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AMERICAN POLITICS AND THE 1968 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN
(Political Committee Draft Resolution)

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American Politics and the 1968 Presidential Campaign

(Draft Political Resolution submitted by the Political Committee of the SWP for preconvention discussion, July 1967)

On the International Front

The continuing and widening war in Vietnam is the central issue in both national and world politics today. The genocidal intervention against the liberation struggle in the southern zone and against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the north springs from the global imperialist aims of the capitalist ruling class of the United States. Every socialist, everyone who stands for democratic rights and national freedom, is duty bound to oppose and combat this criminal war. Every political tendency in this country is being tested by its response to this challenge.

Washington's escalation of the war in Vietnam is another "police action" in a long series undertaken by American capitalism since the end of World War II to uphold the world capitalist system, to stabilize it and to extend it at the expense of the workers states, primarily the Soviet Union. It is part of the policy of containing and rolling back the Russian revolution and its extensions in Eastern Europe, China, North Korea, North Vietnam and Cuba; of blocking the colonial revolution either by smashing it or diverting it from its tendency to break through the limits of private property. The interlocking network of alliances, including NATO, SEATO, CENTO, and the OAS, are designed to advance the military side of this imperialist foreign policy, constituting part of the preparations for a third and perhaps final world war.

This twenty-year period has been marked by two main trends.

The first is displacement of the older imperialist powers (Britain, France, Holland, Belgium) from their uppermost positions in the colonial world by the United States. Among the capitalist countries, the U.S., with its colossal wealth and nuclear stockpile, has become the chief exploiter and unchallenged military gendarme of the colonial areas.

The second is direct intervention in the internal affairs of other countries, whether through CIA operations or open use of troops, whenever capitalist power and property is seriously threatened. The outstanding examples up to now have been Korea, Iran, Guatemala, Cuba, the Congo, Santo Domingo, Vietnam and the Middle East. The mask of liberalism is dropped and the most barbarous terror is used and encouraged whenever the indigenous ruling class proves unequal to the situation.

Despite all these efforts, however, the past twenty years have been featured by extreme political instability. Governments have been continually upset by forces eluding the con-

trol of either the U.S. or the USSR, whose conservative bureaucratic regime favors maintaining the status quo. These forces are constantly set in motion by the very conditions required to perpetuate the world capitalist system. They are under the control of no leader or groups of leaders. Thus the search for capitalist stability, like the search for "peaceful coexistence" between classes and countries with opposing social foundations, is in the long run a fundamentally hopeless objective. The Pax Americana sought by Washington is undermined by ever renewed intensification of the class struggle; and the strenuous efforts to contain anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist aspirations by harsh police efforts and preventive coups d'état merely defer the settlements and make them more explosive. This can be seen in a whole series of countries, Brazil, Santo Domingo, Indonesia, Ghana, Greece and Nigeria constituting outstanding examples.

The imperialist policy has proved most successful on the economic level, re-establishing the war-shattered economies of Western Europe and Japan and paving the way for genuine booms. But the success has not been unalloyed. It has signified American financial penetration of the rest of the capitalist world and along with it intensification of international monetary instability. What happens to one sector of the world capitalist system now more easily affects the system as a whole. While a recession in one sector is cushioned by a boom in other sectors, concurrent recessions can have devastating consequences. The fading of the European and Japanese economic "miracles" thus cause the American imperialists to watch the state of health of their own economy with all the greater anxiety.

At the same time, the gap in economic level between the highly industrialized countries and the colonial world continues to widen. World trade conferences, international agreements and new investments, ballyhooed as means of lessening the gap, actually only serve to accentuate it.

Imperialism's incapacity to solve the elementary economic and social needs of the colonial peoples breeds permanent unrest. This results in repeated upsurges seeking to break the imperialist grip. Although the imperialists have managed to beat these back again and again, the colonial masses, inspired by successes such as the Chinese and Cuban revolutions and the great example of the swift rise of the Soviet Union to the second world power, have displayed remarkable capacity to recover from defeat and to renew their struggles. Their tenacity and determination to fight on despite formidable odds reached heroic heights first in Algeria and then in Vietnam.

Johnson's escalation of the aggression against the Vietnamese revolution takes place in this context. It is part and parcel of the basic postwar drive of U.S. imperialism

toward world domination. Johnson's "escalation" is a continuation of Truman's "cold war," Eisenhower's "containment," and Kennedy's "showdown." The Republican and Democratic parties share equal responsibility for this foreign policy of blockades, blood and napalm, pointing toward a nuclear conflagration.

The escalation of U.S. intervention in the Vietnamese civil war unfolded during the favorable economic conjuncture of the first seven years of the 1960's. After a slowdown at the close of the Eisenhower administration, the American economy experienced the longest and largest "peace-time" boom in its history. This has provided the economic springboard for an aggressive and sustained counteroffensive after the 1959-60 victory of the Cuban revolution. U.S. capitalism has roamed the globe from Western Europe to South Africa seeking new places for investment. Between 1960 and 1965 the gross national product in the U.S. increased by 34.2 percent, corporate profits by 50.3 percent, and direct foreign investments by 45 percent. The "expansive" New Economics of the Kennedy-Johnson administrations has been imperialist economics par excellence.

This expansion has been facilitated by the successive, severe setbacks for the world revolution in the Congo, Brazil, Santo Domingo, Algeria, Indonesia, Greece and the Middle East.

The deepening divisions among the workers states, particularly the USSR and China, and their incapacity to join forces at a governmental level for a common defensive effort or counterthrust, have further encouraged the imperialist offensive.

On the domestic level, the sustained economic prosperity has acted as a damper upon social and political opposition by the organized working class.

Washington's policy has been to take all possible advantage of the openings provided and to press forward as far as possible, particularly in Vietnam where the paralysis of Moscow and Peking is most glaring. The net effect has been to greatly heighten the danger of drifting into a nuclear confrontation.

The "East of Suez" role, formerly assumed by the European powers, has been taken over by the U.S. It has installed its own formidable military bases in Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries in preparation for widening the war there. Meanwhile the conflict in Vietnam has been more and more Americanized as the forces of Saigon have eroded away and collapsed. Unlike the Korean adventure, the Vietnamese war is being waged without any major support from the satellite powers of the U.S. and without the cover of the United Nations flag. The NATO alliance has even shown signs

of strain in face of the widespread popular disapproval in Europe of Johnson's course.

The escalation of American involvement finds a grim reflection in the war statistics. Casualties among the U.S. troops have increasingly tended to rise above those of the Saigon forces. More U.S. troops have been committed to Vietnam than at the high point of the Korean conflict; and, despite all promises about an early victory, the Pentagon continually increases its demands for more G.I.'s.

As the troops, the costs and the casualties continue to mount, Johnson's aim of achieving a military victory before the 1968 election is seen to be less and less likely in face of the resistance of the Vietnamese people. At the same time, the effort to break their will by raining more and more napalm and high explosives on them and by stepped up measures to "cut off the flow of military supplies" increases the risk of a direct military collision with China. The "controlled" escalation tends to become increasingly uncontrolled.

However ominous it is, this pattern is not new. America's rulers have pushed ahead upon this risky path several times in the postwar period. Each time they were stopped from advancing, and even forced to retreat and postpone their schedule of engaging in a major conflict, because of a combination of factors unfavorable to their designs. The most weighty of these have been: (1) an upsurge in the colonial revolution, (2) instability in Europe and Japan, (3) a strong showing by the Soviet Union as in the swift recovery from the devastation of World War II and the early development of nuclear weaponry, and (4) antiwar sentiment inside the U.S. itself. The American imperialists have been checked and slowed down, not by any incapacity to understand or promote their global interests but by their recognition of the real relationship of forces between the contending camps on an international scale as verified by repeated reconnoiters.

Certain shifts have occurred in the four main areas which the American imperialists must take into consideration in calculating their aggressive moves in the direction of war.

The colonial revolution has undergone a series of defeats which though temporary are substantial and demoralizing. The defeats have served to encourage the strategists of American imperialism.

While the war is unpopular in Europe and Japan the degree of economic and political instability in these areas is not so great as to constitute a major deterrent.

The Kremlin's response to the escalation of the war has been to escalate the diplomacy of "peaceful coexistence."

Far from winning "understanding" from the Johnson administration, this has been taken as an invitation to proceed further along military lines, since the Kremlin's diplomacy amounts to a virtual guarantee of low-cost victories so far as the hazards in the Soviet direction are concerned. Peking's policy of rejecting a united front with Moscow in confronting imperialism plays into the hands of the Khrushchevists, assisting them in their policy of avoiding any effective countermeasures to the American military aggression against the Vietnamese workers state.

What is now notably significant in the situation is the deep-going resistance inside the United States, unique in the twentieth century. For the first time since 1946, domestic resistance is keeping pace with opposition in other sectors of the world and linking up with it. This promises to be a major element in staying the hand of the capitalist rulers and reinforcing the international oppositional movements to them.

On the Domestic Front

The entire coming period will take place under the sign of the Vietnam war and continued militarization of American life. The war budget tends to become an ever greater determinant in the evolution of the economy.

The war will be used to exact and justify "sacrifices" from labor, the Negro people and student youth. It will cut into and reverse the promises of the "great society," the "war on poverty," social reforms, civil-rights legislation and concessions, the right to strike and the right to dissent.

This will widen awareness and understanding of the imperialist character of the war, its genocidal aspects and the threat of nuclear destruction in a third world war.

On top of the planned escalation in Vietnam, the U.S. capitalist rulers must be prepared to keep putting down similar uprisings in other places. The prospect of other Vietnams, in the sense of fresh upsurges in the colonial world, as heralded by Che Guevara, flows inevitably from the historic crisis in which capitalism finds itself.

The tendency will be for social tensions to grow even if relative economic prosperity is maintained for another period.

Due to the mounting costs of the war, it becomes increasingly difficult for the ruling class to grant concessions to labor. The workers are thereby compelled to put up greater resistance in order to maintain their standards of living, job conditions and basic rights. The same holds even more for the black masses in their struggle for full equality

and for the youth in the high schools and colleges who want a society that measures up to their needs and ideals.

The Vietnam war has seen the development of an open schism at the top of the American unions and the beginnings of a new spirit of militancy in the ranks.

Reuther's description of the AFL-CIO as "arteriosclerotic" is his way of acknowledging the stagnation and erosion of the American labor movement. He, of course, can not acknowledge that this is the result of its subordination to the Democratic party machine and its support of the reactionary bipartisan foreign policy of the Democrats and Republicans which he has been vigorously upholding. This sad state is the culmination of the decades of service which the labor lieutenants have performed for the White House, the State Department, the Pentagon and the Central Intelligence Agency. It is the result of their long years of ultrachauvinism, of cold-war-inspired expulsions of "Communists" and the unions influenced by them from the AFL-CIO topped by the ousting of the Teamsters. These moves have gone hand in hand with failure to lead the ranks in struggle against the corporations and in extending the benefits of unionism to the unorganized.

This policy, which has been substituted for any sustained efforts to undertake solving the crucial problems facing American society, has entailed a loss of influence and prestige for both the labor movement and its official leaders and won them growing contempt from the best militants and the youth within as well as outside the working class. The loss in standing finally induced Reuther, the representative of the Social Democratic elements in the AFL-CIO bureaucracy, to dissociate himself from Meany's crudities, although not from the basic policies they hammered out together.

The deepening dissatisfaction in the ranks was evidenced in earlier replacements of entrenched leaderships in the United Steel Workers, the International Union of Electrical Workers, and the United Rubber Workers. The boom of the past few years has brought about a significant influx of youth into basic industry and into the unions. When Reuther says these youth did not build the unions and must be educated, he means they have not been tamed to a point acceptable to the official leadership.

Rank and file rejections of contracts negotiated by union leaders is an important sign of the changing mood in the membership. Younger workers don't want labor "statesmanship" from the leaderships of the Internationals; they want bigger checks and protection against inflation instead of fringe benefit packages. They want concrete gains and are willing to show militancy to get them regardless of the way this may upset routine negotiations.

Because of the biggest "peacetime" war budget in U.S. history -- more than \$70 billion for fiscal 1968 -- the congressional estimates place the budget deficit in fiscal 1968 at more than \$25 billion. This would be the biggest post-war deficit, measured either absolutely or as a percentage of the gross national product.

The restiveness of the workers is due in large part to this mounting war budget. Federal deficit financing increases inflation, thereby cutting their real wages, while it maintains corporation profits. The inflationary pressures due to the escalating budget deficit are especially important. Even when a downturn in the business cycle has occurred, such as the one beginning in the middle of 1966, the inflationary spiral continues. Thus in mid-1967, while industrial production and hours worked have yet to begin a significant upturn, prices continued to go up, leaving real wages two percent lower than in May 1966.

Under inflationary conditions, and with the military needs of the ruling class rising, not falling or leveling off, the Johnson administration must eventually try to impose on the unions, through federal intervention and action, an austerity program designed to transfer even more of the costs of the war to the workers. Johnson's policy is to keep the rise in money wages small enough and the tax level high enough so that in the face of rising prices, real wages can be reduced.

This will require a further undermining of the ability of the unions to exercise their independent powers and fresh efforts to prevent the ranks from utilizing their democratic rights.

To the corporations, rank and file rejection of contracts approved by official union leaders is akin to anarchy. This accounts for demands in Congress and the press to amend the Kennedy-Landrum-Griffith Act to restrict the right of workers to vote on their own contracts. The capitalists see the right of workers to reject recommended settlements as too much democracy.

The Johnson administration is preparing to go beyond the use of injunctions to prevent strikes. New legislative proposals are being introduced to more sharply curtail the right to strike. The logical culmination of the structural shift of the economy onto a war basis is some form of wage control and compulsory arbitration.

The Role of the Public Workers

Public workers are the fastest growing sector of the labor force. They increased in total number by one-third in the last five years. They are also the fastest growing sector of organized labor. Today there are more than 1,500,000 unionized public workers.

Their rise in militancy can be judged from the following figures. In 1962 they engaged in 28 strikes. In 1965 the figure rose to 42. In 1966 there were 150 strikes; and from January to May of 1967 more than 150 had already occurred.

These strikes have a special character.

First, they are directed against the government as both employer and strikebreaker. Secondly, they have usually been carried out in the face of antistrike legislation directed against them in particular. Thirdly, they are faced directly and immediately with the problem of political parties, since these run the government which employs them. The experiences gained and tactics used in these struggles have had a sharply political edge. They are forerunners of the battles that will face the heavy battalions of American labor as they fight to maintain their living standards.

The public workers' unions are an important link between labor and the younger generation undergoing increasing radicalization. Young people make up a large portion of this section of the work force, especially among the teachers. It is not only one of the most youthful sectors of the work force but also includes a high percentage of women. It is an area where many young recruits to socialism are gaining their first union experiences; and it is also an area where the question of the war in Vietnam has first been brought into the unions.

The militancy of teachers affects the thinking of their students on the character of unionism and labor solidarity when they see their teachers joining unions and striking to get better pay and working conditions.

The struggles of the public workers undermine the idea that the government impartially stands above the boss-worker conflict, thus bringing into question the whole strike-breaking structure constructed and maintained by the ruling class through its government.

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Up to now, the struggles engaged in by the American working class have been defensive in character, conducted by traditional union means. They promise to become intensified by inflation and other war pressures and attempts by the government to use the Vietnam war as an excuse to attack strikes.

Rising discontent among the ranks, coupled with strike action, do not amount to a radicalization of the working class. This will come only as recognition spreads among the most conscious sectors of the workers that the bosses are

using the Vietnam war to depress their standard of living in face of large corporate profits and that struggles against management can be won only if the government stays out or is kept out. It is this realization that can lead to going beyond job actions to a broader struggle in the form of a political offensive.

The Rise of Black Power

The struggle of the black millions against inequality and racism continues to mount in intensity. Opposition to the imperialist war in Vietnam has accelerated the process of radicalization stemming from the lack of progress in the fight for freedom in America and expressed by the deepening turn toward black nationalism.

Black people are forced by American capitalist society to assume the heaviest burdens in financing and fighting the war. A disproportionate number of black youths are drafted because they are unable to get "2-S" deferments or because of discrimination against them by all-white draft boards. Due to increased draft calls and the alteration of qualifications determined by educational opportunities, the draft rate for black people was increased in 1967. The draft is not the only area where black people face greater odds. Once in the army, a higher percentage are thrown into combat and killed.

Black people are also hardest hit by the domestic consequences of the war -- by rising prices and cutbacks in social welfare programs.

The blame for the lack of progress and growing economic inequities is being placed by more and more black people squarely on the national government. This, along with the Vietnam war and the repression of blacks involved in ghetto struggles through the use of anti-riot laws and police terror, is helping to bring forward the question of political action. The immediate enemy faced by those fighting for black progress is seen with increasing clarity as the state, the executive agency of the capitalist class. Larger numbers are being won to the view that reliance on civil-rights laws and nonviolent direct action will not substantially or sufficiently change this racist society.

The war and the radicalization of new layers of black people have torn the conservative and militant wings of the Afro-American movement apart. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Congress of Racial Equality are continuing to grope for a consistent program and an organizational vehicle which can weld the black masses into a more unified and powerful force. As of now, their radicalism consists of a mood of militant opposition to the "system" and government policies rather than a thought-out and effective alternative to reliance on the government and the

two capitalist parties.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Urban League back the government on all important questions. The Johnson administration is turning more and more to leaders like Roy Wilkins and Senator Brooke as shields against criticism in an attempt to give the federal government a pro-Negro image.

Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference tries to maintain an intermediate and mediating position between the more militant black radicals and the conservatives of the NAACP and the Urban League. While the SCLC rejects the nationalism and radicalism of the black power tendencies, the pressure of the black masses and the continuation of the Vietnam war pushes its leadership into opposition to the U.S. role in the conflict and toward support for direct action, putting them at odds with the government and the more conservative Negro organizations and leaders on certain issues.

As the focal point of the struggle shifts from the rural South to the urban ghettos, rebellions following the prototype of the Watts uprising are becoming a permanent feature of black resistance to the economic and social degradation that marks America's racist society. In the first half of 1967, nine cities experienced major rebellions -- Nashville, Jackson, Houston, Cincinnati, Dayton, Boston, Tampa, Atlanta and Buffalo.

The youth are the spearhead and main participants in these ghetto revolts. They take the risks and provide the spark, just as they did in the sit-ins and freedom rides of the early 1960's. These youth are the hardest hit by unemployment, the draft and inferior black schools, and face the bleakest expectations for the future.

The ghetto rebellions signify rejection of reliance on moral appeals to the government and "love your enemy" as adequate vehicles for changing society. They reflect the belief that racist violence must be resisted and that black people can earn respect and make gains only by defending themselves aggressively. These ghetto rebellions carry on the finest American traditions of mass struggle by any means necessary to attain worthy objectives, traditions set by the rebels of 1776, the black and white Abolitionists in the struggle against slavery, and the militants who manned the picket lines that built the CIO.

It is noteworthy that the first three explosions of 1967 -- Nashville, Houston, and Jackson -- were large-scale confrontations between black college students and the police. These battles, provoked by the cops, are indicative of the growing militancy of black students even in the traditionally conservative middle-class Negro colleges. They express

the shift of politically conscious black students, who are today reading Franz Fanon and Malcolm X more than Camus and Ghandi, away from the liberal ideology of the civil-rights movement toward identification with black nationalism and the proletarian masses of the black ghettos.

The Vietnam war has deepened this student radicalism and strengthened the internationalist aspect of black nationalism. The nationalist students and radicals are the most vehement opponents of the war and are well aware that the U.S. is in Vietnam in accordance with its policy of dominating nonwhite peoples around the world.

Black students are starting to organize on the basis of their new nationalist consciousness by forming campus organizations to oppose the war and the draft, as well as by organizing in black communities where their colleges are located. From their ranks will come new cadres to give sorely needed leadership for the struggle.

As long as no alternative to the capitalist parties exists, reformist alternatives such as a "third force" within the capitalist framework and black Democratic party politicians will sap and disorient the radicalism of the black masses. The political vacuum also gives undue room for "undergroundism" and other ultraleft substitutes for the open propaganda and education required in the long and hard task of gathering together the cadres of a black political organization. These tactics of frustrated ultraleft groups risk demoralization or victimization by police provocation.

The organization and unification of black people and the development of an adequate black leadership have lagged behind the increase in number of people ready to fight back against the system. The next stage of the struggle for equality and emancipation demands a leadership and a program to develop a black political party which can carry forward the struggle in all areas, including the electoral arena.

The Antiwar Student Movement

Antiwar sentiment is at present expressed more acutely among the youth than in any other sector of the population. The student milieu was already sensitized by a previous radicalization that began to develop around the end of the 1950's in response to certain aspects of the colonial revolution and the Afro-American struggle in the U.S. This earlier radicalization was expressed in support to the sit-ins, the freedom rides, in solidarity with the Cuban revolution, the formation of the now defunctive Student Peace Union and demonstrations for campus reforms. Opposition to U.S. involvement in Vietnam brought in new and previously unaffected layers of students.

This student radicalization has special features and limits. Although it originated in response to events in the class struggle, it has not unfolded along class lines or developed a socialist or Marxist understanding of the world conflicts in progress. It has remained primarily a movement of moral protest in reaction to the hypocrisy and brutality of world capitalism.

The student radicals challenge the entire fabric of the present social system, questioning the truthfulness of its rulers and the legitimacy of their policies on issues ranging from the explanation of the Kennedy assassination to war crimes in Vietnam.

The character and conduct of the war cut across all the liberal bourgeois values which democratic-minded and idealistic youth have been taught to believe in. The government betrayals and lies, the genocidal aspects of the war and the crimes committed there under the Johnson administration have incited the strongest reactions. Most of those over twenty-one, who had genuinely voted for peace by supporting Johnson as against Goldwater in the 1964 elections, felt they had been betrayed by the bombing of north Vietnam early in 1965. The moral revulsion and the political level of the student radicals is voiced in the popular chant: "Hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?"

While a shift towards political sympathy with the struggles of the workers and peasants around the world is under way, moral indignation remains the central element around which these students mobilize and around which new waves of reinforcements for the antiwar movement can be won. The anti-administration attitude and anti-imperialist pacifism of the students, intellectuals and masses express a wholly progressive sentiment.

The New Antiwar Movement

The new movement based on the antiwar sentiment of broader sectors of the population grew directly out of student circles and is still marked by these origins. It was initiated early in the spring of 1965 with the organization of the April March on Washington called by the Students for a Democratic Society, coinciding with the chain of campus-based teach-ins across the country.

During the period of organizing for the April 1965 March on Washington, the nonexclusive character of the antiwar coalition was established in a fight with right-wing elements. Since that time the Social Democrats and their allies have played a minor and peripheral role in the antiwar movement. This first big action not only cut across the past two decades of red-baiting but laid the groundwork for large-scale street actions as the political answer to the warmakers

from a diversified and disunited milieu which was not led by any dominant party or established mass organization.

Many of the features and resulting tactical problems of the antiwar movement have been unprecedented.

For the first time in twentieth-century American history a mass opposition has developed during the opening stages of an imperialist war. The struggle involving this opposition has been conducted and hundreds of thousands have been mobilized for action without the existence of a mass labor or socialist party and outside the existing mass organizations. The entire antiwar movement has developed and grown prior to a general labor radicalization. It has seen a split in the ranks of the pacifists that resulted in the emergence of a radical wing that has consistently opposed an imperialist war, not only before it broke out but even more militantly while it is being fought.

The fact that no existing strong mass organization has become part of the antiwar struggle has induced many radicals opposed to the war to conclude that there are no significant mass forces moving in an anticapitalist direction. This has led to a groping search for effective tactics and forms of opposition and to confusion over perspectives, especially the perspective for an alternative to capitalist rule. The problem of widening and deepening the opposition to the war has to be seen within this context.

The students have strengthened the left wing of the antiwar forces and continually pressured the conservative wing into more radical actions. Unlike the left-bourgeois liberals, the students by and large are not inclined to be patient or half-way critics of imperialist policies. The students pressed for the united front of all tendencies and organizations that was actually constituted around periodic national protests and which has been the main organizational vehicle of the antiwar movement.

They played the central role in the fight to win the antiwar movement over to what has become the pivotal political demand: "Withdraw the U.S. troops." The antiwar movement has been the arena of continual struggle between the independent thrust of the student radicals and their revolutionary allies and the class-collaborationist forces headed by the Communist party and the bourgeois liberals, who want to keep the antiwar movement tied to capitalist politics.

Most importantly, the students from the first originated and pushed for mass mobilizations as the main mode of action against the imperialist warmakers. They were the key element both in terms of their own numbers and the work done to organize others. These mass demonstrations are the principal form of independent political action available to the

antiwar movement in the absence of a working-class political party that might open up another range of lines of action.

Organized into local and national coalitions, the antiwar "movement" is an ever-shifting sum of political tendencies, organizations and individuals. The components are widely differentiated so that the antiwar movement as such has no general political program. Each tendency and aggregation of tendencies has to be judged separately and on its own account.

The actions in the streets, which have been carried on by these broad united fronts, are wholly progressive and objectively anti-imperialist in character. That is why the issue of mass action has been the central dividing line in the movement. Opposition from the liberals, the Social Democrats and often the leaders of the Communist party has had to be overridden before the antiwar movement could call for and carry out mass mobilizations against the belligerency of the Johnson administration in Vietnam. It has taken unremitting efforts to prevent class-collaborationist politics or impatient adventurist projects from being substituted for or diverting these mass actions.

The two-year series of mass mobilizations culminated on April 15, 1967 when the largest antiwar demonstrations in U.S. history were organized in New York and San Francisco right in the midst of an imperialist war. The success of the April 15 mobilizations in drawing in new forces from the Negro movement and even a few trade-union figures indicated the openings that are becoming available to the antiwar movement in reaching broader layers of the population.

The reformist leaders who have been brought into the antiwar movement and those that can be expected to follow them play a dual and contradictory role. While they give greater weight to the right wing, they at the same time open up new possibilities for reaching out with antiwar propaganda and agitation to greater components of the mass movement. This advantage outweighs the danger represented by their moderating influence, provided the movement continues to expand and to engage in mass confrontations.

As the antiwar sentiment grows among the people, it will be increasingly difficult for leaders of mass organizations to stand aloof from antiwar protests. In adapting demagogically to the antiwar sentiment they will counterpose anew the issue of withdrawal versus the "negotiations" line which they espouse; they will attempt to reverse the non-exclusion policy of the antiwar movement in order to isolate the most militant sectors and the "Communists," and they will attempt to channel the movement behind pro-capitalist "peace" candidates.

At the same time they cannot avoid providing new and important openings in the labor and Negro movements for antiwar appeals. Some young antiwar activists make the mistake of thinking that the labor and Negro movements will respond to nothing but "bread and butter" questions. However, many of the same reactions and responses that move the student youth into action occur among the working people, black and white. Mothers and fathers, wives and friends, see their sons and men of their generation conscripted and sent abroad to fight and die in a dirty colonial war. Johnson's course in Vietnam and the opposition to it are bound to further advance the politicalization of the labor and Negro movements. Making visible to the entire population the active presence of opposition to this war has been one of the major contributions of the antiwar movement.

Over the past two and a half years, the antiwar movement has provided a first-rate arena for training young militants. Those coming to socialism in the sixties have been given their first opportunity to learn how to do revolutionary work within a mass movement. They are learning through concrete experience how to withstand opportunist pressures as well as avoid the formalism and ultimatism of the ultraleft sectarians. The antiwar movement has been a school for applying the concepts of a transitional program designed to meet the issues as they exist while promoting anticapitalist consciousness and an anticapitalist program and leadership.

The antiwar movement has also provided fresh object lessons on the power of cadres of the revolutionary party within a situation developing in a radical direction. The progress of a mass movement, it has been shown once again, comes in no small measure from the conscious intervention of the ideas and proposals of the Marxist vanguard.

The struggle for decisive influence among the antiwar forces is an essential part of the preparation for leadership of future mass movements on a much broader and more highly advanced political basis, especially in competition with the line of "peaceful coexistence" with capitalism promoted by the Communist party.

Since the 1965 convention in Washington called by the National Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam, the contest over policies within the antiwar movement has underscored and reinforced all these lessons. At that convention the NCC sought to impose class-collaborationist policies on the antiwar movement. As against this, the most militant sector of the left wing advanced the slogan of withdraw the troops and the line of building a broad united front to initiate mass actions. The successful outcome of this struggle turned out to be the major determining factor in the subsequent evolution of the antiwar movement.

Since its formation in December 1966, the Student Mobilization Committee, which is the most advanced expression of student radicalism in the antiwar movement, has become more and more important in its national structure and its weight should increase through its activity in building the October 21 mass march on Washington.

The 1968 Presidential Elections

Between the 1964 presidential elections and the 1966 midterm congressional elections, the most important development in national politics was the erosion of the "consensus" around the Johnson-Humphrey ticket. A significant part of this process was the rapid crumbling of pro-Johnson sentiment on his left flank.

The new stage of escalation of the Vietnam conflict generated splits over this issue not only in the labor and black movements but also within the ruling circles. These disagreements at the top are not fundamental; none of them propose to get out of Vietnam. But spokesmen for the contending groupings clash over how best to promote the imperialist interests of the United States under the given conditions.

On one side these openly expressed differences within the ruling class have facilitated the development of the antiwar movement while that division in turn has been deepened by the extent of the sentiment represented by the antiwar mobilizations. This could be seen when congressional critics of the war reacted sharply after April 15 against McCarthy-like attacks on the antiwar movement and those in the bourgeois camp opposing further escalation of the war. They responded to General Westmoreland's verbal tirade against the antiwar movement by defending the right to dissent, particularly their own. At the same time, these "doves" joined the "hawks" in approving the biggest war budget in U.S. "peacetime" history.

The differences that appeared in the ruling class over tactics in Vietnam are reflected in the jockeying around prospective candidates for the 1968 presidential campaign which will become the focal center for the debate over Vietnam. In this sense the 1968 presidential campaign was off to an early start for the ruling class, the antiwar movement, the mass organizations and the radical vanguard.

The strategy and tactics of those in the two capitalist parties who are hesitant about the war will be worked out with two possibilities in mind: (1) blocking Johnson's re-nomination by the Democratic party; (2) nominating a Republican "peace" candidate. Neither alternative seems likely.

Under the impact of the Vietnam war, bids have been made to organize some kind of electoral activity to the left

of the Democratic party on the issues of war, racism and inflation. To a certain degree these reflect praiseworthy attempts by the more advanced sectors of the American people to break the capitalist monopoly of the electoral field. However, formations like the National Conference for New Politics, under an inveterate reformist leadership, seek to exploit this sentiment and deliberately divert it back towards class-collaborationist politics. The NCNP does not at this time favor even a new "third" capitalist party. Its aim is to develop a "third force," made up of "independents" inside and outside the two major parties, in order to bring about a realignment within the Democratic and Republican machines. The NCNP has decided to become a national membership organization with no age restrictions and is attempting to get initial recruits from its Vietnam Summer program.

The gamut of tactics now under consideration by these "new politicians" includes "anti-LBJ" delegates at the Democratic convention, a "peace and freedom" ticket of the King-Spock variant, the defeat of LBJ in at least one presidential primary, local grass-roots organizing for both Democratic primaries and independent campaigns, and support for those "dove" Democratic and Republican congressmen who have been marked out for defeat by right-wing forces.

The Communist party is faced with a serious problem. After working for three decades in the Democratic party it is difficult for them to shift over to support of a "lesser evil" Republican, should the Democrats renominate Johnson. Thus they incline to favor a national campaign in 1968 on the model of Wallace's Progressive party in 1948. But conditions are very different today. They can scarcely aspire to setting up a third party under their own steam. But they do look yearningly to a "third ticket" coming out of the "peace movement" which would give them an anti-Johnson cover and yet permit continued political activities in the Democratic party.

The Communist party views the forces organized around the antiwar movement, especially the Student and the National Mobilization committees, as an essential base for a successful "peace ticket" venture. They see the key next step as the wedding of these forces to the Conference for New Politics electoral campaigns.

1968 SWP Presidential Campaign

Whatever form of class-collaborationist politics emerges from pseudo-independent political circles, "new" or "old," the Socialist Workers party will counterpose its class-struggle national election campaign as the best step toward the goals of peace and full equality.

The 1968 campaign will in all likelihood take place within the context of a continuing radicalization. It is important to note the specific characteristics of this radicalization which differs from that of the 1944-46 period both in its initial form and in its prospective political evolution.

In 1944-46, labor took the lead, pulling the Negro movement and the middle class along. Today the radicalized students and the antiwar and black freedom movements are in the vanguard with labor lagging far behind. During the freeze of the cold war, general prosperity and political reaction, all labor radicalization was shut off and cut off. The Negro movement was contained by illusory hopes in verbal reforms like the 1954 school desegregation decision and the student movement remained quite passive throughout the fifties.

Today a thaw has begun. The main difference between the union-led militancy of the 1944-46 period and the emerging radicalization will be its tendency to move onto a political level. This gives exceptional importance to the 1968 presidential campaign of the Socialist Workers party. Since there is no immediate prospect for a labor party based on the unions, the class character of the incipient political radicalization can be expressed in 1968 only through a socialist campaign on a national level. The single available electoral avenue for identifying with the perspective of working-class struggle against capitalism is through support of the candidates and platform of the vanguard of the working class, the Socialist Workers party. This in turn should hold out increased possibilities for direct recruitment to the American Trotskyist movement.

The weakness of today's student radicals is not due simply to their middle-class background. Actually they are much more numerous than previous generations of students and a far higher percentage come from working-class families. Their political weakness is primarily due to the fact that they are familiar with only an uncombative labor movement and see in practice no working-class alternative to the ruling-class parties. They are deterred from accepting a Marxist outlook by the numerical weakness of American socialism, the repellent legacy of Stalinism, and the small size of the revolutionary party. These circumstances lead them to reject the concept of the working class as the prime agent of social change. Groping for answers and possible alternatives, they are highly susceptible to political formulas that offer seemingly plausible substitutes such as "independent" formations and "third forces" that stand above the classes.

The labor movement is inherently capable of building a labor party just as the Negro movement is inherently capable of building a black party. But the students and middle-

class radicals do not themselves constitute a social base upon which can be built a viable student or "new left" party. To fight effectively against capitalism, they must be won over politically to the working class. At this stage that means support to the program of its revolutionary party. This program offers the alternative of independent working-class political action differentiated from all forms of spuriously "independent" new politics.

If both the openings and the limitations are kept in mind, the 1968 presidential campaign will offer the Socialist Workers party its most favorable opportunity in many years to recruit new members and to increase the influence of its class struggle program in opposition to the class-collaborationist lines of other radical groupings, particularly the Communist party with its Khrushchevist orientation of "peaceful coexistence." For all members of the Socialist Workers party this campaign must be the central focus of activity from now until November 1968.

The Socialist Workers party will direct its 1968 work in a dual way: it will campaign against the war and it will campaign for socialism.

To the American people the following message will be urgently conveyed: "This is not your war. The Democratic and Republican parties are not your parties. Your enemy is not the people of Vietnam but the capitalist rulers in Washington. Stop the war; abolish the capitalist draft; bring the troops home now!"

The battle for correct political leadership within the antiwar movement will be carried to a higher level as the Socialist Workers party explains and expounds its electoral platform. The antiwar militants will be urged to organize and reach out to the mass movement, to the trade unions, the black people, the G.I.'s and the youth, thereby broadening and deepening the opposition to the war and multiplying its effectiveness.

The only uncompromising and principled "peace ticket" in the field will be the slate nominated by the Socialist Workers party. As in 1966, the Socialist Workers party will solicit support, contributions and aid on the basis of its clear antiwar stand.

The election platform of the Socialist Workers party will stress the socialist road as the only way to assure enduring peace and to forever end the threat of imperialist war with its nightmare outcome of a nuclear conflagration. It will point out how socialism can wipe out discrimination of all kinds and build a society that genuinely practices brotherhood and which will open up the possibility of boundless abundance through scientific economic planning on an

international scale.

The election platform of the Socialist Workers party will also propose steps that can help the American people move in that direction.

These include:

(1) General support for the black power tendency and emphasis on the pressing need to build an independent black political party.

(2) Answering the leadership problem facing the labor movement through organization of a left wing based on a class-struggle program that can come to grips with problems arising from the war program supported by the Republicans and Democrats.

(3) Defense of the unconditional right to strike, complete union independence from government control and interference, and rank-and-file control over all union affairs.

(4) A cost-of-living escalator clause in all union contracts to fully compensate for rising prices as they occur, a reduced work week with no cut in pay, and unemployment compensation at the union wage scale for all jobless persons eighteen years or over, whether or not they have been previously employed.

(5) Equal rights in the union and on the job for black workers and for members of other minorities, and full union support to the Afro-American struggle for equality.

(6) Take all the billions of dollars spent for war and devote them to useful projects at home which can reduce poverty and provide full social benefits for everyone in the country.

(7) For independent political action on a mass scale through construction of a labor party based on the trade unions and an independent black party.

The Socialist Workers party expects a number of direct gains from the 1968 presidential campaign.

Foremost will be the recruitment of young militants opposed to the war on one or another ground. The extent and the quality of this recruitment will provide a fresh gauge of the point reached in the process of radicalization underway in the United States as well as a measure of the timeliness and correctness of the program of the Socialist Workers party and its capacity to swing into action.

Beyond this, the campaign will bring the voice of revolutionary socialism to hundreds of thousands of people who will be influenced to one degree or another. It will see the dissemination of socialist literature on a broad scale at a time when political attention is turned receptively toward the electoral arena.

Finally, the Socialist Workers party will stand out with greater prominence as a revolutionary socialist grouping noted for its energy and alertness, its capacity for self-sacrifice, its ability to renew its ranks, and its unyielding devotion to the struggle for a socialist America in a socialist world.

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