology that Lens employs for the Harvard Business Review. There is no "doubt" involved.

It is Walter Reuther, and the "progressive" coterie which surrounds him, which has moved most effectively to eliminate democracy in the UAW, frustrated its most militant traditions, sabotaged the promising trend to a labor party --- and worked tirelessly to subordinate labor to American capital. No other interpretation of Reuther's role is possible. The kid glove treatment handed Reuther's drive to power by labor action, therefore, is particularly indefensible.

REUTHER AND THE LABOR RACKET PROBE

On January 29 Senator Joseph McCarthy introduced a Senate resolution authorizing a "select committee" to investigate labor racketeering. Immediately prior to the introduction of the resolution, first the UAW International Executive Board, then the AFL-CIO Executive Council petitioned Congress to authorize "an appropriate congressional committee to conduct an investigation...and expose...corruption in labor, in industry." (The Militant, Feb 4, 1956)

On January 28, one day before McCarthy introduced the resolution into the Senate, the AFL-CIO Executive Council, by a 38 to one vote (Becks), assuming the prerogatives of constitutional adjudicators, decreed that invocation of the Fifth Amendment by any member of the organization would constitute grounds for dismissal. That the Council "meant" this to apply only to racket investigations is irrelevant. The attempt to limit the use of the Fifth Amendment, i.e., to establish the priority of the AFL-CIO exec over the constitutional right to avoid self-incrimination, cannot be considered anything but a blow against civil liberties in the labor movement.

Thus, the "progressive" sector of the labor bureaucracy, at the instigation of the 'liberal' Walter Reuther, simply invited the American bourgeoisie to break the integrity of the labor movement, at the same time that it launched an attack on the Fifth Amendment in the manner which is frequently contemplated, but rarely carried, in the bourgeois courts.

Although an attempt to invoke the power of the rank-and-file of the Teamsters is the natural method of democratic struggle, as Gordon Haskell points out: "Much as the union leadership would like to have the movement rid of Communist or racketeer control, they are very reluctant to encourage rank-and-file movements of revolt against established leaderships for any purpose. This kind of thing sets precedents... Rather than encourage all-out membership struggles...they seek to set up another 'official leadership' to fight the old ones." Unfortunately, Haskell, in his mild 'agitation' does not bother to develop the implications of his own remark, insofar as they point up the fact that Reuther, and the "progressive" forces of AFL-CIO have absolutely no interest in eliminating "racketeers" and "communists" except to guarantee the monolithic character of their own domination.

To assert that a "progressive" struggle is taking place in the effort to oust Beck, to discover principally opportunities for "a struggle for democracy", to refrain from a militant exposure of the danger inherent in this bourgeois: 'labor' coalition -- is to display an impossible obtusity.

A few cracks in the bureaucratic apparatus may permit, temporarily, a break in favor of the rank-and-file --- as may any jurisdictional dispute between labor dictators. The elimination of Beck, in this particular instance, simply sets the stage for the final consolidation of the bureaucracy; provides a barrier between the ranks and their "leadership" which will, short of mass movement to the left, be well-nigh insurmountable. The kind of a struggle that is being waged against Beck, under these circumstances, is least of all "progressive". It contains the elements of a dictatorship more severe in its consequences than anything that Beck imagined.

Reuther vs Stellato: Democracy in Local 600

Reuther's current affection for "democratic" process isn't without precedent. His methods in rooting out Stalinist -- and anti-Stalinist -- militants in the period of his rise to power are well-known.

The last center of opposition, Ford Local 600, felt the full weight of his "tactics" in early 1952. Stellato himself had been a Reuther follower and, according to the report of Walter Jason (a not unbiased reporter) in Labor Action, Feb 11, 1952, had carried on his own "coarse, stupid, and bureaucratic anti-Communist campaign", prior to flying into the arms of the defeated Stalinists, and assuming the mantle of champion of the opposition.

Whether Stellato was exactly "driven into the arms of the Stalinists" is an interesting question. It is stated in somewhat overpositive terms, unfortunately, to sustain a close examination of the facts. If, as Reuther asserted in late 1951, Ford Local 600 under Stellato was stalinist dominated, Reuther was remarkably reluctant to prove the point before the special trial board demanded by the UAW Constitution.

More adequate as an explanation of Reuther's hostility is the following remark by Jason (LA, Feb 11, '52): "The Stellato coalition protests against trends in the UAW toward bureaucratism, and in many instances they are correct. The leanings in the UAW away from its traditional rank-and-file democracy are disturbing and dangerous, but so far they still remain only trends."

The "trends" came down with a bang a month later, however. Immediately following the witch-hunt visit of the House Un-American Activities Committee, under Rep. Potter which arrived with the announced intention of hatcheting Local 600, (proving nothing, incidentally) the Reuther-dominated International Executive Board of UAW ordered 600 to "show cause why an administrator should not be appointed to take

charge of the local union." (The Militant, Mar 17)(Dated Det. Mar 12)

Four days later, Walter Jason, reporting to Labor Action, wrote:

"DETROIT, March 16---After a one-day hearing, at which the Reuther leadership acted as prosecutor, judge and jury, the international executive board placed a six-man administration over ~~the~~ Ford Local 600, in spite of vigorous protests of the duly elected officials of that local union, the largest in the world...

"The main charge against the four top officers of Ford Local 600 -- Carl Stellato, president; Pat Rice, vice president; Bill Hood, recording secretary; and Bill Grant, financial secretary -- was that they were derelict in their duty because a small clique of the Communist Party was the real leadership of the local union."

These were essentially the charges which Reuther refused to press before a trial board three months earlier. They are the same charges that the House Committee under Potter failed to establish. (Reutherite international representative Elesio Romano had testified only that "The communists and their supporters were in full control of the Ford local's weekly newspaper, Ford Facts." (The Militant, Mar 11 '52)

Having to defeat the Local 600 leadership in open, democratic election Reuther, therefore, utilized the witch-hunt hysteria which attended the UnAmerican Activities Committee visit to Detroit in order to attack an opposition caucus in UAW.

The cynical, absolutely spurious use of the "communist control" issue is demonstrated by Brother Reuther himself. Despite his 'exposure' of the Stellato regime, the new election required by the UAW Constitution to take place within 60 days, was set off to September by Reuther.--- because the Reutherites couldn't put a slate into the field against Stellato with any hope of success.

The Administrative Board removed (not suspended !) six Local 600 officers "without even charging Communist affiliation." (Militant, Apr 27.)

Most damning of all is the "explanation" which Reuther presented to the Reutherite caucus. If Walter Jason's account is inclusive the "communist issue was buried beneath an entirely different set of accusations which, with ~~the~~ Jason's comments, deserve reproduction here:

"Reuther charges that the criticisms in Ford Facts are not anti-Reuther but anti-union. That is why it was necessary to shut it up.

"He used two major illustrations to try to prove his point. After the last UAW convention, Ford Facts had a sensational full-page story headlined 'Betrayal'. This article blasted the role of Reuther. It criticized the salary increases to top officers and to international union representatives.

(more)

"This article, according to Reuther, was used by other unions to defeat the UAW-CIO in elections. Therefore, the Stellato regime is guilty of anti-union activities.

"Another article that burned Reuther up was the recent criticism of the UAW unemployment conference in Washington. Reuther's program of fighting for more steel and copper was denounced as a "boases' boy" program. The article ridiculed claims that the conference accomplished anything. It accused Reuther of hand-picking the delegates to that conference.

"Of course, readers of Ford Facts know the extremes which criticism of Reuther reach at times in that paper. Does a paper have the right to be wrong? Does a local union officialdom have the right to criticize the policies of the top officers of the union, even if that criticism may be picked up by someone else? Reuther's answer is No!

"The basic trouble with Reuther's rule is that in practice it signifies that NO criticism will be tolerated, for ANY criticism may be picked up by other unions, like CP-controlled unions, and quoted against Reuther and the UAW.

"Let us take the current issue at Ford Local 600. Suppose a local union votes that the placing of an administrator over Local 600 was bureaucratic; this action is noted in the next issue of the local union paper; then a CP-controlled union quotes the local union paper as calling Reuther 'bureaucratic'. Under the present rule the local union leadership is subjected to the same charge of anti-unionism as Reuther levels against Ford Local 600 officials." (Labor Action, Mar 31; dateline, Detroit, Mar 23.)

The crudity of this particularly "coarse, stupid, and bureaucratic anti-Communist campaign" undoubtedly strengthened Stellato's position immensely. Opposition to Reuther was sufficiently strong in 600 to force withdrawal of Reutherite candidates for the top posts. Fifteen of 19 units elected anti-Reuther candidates; several Reutherite incumbents were defeated, and 80% of the 184 General Council seats went to anti-Reuther forces.

Nonetheless, within the month the same "progressive" Mr Reuther sparked a step by the UAW administration to "take steps at the forthcoming March convention to bar members of the Communist Party from holding membership in the UAW." That the position did not carry is not to Reuther's credit.

Thus we have a sample of Reutherite democracy in action. That Reuther failed in his attack on Local 600 is not an indication of Reuther's generosity. It is an indication of the depth of the democratic tradition in UAW. But the depth of a tradition should not obscure the heavy inroads that Reuther has made, and is making. The fact of the matter is clear. A genuine struggle for rank-and-file control will clash with Walter Reuther. He is no friend of labor democracy.

Class Conflict and the "Progressive" Bureaucracy

The dictatorial character of Beck's union is open and indisputable. Traditions of democracy have been smashed! ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ every element of opposition is crude and relentless. To oppose Beck and the quasi-gangster leadership of the Teamsters is a matter of guts -- not slick political analysis. There is not, and never has been, any question of the attitude of socialists toward bureaucrats of Beck's calibre. Every conceivable opening in the struggle to overthrow the Teamster dictatorship should be used -- except a coalition with those forces which intend to destroy, not the Becks, but the unions.

In the context of the struggle which is taking place today Reuther's role is infinitely more dangerous than that of the Becks. The fate of organized labor is at stake. Reuther's progress to power within the labor bureaucracy has been steady and virtually irrevocable. He is dangerous because he understands the power of the movement which he dominates. Every action is calculated -- to prohibit open, independent class action -- the battle against the political and economic subordination of a whole class.

Reuther understands the need, if the bureaucracy is to sustain itself between capital and labor, of militant words, and aggressive "campaigns". But even the enormous barrage of publicity which surrounds Reuther's contract negotiations -- massive affairs -- cannot obscure the fact that Reuther fails, in every contract, every issue, to solve even the immediate problems of his own auto workers.

The famous GAW is a dead issue, solving nothing. The resentment which exploded in dozens of wild-cat strikes immediately after Reuther's most recent 'victory' -- the Three Year Contract in 1955 -- has not been exhausted. Opposition to Reuther is centered in the UAW itself. Jack Wilson's "Chrysler Story Infuriates Rank and File of UAW" (LA, Mar 18) emphasizes that the reaction to Chrysler Vice-President Misch's boast that record earnings were due to "new efficiency in ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ operations, the elimination of 22,000 jobs, and new work standards" ("time-study! automation! speed-up!) whether or not, as Misch says, "The leadership of the UAW had been informed of our plans with a full background of what was at stake." (I am noting the point that the UAW workers charged the bureaucracy with "betrayal. The most that Wilson himself has to say, after noting the shaky vote of confidence accorded Reuther by the higher echelons, is that "Interestingly enough, neither the company nor the UAW has denied the facts in the Crellin story.")

The most casual review of Labor Action's coverage over a period, not of months, but of years (3) shows that it is, not a critic, but an apologist for Reuther. For Labor Action Reuther is progressive. The word needs no qualifying quotes. But Reuther wishes to be, and is,

a dictator, limited only by the forces which can be brought to bear against him within the Union. It is impossible to utilize a Reuther, engaged in the destruction of militant, democratic traditions to introduce democracy into Beck's union. Nothing is further, as Haskell apologetically notes, from the minds of the omnipotent "leadership" of labor.

The role which can, and must, be played by socialists is far from the foot-dragging 'commentary' with which IA accompanies Reuther's more intolerable assaults on democracy. We cannot isolate, within a reactionary bureaucracy, more and less -- "relatively progressive" tendencies. The coalition of labor leaders and the bourgeois witch-hunters (for the labor probe is obviously an extension of the earlier witch-hunt --- the containment of labor, not the 'communists'), is the natural opponent of socialists in and out of the labor movement.

The first thing that has to be learned -- or relearned -- is that labor unions are instruments of struggle against the bourgeoisie. There are no rules in that struggle, except those which are imposed by the black-jack and billie. The class independence of the unions must be the key point in our analysis and activity.

I repeat, the key element in determining the role which the ISL plays today can be discerned by examination of its attitude toward the Labor Rackets Probe. The affinity for Social Democracy -- simply follows!

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(Text of AYS Letter)

May 16, 1957

Dear Comrades,

At a recent debate in New York City with the Young Socialist League we made the following proposals: (1) That the YSL maintain itself as an independent, unaffiliated youth organization programatically based on a socialist opposition to capitalism and Stalinism, (2) That it invite all radical youth to join the YSL as the first step in a regroupment of revolutionary socialist youth, (3) That under these conditions the members of the American Youth for Socialism would be prepared to join the YSL and recognize it as the nucleus of a united socialist youth movement in America.

YSL Discussion

To date we have received no reply to this proposal. We note, also, that the report of the debate which appeared in *The Young Socialist Challenge* did not mention the proposal we set forth at that time.

We have been following with great interest the discussion in your ranks on the perspectives for socialist youth in America as reported in the publicly distributed *Young Socialist Review* and the *Bulletin of the Left-Wing Caucus*.

The majority of the National Executive Committee of the YSL is proposing that the members join the Socialist Party-Social Democratic Federation and constitute its youth affiliate. It proposes to do this on the basis of the present political program of the SP-SDF.

The Left-Wing Caucus of the YSL, on the other hand, in opposing this course states, "We consider that the basic question posed by the proposal for unity with the SP-SDF is; either to build the YSL on a socialist political basis or to liquidate the YSL in its present form on the basis of the anti-socialist politics of the SP-SDF."

We believe that the YSL now has before it a unique opportunity and responsibility. With the dissolution of the Labor Youth League, the YSL today constitutes the only national youth organization putting forward the ideas of socialism. As an independent organization, with a militant tradition, it has the potential of attracting a significant number of radical youth from many quarters.

SP Record

This perspective would be excluded for a youth organization affiliated with and dominated by the SP-SDF. The Socialist Party has a forty year record of incompatibility with any youth movement which even begins to display signs of militancy. The statements and actions of the present leadership of the SP-SDF demonstrates that the forty year record is not about to be broken.

The experience is extensive and conclusive. Social-democratic politics inevitably cores into opposition to the militant aspirations of radical youth. Social-democracy, expresses the interests of the most conservative and bureaucratized layers of the labor movement. It must periodically either tame or drive out those youth who wish to build on the best traditions of the revolutionary workers' movement.

Ex-LYL'ers

We believe that the most pressing task of young revolutionary socialists today is to engage the thousands of former members of the Labor Youth League, who are recoiling from Stalinism, in fruitful political discussion and collaboration looking forward to the establishment of a unified socialist youth movement.

Is it not obvious that affiliation to the SP-SDF would make impossible an effective approach to the former members of the LYL. How can radical youth who are breaking with the bureaucratic monstrosity of Stalinism be attracted to a clique of State-Department "socialists" who display contempt for elementary democracy and who prohibit free discussion among socialists?

Is it not obvious that the independent perspective which we propose offers the best possibility for the construction of a much larger and more effective youth movement than anything that now exists, and would greatly facilitate our common task of spreading socialist ideas among young workers and students?

Left-Wing Stand Offers Basis

In our opinion the position put forward by the YSL Left-Wing Caucus provides the basis for beginning the long and necessary work of constructing a united revolutionary youth movement in this country.

The AYS proposed that we begin the process of youth regroupment by affiliation of the young members and sympathizers of the Socialist Workers Party to the YSL. This would immediately establish the YSL on a considerably larger basis than at any time in its history.

There are important political differences among us. However, we wish to emphasize our conviction that these differences can be discussed in a fraternal fashion within the confines of an organization that stands on a revolutionary socialist opposition to capitalism and opposes both Stalinism and social-democracy.

We ask you to seriously consider our proposals. We suggest the fullest discussion of them, not only internally within the YSL, but jointly with the AYS membership and the young members and sympathizers of the Socialist Workers Party in the various localities throughout the country.

We also suggest that during such a period of discussion we examine to the fullest extent all possibilities for joint activities and fruitful collaboration.

Fraternally,

Bert Deck, Chairman

American Youth for Socialism

(Text of YSL Reply)

May 22, 1957

Bert Deck, Chairman
American Youth for Socialism
116 University Place
New York, New York

Dear Comrade Deck:

We have received your letter of May 16. While it does not indicate the YSL body to which it is addressed, we presume that it is intended for the Young Socialist League National Action Committee.

We note your statement that your proposals in regard to "unity" between the AYS and the YSL, made during the course of a debate between yourself and a spokesman for the YSL on the "Nature of the Russian State", were not replied to by us and were not mentioned in the report of this debate which appeared in the Young Socialist Challenge. In explanation, we wish to advise you that we are not in the habit of considering as formal proposals a few remarks thrown out verbally during a debate on another question. And as for the Challenge report of this debate, the reporter included in his account those statements by the debaters which he felt represented the central arguments of the two sides on the question under consideration.

We note with interest that your letter has already been made public by you - in the Militant of May 20 - before we have had the opportunity to consider it and reply to it. While such a procedure is more usually associated with a propaganda move than with a serious proposal, we do not base our objections to your proposal on this fact.

We note also that you "have been following with great interest the discussion in (our) ranks on the perspectives for socialist youth in America as reported in the publicly distributed Young Socialist Review and the Bulletin of the Left-Wing Caucus." And that in your opinion "the position put forward by the YSL Left-Wing Caucus provides the basis for beginning the long and necessary work of constructing a united revolutionary youth movement in this country." While it might be felt by some that this constitutes interference into the affairs of the Young Socialist League by your organization, and does not comprise the type of procedure that can result in the kind of honest, fraternal socialist regroupment that we all claim to stand for, and which is required for a fruitful socialist unification, we do not base our response to your proposal on this basis.

Our attitude toward your proposal is determined by the official policy of the YSL, as adopted by our National Executive Committee. We stand for the creation of a broad, Debsian-type party of socialism in the United States, and wish to participate in the creation of its youth affiliate. We look to the unification of the ISL, the SP-SDF, the YSL and the YPSL as the first step along the road to this goal.

For us the decisive question is a regroupment of the socialist movement in America which will begin to restore the influence of socialism within the American working class, which will work towards the creation of a labor party and for other socialist and progressive policies. All democratic socialists in the United States, of whatever tendency, are agreed upon this fundamental task. We believe, therefore, that there should be a single, all-inclusive organization of democratic socialists to work together toward this end.

All socialist tendencies should have a place in such a regrouped socialist movement, regardless of their theories on Russia and other questions, provided that they stand for the fullest democracy all over the world, on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Your organization should have a place in the youth affiliate of such a reunited socialist party, provided of course, that it adopted a perspective favoring the creation of such a new socialist movement, and genuinely aimed at loyally working for its creation and loyally building it after it comes into existence, as opposed to any possible policy of "raiding", "disrupting", or "splitting" it, or any of the present-day groups which will constitute it. In this way, the AYS could also make a contribution to the regroupment of socialist forces in the United States and the creation of a socialist movement.

For a variety of reasons, the SP-SDF is best suited to become the framework for this regroupment. It is identified with the historic tradition of socialism in the United States, it is associated with the name of Debs. It is not a discredited organization, unlike others, and is historically known for its broad character. We have, of course, many differences with the present policies of the SP-SDF, but we believe that these can be fraternally debated within a single party whose program is determined, not by the slogans of the past, but the necessities of the present: by the need for all democratic socialists to work together to build a socialist movement in this country, to work for a labor party, etc.

We do not wish to go into your characterization of "social democracy" in this letter, but we do want to point out that we consider it the expression of an unhistorical, rigid and dogmatic approach. For example, you say that "Social democracy expresses the interests of the most conservative and bureaucratized layers of the labor movement." (Our emphasis). In the United States today, the left wing of the labor movement stands for a program of liberal reform through the Democratic Party, that is, it stands to the right of the "social democracy" on the crucial question of a labor party. Do you seriously argue that the American "social democracy" expresses the interests of the "most conservative and bureaucratized layers of the labor movement," that is, of the old AFL craft unionist officialdom?

To us, this is only one example of the fact that you are not approaching the problems of today in the social context of today, that you are repeating phrases from another time and place. We repeat: in our view, the SP-SDF stands to the left both of the official labor movement and the overwhelming majority of the rank and file, on the decisive question of a labor party, not to speak of its general opposition to capitalism and advocacy of socialism.

With regard to the former members of the LYL, we believe that a democratic socialist youth organization, affiliated to a broad, Debsian-type party would offer the greatest attraction to those currently breaking with Stalinism. We do not believe that the crucial differences between us and Stalinists is one of revolutionary socialism as opposed

to reformism; rather, it is the question of democracy. We believe that the first and immediate task of the socialist movement today is to help those breaking with Stalinism to give up every vestige of their former support of totalitarianism. Only then can we debate with them within the confines of a single movement and seek to win them to our political program. And here again, we are confident that our perspective offers the way to the creation of a real democratic socialist alternative capable of attracting the former members of the LYL.

Furthermore, we believe that the notion of "an independent, unaffiliated youth organization" is not viable in America today. In the practical sphere, any socialist youth organization in this country today must rely upon the material and political aid of an adult organization. The YSL is, of course, unaffiliated; but it considers itself to be a part of the independent socialist tendency; it has consistently proclaimed its warm fraternal ties and general political solidarity with the Independent Socialist League. At the time we decided to be unaffiliated, we noted that ~~this~~ this was due to a particular set of circumstances, and recorded our opposition to any idea of a "youth party." We regard young workers and students as the main arena of our activity, and youth work as our main concern, but ~~at~~ at the same time, find it inconceivable to think in terms of regroupment, ~~and~~ divorced from the regroupment of the general, adult socialist movement. To mention one, but by no means the most important consideration, an "independent" youth organization, under present circumstances, would, we feel, become a center for raids on the part of various adult tendencies.

In this connection, there is one aspect of your proposals which is unclear to us. In view of the fact that the AYS is the "youth group" of the SWP, or at least is fraternally related to it, and ~~the~~ since the YSL is fraternally related to the ISL, we do not understand why your proposals to us were not preceded or accompanied by the same or similar proposals of the SWP to the ISL. If there exists ~~a~~ enough of a political basis for "unity" between the AYS and YSL, and for the "affiliation of the young members and sympathizers of the Socialist Workers Party to the YSL", it would appear, given the general political agreement between the AYS and SWP on the one hand, and the general political agreement of the YSL and ISL on the other, that a similar basis exists for such proposals from the SWP to the ISL. The absence of such SWP proposals to the ISL is especially unclear because we fail to see how one can be concerned with "youth" alone, and not with the movement in general, and because such SWP proposals to the ISL would - if made - help to dispel any ideas that might arise to the effect that your proposals to the YSL are a maneuver. Such ideas might occur to some in view of the fact that your proposals come at this time and under conditions currently existing.

The question of socialist regroupment shall be reviewed and decided at our forthcoming national convention. Should the convention adopt a radically different perspective from the one outlined above, the question~~s~~ of your proposals would of course be subject to reopening. Should the convention adopt the policy laid down by our National Executive Committee, as we believe it will, the rejection of your proposals would be indicated. In the interim, the position of the YSL is the position set forth by our NEC. In accordance with this position, we wish to inform you that we do not feel that your proposals constitute a fruitful basis for performing the vital task now posed for socialists - the reconstitution of the socialist movement. Hence we are forced to reject them.

Fraternally,
Young Socialist League
National Action Committee 1147