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number 7

"A CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCUSSION  
ON THE WORLDWIDE RADICALIZATION OF THE YOUTH"

Resolution passed by the Political Bureau of the French Ligue Communiste, section of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, politically associated with the Socialist Workers Party of the U.S.

*for internal cadre education*

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## Introduction

The following document, "A Contribution to the Discussion on the World-wide Radicalization of the Youth," is a document of the French Ligue Communiste, a member of the revisionist United Secretariat of the Fourth International (U.Sec.) and heretofore, on most particulars, political co-thinkers of the American Socialist Workers Party (SWP). The French document is in opposition to the SWP-YSA backed document on this question presented to the U.Sec.'s Ninth World Congress. The Ligue Communiste resolution, despite its low-keyed and matter-of-fact tone, is a savage polemic; indeed, in its overall impact and in terms of its almost certain consequences, it functions more as an autopsy than a critique.

The Spartacist League is publishing the "Youth Radicalization" document here as No.7 in our Marxist Studies series. Originally established as part of our cadre education program to make available to our members and supporters materials which were hard to find or not easily secured, its production run has occasionally been expanded in order to bring to the attention of American radicals writings which are not easily accessible.

The Ligue Communiste's "Youth Radicalization" document, an attack on the most fundamental of the SWP-YSA's political perspectives statements, is not the first document from the faction fight presently raging within the U.Sec. which we felt merited the attention of the broader radical public. In December 1969 we published as No.4 in this format Peng Shu-tse's "Return to the Road of Trotskyism," a broad if politically incomplete critique of the U.Sec.'s systematic and conscious abandonment of Trotsky's central methodological document of the Fourth International, the Transitional Program. Peng's work concentrated for the most part on the liberation struggles within the colonial countries and the U.Sec.'s repudiation of the permanent revolution through capitulation to Castroism and guerilla warfare.

The present fight in the U.Sec. (sharply exhibited at its Ninth World Congress)--which has now led to a cold split in the British IMG--is a war between the European U.Sec.'s centrism and the SWP's reformism, between those envisaging a revolutionary struggle along a revisionist, defective programmatic axis which discards the vanguard role of Trotskyism in favor of tail-ending various nationally-limited, non-proletarian struggles, on the one side, and those who no longer seek struggle of any sort, on the other. The Ligue Communiste, as the present document indicates, represents the former impulse; at the other, right-wing end stands the SWP and its international co-thinkers.

The European U.Sec., taking the political adaptationism it has practiced for years (tail-ending all "left" bureaucratic and petty-bourgeois forces--Stalinism, social democracy, "Third World" nationalism) one step further, proposed at the Ninth World Congress that its organizations should themselves launch peasant guerilla warfare in Latin America. The SWP opposed this perspective with verbal Trotskyist orthodoxy, but its motive was the same reason the CP cites Lenin in attacking adventurist, "confrontationist" radicalism--to preserve its respectability and legality. The SWP-YSA's years of Pop Frontism and opportunist adaptationism have borne fruit at last, with significant recruitment of youth to the YSA. The SWP leadership does not propose to have these years of hard work (of systematic betrayal of a proletarian, Trotskyist outlook) counteracted by the undertaking of anything

so illegal as guerilla warfare! Like the CP, the SWP-YSA will enthuse over the struggles of others--and close its eyes to the fatal weaknesses of the politics and programs of petty-bourgeois formations, the betrayals of "left" bureaucrats, the need for a proletarian class line--but like the CP, its leadership knows that its ambition to become America's most "influential" reformist party depends, occasional revolutionary rhetoric notwithstanding, on being respectable and legalistic. The European U.Sec. groups share the SWP-YSA's fundamental political revisionism but, as centrists, have not absorbed what their objectively non-revolutionary politics entail carried to their logical conclusion.

In reprinting this document, we do not imply agreement with or critical support to the position taken by the French Ligue Communiste. Their critique is not adequate: it is valuable only within the narrow limits of student work tactics; it buries fundamental political analyses under its objections to secondary organizational questions; it more than half subscribes to the belief that youth (students) represent a coherent socio-political sector and function like a class; it accepts the revisionist framework and only challenges the conclusions which flow logically from that analysis. Its main merit is its awareness that something is terribly wrong, but it shows no understanding that the problem lies deep within the revisionist program of Pabloism.

Over the past several years the SWP-YSA leadership has perfected the technique of preaching class-collaboration and opportunism under the rubric of Trotskyism. A necessary corollary of this "tactic," developed at the time of the Soviet Thermidor by the Stalinists to inoculate their ranks against Trotskyism, consists in "ultra-left"-baiting anyone, like the Spartacist League, who criticizes their politics. Thus, of all the major, characteristic positions for which the SWP-YSA is known--builders of the anti-war popular front, uncritical support of Black and Chicano nationalism, the "Red University," dual vanguardism, extreme legalism, the Castro-Guevara cults, etc.--none have anything to do with Leninism-Trotskyism or proletarian socialism; further, all have been spectacular failures. Guevara died on an adventure, while the SWP's idol Castro applauds Russian tanks in Czechoslovakia; while the YSA-SMC builds liberal middle-class peace marches, the civil war in Indochina passes the quarter-century mark (!), the Yankees continuing their rape of Viet Nam--these are the overwhelming "successes" upon which the SWP-YSA has been built, but anyone who dares state that truth is castigated by Camejo-Novack as an ultra-left, querulous, isolated, abstentionist sectarian who no doubt lives only to jealously denigrate the YSA's triumphs! This is not an exaggeration: a concrete example of that by now rather mouldering technique makes its appearance in the latest YSA Organizer:

"A fascinating example of the way the sectarian mind works is this quote from a recent issue of the Revolutionary Marxist Caucus (Spartacist) newsletter: 'The YSA's political degeneration is proceeding almost as fast as its organizational growth.'"

It is of course possible that this sort of thing still passes for marvelous wit around the YSA national office, but its days are numbered because, as the Ligue Communiste's document shows, something new has been added. In this face of all this wonderful humor the reflective YSAer, standing amidst the ruins of a hapless, impotent anti-war move-

ment, will perhaps ask himself: why is it that our French comrades are no longer laughing? why has the "Fourth International" blown apart?

The premonition of future disaster motivating the Ligue Communiste is undoubtedly a belated political expression within the U.Sec. of a growing awareness of the magnitude of the Pabloite organizations' disorientation and failure in the May 1968 French general strike. Since the "Reunification Congress" in 1963 the U.Sec. has held as sacred the belief that the colonial countries had become the "epicenter" of world revolution; the corollary, naturally enough, was the New Left thesis that the proletariat of the industrialized West had become passive, bought off. So the major work of "Trotskyists," according to the U.Sec., was away from the working class and toward low-gauge, solidarity work in support of the colonial liberation movements. As for example the anti-war movement has shown, not only were these ineffective and/or trivial (can you imagine the SWP calling for a general strike in order to aid the Vietcong?), but where the question of revolution was put on the docket, where 10 million French workers went out on strike against the government, over the head of their established leadership, the sellout Communist Party--where the question of revolutionary leadership, of breaking the CP's ideological and organizational stranglehold was posed point-blank--the U.Sec. had nothing at all to say to the workers... unless, of course, you consider that the infantile prattle about Red Universities, "student vanguards," student-worker alliances (shades of Progressive Labor!) and the like constitutes revolutionary leadership!

But this question of revolutionary leadership, of the vanguard role of the proletariat and its conscious organization--the heart of any Trotskyist programmatic statement--never arises. In response to the question of a transitional youth program--since when is "youth" a class, or a persecuted minority?--the Ligue Communiste only says, "what has disappeared is the whole dialectic of the organizational relationships between the vanguard and the movement of the radicalized youth." This is undoubtedly true, but the Ligue Communiste document falls short of presenting any clear alternative conception of the Leninist political and organizational framework for "youth-party" relations. The relationship of the revolutionary party to the revolutionary youth is one of winning members and supporters to its political program and to its organization in a direct sense. The formula evolved by the Trotskyist movement historically is that the revolutionary youth organization should be organizationally independent of the party but politically subordinate to it.

Political subordination is necessary precisely because the youth is not a class and thus the revolutionary youth organization cannot be the organization of a class, but of a militant middle sector of society subject to the pull of conflicting social pressures because its militants do not contain within themselves the living continuity of the revolutionary working-class movement. Yet the revolutionary youth organization must be organizationally independent in order for its internal political life to develop the new generation of revolutionary cadres through full discussion (not restricted by the imposing of party fractional discipline on party members within the youth organization) of the living political issues of the international class struggle. Correspondingly, the youth organization as a whole must agree to maintain

a common public political front with the party.

But this formula--or any organizational formula--does not exist in a vacuum. The entire organizational structure of democratic centralism flows from the commitment of the party to the organization of the working class for revolutionary ends. If the party has decisively departed from such a course, then the maintenance of Leninist organizational forms can be nothing more than an anachronism which is no longer suited to the real (non-revolutionary) needs of the party, neither in its youth work nor in any other field of its activity. Herein lies the fundamental weakness of the Ligue Communiste's critique. The theoretical tools the Ligue has at hand to grapple with the problem are grossly inadequate, for the Ligue--as the left expression of the U.Sec.'s fundamental revisionism confronting the basically reformist political stance of the SWP-YSA--proceeds from the Pabloist framework they share in common. The differences between the European U.Sec. and the Americans, as evidenced in the Ninth World Congress disputes, do not transcend the passive adaptationism--the abandonment of the permanent revolution and consequent tailing after non-proletarian and non-revolutionary forces--which destroyed the Fourth International as a revolutionary instrument.

And what of the self-styled alternatives to the U.Sec.'s pervasive revisionist method? Of the professed anti-Pabloists, the most extravagant claims to continuity with the Fourth International are made by the International Committee (IC) of Gerry Healy (and his U.S. followers, the Workers League of Tim Wohlforth). (The IC, which like the U.Sec. seeks to present itself as an international body, is in fact no more than a bloc between two somewhat politically divergent organizations--Healy's English group and the French group led by Lambert--who, when they are in agreement, then impose discipline on their smaller affiliates.) In 1966 Healy actually proclaimed Pabloism demolished and himself the Fourth International. The IC grouping has (at times) certainly presented a hard anti-U.Sec. line (Wohlforth went so far as to justify an incident of Maoist physical violence against SWP members on the grounds the latter were political "scabs" and should be smashed!). But behind the facade lurks the reality. When in 1952 Healy, acting as Pablo's man, helped expel the anti-Pabloist Bleibtreu-Lambert group in France; when he courted the SWP leadership, finally pulling back before its 1963 reunification with the European revisionists to form the U.-Sec.; through all his shifts towards and then in recoil away from the U.Sec. forces, his basic political method has never fundamentally broken from Pabloism.

The IC's position on the nature of the Cuban state--that it is still capitalist--is nothing but inverted Pabloism, revisionism wearing a sectarian face. The U.Sec. concluded from Cuba's break with capitalism under a petty-bourgeois leadership that a revolutionary, Trotskyist party of the working class was no longer necessary. Healy accepts the whole logic of this position and so is forced, if he refused to accept total liquidationism, to deny that any social transformation has taken place in Cuba. The whole of Trotsky's crucial insistence, in his analysis of the degenerated Soviet Union, that such a state has broken from capitalism but, deformed by the existence of a sellout, nationalist bureaucracy, cannot open the road to socialism--in a word, the need for political revolution--is as alien to Healy's method as it is

to the U.Sec.! Healy's course over the last several years--his embracing of the so-called "Arab Revolution" which presumably exists suspended in time and space above the ebbs and flows of class struggle, and undefined in terms of class forces, his hysterical enthusing over the Maoist-Red Guard "Cultural Revolution"--leads straight to the final betrayal, Healy's overtures to the U.Sec. top leadership (Mandel, Maitan, Frank, Hansen). It goes without saying that the Wohlforthite group has slavishly followed every twist and turn of their mentor.

The urgent task of reconstructing the Fourth International will not be served by these shameful antics.

24 December 1970

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCUSSION  
ON THE WORLDWIDE RADICALIZATION OF THE YOUTH  
(Resolution passed by the Political Bureau  
of the French Communist League)

Preamble

Before drawing a balance sheet of the French experience concerning the radicalization of the youth, we should recall the three fundamental points of disagreement between the draft resolution presented by the United Secretariat at the World Congress and the article published in No. 39 of the review (Quatrieme Internationale).

\* \* \*

1. Characterization of the Period

At the Ninth World Congress, it became clear that there was general agreement that a turn had occurred in the international situation. The victorious resistance of the Vietnamese people, the upsurge of struggles in Palestine, in Southeast Asia, in Pakistan, the resumption of revolutionary activities in Latin America (Mexico, Argentina), the appearance of vanguard militants in Poland and in Czechoslovakia, and finally, the great struggles of the French and Italian proletariat, these have been the principle manifestations of this turn.

However, it is not sufficient to declare that there has been a turn and that this turn has resulted in better "objective" conditions for us. Besides this, it is necessary to draw the strategic and organizational consequences for the Fourth International; not simply content ourselves with "profiting" from the turn, but to deepen it, to accentuate it while we transform ourselves.

On the strategical plane, the resolution on Latin America in favor of armed struggle and the break from entrism in Western Europe testify to this change. On the other hand, the resolution on the youth appears to strike a false note in its strategic conceptions as well as its organizational consequences.

"The work of the sections," reads the last part of the resolution, "has a preparatory and mainly propagandistic character." (p. 16 of text) We think that precisely this preparatory and "mainly propagandistic" work become insufficient in relation to the size of the tasks in the coming period; that it is necessary and possible, even with limited forces, to take the initiative in action and in revolutionary mass agitation, at least in areas concerning the youth. This is not a meaningless difference of "points of view," or "nuances," etc. The conception which assigns to the sections "mainly propaganda" activities implies a whole strategic course for leading the youth.

This course, which is expressed in the program of the resolution itself, could be summarized in the following way: the vanguard, full of wisdom, perched upon the heights of piously accumulated theoretical acquisitions, contemplates the revolutionary field: suddenly on the field there appears the unforeseen mass of youth, which the vanguard tries to describe in its habits and political

behavior; after which the problem will be: "how to bring leadership to this movement and how to win over the best of them?" (p.1) Answer: (a) it is necessary to give the youth a good slice of the transitional program, that corresponds to their immediate aspirations and forms a bridge to revolutionary objectives; (b) it is necessary to gain from the youth new cadres for the vanguard.

On this level of generalities, it is neither false nor true, it is simply formal and abstract. One finds here all the themes belonging to the Fourth International when it was isolated in the period of the cold war and of the ebb of the world revolution, driven into a defensive position where it was difficult to preserve its acquisitions. It is a question of, on the one hand, popularizing the program and winning influence ("tens of thousands of youth have already accepted large parts of the Trotskyist program", p. 15) and on the other hand, to increase the primitive accumulation of cadres ("a substantial number of the youth can be recruited....", "It is necessary to draw new cadres from the youth," p. 15).

The main objection that can be made to this course in the coming period is that it perpetuates the relationship of the vanguard to the mass movement as an exterior force. The interchange between the two is limited to ideological influence in the sense of vanguard-mass (the vanguard groups have "made their mark on the theoreticians" of the movement, p. 8) and to individual recruitment in the sense of mass-vanguard (the vanguard groups have all "won adherents," p. 8). What has disappeared is the whole dialectic of the organizational relationships between the vanguard and the movement of the radicalized youth. This lack was not fatal in the in the preceding period; it could even have been necessary for the protection of the vanguard. Today, in the period of offensive that is opening up, this lack could put the vanguard out of the game.

## 2. A Transitional Program for the Youth?

Besides the criticisms made in the preceding section, the idea of elaborating "a program of transitional and democratic demands" is in itself faulty.

The authors of the draft resolution have recorded the slogans and themes of student mobilizations in order to classify them by categories. The result of this is an ambiguous catalog of slogans more than a program for struggle. If it is true that the slogan for freedom of expression can be shared by the student movement of the advanced capitalist countries, the people's democracies especially, and the colonial countries, still the slogan "university autonomy should be achieved or maintained inviolate" seems, on the other hand, to be more than questionable. If it has a real meaning in the colonial countries, still it is hard to see what the content of this demand could be in the advanced capitalist countries: either a reformist content (that which the Faure reform gives this slogan in France: autonomy permitting the adaptation to regional conditions, to local industries, etc.); or a conservative content: that of defense of the liberal bourgeois university (to maintain the autonomy "inviolate"). For us, it is not a question of repeating again and again the theme of autonomy but of posing every time the question: autonomy in relationship to whom?



In fact, as a catalog of demands, the program proposed by the document only juxtaposes bourgeois-democratic demands (on civil liberties) with university demands whose formulation is obscure when it is not openly reformist. What is the meaning of an "annual salary for all students adequate to their needs"? The term "salary" might very well be a demagogic concession to the thesis of "student labor"; as to their "needs"...of what nature? And who determines them? "Guaranteed jobs for students upon graduation" --good; still it is necessary to specify "the level of skill reached" and then discuss who is to guarantee this employment, who is to determine needs with regard to hiring workers. "Joint control by students and faculty over the hiring and firing of faculty members and administration officials" --this formulation, much too imprecise (what is the "faculty"?) opens the door to camouflaged comanagement, etc.

Indeed, this juxtaposition of democratic themes and university demands doesn't have much that is transitional about it. It is based, on the one hand, on a debatable presupposition: the presupposition that the politization of the student movement follows a pedagogical progression, proceeding from immediate interests to apprehension of historic interests, whereas actually the student politization is determined from the outset by extra-university factors, by the political context as a whole. On the other hand, this program for the youth follows a curious conception of the "propaganda" utilization of the transitional program.

In the draft resolution, the program of "democratic and transitional" demands is the worm to catch the fish, the carrot to lead the donkey. "If you bite at the worm, if you follow the carrot, I will show you the real transitional program in its entirety." There is the essence of the matter. Through this mini-program, the students will be "led to understand the validity of the transitional program in its totality" (sic!) (p. 12). This course is one of gradually unveiling the program as an instrument of recruitment more than as an instrument of struggle. That is the essence of the propagandistic utilization! Operating in this way is not without dangers, however.

For if we in France have practiced the tactic of construction of the organization from the periphery toward the center, it is not true that a strategy was elaborated from the periphery to the center. It is not true that the student movement would be mobilized for transitional goals if you don't have the capacity to make this mobilization unite with a mobilization of the workers. We have, in the course of three years of struggle, adopted the firm conviction that at the present stage there is no strategy for the student movement, there are only initiatives and tactical political slogans for the student movement, subordinate to the overall strategy of the revolutionary organizations. We will return to expand on this point.

### 3. For an Analysis and not a Description of the Radicalization of the Youth

But to limit the student movement to tactical initiatives, isn't that yielding to the most empty empiricism, since these initiatives must each time be concretized as a function of the

country and of the precise conjuncture?

Such misgivings would be legitimate if one contented himself with the ideas furnished by the draft resolutions. Indeed, the draft collects and synthesizes information on the student movement; it describes certain characteristics of the youth. Never does it present the framework or the coordinates which make possible a political analysis of the youth movement. By failing to provide the elements for such an analysis, the draft repeats empty, wordy generalities, inspired by correct principles but for which the concrete conditions for application are not made precise: "a Marxist leadership is needed, politically alert, supple in tactics, capable of avoiding both opportunistic adaptation in the student environment and adaptation to ultraleft sectarianism." Because the draft produces no real analysis of the student movement, it contents itself with noting its bad instincts (opportunist adaptation, ultraleft sectarianism); because the draft does not make clear the real roots, it gives no means to fight them, except with the athletic-psychological qualities of the vanguard, which must be "alert" and "supple" (!) It's that simple.

For us the student and youth movements cannot really be analyzed except in their relationship to two points of reference: the workers movement (political composition, degree of activity and of mobilization) on the one hand, and the vanguard organization on the other hand (implantation, development; In this case the relationship between the movement and the vanguard can also be a relationship of forces). It is only by always specifying the variations in the relations between the youth movement, the workers movement and the vanguard that one can give a concrete analysis of the student movement and define tactical political initiatives for it.

Because these two coordinates are lacking in the draft resolution, it evades all the most difficult problems of the youth movement.

- it loses sight of the radicalization of the youth by only taking up the student movement.

- it doesn't make any distinction between the student milieu and the student movement which greatly simplifies the task; since there is no movement between the vanguard and the milieu, the vanguard has a monopoly of thought and of political expression. Things happen differently in reality.

- although one cannot really speak of a mass movement or of a process of radicalization if one stops short of the forms of organization adopted by the movement, the draft is more than reserved on this question. The masses do not exist politically short of the organized forms of their struggle. This difficult problem of the organizational forms of the youth movement is barely touched on.

In conclusion, we think that the draft resolution says either too much or not enough. To encompass the international radicalization of the youth, it has to give up going into details. Consequently it remains pragmatic and descriptive in the area of analysis. On the other hand it is too precise in the area of strategy, proceeding to premature and improper conclusions before having defined the possibility and the framework of a strategy for the youth and the

student movement.

As far as we are concerned, we propose to write a balance sheet mainly of the European student movement and to analyze more precisely the situation in France. This document is to be considered a contribution to the discussion. Finally, we will summarize our conclusions in the form of theses on the radicalization of the youth, for it seems dangerous and false to us to be more precise if one intends to encompass the problem on an international scale and to avoid extrapolating from a particular experience.

Along the lines of the preceding critique, we will distinguish four main parts in our analysis of the student movement and the radicalization of the youth.

First we will try to place the specific characteristics of the student movement onto the foundation of the radicalization of the youth.

Second, we will show by means of the historic path of the French student movement the variations in the relation between the student movement and the workers movement, the political consequences and the strategical problems that result from it.

In a third section, we will define the political contradictions of the student movement and the manner in which they can be resolved in the transformation of the relationship between the student movement and the vanguard organization.

Finally in the last section we will draw a balance sheet of the French and European experience concerning the specific role of the student movement, the themes for mobilization, and the organizational forms.

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