

BOSS ARCHIVES



Revolutionary Analysis, Strategy and Tactics Today

MERIT PAMPHLET
65¢

Introductory Note

This collection of articles from *The Militant* and *Young Socialist* does not pretend to be a handbook or manual on strategy and tactics for the revolutionary movement, which necessarily vary from time to time and place to place. Instead, it is offered as a contribution to the discussion of effective revolutionary strategy and tactics in the United States today. Such a discussion must proceed, in the opinion of the authors, from a realistic analysis of class forces and relations as they are—and not from wishful thinking, self-intoxicating rhetoric or suicidal frustration. Despite the polemical form in which many of these articles are couched (in the Marxist tradition they seek to sharply counterpose reality to distortion and delusion of all varieties), they provide food for thought by genuine revolutionaries, that is, people who are serious about finding the revolutionary road.

Contents

	Page
Elections as a Weapon of the Struggle <i>by Barry Sheppard</i>	3
How Not to Organize GIs <i>by Harry Ring</i>	5
Black Nationalism as a Touchstone	
1. Its Revolutionary Significance <i>by Tony Thomas</i>	7
2. The Essence of Self-Determination <i>by Gus Horowitz</i>	8
3. Part of a Worldwide Thrust <i>by Gus Horowitz</i>	10
How to Defend Ourselves <i>by Carl Frank, Helen Myers and Ronald Wittmaack</i>	12
Revolutionaries and the Fight for Reforms <i>by George Breitman</i>	14
GIs and the Antiwar Movement <i>by Lew Jones</i>	17
A Perspective on Women's Emancipation <i>by Mary-Alice Waters</i>	18
The Role of Antiwar Demonstrations <i>by Gus Horowitz</i>	20
The Student Revolt <i>by Tony Thomas</i>	22
How to Fight in the Army: A Reply to the Underground <i>by David Thorstad</i>	24
The Nature of the Present Period <i>by Elizabeth Barnes</i>	
1. Do We Face a Major Repression Now?	27
2. Is Fascism Imminent in the U. S.?	28
3. For United Defense of Democratic Rights	30

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Elections as a Weapon of the Struggle

By Barry Sheppard

The position of the "independent radical newsweekly," the *Guardian*, on the 1968 elections was expressed in a front-page editorial Oct. 26. "The *Guardian* does not support any candidate for President of the United States," the editors say. "And, even though there are a number of radicals running for this and lesser office Nov. 5 as protest candidates, we find it impossible to support anyone for any elected office within the government of International Murder Incorporated."

The editorial goes on to present arguments against radicals or revolutionaries participating in the 1968 elections. It is somewhat difficult to discuss the *Guardian* position, because a careful reading of the editorial leaves the reader somewhat confused.

For example, the phrase quoted above about "International Murder Incorporated" seems to indicate that it is wrong to support anyone for any elected office because of the reactionary nature of the U. S. government. Logically, this would apply not only in this election, but as long as the present government exists.

But the *Guardian* editors do not follow their reasoning to that conclusion. They immediately add that they agree with Lenin on combining electoral or parliamentary activity with extraparliamentary action. But they add, "we also agree with Lenin that 'it is sometimes useful and even essential to reject parliamentary forms.' This is one of those times." While distorting Lenin's views, the *Guardian* concedes that at some point it might be useful to engage in electoral activity. When? Under what circumstances?

"A charade"

Not this year, the *Guardian* tells us, and adds, "1968 is the left's year to expose electoral politics as a charade conducted by the ruling class to perpetuate the facade of democratic participation in the governing process. If we are ever to reach the American people with our radical politics, this stultifying facade must first be broken. We fail to understand how this is possible if the left sanctifies the elections by its participation."

Later the editorial says, "This is not to say we reject parliamentary forms at all times. At some stage it may well be advantageous for the left to engage in elections as one of its activities. But such a happenstance presupposes that the left can gain something by its participation. This in turn presupposes a broad-based radical party which combines electoral work with other forms of struggle . . ."

We are left with this advice: Revolutionists shouldn't participate in electoral activity until we have built a "broad-based radical party." It would seem logical that in order

to build a *broad-based* party, we would have to first reach at least a significant minority of the American people, and convince quite a number of those. But, we can't hope to even reach the American people until we "break the stultifying facade of electoral politics." The way to break this facade is to not participate in the elections.

In other words, *after* the illusions of the American people in electoral politics have been dispelled, we will then be able to reach them, and then we can build a broad-based party — and then we will participate in the elections!

Clearly, the *Guardian* editorial is not a serious analysis or thought-out position, but a conglomeration of phrases and arguments light-mindedly thrown together. But since their position of not voting was the same as that officially taken by the national leaders of SDS and others, it is useful to discuss their main arguments on their own merits, even though the *Guardian* has combined them into an incomprehensible whole.

To begin with, the *Guardian* editors imply that their stand is consistent with Lenin's views. This is a gross distortion. Lenin viewed mass actions such as strikes and demonstrations as more important than electoral activity, but he believed that it was also essential that revolutionaries participate in the capitalist elections, *especially to counter* the illusions of the masses about capitalism and the capitalist electoral system.

Lenin's view

Lenin devoted a whole chapter of his work, *Left Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder*, to refuting the ultralefts of his day who were opposed in principle to revolutionaries participating in capitalist elections or in capitalist legislatures if elected.

In arguing with some German Communists who held that parliamentarism had been "bypassed," Lenin pointed out: "Parliamentarism, of course, is 'politically obsolete' for the Communists in Germany; but — and that is the whole point — we must not regard what is obsolete *for us* as being obsolete *for the class*, as being obsolete *for the masses* . . . Even if not 'millions' and 'legions' but only a fairly large *minority* of industrial workers follow the Catholic priests and rural workers the landlords and kulaks [Lenin is referring to specific conditions in Germany at the time] — it *undoubtedly* follows that parliamentarism in Germany is *not yet* politically obsolete, that participation in parliamentary elections and in the struggle on the platform of parliament is *obligatory* for the party of the revolutionary proletariat *precisely* for the purpose of educating the backward strata of *its own class* . . . As long as you are unable to

disperse the bourgeois parliament and every other type of reactionary institution, you *must* work inside them, *precisely* because there you will still find workers who are stupefied. . . . Otherwise you risk becoming mere babblers."

Wrong in '06

In the same chapter, Lenin explains that the Russian Bolsheviks were *wrong* to have boycotted the 1906 elections for the reactionary Czarist pseudoparliament. He explained that the Bolsheviks correctly used the boycott tactic during the 1905 revolution, when the boycott "succeeded in *preventing the convocation* of a reactionary parliament by a reactionary government in a situation in which extraparliamentary, revolutionary mass action (strikes in particular) was growing with exceptional rapidity, when not a single stratum of the proletariat and the peasantry could support the reactionary government in any way, when the revolutionary proletariat was acquiring influence over the broad, backward masses by means of the strike struggle and the agrarian movement. It is quite obvious that *this* experience is not applicable to present-day European conditions." Nor to present-day American conditions, it might be added. Not even the *Guardian* editors, we assume, believe their abstention from the elections succeeded in preventing the convocation of the next Congress.



V. I. Lenin

Lenin's essential idea here is completely applicable to the situation in the U.S. today. The *Guardian's* main reason for abstaining from the elections, they say, is to "expose electoral politics as a charade."

Real illusion

Certainly it is true that the masses of American people do have deep illusions about the electoral system, capitalist politics and capitalism itself. But it is *just because* of those illusions that revolutionaries *should* participate in the elections, to *take advantage* of the facade of democracy to reach many people who would not otherwise be reached with an alternative to the capitalist system and to the capitalist fraud being perpetrated upon them.

The Socialist Workers Party presented just such an electoral alternative in 1968 and as a result was heard by hundreds of thousands of people it could never have talked to if it had sat on the sidelines without presenting any candidates.

Because the illusions of *almost all* people in this country run so deep, they tend to dismiss movements which do not participate in the elections as not being serious, as not seriously intending to win political power. That's a bad image for revolutionists to cultivate.

For most people, election time means a heightened interest in politics. It is a good time for revolutionaries to reach people, but this can be done on a large scale only if the revolutionaries enter the electoral arena, where the attention of the masses is focused.

The *Guardian* asserts that for the left to participate in the elections would "sanctify" them. This is absurd. (It also contradicts the *Guardian's* stand that it's OK to participate in some elections, since revolutionaries don't want to "sanctify" any capitalist elections.)

"Desanctify"

But how does sitting on the sidelines, where the people don't even know what you think, help "desanctify" the elections? Revolutionary participants in the elections can use that forum to expose the essentially fraudulent character of capitalist democracy and to oppose and expose the capitalist parties and their candidates.

What is decisive is *how* you participate in elections. The *Guardian's* whole approach is to separate and counterpose electoral activity and extraparliamentary action. But, for revolutionaries, electoral activity is not a substitute for mass action. The two forms of struggle must be combined.

For example, in this election Fred Halstead and Paul Boutelle utilized the campaign platforms provided them to defend, support and build the antiwar and black-power movements.

On a national and local level, the SWP candidates used their campaign to help

build the recent October demonstrations that succeeded in bringing about a thousand antiwar GIs into the antiwar actions.

Another of numerous examples has been the leadership role played in Berkeley campus actions by Peter Camejo while campaigning for the U.S. Senate on the SWP ticket.

The SWP also used the electoral platform to educate about the nature of the capitalist parties, the imperialist nature of the Vietnam war, the just and progressive character of the demand that black people control their own communities, and about many other issues, including the nature of the fraud the capitalist elections actually are.

Revolutionists enter the electoral arena to raise demands that expose capitalism and organize people in struggle against it. Two such demands raised by the SWP in this campaign were for immediate withdrawal of troops from Vietnam and for black control of the black community.

An abdication

By refusing to enter the capitalist elections out of fear of "sanctifying" them, you simply turn the whole electoral field over to the capitalists, so they can that much more easily perpetrate their con game and fool the people into thinking that capitalist rule is really democratic. It is much better for revolutionists to enter the electoral field in order to expose capitalist misrule and bring the revolutionary alternative to as many people as possible.

There is another problem involved here. The key question in American politics at this point is not the illusion that the "ruling class can be voted out of power," which the *Guardian* editorial intimates. There are much deeper and more immediate illusions which must be dispelled before we struggle with that one among the mass of American people.

(Of course, insofar as that illusion exists among those who consider themselves socialists or revolutionaries, it must be fought. And it is a fact that many radical-minded people are influenced by the reformist proposition that there is a "parliamentary road" to socialism. But simple abstention from the electoral process doesn't educate such people. It only leaves them more vulnerable to those, like the Communist Party, who promote the "lesser evil" game. If the genuine left doesn't provide an electoral alternative, such people are far more likely to go along with such a sorry substitute.)

But among the mass of the American people—among the workers and black people—the key illusion that must be combated is not that the ruling class can be voted out of power, but the illusion that their problems can be solved within the framework of the present system and through one or another of the capitalist parties.

Educational vehicle

The SWP used its campaign as an educational vehicle to explain that both major parties serve the interests of the ruling rich and that black people and working people should break from them and form their own independent parties. At the same time, the Socialist Workers ticket served as a concrete pole of attraction on the electoral arena for those who have already come to understand this need.

Too small?

Another argument raised by the *Guardian* is that campaigns like the SWP campaign are too small. "What can electoral action demonstrate about the left, but its weakness?" they ask. (This theme of weakness, hopelessness and a certain lack of optimism runs through the whole *Guardian* editorial, which itself is entitled, "The election will come and go—will we?")

If radicals entered the 1968 elections with any pretense or claim that they would get big votes, then indeed they would demonstrate their weakness—political as well as numerical. This is what the Peace and Freedom polyglot of organizations and tendencies expected. Consequently, they watered down their program and failed to carry out a *revolutionary* election campaign, especially on the crucial issues of the nature of capitalism and the capitalist parties.

The SWP understood its limited resources and set itself a different aim. While using every opportunity afforded by the campaign, such as free TV time, to reach as wide an audience as possible, the SWP and the Young Socialist Alliance concentrated on convincing mainly radicalizing young people. For the facts are, *most radicals* have illusions about capitalist politics.

It's in this context that the *Guardian* position itself must actually be measured. Obviously, the *Guardian* was not seriously suggesting that its proposal to its readers—that they don't vote—was a real campaign to tear the mask of illusion in electoral politics from the eyes of the American people. They weren't actually proposing the utopian idea of organizing a mass boycott of the elections. Their editorial was directed to *radicals*.

Ducks issue

The hard fact is, that regardless of intent the *Guardian's* abstention position only served the purpose of dodging the real issue—whom to support in the elections, the revolutionists or the reformists? By ducking that issue, by trying to put the revolutionists and the reformists in the same bag, the *Guardian* only gave aid and comfort to the reformists.

What it comes down to is that those who reject all forms of electoral opposition to the capitalist parties simply open the

door for the acceptance of one or another of them. The *Guardian* stand needlessly gave ammunition to those within the movement who do essentially cover up the fraud of the elections.

For example, CP hack Mike Davidow immediately seized on the obvious weaknesses in the *Guardian* stand to bolster his treacherous arguments for supporting Democrat Paul O'Dwyer.

The SWP campaign was a first-class example of how revolutionaries can participate in capitalist elections to further their principles and activities.

It certainly did far more than the abstentionist *Guardian* in dispelling illusions among many young people about the capitalist system and its parties.

It was particularly effective, for example, in exposing the truth about the McCarthy campaign, which was tailored precisely to suck young people into capitalist politics.

As a result of the SWP campaign, thousands of young radicals have been exposed to revolutionary arguments, and hundreds have joined the Young Socialist Alliance. The revolutionary socialist movement won new members in many new cities and regions, and 12 new chapters of the YSA were formed. The final tabulation of these important gains for socialism will come not at the polls but on Thanksgiving weekend, when the national convention of the YSA takes stock of the much more powerful movement it has become through its support of the SWP election campaign.

—From *The Militant*, Nov. 15, 1968



Photo by Shannon

Paul Boutelle (1968 vice-presidential candidate of the Socialist Workers Party) addresses class organized by Columbia University students during their strike.

How Not to Organize GIs

By Harry Ring

In September we reported on a meeting of the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam and the plans it mapped for a week of antiwar activity culminating on Election Day. Some people thought we were being unduly gloomy or a bit factional in presenting the view that the plans indicated there could only lead to "a further narrowing of the base of the committee and limiting its capacity for broad, mass action against the war."

This assessment was, unfortunately, borne out to the extreme. The "National GI Week" and "Election Day Strike" organized by the "Mobe" were a total fiasco.

The outcome is particularly disgraceful in that the potential for effective action against the war has increased in the recent period, not lessened. This is particularly true of that vital new constituency for the antiwar movement—the GIs themselves.

The proposed plan of the Mobilization did not lack in breadth—at least on paper. Mobe news releases promised massive street demonstrations in scores of cities, with "hundreds" of movement centers as the focus of activity. The culmination was to be a giant "love-in" at Fort Dix Nov. 3 and, in cooperation with SDS, a nationwide student "strike" against the elections Nov. 4-5. The performance fell somewhat short of the promise.

"Movement activists 'voted with their feet in the streets' on campuses and in cities around the country," said a sympathetic Nov. 7 *Liberation*, News Service report, "but in most cases they failed to attract much support from other students and young people."

The equally sympathetic *Guardian* (Nov. 9) found that "the offensive seemed not to be the massive effort its organizers had announced."

The term "student strike," the *Guardian* added, "turned out to be a misnomer."

That was a bit of an understatement. In New York, for example, the Mobe in combination with some of the SDS leaders, plus spokesmen for the Radical Organizing Committee and High School Union, made grandiose announcements of a citywide strike coupled with massive street "confrontations" throughout the city on Election Day. Not even a thousand people turned out.

This was hardly surprising. Apart from the lack of any serious preparation, the so-called strike was politically motivated in a way that could serve only to narrow the base of the action. The antiwar theme which was supposed to be central virtually disappeared and was replaced by the sectarian notion of opposition to any form of participation in the electoral process—a view held by Dave Dellinger and Rennie Davis, who have been running the Mobe, and the SDSers and ROCers associated with them.

"The elections are shit. Our power is in the streets," proclaimed one SDS poster. It seemed a bit pathetic when you looked at the several hundred gathered in a corner of Union Square, and an almost equal number of cops.

But most light minded and irresponsible of all was the approach to National GI Week.

For several years it has been increasingly apparent that a key factor in building an effective movement to stop the war is to win the GIs themselves to a peace position.

This idea was rejected by many in the movement, particularly those pacifists and others who generally favor "individual resistance." For them the troops were not draftees forced to fight in a war not of their choosing, but "mercenaries" to be "confronted."

Now, it has been recognized by the most obtuse that there is significant antiwar sentiment among GIs and that there are an impressive number of servicemen and women ready to assert their constitutional right to voice their views on the war.

Finally compelled to recognize this reality, a turn toward the GIs was finally made by those like the present operators of the National Mobe (which, incidentally, for all practical purposes has virtually stopped functioning as a coalition). But they made the turn to the GIs in such a damagingly irresponsible way that one is tempted to think it might almost be better if they hadn't.

The leaflet announcing the Fort Dix "love-in" is a prime example of what can be described, at best, as sheer stupidity. It's almost as if the leaflet was designed to turn off thinking GIs who are moving toward an antiwar position.

The antiwar movement can make an enormous contribution to the cause of peace by linking up with the antiwar sentiment in the Army. But such a linkup can be made only if the project is recognized and approached for what it is—a deadly serious business for the GIs involved.

Obviously, it is a far weightier matter for a serviceman to act against the war than a civilian. Constitutionally, he has the same rights as a civilian to express his political beliefs. But the GI must deal with the brass. He is subject to harassment and victimization ranging from extra duty to summary assignment to Vietnam.

Therefore a soldier with a minimum of common sense is not going to act precipitously or foolishly. But if he sees he has serious, significant support on the outside—in the civilian population—he can and will act.

This was demonstrated by the 500 GIs who joined 15,000 civilians in the Oct. 12 San Francisco demonstration, despite threats by the brass.

It was demonstrated by the nearly one thousand active duty GIs who participated in the parades, rallies and teach-ins during the Oct. 21-27 Week of International Solidarity with Vietnam, organized in this country by the Student Mobilization Committee. In the face of heavy intimidation, GIs participated in places like Austin and Dallas, Texas, and Atlanta, Ga., not to speak of New York, Chicago, Seattle, etc.

But an antiwar GI—or one who simply wants to know more about the war—would be an utter fool to stick his neck out for the kind of scatter-brained affair outlined in the "Hanoi Rose" leaflet.

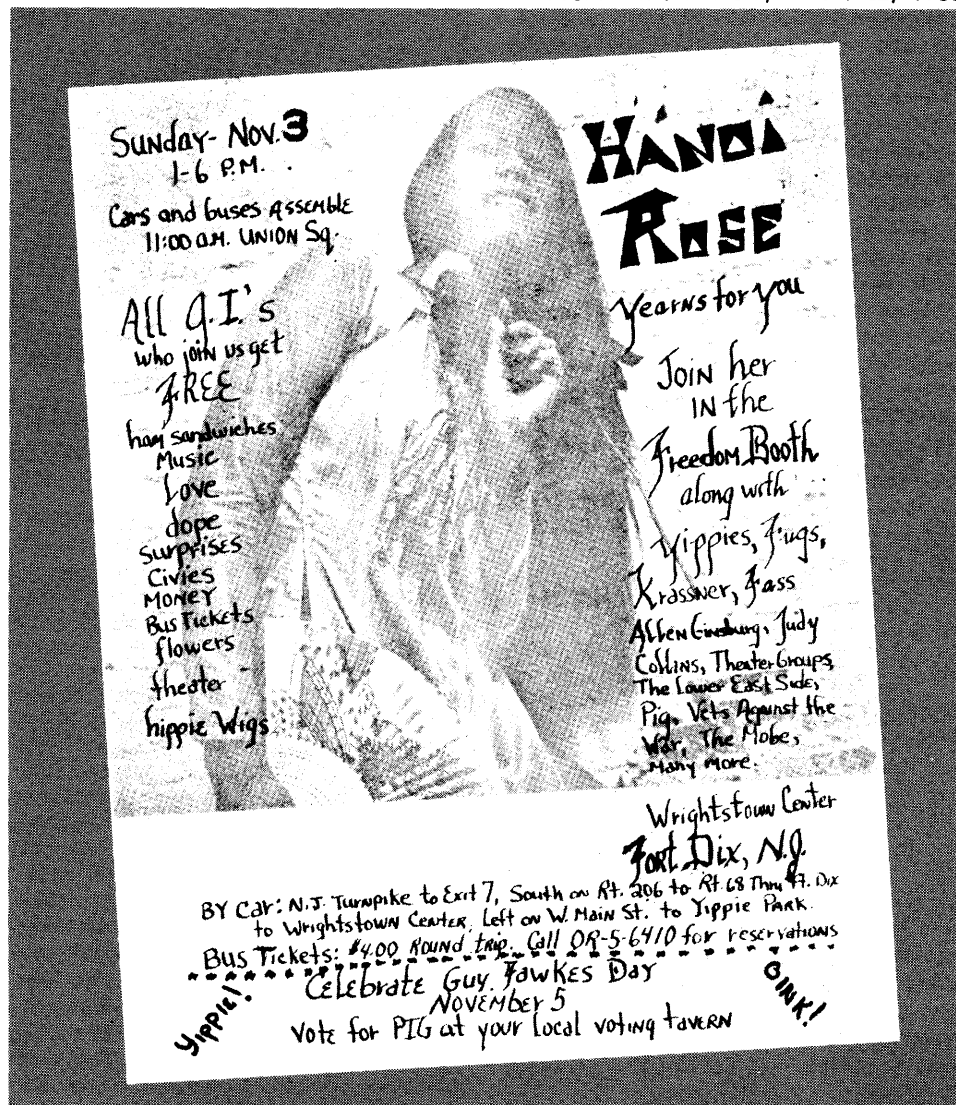
And, it might be added, few are likely to take seriously the offer to help "return them to civilian life," a key point in National Mobe propaganda.

The outcome, not surprisingly, was a

flop. The *Guardian* reported: "It rained and rained over Wrightstown, N.J., where 200 soggy people stood in a clearing . . . across from the entrance to Ft. Dix to show support for the GIs inside. . . . Perhaps it would have been different if the sun had been out and the invited rock bands had played. But there were few soldiers in sight and the crowd had the uneasy feeling that the guys on the base must think the movement 'doesn't even have the sense to come in out of the rain'. . . . So the crowd, resigned, kept up their spirit with entertainment . . . and the rambling commentary of Paul Krassner. . . . Allen Ginsburg droned 'om' for hours over the loud speaker equipment, some freaks played catch with a defused bomb, night fell and it was over."

Amen.

—From *The Militant*, Nov. 22, 1968



HOW WEIRD CAN YOU GET? This leaflet was actually distributed to GIs by National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam. Antiwar servicemen looking for serious civilian support in bringing antiwar views to GIs could only be repelled by such trash.

Black Nationalism as a Touchstone

1. Its Revolutionary Significance

By Tony Thomas

The most significant—and negative—event at the Ann Arbor SDS national council meeting Dec. 27-31 was the passage of the Progressive Labor Party's retrograde antinationalist resolution on the black struggle.

This was part of PL's current campaign to oppose the right of self-determination of the Afro-American people. The PLP resolution passed at the SDS meeting represents a total rejection of the lessons that Lenin and the Bolsheviks taught on the national question, and like any rejection of revolutionary policy, results in an adaptation—conscious or not—to the ruling class.

In their proposal to the national council, PLP stated "Nationalism has replaced pacifism as the main ideological weapon of the ruling class within the black liberation movement. Nationalism is used to divert Third World people from struggle on a class basis, from making alliances with white workers and students."

PLP editorialized in January's *Challenge*: "Nationalism is a bourgeois idea and is opposed to internationalism. Nationalism is also a barrier to united working-class struggle domestically . . . Unless nationalist feeling is transformed through struggle into working-class consciousness, it will be turned by the ruling class into support for some sort of Black Capitalism."

While cloaking their arguments with platitudes on working-class "unity" and "internationalism," PL refuses to support Afro-Americans fighting for the basic democratic right of self-determination. In taking this stand in opposition to nationalism, the Maoists share a common position with U. S. imperialism and with the most openly reactionary misleaders of the black struggle.

Nationalism 'bourgeois'?

PL claims that black nationalism is a "bourgeois racist" reaction to the ideology of racism among whites, rather than a revolutionary reaction to the oppression of blacks. Black nationalism, they say, divides black workers from white workers and prevents black workers from uniting with whites in struggle against capitalism, and it is thereby directly counterposed to international workers' solidarity. PLP sees the solution for Afro-Americans in the rejection of nationalism and support of a "class" (presumably integrationist) position.

The Maoist position contradicts the basic Marxist principle of unconditional support of the right of self-determination of oppressed peoples. Moreover, it lacks anything close to an accurate understanding of what really is happening in the black struggle.

The Marxist position on nationalism is best explained by Lenin in his work, *Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination*. Lenin saw self-determination as a basic bourgeois democratic right. With the development of imperialism, which thwarted self-determination for most oppressed peoples, and the resulting colonial revolution, the question of the relation of national liberation struggles to the struggle for socialism came to the fore.

Lenin insisted that revolutionary socialists should support, without qualification, the struggle for self-determination as a struggle against imperialist oppression. The nationalism of any oppressed nation, he explained, "has a general democratic content that is directed against oppression and it is that content we unconditionally support."

Essential step

He regarded the breaking down of national oppression as an essential step toward socialist internationalism. "Just as mankind can achieve the abolition of classes only by passing through the transitional period of the dictatorship of the oppressed class, so mankind can achieve the inevitable merging of nations only by passing through the transitional period of complete liberation of all oppressed nations."

Clearly, Lenin shared nothing with revisionist socialists who, like PLP today, refused to support the national struggles of oppressed peoples in his day. He characterized the Russian socialists who opposed the demand for self-determination for Finland, Poland, the Ukraine, and other oppressed minorities as "lackeys of the blood-stained imperialist bourgeoisie."

Nor can Lenin's stand on nationalism be avoided by arguing that black people are not, formally speaking, a nation, or by the PLP assertion that Afro-Americans are oppressed simply because we "are part of the working class." All black people are victims of racism, regardless of class, and there is discrimination against black workers within the working class. To try to reduce the national oppression of black people to a simple "class" issue is an anti-Marxist vulgarization of political theory.

The national oppression of black people is central to American capitalism because it is the basis for the superexploitation of black workers, who make up the great majority of the Afro-American nation. The imperialists maintain this exploitation by keeping a colonial control over the economic, social, cultural, and political institutions of the black community. And that is why they so fiercely oppose the nationalist movement for black control of the black community.

Not only do the Maoists reject the whole Leninist theory of the national question, but in doing so they fail to see the revolutionary importance of black nationalism.

Key aspect

Because the national oppression of black people is such an integral part of U. S. capitalism, the demands for black control of the black community or for a separate black state are necessarily anticapitalist in direction and can be won only in the context of a socialist revolution.

Just as the Vietnamese cannot end U. S. exploitation and gain national self-determination without ending capitalism in Vietnam, Afro-Americans cannot achieve real self-determination without ending capitalism in the United States. This is especially true because of the proletarian nature of the black nation.

It is not a coincidence that revolutionary nationalist leaders such as Malcolm X, Huey P. Newton, H. Rap Brown, and Stokely Carmichael, and nationalist organizations such as the Black Panther Party, DRUM, and SNCC, have all developed prosocialist positions.

Nationalist struggles lead the masses of black people toward revolutionary action and viewpoints. The revolutionaries in the black nation are almost entirely nationalists. It is those conservatives like Roy Wilkins who share PL's antinationalist views.

The major struggles of the past year—the explosions in the high schools, the struggle for community control of the schools, and the struggle, led by black and Third World students, now being waged at San Francisco State College—have all been based on nationalist demands. They are demands based on the idea of black people wresting control of their lives away from domination by this racist capitalist society. These demands are now familiar—for Afro-American history and culture taught by black teachers, for black control of the schools and curriculum, for black control of the police, etc.

False issue

Of course, within the context of the rise of nationalism, there have been attempts by some organizations and leaders to channel nationalist sentiment in a procapitalist direction. But the charge that black nationalism is reactionary just because some nationalists, like Floyd McKissick of CORE, advocate "black capitalism" has as much strength as the argument that says the working class is a reactionary force because the trade-union leadership is procapitalist.

Moreover, it is not black nationalism that divides the black and white workers as PL claims. What divides black people

from white workers is the unwillingness of white workers to struggle against discrimination on the job and within the unions, much less support self-determination. White workers attempt to maintain their relatively privileged job positions by supporting the union bureaucracy against black caucuses like DRUM.

A basic key to alliances between white and black workers will be the struggle against the common capitalist enemy which will be carried out by the white workers on a class basis and by blacks on both a class and national basis. This kind of unity will not develop out of any liberal-type "combat-racism" campaign as advocated by PL at the SDS NC, but out of recognition of common anticapitalist interests that will come as a result of the struggle.

S. F. State example

An example of this type of common action is the bloc, even if tenuous, between the striking students at San Francisco State and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). Individual teachers aside, the AFT and the Central Labor Council are not dedicated to supporting the nationalist demands of the Third World Liberation Front and the Black Student Union for control of black and other Third World studies and of Third World admissions. However, it was the militant struggles of the students which gave these professors—who have been attempting to get union recognition for over a year—the basis to strike. And this unity of action of the students and faculty against the common enemy—the racist capitalist university—has tremendously strengthened both the union and student struggles.

This type of alliance between white and black workers against a common foe will become more prevalent as American capitalism becomes less able to meet even



"If you're afraid of black nationalism, you're afraid of revolution. And if you love revolution, you love black nationalism."—Malcolm X.

such modest economic demands as white workers are now raising. Trade union struggles will also sharpen as black caucuses begin to struggle against the employer-serving union bureaucracy.

A basic part of any alliance between white workers and revolutionary black workers will be support to self-determi-

nation for the black nation, and it will be the responsibility of revolutionary socialists to help build this support. It will be over this issue, among others, that the revolutionaries will be divided from the reformists.

—From *The Militant*, Jan. 24, 1969

2. The Essence of Self-Determination

By Gus Horowitz

Simultaneous with the growing radicalism of the black liberation struggle a stream of invective is pouring forth against the ideological power behind this radicalism—black nationalism. These vitriolic attacks come from two quarters: from the ruling class, whose response is none too surprising, and from self-designated friends, allies, and tutors of the black struggle.

The latter opponents of black nationalism include the Progressive Labor Party. In the past few months, this Maoist group-

ing has waged a campaign to warn students, workers, and black people of the manifold dangers of black nationalism, as PL sees them.

In the January 1969 issue of *Challenge*, organ of Progressive Labor, an editorial proclaims that "nationalism, which is a bourgeois reaction to racism, **must be defeated.**" "Nationalism," they assert, "is a bourgeois idea and is opposed to internationalism (the unity of oppressed people throughout the world). Nationalism is also a barrier to a united working class domestically."

In the course of its campaign against black nationalism, PL succeeded in winning a majority vote at a recent SDS national council meeting for a resolution containing its line of opposition to black nationalism. That resolution went even further. Under the heading "Defeat Nationalism," the resolution says that "nationalism has replaced pacifism as the main ideological **weapon of the ruling class** within the black liberation movement." (Emphasis added.)

In the Jan. 24 *Militant*, Tony Thomas took on this fraudulent PL theory and

pointed out the revolutionary significance of black nationalism. It is not necessary to repeat his argument here, but only to note that nationalist demands have been the backbone of a series of militant struggles.

These include the New York City struggle for black control of the schools in the black community, the San Francisco State struggle, the struggles at other colleges for black control of black studies departments, and struggles in many high schools. Black control of the black community—the central demand—is a nationalist, not a working class demand. And it is a progressive demand. Lenin explained that the nationalism of the oppressors is reactionary, but the nationalism of the oppressed is progressive.

How then do the PLers square their opposition to black nationalism with the Marxism they profess?

Inconsistent view

First, it is useful to note a certain inconsistency in PL's position on nationalism. Though they say that nationalism must be defeated, they mean this to apply only to black nationalism. It is possible, for instance, to find examples in Challenge, where support to national liberation struggles is urged and where nationalist demands are encouraged, specifically, in the case of the colonial revolution.

Most radicals readily see the nationalist aspects of revolutionary movements in the colonial world. In Cuba, the nationalist desire for independence, for freedom from U. S. domination, led to a revolution which became socialist in character. In China, the revolutionary model for PL, the same desire for national independence was one of the impelling forces of the revolution. The same is true of Vietnam today. "Vietnam for the Vietnamese," a nationalist slogan, might well be restated as Vietnamese control of the Vietnamese community.

History has shown that in the colonial world national struggles contain a powerful revolutionary thrust. Although a Marxist program is necessary for success, the revolutionary thrust of nationalism exists even when liberation struggles do not have a socialist or working-class program. To say otherwise would mean to condemn most of the national liberation struggles going on in the world today. This aspect of nationalism is present, moreover, even though the majority of people in the colonial world are peasants, not workers and where in some countries the working class is but a tiny fraction of the population.

So clear are the nationalist aspects of revolutionary struggles throughout the colonial world that PL has not had the audacity to declare such nationalism reactionary. Would PL dare say that Chinese, Cuban, Vietnamese—or Arab, African, Indonesian—nationalism is reactionary,

"a bourgeois idea" that "must be defeated" or "an ideology that the ruling class relies on to split the movement?"

Black struggle peculiar

PL's opposition to nationalism is really an opposition to certain nationalisms, in particular black nationalism. What then, does PL think is so peculiar about the black struggle that it makes black nationalism reactionary, while the nationalism of oppressed nations throughout the world is progressive? Their answer twists the reality.

"Black students," says Challenge, "are usually consciously impelled into struggle around nationalist feelings. (Emphasis added.) But this is objectively based on working class oppression."

"Usually," says the SDS resolution, "a nationalist feeling is the initial conscious impetus towards struggle among black people. But the material basis of this struggle is class oppression." (Emphasis added.)

In other words, black people suffer oppression as workers, as the most exploited section of the working class, period. "The class aspect of imperialist oppression is primary," says the SDS resolution. Any national characteristics to the struggle are merely feelings, secondary in importance; a passing form, but not the essence. The black liberation struggle, both the SDS resolution and Challenge summarize, "is national in form, and working class in content."

PL does not think that black people suffer national oppression, that black people are oppressed as black people, not only as workers. Black people, according to PL, more accurately black workers, are merely a specially exploited section of the American working class. For PL, the struggle of Afro-Americans is solely part of the class struggle.

Thus PL's problem of reconciling their opposition to nationalism with Marxist theory is neatly solved. Lenin's theory of self-determination applies only to oppressed nations, and thus is irrelevant to the black liberation struggle, according to the logic of their analysis.

Theoretical reversion

PL's theory is a reversion to that held in the earliest days of the American socialist movement, before the lessons of the Russian Revolution were learned. At the time, the left wing of the socialist movement held that black people suffered the worst form of exploitation, but purely a class oppression nonetheless. As a multiclass national minority, black people did not really exist. Therefore, the early socialist movement felt no need to deal with the special forms of oppression that black people suffer. Solve the problem of class oppression, they said, and racism would end.

The victory of the Russian Revolution taught its lessons about the revolutionary implications of national liberation strug-

gles and caused American Marxists to rethink their position on the black struggle. The conclusion was that in all essentials black people were nationally oppressed. Not only black workers, but all black people, suffered such oppression, just as do all people of the colonial world, not merely the workers. In history, tradition and culture—and in common racial oppression—black people have a well-delineated character as a national minority.

Though this view of the oppression of black people was not widespread at the time of Debs, even among black people, today it is clear that black people do see themselves as nationally oppressed and are increasingly conscious of a black identity. Afro-Americans identify with one another not only as workers or by other class ties—they identify and solidarize themselves with one another as a people. And today they are demanding rights—and power—as a people!

Material basis

PL does correctly state in Challenge that it is "capitalism's drive for profits which is the basis of racist super-exploitation." The SDS resolution states that "the material basis of racism is capitalism's driving need to maximize profits." Not only are extra profits derived from the superexploitation of black workers, but "low wages for black workers and black unemployment are used to keep down wages for all workers."

Though the above is correct, it is also one-sided in analyzing the cause of racism. Racist oppression developed because of capitalism, because of the material gains capitalism derives from it. But all black people suffer oppression, not only black workers. The fact is that to carry through its superexploitation of black workers, capitalism must necessarily maintain the entire black people in a subjugated status.

The dynamic of the black struggle is thus two-fold; it is a combined class and national struggle. That is what makes the black liberation struggle so revolutionary a force. Unlike the colonial world, black people are largely working class. Demands of the entire black nation are at the same time demands raised by black workers, and vice-versa. This dual character gives to the black struggle a potential for revolutionary development that can be realized far more quickly than in the case of national liberation struggles in the colonial world. Class and national demands become quickly intertwined.

The link

The success of the struggle for black liberation and the struggle of black workers are inextricably tied together, both of them linked to the future of American capitalism.

Racism is woven deep into the fabric of American capitalist society. Today's struggles of black people against racism—for control of their destiny—deal blows

at capitalism itself. Consider this. Grant—for a moment and for the sake of argument—that capitalist America can afford to take its racist foot off the necks of black students and grant their demands for in-

dependent power in the field of education. What will capitalist America do when it is confronted with similar and perhaps even more revolutionary power demands from black transit workers, black auto workers,

black rubber workers, black steel workers? On that day—toward which we are now moving—the revolutionary essence of black nationalism will be abundantly clear. Perhaps, even, to the most stubborn Maoist.

—From *The Militant*, Jan. 31, 1969

3. Part of a World-Wide Thrust

By Gus Horowitz

To read the press of the Progressive Labor Party, one gets the impression that black nationalism is the worst internal danger confronting the black struggle, rather than a means of mobilizing black people in militant action, as experience has shown. "Nationalism, which is a bourgeois reaction to racism, must be defeated," declares the January issue of its paper, *Challenge*.

Curiously enough, PL's campaign to defeat black nationalism was launched in the course of two of the most important struggles bearing a nationalist character: the New York City fight for black control of the schools in the black community; and the San Francisco State struggle for a black studies department under black control. This is not mere coincidence. PL has criticized both these struggles for their lack of "class content," the reason for which PL says it opposes nationalism in the first place.

The December 1968 *Challenge* criticized the black and Puerto Rican struggle for control of the schools in New York City. An article headlined "Why Community Control is the Wrong Fight" asserts that "the main thing wrong with the demand for community control of the schools is that it hides the class nature of our bad education . . . What the parents really need is for the working class to replace the bourgeois' control of the schools with working class control of the schools." (Emphasis in original.)

The struggle of Afro-Americans has nothing to do with national oppression—it's merely a special case of the class struggle! What a travesty on the facts that is.

Of the 1,200,000 students in the New York school system, more than half are black and Puerto Rican. Yet only four percent enter the municipal colleges. Of the teachers, only 8.8 percent are black. The entire educational system is designed to condition these students for unemployment or the worst jobs. The content of the education comprises the values of white-dominated society. Most teachers and administrators come from a background that is totally alien from that of the ghetto youth of New York.

Certainly the school system is not geared to the interests of the white working class

students either. But one would have to be blind not to see that there is a special national aspect to the oppressive nature of the educational system; that the black and Puerto Rican communities face a special national as well as a class oppression. This national aspect motivates the demands for community control.

To the black and Puerto Rican communities, the idea of control means: that their children will learn their own history, not the racist falsifications they get today; that they will be insured of having black and Puerto Rican teachers who can understand their background and their needs; that racism in education will be eliminated; that adequate education will be received; in short an education that will be a means to assert their national identity. The black and Puerto Rican people feel, and rightfully so, that such demands can be carried out only if they themselves have control of their schools.

PL's blind insistence that these demands lacked "class content" puts it in opposition to the legitimate national aspirations of the black and Puerto Rican people.

Moreover, just to be sure that no one would be misled by PL's call for "working class control," the article itself maintains that working class control is the wrong thing to fight for. It can't be achieved until the socialist revolution, says PL. So black people had better wait, PL implies, wait until the workers are ready to make the revolution before demanding control over their community. Left out of this brilliant analysis is any conception of how workers—white or black—are to develop a socialist consciousness, if not through struggling for control over their lives.

In the meantime? "Instead of fighting for the abstract umbrella demand of control, we feel that parents and teachers should wage united struggle over the real and specific injustices which are the reason they are stirred up in the first place."

What PL ignores is that the black and Puerto Rican people were "stirred up" not only because of specific injustices, but because the injustices are systematic. Who else but themselves could be trusted to eliminate the injustices? That's why they demanded control. Far from being abstract or unreal, the demand for community con-

trol was precisely the issue.

As if to imply that part of the fault for the parent-teacher split lay with the black and Puerto Rican communities, PL says: "Under community control the parents on the governing boards will become the apparent bosses of the teachers. This will make it almost impossible for parents and teachers to get together and fight their common enemy."

What prevented unity against the common enemy was the racist policy of the UFT leaders, not the legitimate demands of oppressed people. A progressive leadership in the teachers' union would not have fought community control, but would have allied itself with the demands of the black and Puerto Rican people.

Instead the teachers' bureaucracy whipped up a campaign of hysteria against community control on the grounds that it was anti-working class and anti-union. Whether they realize it or not, PL's own campaign against black nationalism, launched at the same time, is nothing more than an adaptation to pressure from backward sections of the white workers and the trade-union bureaucracy—not to speak of the mounting social pressure of the capitalist offensive on this issue.

Throughout the *Challenge* article PL smears the demand for community control by equating it with the intentions of Lindsay and the ruling class. The demands raised by the black and Puerto Rican communities have been for their own control of the schools. Lindsay's plan for decentralization was intended, among other reasons, as an apparent concession to this feeling that would still keep real control in the hands of the city administration.

The black and Puerto Rican communities fought to implement a totally different concept of community schools than what Lindsay had in mind. But PL makes no such distinction and brands the community's struggle for control as being manipulated by the ruling class. If every struggle is tainted, just because the ruling class attempts to co-opt it, then militant struggles could never be waged. PL's confidence in the black and Puerto Rican masses is none too high, given that type of approach.

The same themes may be observed in PL's criticisms of the black student strug-

gles. The February issue of **Progressive Labor** says: "The major weakness of these movements is that they don't have a working class orientation. Nationalism is strong, sometimes leading the struggle into the dead-end of 'Black student power.' Basically the goals of the black students are limited to securing a better deal for themselves from the schools and from the ruling class. They are not aimed at defeating the system."

What a denigration of the black student struggles! All they're after, according to PL, is a "better deal for themselves," for their own individual advancement.

To the contrary, almost every one of the black student struggles has been waged with the intention of relating black studies programs to the needs of the entire black community. Not only the students, but all black people see these struggles as a chance of "securing a better deal for themselves." Isn't that what the struggle for socialism is all about? To secure a better deal for the working class and for all oppressed nationalities?

Is it true that these struggles "are not aimed at defeating the system?" PL may think so, but the "system" certainly doesn't. The demands for black history, black studies, black teachers, black administrators have not been raised with the intention of turning over the implementation to the ruling class. The demand for black control strikes right at the heart of the matter — ruling class control or control by those presently oppressed. The demand for control, when raised by oppressed nationalities, challenges the right of the ruling class to rule over them. That is what terrifies the rulers so. But PL is blinded to this central aspect of nationalist demands.

What of PL's criticism of the struggle at S. F. State? Here they are a bit more careful, perhaps because some of the campus PLers might find it most awkward to oppose the struggle on the grounds that it lacks class content. So PL "exposes" only some of the demands, claiming that others do have class content.

An article in the January **Challenge**, described as a "working class analysis" of the San Francisco strike demands, says: "The 15 demands of the SF State strike only begin to challenge the basic racism of the school system. In many ways, they are relatively mild. Some of the demands, taken by themselves, could have been easily granted by the Administration [horror of horrors] without altering the basic ruling-class content of their brainwashing 'education.'

"Demands such as hiring a Black administrator or Black teachers without challenging the basic class role of administrators or teachers could be met simply by changing the color of the brainwasher's face. (Hayakawa himself is, as he never tires of repeating, 'a person of the Third World.')



Photo by Karra Kenyatta

IN MALCOLM'S TRADITION. Students at Malcolm X Junior and Senior High Schools, led by Lyngore A. Fong Bey, chairman of Malcolm X Senior High Association of Black Students, set out for citywide rally during Detroit high school shutdown.

Even demands for Black history or ethnic studies don't necessarily pose any threat to the system, until they begin to get more specific as to what the class content of such a curriculum would be!" (Emphasis in original.)

Aside from the fact that the 15 demands were raised as a totality, not separately, PL's line flies in the face of the black students' own conception of the meaning of the struggle.

Nesbit Crutchfield, a leader of the S. F. State Black Student Union, explained the concept of the 15 demands in the January issue of **The Movement**: "They're about self-determination. Self-determination means the power and ability to determine our own destiny."

In effect, however, PL has said that it will support the rights of the black students to run their own education — provided they decide on a program that is harmonious with PL's peculiar conception of working class content. This approach tramples on the very essence of self-determination.

The essence of self-determination is the right of oppressed nationalities to decide for themselves what they want and need. Revolutionaries have the obligation of supporting this right, regardless of what they may think is best.

Nowhere does PL say where it stands on the right of the black students to decide the content of the black studies program they are fighting for. To the contrary, PL places conditions on the struggle. It will support the right of black students to raise only those demands which PL itself advocates.

A final glimpse of the PL line is in order —

their conception of who will be allowed to struggle against oppression in the black worker-student alliance. From the February issue of **Progressive Labor**:

"Such a united front between black workers, including communists, and a section of the middle class will exclude those who rely on the ruling class, which includes those few who parade under the slogan of integration or those pushing 'community control' and 'decentralization.' And because this movement is aimed at the bosses and their government it will limit the indiscriminate 'hate whitey' bunch."

The struggle, you see, is all planned out; from the type of demands that black people are permitted to raise, to the time when demands for control can be brought up, to the type of people allowed to engage in the struggle. That'll be the day.

—From *The Militant*, Feb. 7, 1969

How to Defend Ourselves

By Carl Frank, Helen Meyers
and Ronald Wittmaack

Introduction

The total number of students, faculty and community supporters that have been arrested in the course of the strike at San Francisco State College now stands at 629. Defending these victims of the strike has become a central task of the strike forces, and a very crucial one. Already the debate over defense strategy has begun.

The Progressive Labor Party (PLP), for example, has proposed that the government must be forced to grant a mass trial, or the whole idea of a political defense should be abandoned. The Young Socialist Alliance sees a mass trial as a tactic, not a principle, a form of trial that may or may not be desirable, and may or may not be possible.

Consultation with lawyers has revealed that the state has no intention of allowing mass trials to take place, and since the striking students at S. F. State do not have state power, it would prove rather difficult to implement the PLP proposal. But does that mean that the concept of a political defense should be thrown out? Obviously not.

For more than three months the strikers at S. F. State have been engaged in a pitched battle with the forces that control the state of California. While the state authorities have arrested hundreds of people, ostensibly on charges of a criminal nature, the reasons for the arrests are political—the determination of the ruling class to break the strike, to deny the right of self-determination to Third World students, to destroy the teachers' union. Only a political defense can possibly expose the nature of the charges, mobilize public support for the victims, or win acquittals for them.

The following article is based on a contribution to the discussion on defense strategy by Carl Frank, Helen Meyers, and Ronald Wittmaack, three defendants, and all members of the San Francisco Young Socialist Alliance.

* * *

Even while the strike at S. F. State continues, we find ourselves faced with the task of mounting a defense against the state's most serious attempt to intimidate the movement. A total of 629 people have now been arrested; some face charges as serious as attempted murder. We must develop a defense strategy against these frameups which takes into account the fact that we have mass support for our struggle, and which seeks to prevent victimizations. Our defense must be a political defense, as well as a legal defense.

A purely legal defense would concentrate on answering the specifics of the state's charges. But that is not the essential point. We were arrested because of our politics. To gain public support it is necessary to



Cops grab Helen Myers at S. F. State

go beyond the boundaries of a legal "You did/We didn't" defense. We must wage a political defense against a political attack.

We must explain the issues behind the strike. We must continue our battle to win public support. It is only massive public support which has enabled us to continue the struggle up till now; it is only massive public support that will assure the smallest number of convictions possible, and the lightest sentences for those who may be convicted. That is the essence of a political defense.

Everyone should stop and think for a moment—where would Huey Newton be today had not a vast campaign been waged on his behalf? He might well have been awaiting execution on death row.

A political defense is not simply a legal fund, a mass trial, a pamphlet, a demonstration, a speech from the dock, a list of supporters, telegrams, or publicity. No one of these things in and of itself solves the problems of a political defense. Any or all of them can play a part in building such a defense. If we agree that a broad campaign for public support is necessary, we must consider each of these things and how to use them.

S. F. State is a test case. The entire nation is watching what happens here. The power structure is trying to determine just how far it can go in repressing the Third World liberation movement, in destroying campus civil liberties, and in breaking the teachers' union. To allow them to succeed would set a precedent and encourage further attacks on the black liberation movement, the student movement, and the union movement.

Our strike is a result of the tremendous social contradictions in this country, and has revealed the anger and determination of the youth of the oppressed national minorities and the depth of the radicalization among the white youth. Our determination, our courage has scared them. The ruling class wants to smash this movement, even if the price is high. The cops and the courts are their apparatus and will be used as such. Blind faith [illusions] in the niceties of the law will avail us nothing. A political defense goes beyond the courtroom, without ignoring the courtroom. It says, our cause is popular, and mobilization of popular support is the best weapon against victimization.

We are not the first victims of political repression. In "democratic" America there has been a panorama of struggles, especially labor movement struggles, against an unjust system. Cases have been fought in the courts and in the wider arena of public opinion to establish and uphold the rights to free speech, free association, union organization, the right to strike, and the right to disseminate and fight for unorthodox views on issues ranging from birth control to the socialist revolution.

Many basic lessons have been learned in this process which we should keep in mind.

1. Whatever democratic freedoms the American people, the labor movement and Afro-Americans now enjoy, by statute or in practice, were not generously bestowed upon them as freewill offerings from the good-hearted possessors of property and power. They have had to be torn from the ruling class powers through bitter and prolonged battles, and sometimes with arms

in hand.

Laws protecting our rights are written into the Constitution, federal and state statutes not because they are a weapon of the ruling class, but because they have been fought for and won in struggle.

2. The democratic, constitutional and legal rights of the American people are the most valuable political acquisitions of their past struggles. These are indispensable instruments of struggle against any encroachment, assault, or erosion by the forces of reaction. A strong defense of existing rights is a precondition of the fight to extend them.

Our civil liberties have been trampled on in the course of our struggle. Far from getting in the way of our struggle against racist oppression, the re-establishment of free speech and free association at State will help us in the fight. Our defense campaign must not minimize the task of defending those liberties, rather we must point out their intimate connection with our struggle.

3. The right to strike is a crucial democratic gain. It has taken tremendous sacrifice to secure the legality of trade unions and their right to strike. Our right to strike has been challenged. We must point out that those who issue this challenge to us today will challenge the trade unions and other civil liberties and radical organizations tomorrow.

4. At the same time, we ourselves must recognize that the machinery of the state and its repressive agencies are in the hands of the ruling class. They will honor the rights of the individual citizen and the people so long, and only so long, as these do not cut deeply into their vital interests. Reagan, Hayakawa, the trustees, Alioto, and their cohorts cannot be relied upon to adhere even to their own version of "legality."

5. Regardless of their claims to the contrary, these members of the ruling class are the enemies of democracy. They fear its application and resist its expansion. This imposes the obligation upon us to be the most vigorous and consistent champions of democratic liberties. We must defend all victims of reactionary persecution, no matter what their special beliefs.

We must make our motto the old IWW slogan, "An injury to one is an injury to all." This applies to all of us as defendants. No one must be abandoned. The press has sought to divide us time and time again. "The teachers are against the students," or "The BSU is split into a moderate and a left wing," they say. Even if we have internal differences, we are all united on this: the state is repressing us all, and we must stand together against that repression.

6. Whatever illusions liberals and others may have, we should place no confidence in the capacity or will of the state, its courts, officials, or politicians to grant democratic rights. The best way to fight their frameups is to develop a broad de-



The United States Constitution guarantees, in the Bill of Rights, the freedom of assembly. This is apparently of little concern to the San Francisco authorities who ordered these police onto the San Francisco State College campus to jail 456 students gathered in a peaceful campus rally during the Third World Liberation Front student strike.

fense movement based upon those sections of the population which will respond to the issues on behalf of the defendants. Thus the counter-pressure of aroused public opinion can be brought to bear upon the authorities to frustrate their attacks.

7. It is crippling and self-defeating for a defense committee and its campaign to be conducted in a sectarian or exclusive manner. Appeals for support should not be limited only to those in agreement with the ideas of the defendants. Care should be taken to point out how the issues at stake concern and affect the rights of others. Support should be solicited and welcomed from anyone willing to aid the defense, regardless of their positions on other matters. A defense committee should stand ready to collaborate with other groups which have similar purposes in opposing violations of legal or human rights.

This does not mean that the defendants have to hide their ideas from their supporters. On the contrary. A key aspect of the defense is precisely the right of the defendants to hold whatever views they do. Broad public support for civil liberties will be won only on the basis of honesty and in-

tegrity on the part of the defendants.

Thus, agreement with the 15 demands is a condition of membership in the strike committee. It must not be a condition for sponsorship of the defense cases. To insist on political agreement as a condition of defense support is to go against the very idea of solidarity among the victims of repression of the state.

It is our belief that a defense committee based on these general principles and drawing on all the lessons we have learned in our experiences defending victims of the black liberation struggle and the antiwar movement, can have a decisive effect on the outcome of the court cases.

But if any of us should be imprisoned, such a defense committee will stand ready-made to insure that we are not forgotten, that we do not become demoralized, that we are not further victimized in prison, that we have books, money, cigarettes, and solidarity.

There are many questions which we must still discuss in this context. But we believe we should start now to build the biggest and best political defense possible, one that can go on to victory.

—From *The Militant*, Feb. 7, 1969

Revolutionaries and the Fight for Reforms

By George Breitman

Among young radicals, white and black, there is a certain amount of misunderstanding about problems connected with reform and revolution and their relation to each other.

Such misunderstandings are sometimes expressed in current notions:

- That it is incorrect for revolutionaries to advocate and fight for reforms;

- That revolutionaries should not bother trying to organize the masses to fight for anything that can be won under the present system;

- That the only kind of demands it is proper for revolutionaries to raise and organize around are those that cannot be used, misused, distorted or "co-opted" by the ruling class or opportunists; etc.

Perhaps these questions can be clarified by re-examining the concepts "reform" and "revolution" from a Marxist standpoint.

For present purposes, a reform can be called a change in social, political or economic institutions or arrangements that does not necessarily imply or require a fundamental change in those institutions or arrangements. In contrast, such a fundamental change, involving the overturn of the social-political-economic system itself and the replacement in state power of the former ruling class by a new ruling class, is what we usually mean when we talk about revolution.

Examples: When Congress passed laws in the 1930s recognizing the legal right of the workers to organize unions and bargain collectively, that was a reform. When the Supreme Court ruled in 1954 that school segregation is unconstitutional, that was another reform. The New Deal initiated by Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1930s was not a revolution, just as the more recent Great Society was not a revolution, because the prevailing class and power relationships were not changed basically, as they were in the Russian, Yugoslav, Chinese, Cuban and Vietnamese revolutions of this century.

Some reforms are initiated by the ruling class itself, because it thinks them beneficial to the interests of its system. Some are resisted by the ruling class for a long time, and granted only after bitter struggle convinces them that it is a lesser evil. Some reforms are won peacefully, others only through the most violent conflict. Some ruling classes have been known to refuse to grant certain reforms right up to the point where they were overthrown. (Not every ruling class makes all decisions wisely or always acts truly in its own self-interest; this is especially true in revolutionary situations and crises.)

Revolutionary Marxists, starting with Marx, have never been opposed to the struggle for reforms; on the contrary. For

revolutionaries to oppose such struggles or refuse to join and try to lead them would be to doom themselves to permanent isolation and futility. Except in revolutionary situations (and not always then) most of the exploited and oppressed masses do not see the necessity or possibility of winning anything but reforms (no matter how radical or numerous the reforms they want may be).

The essence of Marxist strategy, of any revolutionary strategy in our time, is to combine the struggle for reforms with the struggle for revolution. This is the only way in which to build a revolutionary party capable of providing reliable leadership to the masses and of enabling them in revolutionary situations to make the transition, in consciousness and in action, from the struggle for reforms to the struggle for power and revolution.

The United States is not now in a revolutionary situation. This is unfortunate, but true; and it is from this truth that revolutionaries must proceed in the development of strategy and tactics. On the other hand, it is also true that there is considerable social unrest, frustration, alienation and the start of sizable radicalization in this country today, especially among young people, who provide the chief forces for revolution.

Favorable situation

That means there is a favorable situation developing for conscious and dedicated revolutionaries—a growing body of people who can be won to the cause of revolution even before a revolutionary situation actually arises. The development of significant revolutionary cadres is more possible now than at any time in the last third of a century.

But the gathering, education and toughening of revolutionary cadres, while indispensable for a revolution, isn't enough to guarantee one. There are still all those people "out there"—the millions and millions who are not ready to make a revolution, although they are certainly in favor of reforms that can affect their living conditions and personal destinies. (This applies not only to the population generally, but also to the overwhelming majority of black people and young people, among whom the radicalization process is more advanced.)

Even though a revolution is not possible today, the development of a revolutionary strategy is. But you can't develop one unless you take into account the way to win those millions toward independent and revolutionary motion.

So revolutionary Marxists cannot be opposed to the struggle for reforms. What we oppose is reformISM.

Reformism is the tendency which holds

that the basic problems of society can be solved, or even that socialism can be achieved, by the gradual accumulation of reforms, one by one. That concept, not fighting for reforms, is what revolutionaries are and should be against.

Reforms can be sought in various ways. Reformists work for them in a class-collaborationist, conciliatory fashion, attempting to convince the exploited and oppressed masses that the system is "workable," that their interests and those of the exploiters and oppressed can and should be reconciled, that class and national struggles should not be fought out to their logical conclusion.

Revolutionaries fight for reforms, but they never stop teaching the masses the truth about the inadequacies of reforms so long as the ruling class is not displaced from power, about the ease with which reforms can be cancelled or withdrawn or made meaningless by ineffective or discriminatory enforcement as long as the ruling class remains in power, about the need to go beyond reforms and reconstruct the foundations of society on a planned and rational basis.

In the struggle against fascism, for example, reformists seek to reinforce illusions about and reliance on capitalist democracy, and oppose anti-fascist methods that might go beyond the framework of capitalist democracy and thus incur the displeasure of the democratic capitalists. Revolutionaries, on the other hand, try to help the masses to understand the unreliability and treachery of the democratic capitalists and the need to combine anti-fascism with anti-capitalism.

Another distinction is that reformists propose at best halfway measures aimed at avoiding showdown conflicts while revolutionaries encourage independent mass action and independent mass organization as the only way to win and keep reforms, to deepen consciousness and extend the conditions for continuing social change.

Only reform?

James Haughton and Timothy J. Cooney of Harlem's Equal Employment Council, which seeks construction work for blacks, think they have an airtight case when they argue that **because** the U.S. is not about to have a revolution, **therefore** the black man "has only one course of action: the hard, unromantic road of reform." That they actually mean the road of reformism is made clear when they add: "He [the black man] must have a legislative program and a political strategy for putting it across. He must grit his teeth and politely testify before hostile Congressional committees. He must make alliances of convenience with people he doesn't like. He must learn that awful business of compromise," etc. (**Manhattan Tribune**, Nov. 20, 1968).

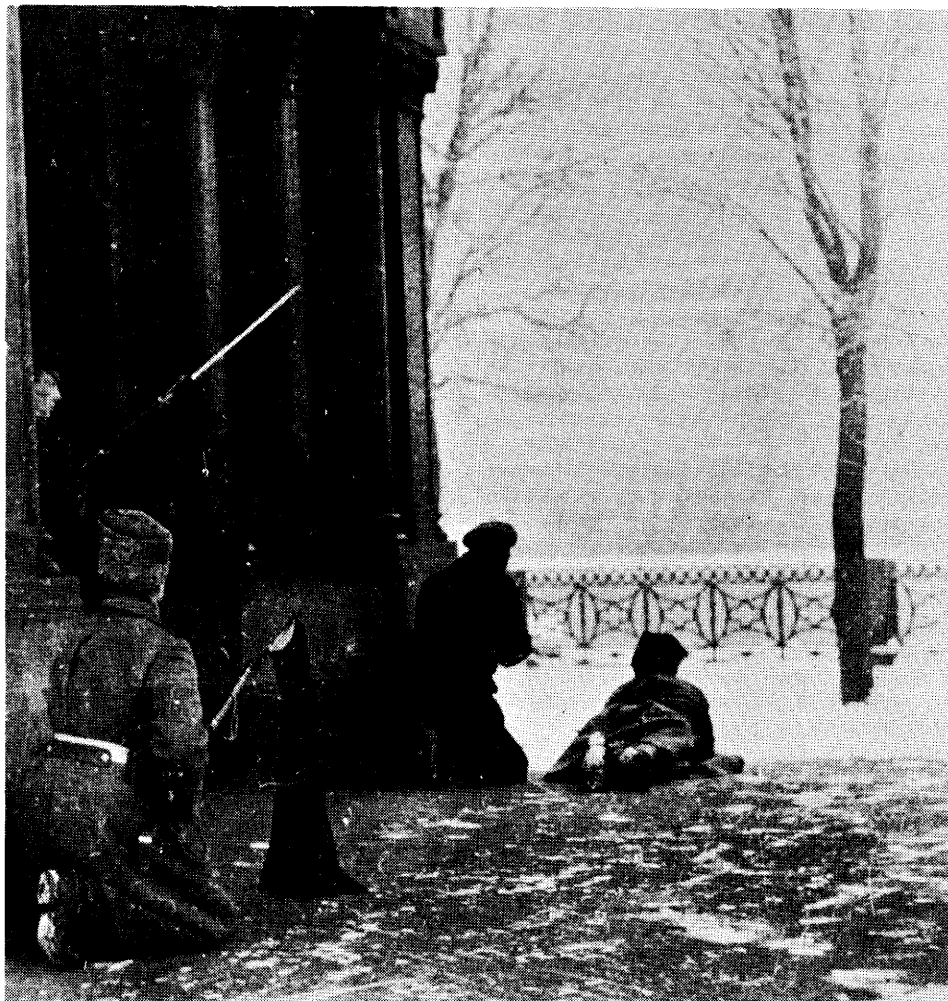
The flaw in their logic is obvious. Black people have to fight for reforms, but that doesn't mean that they have to fight for them in a reformist way. They have the alternative of fighting for them in a revolutionary way—by militant mass action rather than polite testimony, and as part of a strategy consciously aimed at mobilizing the masses to change the system. You don't have to become a reformist just because revolution is not around the corner. In fact, that is the way to assure that revolution will never come—just as, conversely, a refusal to fight for reforms, in a revolutionary fashion, is also a way of postponing revolution.

In a similar way to Haughton and Cooney, Harold Cruse thinks he is making some kind of telling point when he asserts that Malcolm X cannot be considered a revolutionary because the program of his Organization of Afro-American Unity "was definitely written as a reformist document." (*The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, p.442) He means, of course, that the OAAU programs of Malcolm's time urged black people to organize to fight for reforms.

But why does that disqualify Malcolm as a revolutionary, any more than it disqualifies Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Mao Tse-tung, Castro or Ho Chi Minh? The real question is whether Malcolm intended to fight for those reforms in a revolutionary way, and to utilize the organization, education and experience acquired in the course of the fight for them to promote revolution. The answer is affirmative, although it will not be found in Cruse's writings. It is clearly apparent from Malcolm's teachings, summarized in his declaration: "By any means necessary."

To approach the problem another way: It is instructive to contrast SNCC with the black student unions that have arisen in the last year or two. SNCC is an organization to whom all revolutionaries owe gratitude as a pioneer of the present radicalization; historically, it will surely be ranked with the IWW as a forerunner of the American revolution. But its present stagnation and isolation cannot be attributed solely to the savage persecution it has suffered at the hands of the government. In part, it has been hamstrung by its own anti-leadership fetish, by the unfortunate theory held by some of its leaders that "repression" will produce radicalization and revolution, and in the recent period by generalizations about revolution that somehow discouraged or minimized participation in the partial struggles that got the label of "non-revolutionary."

On the other hand, the black student unions, which might have served as a major base for the revival and expansion of SNCC, have been healthily free of certain abstentionist inhibitions. Without excessive rhetoric, they have struck stunning blows at the status quo from one coast to the other. And what are their demands?



1917. Students firing on cops during Russian Revolution. The Bolsheviks won a mass following with the explosive reform demands, "Land, Peace, Bread."

Nothing but reforms, and reforms of only the schools at that!

But because they are fighting for reforms in a radical way, they have raised the campus struggles to a new level, strengthening the whole movement immensely, and making possible the widening of the youth radicalization, including whites as well as blacks. And because they are fighting in a radical way, they are winning more than if they had fought in a reformist way, even where they cannot win all of their demands. Dr. Nathan Hare is absolutely correct in his retort to Roy Wilkins when he says, "Our cries for more black professors and black students have padded white colleges with more blacks in two years than a decade of whimpering for 'integration' ever did."

False limit

If we limit ourselves only to those demands that the ruling class and opportunists will not try (often unsuccessfully) to distort, manipulate or co-opt, there will be very few demands we will ever be able to raise. In a revolutionary situation the ruling class will try to co-opt even revolutionary demands. For example, in the

German revolution at the end of World War I, when the masses began to organize workers and soldiers councils (soviets), the ruling class and its social-democratic henchmen offered to "recognize" the councils and incorporate them into the government as an official institution (where, of course, they would have been subordinated, housebroken and emasculated).

There are few if any demands so simple that they can be guaranteed forever immune to manipulation by the enemy. The cure lies in education, alertness, flexibility, and in the creation of movements with a high level of revolutionary consciousness—not in the search for perfect but elusive formulas, and not in abandoning or abstaining from the struggle for reforms that have the potential of organizing and educating the masses.

(The Cuban Revolution developed as a struggle for reforms—end of the dictatorship; land for the peasant; lower rents; homes; schools; jobs for the workers—but because the Fidelistas mobilized masses in a revolutionary struggle for these reforms and educated them to the need to struggle for these things against any force

that opposed them, they carried the struggle to a conclusion that brought the first socialist revolution in the western hemisphere.)

Nothing in the world can be done to prevent the government, the Ford Foundation or various black opportunists from trying to give their content to the popular demand for black control of the black community, from interpreting it as "black capitalism" or "decentralization" or the election of black Democrats, etc., and from seeking to deflect the struggle for this demand into safer channels. (Attempts to dampen down movements with concession can boomerang too. This, for example, was the intent in giving ghetto youth college scholarships and grants. Now they've got a panther by the tail.)

The way to combat efforts of the ruling class to co-opt demands is not to conclude that such demands are worthless but to give them a revolutionary content. To do otherwise can only guarantee the continued influence of the reformists among the masses.

For example, the school issue is a major one today for black people in New York and other cities. The reformists, supported by sections of the ruling class, try to keep that struggle within the limits of simple school decentralization. It is the obligation of revolutionaries to join the school struggle precisely to counterpose the revolutionary concept of black control of black schools to the reformist concept of an "improved," "less bureaucratic," "decentralized," education system.

The negative attitude of some black radicals to the struggle for black control of the black community has been paralleled by the disparaging attitude of some whiteradicals toward certain demands and aspects of the fight against the war in Vietnam, which has already radicalized millions of young Americans despite far-from-perfect leadership.

Antiwar movement

The current antiwar movement had hardly got started in 1965 before some leaders of SDS and certain ultra-leftist groups began to complain that they were "tired" of broad anti-war demonstrations and marches demanding the withdrawal of the GIs from Vietnam. Why? Because they weren't stopping the war, or because they were "too square," or because they weren't sufficiently anti-imperialist, or because they concentrated on trying to reach wider sections of the population instead of seeking "confrontations" with the cops, or (during the 1968 election campaign) because the liberal capitalist politicians were trying (with partial and temporary success) to exploit, deflect and co-opt the antiwar sentiment and movement.

The Vietnamese liberation movement has a more realistic and a much more favorable estimate about the value of the antiwar demonstrations, and do not concur in the American ultra-leftist judgment that they are now "passe."

But independently of the Vietnamese opinion, surely there should be more American radicals capable of appreciating the tremendous contributions the antiwar movement, with all its defects and limitations, has made up to this point, and is still capable of making—providing the American radicals don't turn their backs on it now.

Similar criticisms can be made about some of the current radical attitudes to antiwar referendums, and to electoral activity in general. (Barry Sheppard's refutation of the *Guardian's* no-vote position on the 1968 election campaign, in the Nov. 15, 1968, *Militant*, was perfectly correct, but probably will have to be repeated many times before electoral abstentionism is fully understood for the childish nonsense it is.

Voting age issue

Lowering the voting age to 18 is nothing but a reform, and one which has been granted even in reactionary states in this country. But a fight for this reform, led by revolutionaries and conducted with some imagination, could have a profoundly radicalizing-politicizing effect, especially among young people.

I lived in Michigan a few years ago when a referendum on this issue was held in that state, and I must report my disappointment at seeing the revolutionary socialists, adult and youth alike, confining themselves to routine endorsement of the lower-age reform instead of dramatizing and leading the campaign to enact it. Perhaps their under-reaction was due to the fact that both capitalist parties, the labor movement and just about everybody else also endorsed the proposition. (But it was badly defeated



Fidel Castro's movement to achieve basic reforms in Cuban society culminated in the western hemisphere's first socialist revolution.

in the referendum vote.)

It is healthy for radicals, old and young, to beware of the dangers of reformism, but it is dangerous to mistake the baby for the bathwater or the bathwater for the baby. The American Communist and Socialist parties did not become reformist because they participated in the struggle for reforms; the reasons have to be sought elsewhere. And the Socialist Labor Party did not remain revolutionary by deciding to oppose participation in struggles for immediate and partial demands; their hostility to every working-class revolution of this century testifies to that.

Capitalism always attempts to buy off every popular movement that it cannot pervert, misdirect or crush. But there are limits on what it can accomplish along these lines, as the fact that one-third of the world has been torn out of its grip demonstrates. The dangers of co-optation must not be underestimated, but neither should they be overestimated. The reforms and concessions of recent years have not mollified, conciliated or co-opted the masses of black Americans (even though they bought off some potential leaders). It really takes a lot of faith in the power of capitalism to believe that it is capable of satisfying the demands of the black masses—the only kind of "co-optation" that could end their struggle.

Struggle is the school of the masses. All demands that move the masses into struggle and raise the level of their consciousness are worth raising, fighting for and incorporating into the over-all revolutionary strategy.

None should be excluded because they are "only reforms," or because through sharp struggle they may be won partly or wholly under capitalism, or because the capitalists will try to utilize them for their own purposes, or because they don't conform to the dogmas of sectarians and abstentionists, who have so little self-confidence that whenever they get involved in anything outside of their own tight little warm circles they begin to ask, "What are we doing wrong?"

—From *The Militant*, Feb. 28, 1969

GIs and the Antiwar Movement

By **Low Jones**

[The following is excerpted from a report approved by the national committee of the Socialist Workers Party.]

What began in Vietnam, in the eyes of the ruling class, as a simple policing action turned into a full-fledged war, into quite a long war in fact. It is now four years that the U.S. has had large numbers of troops in Vietnam, a longer time for the United States than either World War I, World War II, longer than the Korean War, longer even than the Civil War.

Problem remains

The war continues to drag on. Yet the problem for the U.S. ruling class remains the same: how to win a political victory. The U.S. has had no victory. Nor has it been defeated, although failure to gain victory in four years can be considered a kind of defeat for the most powerful imperialist nation in history.

In the last year the U.S. has readjusted its methods of conducting the war, its methods, not its aims. American imperialist aims in the war have not at all been readjusted, they remain exactly the same: The aim of trying to control Asia or part of Asia; to try to win a victory over the NLF and thereby a symbolic victory over the colonial revolution; if possible, to try and overturn the revolution in North Vietnam.

What is basically new in U.S. policy is not a cutback in the war effort, but an addition. The U.S. is now combining a war of diplomacy along with the military war, trying to win at the negotiating table what it has so far been unable to achieve on the battlefield.

By halting most of the bombing of North Vietnam, the U.S. mollified public opinion at home and around the world, not an unimportant consideration.

Washington also found that it made good military sense to halt the bombing of the north and concentrate its military efforts in the south. And that is exactly what it has done. The tonnage of bombs dropped is approximately the same as it was before the bombing pause in the north. Now all of the bombing is concentrated in South Vietnam. In addition, the war has spilled over more into Cambodia and Laos.

The bombing halt allowed the U.S. to start moving troops from the demilitarized zone into the southern regions where they have opened up a general offensive. According to the journalist, I. F. Stone, the U.S. increased the number of its combat missions exactly at the time of the bombing halt last November. Since then, 2,000 GIs have been killed, and just since the first of the year, according to today's *New York Times*, 1,200 have died. All evidence points to an actual intensification of the war in Vietnam, not its diminishing.

Main result

Indeed — and not accidentally — the principal result of the Paris talks so far has been to deescalate the protests against the war. Charles Mohr, writing in the *New York Times* on Jan. 3, said speaking of the government officialdom: "One important factor on which the present optimism is based is the hope that a decision to continue to prosecute the war can be reconciled with the domestic American desire to 'ease the pain.'" In other words, by their war of diplomacy they have hoped to disarm their critics and deactivate the protest movement, while actually continuing the war.

Large sections of the antiwar movement had — and some still have — illusions in the Paris talks. That simply reflects what the whole population is thinking. One might say there has been a temporary vote of confidence in Nixon and the peace talks.

People are willing to give him a chance, willing to wait and see if the talks will bring an end to the war. But it is a highly temporary vote of confidence. The Paris talks are a kind of political "time bomb," one which can explode in an unintended manner.

The vote of confidence has masked a deeper, broader antiwar sentiment in the population than existed when the Paris talks began. Any great escalation of the war, rising casualty figures or the prolongation of the talks could very swiftly bring that antiwar sentiment to the surface. We can therefore expect a change, a shift in the mass attitude towards the war. We will again see a wave of righteous indignation — the kind that we have seen throughout the history of the antiwar movement when people discover that they have been lied to once more.

GI response

The GIs have had a decidedly different reaction to the negotiations than most other people. Once the U.S. conceded that it was not going to win completely by military means, the average GI naturally thought: why the devil should I waste my life unnecessarily in a war like this? — a war that he most likely did not support or did not understand. As a result, since the Paris negotiations there has been a significant increase in GI protest activities throughout the country.

We have long pointed to the important potential of GI antiwar sentiment. For a long time we alone in the antiwar movement urged that an orientation towards the GIs be part of antiwar activity. Now, with the beginnings of GI antiwar protests, and if the April 5-6 demonstrations can measure up to expectations, that orientation can become a permanent feature of the antiwar protest movement.

Our approach to GIs is linked directly to our basic approach in the antiwar



movement, the building of massive actions against the war reflecting the interests of the majority of people. Mass actions, rather than the actions of isolated individuals, are the motor force of social change. Accordingly, our line of approach towards GIs has been threefold.

First, we do not advocate that GIs take moralistic, isolated individual action against the armed forces—desertion, disobeying orders, or whatever. Such acts simply expose GIs to victimization and can effectively wipe out the leadership and cadre. Moreover, they are not a program acceptable to the great bulk of GIs. Whether cloaked in terms of pacifist moralism or ultra-left ardor, isolated individual acts are simply ineffective.

Second is our concept of the citizen-soldier, that is, the GI is a citizen who is temporarily in uniform. While serving in the armed forces he maintains his full rights as a citizen. GIs have the right to their own beliefs, their own opinions, to free speech and assembly. These rights exist and can be fought for successfully, despite the attempts of the brass to prevent their exercise. It is the duty and obligation of the antiwar movement to do everything it can to support those GIs whom the brass attempts to victimize for exercising their constitutional rights.

Third, the war in Vietnam is the question around which GIs are exercising their rights. The war is the most important question to them, the question they can agree upon, the question on which the antiwar movement must approach them. Moreover, the war is the question around which GIs can get the most civilian protection, should the brass attempt to crack down and take away their rights.

On the basis of that threefold approach we can look forward to the building of effective antiwar actions by GIs.

While embracing the new development of GI antiwar protests, we should have an absolutely clear understanding of their character and pace of development. We do not anticipate, for example, that in the near future there will be massive GI uprisings like those that took place after World War II. GI antiwar sentiment is in a gestative stage right now. At this point the actions of antiwar GIs are the actions of the most politically conscious—though they reflect very graphically the deep antiwar sentiment that generally exists.

Our view is that the political consciousness and activity of GIs is totally connected to that of the whole population. We do not think that GIs are so isolated from the rest of society that there will be a mass radicalization and massive protest in the armed forces prior to a big change inside the whole population. There will be no such thing until the mood within the population itself is such that massive GI protests can be defended and identified with.

Nor do we think that antiwar GIs are about to displace the civilian antiwar movement as the central component in the struggle against the war. No, they are a major reinforcement, and vitally important new component of the general movement against the war, but not a substitute for it. As vital as they are, the GIs cannot be the central axis of the antiwar movement.

In our view there is a very intimate interplay between the civilian population and the GIs. There may be political changes in one sector that momentarily outstrip the other, but ultimately there will be an interrelated, a parallel process in the development of antiwar sentiment and of general anticapitalist radicalization in all sectors.

Interpenetration

History shows that there is a most intimate interpenetration between the ranks

of the military and the civilian population in a period of social unrest and political turmoil. This is because of the present character of the army. The army is not narrowly based, composed of an elite officer corps with social misfits in the ranks. By virtue of the draft and wartime expansion the men in uniform represent a cross-section of the population, only with a different set of specific problems. The war is a most acute question to them because they know they can get hurt in that kind of business.

According to *Fortune* magazine, 20 percent of all male youth between 18 and 24 are presently in the armed forces. That is a very active age bracket. The percentage of Afro-American, Mexican, Indian, and Puerto Rican youth is much higher and increases as you get closer to the front lines. By this June, 30 percent of the draftees will be college graduates. And if the *Fortune* article on youth is accurate, half of that 30 percent are going to be people with attitudes very similar to the antiwar movement, or who have had contact with the antiwar movement. So the men in the army are not a body of mercenaries, paid killers, or willing crusaders as some have tried to picture in the past.

So we see a fundamental identity of the political climate in a draftee army and the civilian population. We should not be confused by the change in form just because one segment of the population now wears a uniform and is put in a position of special jeopardy. That is the basis for our orientation in attempting to reach GIs. That is why we emphasize the importance of antiwar GIs, but not to the point of isolating them from general antiwar activity.

—From *The Militant*, March 14, 1969

A Perspective on Women's Emancipation

By Mary-Alice Waters

The last year has seen a sharp rise of interest in "the woman question," or the "women's liberation movement." This interest has been manifested in numerous ways: an article in the *New York Times Magazine*; a resolution passed by the SDS; a series of articles in the *Guardian*; the emergence of far out groups like SCUM (Society for Cutting Up Men) and WITCH (Women's International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell).

This growing concern among American women over the role they are forced to play in society is not surprising. In part, it is one more sign of the deepening radicalization. Just as glorification of the family, motherhood and the church increases during periods of reaction, such as the 1950s, so periods of radicalization and deepening social unrest tend to call them into question. The generation of the 1960s

is trying to analyze and understand the complex of problems and issues raised by the relegation of women to an inferior social status.

Nor is it surprising that this has become an issue in the student movement. In the United States today there is an ever growing number of women with a high level of education, millions more than at any other time. Recent advances in the field of medicine, particularly the development of safe, virtually 100-percent effective contraceptive devices, give women greater control over their lives than ever before in history.

Yet these same women, when they look for a meaningful way to utilize their talents and abilities, find themselves brought up sharp against the socially accepted norms, and their mythology. They are warned that "human nature" dictates a woman cannot achieve personal fulfillment and happiness if she does not perform her

social function of childbearing; that her "biologically determined" role is to marry, raise a family, and run a home; and that if she makes the arrogant mistake of thinking she can use her productive abilities as well as her reproductive ones, she will find herself miserable and alone, rejected by men and society, especially as she grows older.

The degree to which this all-pervasive mythology is ingrained in every girl from infancy on is enough to make most of them recoil instinctively from leaving the well-marked road.

Working-class women, and especially black women and women of other minority groups, usually have even less choice. They are confined to the most menial jobs at the lowest pay, with no compensation made for the fact that they probably have a full-time job at home as well.

For the revolutionary movement the

"women question" is also important because a correct appreciation of the issues involved is a prerequisite to releasing the full creative energies of half the potential revolutionary forces available. But the "woman question" is one of the most emotionally charged issues with which the radical movement has to deal, because it touches on questions of sexual relationships, family ties, and other personal questions to which people often tend to react irrationally. The attempt to achieve a scientific understanding of the role of women in society, to place it in a correct historical context and analyze it as a class question meets with tenacious resistance.

While it would take a book, or more accurately several books, to deal adequately with the topic, it is worthwhile to indicate certain aspects which the Marxist movement has always considered fundamental to an understanding of this question. One of the handicaps immediately encountered is that with the exception of Engels' **The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State**, there are few easily accessible works that give a Marxist approach to the question.

Even to get the necessary historical and factual material is difficult. But it would be a serious error to look at the problems of women simply as they exist today and fail to see them in their long historical perspective.

Engels summarized the historical materialist approach in his preface to the first edition of **The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State**. "According to the materialist conception, the determining factor in history is, in the last resort, the production and reproduction of immediate life. But this itself is of a twofold character. On the one hand, the production of the means of subsistence, of food, clothing and shelter and the tools requisite therefor; on the other, the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species. The social institutions under which men of a definite historical epoch and of a definite country live are conditioned by both kinds of production; by the stage of development of labor, on the one hand, and of the family, on the other."

While the history of humanity goes back a million years or more, the family in any form even remotely resembling the present institution has existed for only a few thousand years. The roughly modern form of marriage and its "nuclear family" did not evolve until the rise of capitalism. In other words, the family is an institution that emerged when class society came into being, and its forms have evolved along with the changing stages of class society from slavery through feudalism to capitalism.

Historically, the subjugation of women was directly tied to the emergence of the patriarchal family, private property, and the state. While women have, obviously, always played the same reproductive role

in society, they have not always played the same productive role. Even at the edge of recorded history, women were the main producers in society and often the "governesses" as well. Society was organized on the basis of maternal kinship, and paternity (if known) was relatively unimportant as long as the father did not come from a proscribed group.

While the men were basically hunters and warriors in man's prehistory, it was the women who became the first tillers of the land, thereby establishing the basis for the historic advance from savagery to barbarism—from food gathering and hunting to food raising and domestication of animals. But agriculture demanded fixed communities, tied to definite areas of land, and it was only during this period of human history that the material conditions were created for the transition from a matriarchal form of society to a patriarchal one.

As communities became fixed, husbands rather than brothers became the central men in each basic social unit. The clan began to narrow down to an "extended family" comprised of a mother, father, children, and spouses, often spanning several generations.

As man's productive capacities grew to the point where it was possible to create a sizable and sustained surplus of goods—the basis for private property and class divisions—the divisions between rich and poor emerged. The need for clearly identifiable heirs to this wealth assured the historical ascendancy of the patriarchal family. Only later did the state emerge to codify and legalize the "rights" of private property and the life-and-death control of each patriarchal head of family over his slaves, wife and children.

Throughout the historical periods of chattel slavery and feudalism, however, marriage was largely an institution for the nobility and the rich. Its prime purpose was the protection and expansion of property, as the frequent legal marriages between children, even infants, testified.

It was only with rise of capitalism that marriage and the current family system became universalized.

Under capitalism, the family unit, stripped of land to live on and all economic security, was reduced to the molecular unit of mother, father, and children. The woman, no longer able to play a productive role as she did even on the farms and in the days of "cottage industry," is reduced to a purely reproductive function, and the man is made solely responsible for the entire unit, come death, disease, unemployment, starvation, or whatever. In other words, the family system was utilized by capitalism as an additional form of exploitation and oppression of the working class. At the same time it was dressed up as a sacred moral and legal absolute supposedly based on nothing but ideal "love."

Such a historical overview, sketchy as it may be, says some obvious things about the role of women in society.

● It explodes the myth of the biological inferiority of women—that because of their reproductive functions, they are incapable of playing a major productive or governing role in society. They have played such a central role before and will again, when society is organized on the principles of social ownership and production for use not profit.

● It places in historical perspective the popular mythology surrounding eternal, sacrosanct marriage and the holy (patriarchal) family.

● It clearly establishes the historical roots of male domination and the relegation of women to an inferior social status. This domination is a result of the emergence and development of class society, which has existed for only a few thousand years.

A historical view also helps answer the question of how to eliminate the oppression of women. The triumph of the world socialist revolution, the establishment of a classless society based on levels of human productivity surpassing anything currently known, will provide the material basis for the social liberation of women by freeing them from sole responsibility for the day-to-day care and raising of children. It will give them economic independence and security by integrating them into the productive processes of society.

It will eliminate the material basis for the family in its current form—a tiny nucleus, surviving (as does the rest of capitalist society) on the basis of cut-throat competition, greed, avarice, and all the other norms of our society.

In the past, women have struggled and won many valuable and important democratic demands—the right to vote, hold property, defend themselves in court, etc. And it is only through continued struggles that further gains will be won. In so doing women can help to advance the revolutionary struggle as a whole and bring closer the day when the emancipation of women will become a reality.

But the struggle of women is interrelated with all the other great issues of the world revolution today, and to achieve ultimate victory a coordinated and interrelated struggle must be waged. To lead such a struggle and help organize it requires a revolutionary party of men and women, one that educates and fights incessantly against the insidious pressures of racism, male chauvinism and the myriad other weapons of the ruling class.

It is also through contributing to this struggle for socialism that many women find the best opportunities for developing and using all their productive and creative abilities.

—From *The Militant*, March 21, 1969

The Role of Antiwar Demonstrations

By Gus Horowitz

The April 5-6 demonstrations against the war in Vietnam were an outstanding success. The demonstrations were far larger than anyone had anticipated, showing that antiwar sentiment continues to deepen and that the disorientation induced by the Paris talks is rapidly dissipating.

Moreover, the youthful composition and militant political tone to the demonstrations testified to the continuing and deepening process of radicalization in the United States, a process in which opposition to the war plays a decisive part.

But the April 5-6 demonstrations also produced a curious side effect. Some of the people who had taken little notice of the actions prior to their taking place, now see an opportunity, after the outcome of April 5-6, not to build future, larger demonstrations like it, but to try to undercut the very basis on which April 5-6 was built. Speaking for many of these people is the newspaper, the *Guardian*.

An April 12 *Guardian* editorial tells us that "It is clearly time for the general antiwar movement to recognize in theory what it is in practice — a mass radical movement with Vietnam as its central but not exclusive thrust . . . Any attempt to revive the old left-liberal coalition as it formerly operated — resulting in a watering-down of radical politics, compromise and caution — or to push the new movement back to a Vietnam-only perspective, could bring things to a standstill again . . ."

"Being against the war is not enough. The newly radicalized antiwar movement must struggle against the source of imperialistic war and it must conduct the struggle here and now against the capitalist system, its institutions, politicians and policemen which make such wars inevitable. The movement, simply, must struggle for power to the people."

Wrong on 2 counts

The *Guardian's* proposal is dead wrong on two vital counts: 1.) the kind of movement it proposes would not be able to struggle effectively against imperialism; 2.) its proposal would seriously weaken the present struggle against the imperialist war in Vietnam.

Just what is a movement that can "struggle against the source of imperialist war . . . against the capitalist system"? If we are to learn anything at all from history, it is that imperialism will not be defeated by anything less than a revolutionary socialist party — like Lenin's Bolshevik Party, for example.

The *Guardian* does not represent any such organization. Nor does the *Guardian* claim to have a revolutionary program around which to build such an organization. Nor is it either of these things that the *Guardian* is proposing.



Over 30,000 people marched in the April 6, 1969 demonstration in San Francisco.

The extent of the *Guardian* proposal is that there should be a radical organization uniting all people who agree that they are opposed to imperialism.

And who might that include? Well, one might be Dave Dellinger, an anarcho-pacifist, opposed to parties in principle. Then there's Abby Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, representing the Yippie and/or Crazy opposition to imperialism. And don't forget Youth Against War and Fascism, which seems to feel that clubbings by cops offer the best way to raise anti-imperialist consciousness. Then, of course, the SDS national collective, which in recent months has been so wrapped up issuing anti-imperialist documents, that it neglected to discuss, much less support or build, the April 5-6 demonstrations.

Quite a conglomeration. And they're all anti-imperialists. If you don't believe it, all you have to do is ask them.

But that's just a starter, for the number of people who will speak out against im-

perialism can be greatly expanded, once you think about. There's the Communist Party. And the Peace and Freedom Party. And even some liberals in the Democratic Party are outraged by imperialism and wish the U. S. wouldn't act that way.

All of them can agree that imperialism must be ended. All they disagree on is *how* to do it — which just happens to be the key point.

Is that the type of organization the *Guardian* wants? Of course not, they would protest. Some of the people mentioned are not "really" against imperialism; the movement the *Guardian* has in mind would be limited to the "real" anti-imperialists. And who are they? Which of them are "really" capable of organizing to overthrow imperialism? And which only talk a good game? No comment from the *Guardian* here.

Program and party

Serious people will have to return to the original argument. The only way of defining anti-imperialism is in terms of a

revolutionary socialist program and party capable of overturning the imperialist system.

All of which simply illustrates that the formula of simple opposition to imperialism is really the "lowest-common-denominator" politics which the *Guardian* so frequently rails against. It is, in short, just a phrase that covers up for the lack of a program and organization capable of ending imperialism.

That is why serious revolutionaries, from Lenin's time on, have never tried to build "lowest-common-denominator" movements against imperialism. Serious revolutionaries are unwilling to perpetrate such a fraud and call the variegated protest movement (all the individuals and groups involved — revolutionary and reformist) anti-imperialist. Revolutionaries are anxious, however, to build actions against specific imperialist wars — like the war in Vietnam — and to do so will unite with everyone, regardless of ideology, who is ready to build mass actions in the streets against the war.

In terms of opposing the war in Vietnam, the *Guardian's* editorial boils down to asking simply, ". . . for the general antiwar movement to recognize in theory what it is in practice — a mass radical movement with Vietnam as its central but not exclusive thrust." Since they don't want "to push the movement back to a Vietnam-only perspective," what changes do they have in mind? In particular, on what basis would they ask people to fight the war in Vietnam?

At this point, search as we might, we can't find any particulars in the *Guardian* editorial. Do they want the anti-imperialists to carry their own banners on the demonstrations, and chant their own chants? That can be done already. Do they want the anti-imperialists to launch an extensive propaganda campaign in the movement, to explain their ideas to other people and raise consciousness? That, too, can and is being done already.

What would be new? Here we can only guess, but a process of elimination leaves only the following: to change the antiwar movement into an "anti-imperialist" movement, the *Guardian* would draft some sort of "lowest-common-denominator" anti-im-

perialist analysis of the war; then it would draft up some "lowest-common-denominator" anti-imperialist slogans.

Then they would have to limit the actions to those who agreed to the coalition "compromise" analysis. They would summon to demonstrate only those people who agreed with such analysis and slogans. Otherwise, wouldn't it be reverting to the coalition with "liberals"?

There are today broad layers of people against the war in Vietnam, but not in agreement with the *Guardian's* analysis of society and, therefore, presumably not qualified to participate in such demonstrations. Does anyone get the feeling that such actions might be considerably smaller than April 5-6?

Added problem

And serious revolutionaries would also face a problem. We in the Socialist Workers Party think that we do have a Marxist program that is adequate to the task of organizing against imperialism. What is more, however hard we might try, we don't think we would be able to get together in a single political party with Dave Dellinger, Jerry Rubin, Abby Hoffman, YAWF, the SDS N. O., the *Guardian*, etc., etc. or even in drafting a mutually agreed upon analysis of imperialism and how to fight it. And we certainly won't be party to any formula that embraces liberal and radical, reformists and revolutionaries, Marxists and anti-Marxists and calls all of them anti-imperialists.

So, no thank you. We don't want to scrap the antiwar movement for demonstrations that are limited to the select few. We prefer the present method which calls on everybody who is ready to act against the war to come out in the streets and demonstrate — even if they're not ready for the *Guardian's* "anti-imperialist" movement!

In contrast to the electioneering for liberal capitalist politicians, lobbying Congress, or other activities which divert the thrust of antiwar sentiment into ruling class institutions, demonstrations in the streets are an independent expression of mass opposition to the war. On the basis of such independent action, revolutionaries can unite with other groups in antiwar pro-

test. Yes, revolutionaries work in coalitions whose single purpose is to build actions against the war in Vietnam — but they are aware of precisely who they're uniting with, and for what specific purpose, and don't muddy the issue by seeking agreement with them on a common watered-down political program.

What the *Guardian* incorrectly and disparagingly calls the "lowest-common-denominator" is, in actuality, the only basis on which independent mass actions can be built against the imperialist war in Vietnam.

Mass action is key

Revolutionaries always try to find the way to involve masses in such action, even though the majority of people do not yet have a socialist consciousness. The orientation towards mass action is a mark of revolutionary strategy, because it is only through mass action that revolution, and in fact all social change, is made.

Moreover, even casual observers can see that one of the by-products of the mass antiwar demonstrations has been a tremendous radicalization in the United States. Far from limiting consciousness, the mass demonstrations have created a climate of protest, of opposition, of struggle that has set tens of thousands of youth thinking in a socialist direction. This radicalization and climate of protest makes it much easier to build other struggles against other features of the capitalist system, struggles which should also be organized to involve masses of people independent of the ruling class.

Furthermore, when it is possible, in the midst of an imperialist war, to mobilize masses of people — including members of the armed forces! — in militant demonstrations demanding the immediate withdrawal of the imperialist forces and self-determination for the "enemy" that is far from a "lowest common denominator." It is concrete, meaningful struggle against an imperialist war — not hollow verbiage.

The *Guardian's* proposal to scrap the antiwar movement is a gross disservice, not only to the struggle against the imperialist war in Vietnam, but to the entire struggle to change the capitalist system.

—From *The Militant*, April 25, 1969

The Student Revolt

By Tony Thomas

The explosion of campus struggles in the past nine months has been an important advance for the antiwar, student and black liberation movements. They have helped to expose the rottenness of the dying capitalist system with its wars, racism, and imperialism. These evils can only be removed if the system itself is destroyed. The student explosion is demonstrating the kind of uncompromising struggle needed to smash capitalism.

An analysis of these struggles and of the upswing of the student radicalization and the black liberation movement shows that the issues are not limited to the campuses but are central issues facing society as a whole. The spilling over of these struggles from the student movement to other sectors of society largely accounts for the ruling class' fear of them.

The two central issues which have precipitated these struggles have been the Vietnam war and the struggle for black liberation.

The Vietnam war, as the most significant aspect of the struggle between imperialism and the forces of revolution, has had a strong impact on the development of the campus struggles, both on an objective and subjective level. The war has played a central role in radicalizing masses of students, not only on college campuses but in the high schools.

The economic effects of the war have also been important. Cutbacks in spending and hikes in tuition have spread from campus to campus. This has had an especially adverse effect on Third World students, who are hit most severely by them. On an immediate level, university complicity with the war machine has been an important target of the student struggles, many of which have centered around fighting ROTC and war research.

In this context, the importance of building the mass movement to bring the troops home as a central means of deepening the campus radicalization and as part of the crucial need for solidarity in action with the Vietnamese people and the growing GI

antiwar movement cannot be over-emphasized.

The second major component of these explosions is the struggle for self-determination of black and other Third World students. This struggle has been sharpened by the war because the draft, the deaths and the cutbacks particularly affect the oppressed national minorities. The struggle on the part of blacks and other Third World people to control their own communities has found its most concrete focus thus far in the struggle for black studies programs controlled by black students and the black community, and for open admission of Third World students to universities. City College of New York (CCNY), Cornell, San Francisco State, Southern University, and Howard are just a few examples of the vanguard role Third World students have played in unleashing the new wave of explosions.

Within the black struggle, the black student struggles have played an important role in pointing out a revolutionary axis for organizing—around the transitional demand of control—for black control of black studies, for black control of the black communities. The involvement of the masses of the Third World communities has been of central importance in showing how the black liberation movement must be built and how struggles can be won—by organizing the masses. This has pointed the way for the mass black political party that is needed.

A series of errors has cropped up within the struggle, errors that have led to defeats. The principal one is the ultraleft tendency to substitute the consciousness and actions of a political vanguard for the consciousness and actions of the masses of students. This short-sighted view fails to understand that the ramifications of the contradictions of the imperialist university go beyond the small handful of organized radicals. The result of this trend of thought is adventurist acts in line with the so-called "spark" theory, elitist and sectarian organizational concepts, and a catch-all piling up of demands that diffuses the struggle.

Substitution of the vanguard for the masses leads to failure because it cuts down the size of forces that enter the struggle and because it forgets the fundamental tasks of revolutionists: to raise the consciousness of the broadest masses through revolutionary struggle.

According to the "spark" theory, all that is needed for a successful struggle is a bold act on the part of a small group, regardless of the political situation and the consciousness of the masses of students. Somehow such an act is supposed to instantly mobilize and organize the masses of students, or else by sheer audacity overwhelm the power of the bourgeois state and university, and lead to instant victories.

The "spark" theory attempts to "get rich quick" by avoiding the most important political question—the consciousness and organization of the masses for struggle. The vanguard aims at building a mass movement because this is the only way a revolutionary victory can be won, whether in a campus struggle or in a revolution itself. Serious revolutionaries utilize every chance to organize the broadest possible section of people, not only to spread the heightening of consciousness, but also because this is the only way the power of the ruling class can be set back. They have the guns, but we have the numbers.

One other problem of this ultraleftism in the campus struggles is closely related to the "spark" theory. This is the tendency to reject democratically organized united fronts for elitist and sectarian forms of organization.

The best and most effective way to organize for struggle is through a united front, that is, a coalition of all groups and individuals who are willing to struggle around the agreed upon demands. Within such a formation, all decisions should be made through open and democratic discussions, including the election of leadership which should try to represent the various points of view. There are several important reasons for this: 1) Only through democratic and open discussion can the highest possible understanding of the issues and appropriate tactics be developed among

all those involved in the struggle; 2) Only by such discussion can the leadership find out whether the actions are supported by the rank and file; 3) Only through democratic functioning can new policies, tactics and leadership be developed to replace old ones that have shown themselves to be inadequate. The more prolonged, the wider, the sharper the struggle, the more important is the maintenance of democratically organized united fronts for broadening the struggle and adjusting the leadership and strategy to the objective needs of the struggle.

Ultraleftists oppose sectarian and elitist forms to this conception. This is especially true of SDS. They say that their political organization should hold a monopoly of the leadership of the struggle instead of uniting with all who are prepared to struggle. They also attempt to impose their program on all other issues whether or not it is relevant to coalitions or united fronts. They furthermore tend to act outside of the control of these united fronts. They seek to build their organization before advancing the struggle and as a result wind up setting the struggle back and isolating their group from the broadest sections of militants.

There is also a tendency among such groups and among a few Third World student groups to organize themselves in an undemocratic fashion. This was especially true in the CCNY struggle. The demands and tactics are handed down from the top. The organizations are divided into small cell groups. Negotiations are carried on between the leaders and the administration, while the masses are kept in the dark. The result is that the rank and file does not understand the political axis of the struggle, many tactics with which the leaders may not agree are not implemented, suspicion develops between the rank and file and the leaders, new leaders and policies do not come forward when old ones fail, and eventually the struggle dissipates.

A third expression of this substitutism is the attempt to add catch-all demands to the basic issues of the struggle. This usually takes the form of either insisting on an anti-imperialist consciousness as a prerequisite for struggle, or of a feeling that de-



Photo by Dan Johnson

U of Minnesota students marched to Minneapolis courthouse demanding dropping of frame-up indictments of black student leaders in the spring of 1969.

mands that can be met are reformist or counterrevolutionary.

SDSers often make *verbal support* to an anti-imperialist position rather than readiness to struggle against the imperialist war, the imperialist university or the imperialist state a precondition for struggle, or even a central demand. This approach actually hinders the real anti-imperialist struggle. The contradictions of the university, the war, the oppression of Third World peoples are the outgrowth of the imperialist nature of society. Anyone who really understands imperialism should understand that those who struggle against imperialism in its concrete forms are carrying out anti-imperialist struggle. This insistence upon verbal anti-imperialism hinders the development of real anti-imperialist consciousness among the broad mass of students because real anti-imperialist consciousness flows from real struggle against real imperialism, not from verbalism.

The addition of irrelevant demands and issues to the struggle only serves as an obstacle to winning its objectives. This is often the result of an attempt by one group to impose its full program on the others and can only needlessly split the movement by diverting its focus away from the central issues.

The idea that demands that can be met (that is, won) are bad demands is incorrect and simplistic. Revolutionary movements are built from

victories, not defeats. Struggles for demands that can be met (that is, reforms) are not "reformist" if they teach the masses how to struggle in an independent, anticapitalist fashion. By fighting for reforms in a revolutionary way, revolutionaries can reach the vast majority of students who have not yet reached revolutionary consciousness. Moreover, refusing to fight for reforms leaves the leadership of these struggles to the real reformists.

In the face of these campus explosions, the position of the Young Socialists is clear. YSAers have intervened in and helped lead struggles from Arizona State to Brandeis, and from Duke University to San Francisco State. Third World YSAers have intervened in the struggles of Third World students at such campuses as Berkeley and CCNY. To build these movements in the broadest, most militant way possible is the aim of the YSA.

The YSA puts its revolutionary Marxist analysis, the product of the historical experience of the international working-class movement, into use in these explosions. Furthermore, the YSA intervenes not only in the campus struggles but in the antiwar, Third World, GI and other struggles against the capitalist system. The new stage of campus rebellion shows more than ever the need to build the revolutionary socialist youth vanguard — the YSA.

—From *Young Socialist*, June, 1969

How to Fight in the Army: A Reply to the Underground

By David Thorstad

On May 20 military authorities at Fort Jackson, S.C., realized they had no case against antiwar GIs on the base and decided to drop charges against the last of the activists of GIs United Against the War in Vietnam, and to release them from the stockade, where they were being held because of their antiwar views. Their release marked a spectacular victory for the right of servicemen to oppose the war. It demonstrates not only the fact that GIs have the right to voice their antiwar views, but that they can defeat attempts by the brass to prevent them from openly organizing other GIs to do the same.

Furthermore, this victory reflects the considerable progress that is being made in organizing the widespread and potentially explosive antiwar sentiment existing within the military.

The increasing visibility of the GI antiwar movement has led the mass media to give it a great deal of attention recently. In the last couple of months, for example, the *New York Times* has carried numerous articles on Fort Jackson GIs United, attempting to diagnose the severity of the antiwar infection within the ranks of the Army. And it seems to be quite severe. One of the leaders of GIs United claims that 80-90% of the more than 20,000 men at Fort Jackson alone are antiwar.

The radical movement, too, is beginning to examine the implications of this phenomenon. Even those who, like SDS and *The Guardian*, were somewhat tardy in recognizing the symptoms are devoting more attention to it.

In the process, contrasting and even radically conflicting views on the most desirable and effective way for GIs to advance their struggle have emerged. Some of these views are remarkably naive. Unfortunately, that fact alone is not sufficient to discredit them.

One of these is the concept of "underground barracks organizing." Underlying this approach is the assumption that GIs have no rights, and that any political activity inside the armed forces must be carried out on the sly. Advocates of this "undergroundism"

do not believe masses of GIs can be organized against the war. Nor, if they could, would that be "revolutionary" enough for their tastes. Justifications for their "undergroundism" are often punctuated with revolutionary-sounding phraseology which serves as a smoke screen for their abstention from organizing in the barracks or anywhere else. If you can imagine David in a hiding place, too busy explaining the need to destroy Goliath to actually get around to making a sling, then you have a fairly good idea of what "barracks organizing" is all about.

"Barracks organizing" is frequently counterposed to the concept of the GI as a citizen soldier, that is, a citizen who is temporarily in uniform, but who retains his constitutionally guaranteed democratic rights of free speech and assembly, and who exercises them openly inside the Army. This is the concept underlying the approach of GIs United at Fort Jackson.

Although SDS has taken no formal position on this question, the "barracks organizing" view is shared by many of its members. The January 22, 1969, issue of *New Left Notes* contains an interview with two ex-GIs which puts forward this view. The interview, obtained by SDS Inter-Organizational Secretary Bernardine Dohrn, is a bit prematurely entitled "Revolution in the army."

In the interview, Dave Kline, an ex-GI from Fort Hood, Texas, speaks of organizing in the Army in terms of "slipping around and keeping cover." He caps off his comments on this point with a highly confused but nonetheless determined criticism of mass demonstrations. While stating that he sees the purpose of demonstrations being to get GIs to stick their necks out for no reason, he explains that people of his persuasion are "trying to overthrow the system" and "trying to build up consciousness to take back home." The implication is that for GIs to express their views on the war in demonstrations is both risky and reformist, and that waiting to return "back home" to begin to overthrow the system is revolutionary. Distilled of its rhetoric, "barracks organizing" is essentially an excuse for doing nothing.

This concept of "barracks organizing" is strikingly similar to the argument, once popular with SDS and the DuBois Clubs, that "community organizing" was what serious people were engaged in, and that mass demonstrations were merely cooked up by others in order to divert them from this endeavor. Yet the fact is that organizing in the community was one of the ways people were mobilized for mass demonstrations.

A similar view is expressed in a recent editorial in *Fatigue Press*, a GI newspaper at Fort Hood, criticizing mass antiwar demonstrations of GIs and civilians: "It appears that the civilians involved are receiving all of the good from this sort of joint action while the GIs get nothing. For instance, if GIs lead a march, they are the ones who'll get busted first and much more seriously than the civilians. The civilian organizations will get all kinds of fine publicity but this helps GI organizing not at all. When this sort of thing happens, it creates animosity among soldiers towards the civilian movement and discourages them from being politically active after discharge.

"Furthermore, this type of action pulls soldiers off posts and orients them toward civilian activities, thus shifting their emphasis from the post where it should be, to the campus and city. In addition, the kind of soldier who would consent to participate in the sort of activity which would single him out so obviously probably has potential as an organizer. But if he is out marching, he is separated from those he should be organizing."

Organizing in the barracks and mass demonstrations are, of course, complementary. It is difficult to imagine how large numbers of GIs could be organized to participate in mass antiwar demonstrations without barracks organizing. Moreover, nationwide demonstrations such as those on Easter weekend give an impetus to barracks organizing. Furthermore, this organizing will intensify following such demonstrations, as an article in the *Washington Post* of April 17, 1969, noted: "Many of the servicemen who marched in the peace parade in New York on April 5 went back to their

bases emboldened to spread the word to their colleagues with greater aggressiveness than before."

In an interview in the April *Young Socialist*, Pvt. Jose Rudder of Fort Jackson GIs United explained the necessity of having a strategy of developing unity through action on a national scale if the war is to be ended. Barracks organizing, to be effective, must be a part of this strategy, not an end in itself: "This 'barracks organizing' is important in initiating the movement, in getting it started. You have to make personal contacts with people, you have to organize on an individual basis, but this can't be the end of your program. You just can't take an egg out of the refrigerator and put it on the table and expect it to cook itself. You can't just go into the barracks and talk to individual GIs and just by talking to them and not doing anything expect the movement to blossom and flourish. You have to get people together from other companies, from other barracks, and start a program of direct political action. You have to take that egg, and put it in the frying pan, you have to put the fire to it, and you have to cook it."

What those who advocate the "underground barracks organizing" approach reveal is their inability or unwillingness to develop such a strategy that can lead from the particular to the general, from the individual to the mass, from the local to the national.

There is little point in indulging yourself, as does Kline, with talk of "overthrowing the system" if you can't develop the strategy to bring it about. Making a revolution requires a great deal more than good ideas. And "undergroundism" doesn't even qualify as a good idea because it sees no way of mobilizing masses of people in struggle against the system. In fact, it does the exact opposite. It perpetuates a feeling of isolation, frustration and impotence. Now making a revolution is a good idea. But since they lack a strategy for mobilizing masses of GIs and civilians to help bring it about, the "underground" barracks organizers will never get beyond the stage of talking about it.

One of the main reasons is that there is a key flaw in their approach. They

quite correctly recognize that the brass and lifers are not at all pleased with GI antiwar activity, and that they will do whatever they can to stop it. But here they make a serious mistake. They mistake attempts by the brass to stamp out this dissent as proof positive that what the brass has been telling them all along is true, namely that they have no rights. This view is explicitly stated in the same *Fatigue Press* editorial referred to earlier: ". . . civilians say, 'If you get busted, stand up for your constitutional rights of freedom of speech and assembly,' completely overlooking the fact that constitutional rights exist only for the rich. Also, crying 'fight for your rights' implies that these rights do exist and shifts the center of our attention from revolution to reform."

GIs United Against the War in Vietnam, having just won a resounding free speech victory against the Army, must be puzzled to learn that "constitutional rights exist only for the rich." None of them are in that category. True they had to fight for their rights. But they proved that they could be won. And in winning them, they have won a tremendous victory for the entire GI antiwar movement. How did they do it?

From the very start GIs United at Fort Jackson has charted an alternative, far superior course to "undergroundism." Growing out of sessions of mainly black and Puerto Rican GIs listening to tapes of Malcolm X, the group soon was holding regular meetings in the barracks attended by 50-100 soldiers. These meetings were really classes in which the war, capitalism, imperialism and racism, among other things, were discussed. The soldiers also circulated a petition requesting the Commanding General to provide them with facilities for an open meeting on post where they could discuss the war and related issues.

The central issue around which they organized was the right of GIs to discuss the war in Vietnam. There are several reasons for this. First of all, as with youth in the civilian population, the Vietnam war is the central issue radicalizing GIs. It is the one which confronts them most directly. Second, no one has a more appropriate right to discuss the war than the men who are expected to risk their lives fighting it. Third, it is legal. This

is no small detail. It means that if their constitutional rights are violated, the onus unmistakably rests on the brass. On that basis, it is possible to win a battle against the armed forces, both in the courts and with public opinion. Furthermore, the fact that this antiwar activity is legal encourages more GIs to get involved in it.

Finally, by defensively formulating their activity as merely the exercise of their constitutionally guaranteed rights of free speech and assembly, they were able to call their own plays and put the Army on the defensive, as well as to gain widespread sympathy among the public at large. The brass was put in the embarrassing position of trying, in its customary, unadroit manner, to defend its illegal behavior before hostile soldiers and an increasingly unsympathetic public.

From its inception, GIs United operated on an open basis. It would have been a bit incongruous, not to say impossible, for them to organize around their constitutional rights in the "underground." Their openness was one of their key strengths. Not only did it make it possible for large numbers of soldiers to participate; it also made the Army look ridiculous when an undercover agent was uncovered in the group. GIs United was interested in winning victories for GIs, not in sitting around whispering about how GIs have no rights and can't do anything about it.

They recently gained national celebrity by filing an historically unprecedented suit in Federal court against the Army to force it to uphold this constitutional right of assembly. They have also seen their pioneer effort spread to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where a new group of GIs United has been formed.

Army authorities resorted to every conceivable kind of harassment and intimidation in an attempt to convince these GIs to cease their antiwar activities, including that of railroad-ing their leaders into the stockade. This was very serious and had to be combatted, but it was hardly surprising. The Army has never been known for its civil libertarianism.

However, it would have been a sign of shortsightedness for revolutionaries to fail to detect and make use of the inherent weaknesses in the Army's sledgehammer approach. The

fact is that soldiers can fight for—and win—the same right to discuss the war as civilians. The fact is that the Army is violating this constitutional right. And the fact also is that by forcing the Army to uphold that right, an important victory can be won, and a significant precedent set, the implications of which require only a rudimentary imagination to understand.

Imperialist wars, like the one in Vietnam, cannot be effectively waged if the troops are actively opposed to them, if they don't see the point of fighting. Seriously, legally organizing large numbers of GIs to openly oppose the war is a concrete step toward destroying the fighting power of the imperialist army. To destroy the fighting power of an army whose job it is to protect the world-wide profits of the capitalist system is to deal a serious blow to the system itself. Far from being "reformist," fighting for democratic rights inside the armed forces is eminently revolutionary. To "underground" partisans of "instant revolution" this method may seem too complicated. That is why they are underground. With their approach, their earnestly hoped for revolution will never see the light of day.

An aggressive defense on behalf of GIs whose constitutional rights have been violated by the brass is the only way to help assure an ultimate victory. To be effective, it must be carried out the way the defense of the Fort Jackson Eight has been organized by the GI Civil Liberties Defense Committee.

What is needed is a campaign to mobilize public opinion around a broad defense which welcomes the support of anyone, regardless of his political views, who opposes the violation of the rights of the defendants. Such a defense effort recognizes the widespread antiwar sentiment in the general public, as well as in the Army itself, and it effectively utilizes the sincere commitment to democratic rights among broad layers of the American people. It understands that GI and civilian opponents of the war are struggling together toward a common goal. Needless to say, such a defense cannot be organized by sectarians or from the "underground."

Such a defense is also a valuable revolutionary tactic which can be used to exacerbate the existing divisions in the ruling class over the Vietnam war by playing one part of it against the other.

One of the reasons the *New York Times*, for example, has given extensive coverage to the activities and issues raised by the Fort Jackson GIs is that it reflects the thinking of a section of the capitalist class that hopes thereby to pressure the Nixon Administration into ending the war before the Fort Jackson example becomes the norm throughout the armed forces.

The contrast between the pessimism of "undergroundism" and the activist optimism of GIs United is poignantly highlighted by an excerpt from the statement made by Pvts. Andrew Pulley, Jose Rudder and Jole Cole on their victory: "Never again will the Army be able to interfere with the constitutional rights of American soldiers without the prospect of a repetition of the Ft. Jackson 8 defense campaign.

"Our case has struck a blow at the very heart of the American bureaucratic military structure—military injustice. It should now be apparent to the brass that today's 'New Action Army' does not consist of mindless robots but of men who feel they have the right to question policy—especially policy which they will be deployed to enforce.

"The GI antiwar movement has chalked up a tremendous victory and the brass reels from another defeat. There is no telling what can happen when right is on one's side."

"Revolutionaries" who fail to appreciate the relationship between the defense of free speech and the fight against the war; who recoil at the strengths of the enemy, but are unable to turn his weaknesses to his disadvantage; who mistake revolutionary potential for revolution itself, and yet have only a foggy idea of the strategy whereby the one could lead into the other: such people hardly deserve to be called revolutionaries.

It is very important to understand the relationship between the civilian and GI components in the antiwar movement. Civilians can do much to aid GI opponents of the war by building mass, legal demonstrations in which GIs can participate, and by

launching a vigorous campaign of defense for victimized GIs. GIs, on the other hand, are an encouraging stimulus to large numbers of civilians to intensify their struggle to end the war. One is no substitute for the other. They are integral parts of the same movement. The significant GI participation in the massive antiwar demonstrations on Easter weekend was the most striking indication to date of the ability of GI and civilian antiwar forces to join together in this common struggle.

In the process of organizing this fight against the war, just as many civilians are developing a better understanding of the capitalist system and the need to destroy it, so it is with GIs. But the strategy for helping to accomplish this is not to be found in the subterranean, provincial "barracks organizing" per se, but in an approach which consciously leads to mass participation of people both in and out of uniform.

To neglect or refuse to fight to end the war in favor of abstract rhetoric about the need to "destroy the system," and thereby deny the possibility of beginning to do precisely that inside the Army, is in the final analysis to accomplish neither.

To recognize the need to destroy capitalism, as the *New Left Notes* interview does, is the beginning of political wisdom. However, to be unable to develop a strategy linking this objective to the fight against the war—both inside and outside the armed forces—is to miss an excellent opportunity to graduate out of the beginners' class.

—From *Young Socialist*, June, 1969

The Nature of the Present Period

1. Do We Face a Major Repression Now?

By Elizabeth Barnes

One of the serious questions facing the radical movement today is how to wage an effective defense against the growing numbers of attacks by federal and local officials. The scope of the problem can be seen by listing just some of those who have been victimized during the intensification of the struggle this spring. There have been the sentencing to death of Ahmed Evans in Cleveland, the raid on the national SDS headquarters and the arrests of SDS leaders in various parts of the country, the police attack on the national convention of the Republic of New Africa in Detroit, attacks on GIs United and other GI protesters, the hundreds of arrests as well as court injunctions and police assaults on campus activists, the use of guns for the first time against white student demonstrators in Berkeley and the continuation of the use of guns against black students in the South. Hardest hit has been the Black Panther Party, which has suffered numerous arrests on serious charges, as well as physical attacks by police.

As the numbers of court cases and assaults begin to pile up, the movement is faced with an important test. Will effective struggles be mounted to fight off the attacks? Or will the government be at least partially successful in its attempts to intimidate, isolate and victimize activists and vanguard elements.

In order to effectively combat any type of persecution—whether it be a witch-hunt, a physical assault or jailings and arrests—the movement must first begin with a serious, thought-out analysis of the true relationship of forces in this country. Do the victimizations represent, as many in the movement believe, the beginnings of a period of deepening repression and reaction? Do they, as both the SDS and Black Panther Party newspapers have indicated, represent the danger of impending fascism? Are the so-called "Mitchell raids" a reenactment of the Palmer raids of the 1920's, as has been suggested in the *Guardian*? Obviously a period of general repression requires a different response and tactics and strategy than does one of radical upsurge.

Not fascism

If we examine carefully the nature of fascism in the concrete instances when it has come to power, as in Germany and Italy, it can very easily be seen that what we are experiencing in this country is certainly not fascism, nor even a strong incipient fascist movement. Fascism means the complete smashing of all radical, revolutionary, working class or opposition movements, be they trade unions, black organizations or radical student groups.

Fascism means the end of any kind of democratic rights, not only for radicals and revolutionaries, but for the masses of

American people as well. It means the end of free speech and the right of assembly, censorship of the press, the end of any kind of elections. It means concentration camps for minority groups and radicals or for anyone who disagrees or resists.

Incipient fascist movements start to pose a real danger when their demagoguery begins to have an appeal to masses of people and when they have the strength to organize gangs of fascist thugs who are given free reign to physically attack, break up and destroy all opposition organizations. Such is not the situation today. Literally hundreds of radical, black nationalist and union meetings, rallies and demonstrations take place every week in this country. Massive antiwar demonstrations are held throughout the country.

Reaction?

But, if we are not in a period of impending fascism, is it not a time of reaction similar to the repression after World War I or comparable to the deeper McCarthyite reaction of the 1950's? Again, looking carefully at both these periods, one can see that the situation today has quite obvious differences. During the early '20s, patriotic and anti-Communist hysteria was rampant in this country.

A massive witch-hunt was touched off by the government when Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer began a national series of raids in 1919-20, rounding up "subversive" foreign-born for detention and deportation.

The American Legion, a vicious red-baiting force, was powerful enough in this atmosphere to intimidate entire communities and even physically assault such things as union Labor Day parades. Racism was widespread and the black people virtually unorganized.

What we have in the U.S. today is a major trend in the opposite direction. Instead of war hysteria, we have for the first time in history the development of mass opposition to a war while it is actually going on. There is a mass nationalist radicalization of black people and an unprecedented rebellion among young people which is raising deep questions in the minds of hundreds of thousands about the basic nature of this capitalist system.

Fifteen years ago, the witch-hunt was so strong that even having a relative who was deemed a "communist" could cost you a teaching job or a job with the government. Now avowed revolutionaries are heads of departments in some universities.

Crude attempts

The repressions that we see today represent the attempts of the ruling class to beat back this radicalization. Clearly such attacks are to be expected. They have always accompanied any movement for

social change which begins to challenge the system. This does not mean they are not a serious matter. A failure to deal effectively with these attacks today can pave the way for serious defeats in the future. On the other hand, a strengthening of the movement's ability to defend itself would provide a tremendous impetus to the winning over of new forces.

Much of the discussion in the radical press about "the repression" has emphasized the strength of the reactionary forces. But, it is just as important to realize that along with the attacks, there have also been some important victories in overcoming them. The Oakland Seven recently won their encounter with the authorities hands down. GIs United Against the War has been faced with 10 arrests in the last three months and they have won every one of their cases. Not only this, but by waging an effective defense campaign, these GIs have been able to turn the persecution by the Army to their own advantage by using it to help expose the undemocratic and racist nature of the forces aligned against them.

The recent attack on the national convention of the Republic of New Africa in Detroit is another significant example of how the mounting of a unified defense can turn around and beat back a reactionary assault. The cops and politicians in Detroit began to build up a backlash-type campaign after the shooting of a cop outside the RNA convention March 29. One of their key targets was Judge Crockett, a black jurist who had insisted on giving those black people arrested after the incident their rights under the law. But, the mass support which Crockett won in the black community and the demonstrations and rallies mounted in defense of his action, forced the witchhunters to back down.

Isolation

Behind every attempt at repression is the hope on the part of the ruling class that they can isolate the radicals and discredit them in the eyes of the people. To get away with this, they try to portray the struggles against war and racism and other evils of the system as the "conspiracies" of a few, or as being "violent" or "anti-democratic."

The first task in response to any repression is to expose these lies for what they are, and to make every effort to explain concretely how it is the ruling class which is undemocratic and which is using force to deny basic democratic rights.

This means rejecting the infantile notion held by some radicals today that civil liberties are something which revolutionaries are too busy to defend and even something to scorn.

This theme appears in the April 24 *New Left Notes* in a report on the situation at Kent State. "The repression at

Kent State has clearly hurt us," wrote SDS regional organizers Terry Robbins and Lisa Meisel. "Over 60 of our people have been banned from campus, at least 11 face heavy charges with total bail exceeding \$12,000, and the administration has succeeded at least to some extent in scaring a lot of people and obfuscating our original demands, and allowing the civil liberties whiz kids to spring up.

"On the other hand, SDS has made several key advances. We have fought and fought hard, making it clear that we are serious and tough. We have constantly stressed the primacy of our four demands, maintaining that political repression is only an extension of the peoples' oppression, never getting hung up in the civil libertarian or pro-student-privilege defenses of our movement."

Nothing could be a more costly mistake. Any movement that seeks significant goals obviously is going to be attacked. To announce that you have no interest in defending yourself can only whet the appetite of the enemy and discourage potential supporters of your cause.

Part of struggle

The fight for democratic rights, for civil liberties, is an indissoluble part of the struggle for major demands and for the basic transformation of society.

By Elizabeth Barnes

There is a growing notion in radical circles about the possibilities of an imminent fascist take-over in this country. People speak about the "fascist" repression in Berkeley and about "fascist" Ronald Reagan. The **Black Panther** newspaper of May 31 carried a lead article entitled "Berkeley: Ronald Reagan creates the Fascist state." In that and subsequent issues they announced a revolutionary conference to be held in July to build a "united front against fascism."

In the May 20 **New Left Notes**, Michael Klonsky, national secretary of SDS, warns against the "emerging" fascism.

"When people begin to organize for what is rightfully theirs," he wrote, "the state can only respond with fascism."

This fear of fascism, which exists in the minds of many radicals, is partly a reflection of a greater general awareness in the movement of the basic instability of the capitalist system. People see big changes and social explosions taking place, as well as the resulting repressions, and they begin to realize that giant social contradictions are involved which have the potential not only of leading to socialist revolution, but of going in the opposite direction as well.

Regardless of what false illusions they may have about the true nature of capitalist democracy, most Americans are genuinely concerned with democratic procedures—with justice and with fair play. In every struggle their sympathy and support will invariably go to those who they feel have justice on their side. That's precisely why the enemy always tries to depict the movement as an "undemocratic," "lawless" "minority" that is seeking to impose its views by force. The whole idea is to persuade potential supporters that it's wrong and/or dangerous to back the movement and its demands.

But if the movement utilizes every opportunity to prove who is truly the minority that seeks to impose its views on the majority by force it can win significant support. And if it appeals to people to defend its democratic rights, it will invariably win a response. Furthermore, in the course of involving people in the defense of its rights, the movement has the very best opportunity to educate them and win them to the issues it is fighting for.

Those who would reject a struggle for the defense of the movement against attack are really demonstrating a lack of confidence in the capacity of the movement to fight back or in the capacity of others to respond to an appeal for support to

its democratic rights. Those who take this view must ask themselves how a movement that cannot accomplish even such limited aims is going to make a revolution.

What is really involved is a tremendously exaggerated notion of the strength of the ruling class and an equally serious underestimation of the present strength and future potential of the movement.

The reality is that radicalism is at long last on the rise in America. The counter-attacks of the rulers are testimony to that. These assaults are deadly serious and must be combatted. But it should be understood that if properly and intelligently fought not only can they be beaten back, but these attacks can actually be used to build and advance the movement.

If the entire movement responds as one to every attack; if it combats the poisonous notion that you defend only those you agree with; if it stands unflinchingly by its goals and at the same time fights energetically for every single one of its rights, it can only go forward.

The movement in this country has indeed been through difficult days in the past. But this is already a different time, here and throughout the world. It's a time for revolutionary optimism and revolutionary audacity.

—From *The Militant*, June 13, 1969

2. Is Fascism Imminent in the U.S.?

But, a recognition of the potential dangers of fascism will prove useful only if we are able to identify it correctly, and to distinguish it from other forms of reaction and repression. As with all social phenomena, Marxists always try to be very precise in their terminology when analyzing the different forms of reactionary governments which appear under capitalism. This is not, as some assume, because of an inclination to theoretical "hair-splitting." To oppose something effectively, you have to know what its basic nature is.

Significant distinction

What is fascism? Is there a clear, significant distinction between fascism and other forms of political rule?

Fascism is, to begin with, a form of capitalist rule just as are bourgeois democracy and military dictatorship. The differences between fascism and bourgeois democracy are readily apparent and fairly easy to define. Under bourgeois democracy, as it functions in this country, the people have certain rights—some of them illusory, some very real and some a combination of the two. (It's an illusion to say the people choose a president. Other rights won by the people, such as the right of unions to organize, have a good deal more substance.)

Under a dictatorship, such as exists in Greece today, or in most Latin American countries, the people have none of the legal rights associated with a democracy, and, in proportion to the strength of the dictatorship, people are jailed or shot for trying to exercise such rights.

Fascism, too, is a form of capitalist dictatorship. But it is more complete, more barbaric and horrifying than any other kind. The slaughter of millions of people in Nazi concentration camps is the most somber reminder of this. And there are other extremely significant features of fascism which we will discuss later. For now, let's return to the question of bourgeois democracy and whether it has been, or is about to be, ended in the U. S.

Two aspects

Marxists make a point of understanding the two basic aspects of bourgeois democracy. We recognize that to the extent it really does exist, people do have certain meaningful rights—rights that can be utilized in the struggle for a better world and that should be seriously defended whenever the capitalists try to curb or eliminate them.

On the other side, we have no illusions about the fact that bourgeois democracy is a form of capitalist rule. And as with

any other form of class rule, a response from the rulers can be expected when any action is taken that is contrary to their interests. The response may vary in character, depending on the seriousness and scope of the attack and the ability of the rulers to take action at the particular moment. Sometimes capitalists will respond to an attack with a concession that they hope will cool the struggle. Other times they will respond with repressions. And often their strategy will consist of a combination of the two.

Such responses to movements for reform or basic social change can be made within the framework of bourgeois democracy, and even though a response can be quite savage, it does not necessarily herald the end of that particular form of capitalist rule.

The thing which has led many people to decide that fascism has arrived in the U. S., or is very close at hand, is the repressive responses to the actions of the black liberation movement and the campus movements.

There has been, in fact, a certain disorientation within the movement as a result of the rulers' attacks. One almost gets the impression that, at least among many students, their response to these counter-attacks expresses a certain naivete, if not illusion, about the character of bourgeois democracy. It's as if they're astonished that in a "democratic" country the rulers will strike back, and strike back quite brutally.

Consider a concrete case — Berkeley — where, we're told fascism holds sway.

What happened in Berkeley was truly horrible. After some people applied their time, money and labor to turn an idle dump into a people's park, they were met by a massive police attack, including guns, clubs, gas and one cold-blooded police murder. It was a rather shocking indication of how sensitive some sectors of the ruling class have become about even small threats to their "way of life."

But it wasn't fascism.

To say that in no way lessens the indictment of the Berkeley and California authorities for the savage crime they committed. It's simply a matter of making a precise estimate of the situation of the two conflicting forces in order to fight the enemy more effectively.

Despite attempts to impose martial law in Berkeley, there were protest demonstrations involving tens of thousands. Delegations of citizens put heavy pressure on the Berkeley City Council. Thousands mobilized in the state capitol to vent their protest. Ordinary capitalist newspapers like the **San Francisco Chronicle** and **Berkeley Gazette** wrote editorials condemning the actions of the authorities. Community publications exposed the crimes of the police, and even, with good effect, proselytized the **National Guard**.

The fact is that in a fascist state most of these activities would be impossible.

Under fascism it would have required a full-scale insurrection to carry through such a response to a police attack.

Tiny minority

In capitalist society, the ruling class is a tiny minority of the population. It can maintain its rule only if the masses do not recognize the class oppression which is embodied in and supported by the state apparatus. (The great virtue of bourgeois democracy from the capitalist viewpoint is that it helps to veil this basic class reality.)

But when capitalism reaches the point of political and economic crisis where the masses begin to rebel against it to the extent of threatening the very existence of the system — then the rulers will try to destroy bourgeois democracy and look for another, stronger form of rule. In the advanced capitalist countries where there is a strong labor movement and an established democratic tradition, it is not easy for the ruling class to simply switch to some form of direct military dictatorship in order to put down the opposition. And that's where fascism comes in.

What the capitalists must do is to find some other social class whom they can win as an ally in smashing bourgeois democracy and the organizations of the working class and the radical forces which stand in the way of imposing a dictatorship. In turning in such a direction, the capitalists support and finance fascist movements to which they assign the task of winning significant sectors of the middle class, and others, in an assault on the radical and workers' movements. In this way, fascism seeks to make the middle class the battering ram for the destruction of democracy.

But the big capitalists do not just snap their fingers and say, "O.K., we need a mass fascist movement," and one comes into existence. A fascist movement is only successful when a crisis in the system becomes so deep that the masses of people become desperate for a solution to their basic economic and political needs. In order to get the storm troopers into action, the fascists have to use social demagoguery. They must pose as a "revolutionary" movement, promising the people that they will be able to make big changes in the existing corrupted system, if only the "communists" and other "troublemakers" can be gotten out of the way.

It is the involvement of masses of people in the actual repression which gives fascism its power and finality as a reactionary force. Once the working class and radical organizations have been decisively and physically destroyed by the fascists, it takes a long time to turn this around.

Lesson

There is another important lesson about fascism to be learned from history. In every instance where a fascist movement has developed, and has begun to attack the rights of the working-class movement, the first instinct of the workers has always

been to oppose it by any means necessary. Moreover, such efforts have had the sympathy and support of other sectors of the population who seek democratic solutions to their problems and are repulsed by the extreme violence of the rising fascist movement.

How is it then that fascism has been able under certain conditions to win out? The answer to this question is found in an examination of what the radical and working-class movements have done in response.

In any kind of deep social crisis, the masses of working people are going to take part in waves of strikes or other types of struggles through which they hope to better their conditions. In such a situation, the key question becomes whether there is a revolutionary socialist vanguard which is strong enough and audacious enough to mobilize the workers and other rebellious forces in the direction of making a revolution. If there is no revolutionary party which can lead the masses toward a basic resolution of the social crisis, then the working-class and revolutionary movements as a whole become discredited in the eyes of the people. Then the middle class falls prey to the propaganda that the workers and socialists are mere disrupters who have no serious intention or ability to solve the problems of the masses.

What happens is that the middle class not only loses patience with working-class movements, but they are persuaded by demagogues that the organized workers and minority groups are actually responsible for their misery. This was the pattern in both Italy and Germany.

The U. S. today is at the very center of a profound world-wide social crisis, which is challenging the capitalist system internationally. If this crisis continues to deepen, as there is every indication that it will, and if the progressive forces are unable to resolve the crisis in a revolutionary fashion by doing away with capitalism once and for all, the threat of fascism will become a real one.

But, fortunately, the problems which the movement faces today are markedly different than those we would have if fascism were on the agenda. Now we have the development of a radicalization which far outweighs any corresponding polarization on the right. The task ahead is to build a revolutionary socialist movement strong enough so that we can make a revolution when the objective conditions make that possible. And in doing this, we must first learn to defend the movement from the onslaughts of a very present danger — the elected politicians who are using their courts and cops and other "traditional" methods to undemocratically attack us.

—From *The Militant*, June 20, 1969

3. For United Defense of Democratic Rights

By Elizabeth Barnes

In *The Militant* last week, we argued against the idea that there is any imminent danger of a fascist takeover in this country. We tried to show that the present form of capitalist rule in this country, despite its undemocratic and repressive nature, has some very important characteristics which differentiate it from fascism, characteristics which the movement must take into consideration if we are to effectively fight capitalism in all its forms.

The system under which we now live in this country is capitalist, or bourgeois democracy. The differences between bourgeois democracy and fascism are great, and while the seeds of fascism are spawned under bourgeois democracy, the transition from the one to the other is not quick or easy.

Fascism, as we indicated last week, is the most barbaric form of capitalist rule. Under fascism all freedoms are wiped out. All organizations through which the masses of people might resist oppression are destroyed, including the labor unions, minority organizations, dissident political parties and, often even, social and religious groups. Oppression is total.

Bourgeois democracy, on the other hand, permits and concedes certain rights to the

masses. Some are real. Others are a fraud. The Bill of Rights, a part of the Constitution won by popular insistence, formally assures freedom of speech, press and assembly. The rights to organize unions, to strike, to organize political parties and minority movements are formally guaranteed, and to the extent that masses of people insist on exercising their rights, they can assume a very real content, both in terms of improving conditions in an immediate sense and in terms of working for fundamental change.

To note these positive features of bourgeois democracy, as opposed to fascism, does not in any way constitute a testimonial to bourgeois democracy or suggest that it is a "lesser evil" that we should learn to live with. The very contrary is true.

What is decisive about bourgeois democracy is not its democratic aspect, but its bourgeois aspect. Regardless of its form of rule, capitalism today is a reactionary and socially bankrupt system that threatens the very future of mankind. It must be abolished if there is to be meaningful social progress. A correct understanding of the nature of bourgeois democracy, as opposed to fascism or other forms of capitalist rule, is important precisely

in order to facilitate the struggle against capitalism.

Under bourgeois democracy, capitalism has committed unspeakable crimes. At home we see the oppression of black people and other minority peoples, the trampling on human dignity, the oppression of workers, hypocrisy and the drive toward stultifying conformity.

Abroad, we see a government that speaks in sickening terms of leading the "free world" raining bombs and napalm on the people of Vietnam and making common cause with the worst dictators.

And there is today, clearly a significant erosion of democratic rights. When an attorney general can claim the legal right to tap the phone of anyone he deems a threat to "national security," we have a token of the extent of that erosion.

But, the big decisive fact about what is happening in this country today is not only that there is a move to the right among the capitalist rulers. There is at the same time, a move to the left among the people. And that's what's decisive.

A change is taking place in the consciousness of the American people that has been unmatched since the 1930s, and in some ways it goes even deeper.

Today, increasing numbers of people—



The Fort Jackson Eight won a victory for the antiwar movement when all court martial charges against them were dropped.

mostly but by no means all young—are beginning to see the fraudulent and undemocratic nature of bourgeois democracy. They are beginning to see that even the least repressive form of capitalist rule cannot be genuinely democratic because its very nature is determined by its role as defender of an oppressive, basically irrational and morally worthless system.

Think of all the young people who, just a few years ago, really believed the Vietnam war was the result of a mistaken policy and who now understand that it's nothing but conscious imperialist aggression. Think of all the black youth who just a few years ago looked to Martin Luther King's doctrine of nonviolence, and compare this with the ghetto explosions. Think of the thousands and thousands of young people who not only are not concerned about making it under this system but have come realize that doing so is just about the worst thing that could happen to them.

From that viewpoint alone, it's important not to confuse bourgeois democracy or the policies being carried out by bourgeois liberals with fascism. Just at the time significant numbers of people are beginning to realize there's something basically wrong with bourgeois democracy, it doesn't help to muddy the issue. Such confusion can lead to damaging results. If people begin identifying all oppressive acts with "fascism," it takes the heat off the liberal capitalist politicians and even opens the door for people supporting them as "lesser evils."

The lesson that socialists must hammer home is that brutality, oppression and injustice are inherent in capitalism and every serious attempt to win a better life under this system will meet with them. That's why capitalism must be abolished and why a clear socialist alternative to it must be developed.

The other important thing is that if we have a clear, sober understanding of bourgeois democracy and its basically rigged character, we are in a position to utilize more effectively those rights to which we are legally entitled under the system. Those who have illusions about the system, for example, will have faith in bourgeois courts, or "progressive" capitalist politicians, to assure their rights. Marxists, who understand the nature of the system, know the only way to assure your rights is by mobilizing significant forces to fight for them. That's why so many gains under bourgeois democracy are often won by radicals who are out to change the entire system.

Furthermore, it is important to realize that under bourgeois democracy, in addition to sheer force, the capitalists use other, equally lethal weapons. They will use their control of the mass propaganda media to falsify the true aims and activities of the movement.

President Nixon, for example, will do his utmost to convince the people that the

rebel students, or black or brown people, are a "minority" trying to force their will on the majority without concern for the democratic process. He talks this way because he knows the American people regard democracy as something that benefits them. He doesn't just go in and repress the students or black radicals. First he tries to isolate them from the people by building up the lie that they're the enemies of democracy and justice.

Another important fact to keep clear about in fighting repression is that even though sometimes it may look that way, the ruling class really isn't all-powerful. And one of the reasons they're not is because the democracy to which they are publicly committed, and which the masses genuinely favor, can often be used against them with terrific effect.

There have been many cases where the rulers have carried through repressions. But there have also been a lot of others where they started out to carry through a repression, and have then been forced to back off. The case of the Presidio 27 is an example.

What happened there couldn't have happened a few years ago. Just the fact that a group of GIs staged a demonstration in that stockade was itself a sign of the times.

The speed and ruthlessness with which the Army moved against these GIs made clear that they had decided as a matter of policy that they were going to make an example of these men. And the first 20-year sentences underlined the fact.

But what happened? In a county where mass anti-Vietnam-war sentiment is spilling over into generalized antimilitary sentiment, there was a big public outcry against this travesty of democracy. Publicity, mass demonstrations, helped expose what was going on. The brass realized that instead of silencing people, the Presidio case was arousing them, inside and outside the Army. Instead of dampening the radicalism, it was adding to it. They decided to back down, and they reduced the heavy sentences on the first men and gave light ones to the rest.

Or consider the case of the Ft. Jackson GIs United Against the War in Vietnam. The brass set out to put those militant GIs away for a long time. They wound up dropping charges against every last one of them in order to stop the public outcry and the growing dissidence within the Army. Until the present, such things were unheard of in the United States Army.

It didn't just happen either. GIs United was organized by courageous militants, black and white. And equally important, it had among its leaders some Marxist GIs who had a theoretical understanding of the class nature of the Army. It can be said that it was precisely because they had no illusions about the nature of bourgeois democracy that they were able to utilize it so effectively.

They knew there would be a crackdown

when they began to exercise their right of free speech to oppose the war and to support self-determination for third-world people.

But they also understood that the brass is not all-powerful and that in the present political climate, if they organized a clear-cut struggle to defend their constitutional rights as citizens they could get a lot of people, inside and outside the Army, to support them. With a broad, united defense organized behind them, their approach proved correct, and the brass was forced into a really humiliating retreat.

Capitalism has derived many benefits from the swindle inherent in bourgeois democracy. But it has also paid a certain significant price too. Over the years, belief in democratic procedures has become so deeply ingrained in the American people that huge struggles can erupt over such rights. This is part of what's happening today. And because capitalism is in a period of historical decline, in which its growing contradictions compel it to grant ever fewer concessions, these struggles over democratic rights tend to extend beyond themselves to challenge the very bases of the system.

Nothing is more simply democratic than the demand of black and other third-world people for control of their own institutions. To say that people have the inalienable right to determine their own destiny is as American as apple pie. But when black people act upon it and concretize it by demanding black control of black schools and black control of all other institutions in the black community, it has an explosive revolutionary content.

Such seemingly simple demands, history shows, are in fact the stuff of which revolutions are made. Throughout the history of capitalism, mass struggles have been fought to win and extend the rights of the people, and they have had enormous social consequences. Just consider that the present stage of the black liberation struggle, with all its deep revolutionary significance, began back in 1960, when some courageous black students in the South decided they were ready to go to jail for the right to drink a cup of coffee at a lunch counter of their choosing.

But again, the problem is a dual one. People of differing political beliefs must unite to utilize every opening provided by bourgeois democracy to defend and extend their rights. But equally crucial, they must learn to understand the fact that the struggle for such rights must be inseparably linked to the struggle to abolish this reactionary society and build a new social order. We don't have fascism today. But, if we don't get them, they'll eventually get us. And the only way we'll get them is by building a mass revolutionary socialist party capable of leading the movement for the abolition of capitalism.

From *The Militant*, June 27, 1969

A large black silhouette of three men walking from left to right, filling the background of the page. The man on the left is wearing a hat and a long coat, the middle man is wearing a hat and a suit, and the man on the right is wearing a hat and a suit.

Further Reading

How to Make a Revolution in the U.S. by Peter Camejo .25

A clear, vivid exposition of how socialism can be achieved in the United States.

Fascism: What It Is, How to Fight It by Leon Trotsky .50

This edition consists of eleven selections from the many books, pamphlets, and letters in which Trotsky analyzed fascism and developed a program to combat it.

Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination .95

This collection represents Trotsky's major statements on the black struggle, made in the course of four discussions during the last decade of his life. It shows, among other things, what Trotsky's attitude would have been to Malcolm X and what Malcolm represents.

The Problems of Women's Liberation by Evelyn Reed \$1.45

A timely examination of the historical roots of women's present status as the "second sex." The author uses the findings of anthropology to explode the myth of women's inferiority.