

November 8, 1964

Dear Comrades,

In replying to the charges brought against me, let me first say that I do not deny selling the issue of the Bulletin of International Socialism which has been mentioned.

There are, however, certain important factors which should be noted, and which the YSA leadership has chosen to ignore. At a membership meeting several weeks ago I specifically presented before the organization, as well as to several leading members individually, certain problems posed by my association with the American Committee for the Fourth International, considering the clear political differences between the American Committee for the FI and the YSA. I made clear my wish to remain in the YSA, and urged that some clarification of this problem be attempted. I was ruled out of order at this meeting. Although one leading comrade later assured me he would try to have the National Executive Committee of the YSA take up this matter with me, I never heard anything further.

It seems to me that the YSA leadership itself laid the groundwork for this incident, intentionally refusing to confront this problem which was honestly raised by me. They preferred instead to allow some incident to arise on which they could take disciplinary action if they so desired. It cannot be said that I acted behind the back of the organization. I want it understood that I did not set out to violate YSA discipline, but that I realized problems involving different political line between the Bulletin and the YSA would arise and tried beforehand to have the matter discussed.

Furthermore, lending credence to the view that the leadership simply is seizing on a pretext for disciplinary action, I was never told by any leading YSA members to cease selling the Bulletin on the instances involved. If the violation was so flagrant, I would suppose that it would be logical to be asked to stop. Also, I was never asked to take a specific assignment such as selling the YS, which I would willingly have accepted. The fact that I did not sell the YS is used against me, although I was never asked. As recently as 6 months ago in a somewhat similar incident, several members were specifically asked to sell the YS and only after they refused was disciplinary action suggested. Why was the same procedure not followed here? Were the comrades afraid that I would accept the assignment?

In threatening me with disciplinary action at this time, the YSA leadership is, first of all, placing a question mark on my participation in the pre-convention discussion just beginning, thus giving the impression that they are afraid of political discussion and controversy in the YSA. At the very least any action preventing me from participating in the discussion should not be considered until the convention or after.

In addition, the way the matter has been raised shows again a tendency to solve political problems by strictly org-

anizational means. One incident is raised not my entire activity, the political line of the Bulletin of International Socialism, its position on the Negro question and a series of other points. The leadership wants to avoid any clarity on the political reasons for this trial.

I am a founding member of the national YSA, and have been a member of the local organization for $6\frac{1}{2}$ years, longer than any present YSA member that I can recall. This is my entire political life, of course, and I do not take membership in the YSA lightly. I want to remain in the organization, precisely to struggle within it for the method of Marxism, because only in this way can we prepare for the next American Revolution.

If by being in effect expelled from the SWP, with which the YSA is in political solidarity, if by associating myself with the American Committee for the Fourth International, I am making it impossible for me to remain the YSA--if that is your position, then say that, explain it, and take political responsibility for that decision. Otherwise, give me assignments, give me an opportunity to remain in the YSA, draw the line on activities you consider it impermissible for me to engage in as a YSA member while also a supporter of the Bulletin of International Socialism, and we can at least see if dual membership of this sort can work. This latter course is what you would follow if you were not simply interested in disposing of me. Your present course is politically dishonest.

As I have tried to indicate, the basic issue is of course a political one, the course followed by the SWP and YSA and my opposition to it. As my tendency has explained in the past, we believe the basic problem to be the turning away by the SWP-YSA from the Marxist method and the embracing of a different method, the method originally developed and used in the world Trotskyist movement by Michel Pablo, the method of empiricism.

Under the objective conditions of the past two decades, disorientation and even the loss of older revolutionary cadres was inevitable. The problem was that the SWP was increasingly isolated from the mass movement in this period and unable to develop Marxist theory at the same time, which would have held such disorientation and shrinkage of the movement to a minimum. Thus the movement succumbed entirely to the pressures of the objective situation.

The SWP is thus no longer geared towards changing history, but merely towards observing, contemplating, and accepting it. Because it could not absorb and develop the Marxist method, it began looking to other forces and other classes which would provide a short cut to revolution. Thus, not only did the SWP majority adapt to Castro, refusing to call for workers' democracy and refusing to criticize the Stalinists until Castro himself spoke out, but it followed this with the most unabashed adaptation to Ben Bella and a host of other "revolutionaries" in the colonial world. Even more revealing, here at home, the movement has for the last several years moved further and further away from a proletarian orientation, with the SWP leaving this field to such new groups as Progressive Labor and gradually sliding into an orientation almost indistinguishable from that of the YSA, towards student and radical circles entirely.

In line with the empiricist outlook of seeing events only as they are and not as they will become and are becoming even at the moment, the workingclass has been forgotten, has been left out as the leading force of the socialist revolution. We are no longer interested in the workingclass itself, in the rank and file, in Cuba, Algeria, Great Britain, and even here at home. Rather there is an orientation towards the leaders, who are now, it seems, in control.

This is the general course--the inability to develop Marxist method, the development of a crassly empiricist outlook, and the development of a deeply revisionist political line. This course is shown in many current developments; I will refer to several of the most important ones. I feel that YSA members should consider these issues at the convention itself to the extent it is possible. The future of the Trotskyist movement depends on it. (In making these criticisms, I will refer to the positions of the SWP and/or the YSA, since I consider us part of the same overall movement, and the destiny of both organizations is closely intertwined.)

1. On the Negro question, we continue to take a completely abstentionist line while refusing to criticize such nationalist spokesmen as Malcolm X, and criticizing even the respectable old leaderships too little and too late. Leading YSA members have even proudly stated that we are consciously tailending developments in the Negro movement because of its national character. The national element is present, but it is no excuse for abdication. Meanwhile, Malcolm X rewards our tailending faith by absenting himself from the struggle at home for many months, and making statements which show an increasing dependence on the bourgeois and petty bourgeois leaderships in the newly independent nations.

Even more revealing, the SWP has advanced the slogan of removing federal troops from South Vietnam and sending them to Mississippi. The disastrous nature of this demand, which falls into the category of Social-Democratic minimum demands rather than revolutionary transitional demands, is so apparent that none on the left or in the working class or Negro movement but the avowed reformists, the middle class Negro leaders and the Stalinists have advocated or defended it. The situation is such that Progressive Labor and even the centrist Shachtmanite YPSL have correctly called the SWP to order on this.

2. On Progressive Labor - While the Progressive Labor Movement has deepened its work among the Negro and Puerto Rican workers here in New York (and has, by the way, taken a far superior line on the Negro struggle to our own), we have taken an extremely sectarian attitude instead of seeking out ways of working together with them. What is so healthy about P.L. is precisely what we lack more and more --an interest in the workingclass and in working in the mass movement. You cannot write this off as romantic adventurism while you yourself do nothing. If P. L. is adventuristic, we have the duty to work with them and show how it should be done. But we don't because we are totally uninterested in this kind of work, which can and should be done while maintaining a campus orientation. We should be continuing to reach students on the campus, but we should be giving those we reach some direction towards the workingclass, and they should then reach other students on this more conscious level. Next to our abstentionism, P.L.'s work, with its mistakes, looms large and significant. YSA members should ponder the way in which P.L. has taken the initiative in the radical movement which we used to think we held, the way in which

many of the sincere, revolutionary-minded, newly radicalized young people are being attracted to P.L. where P.L. is active. The SWP and YSA's lack of proletarian orientation and completely propaganda-type routine activity have undoubtedly played a part in giving the initiative to P.L.

3. On the world Trotskyist movement, we have ignored the disintegration of the reunified world organization grouped around the Unified Secretariat in Paris. A minority led by Pablo has been suspended from the international organization, and a large majority of the Ceylonese Lanka Sama Samaja Party has supported a coalition government with the bourgeoisie and split away from the International. Together this amounts to a majority of the forces of the reunified group. The reunification, which was condemned at the time by the International Committee, but supported by the SWP, took place a year ago. You must reconsider the arguments against reunification without political discussion which were presented by the Socialist Labour League of Great Britain at that time. Haven't they been borne out by the developments? And mustn't we see a direct and organic connection between the open capitulation to reformism of Pablo and the Ceylonese ex-Trotskyist Perera and the political line of the organization which nurtured and sheltered these capitulators for years, which refused time and time again to struggle against the developing centrism in its ranks and adopted some of the revisionist policies of Pablo and Perera for its own? How about drawing some lessons before there is nothing left to salvage of the Unified Secretariat? We should reconsider our attitude toward the SLL which has continued to expand its influence among the British workers and which is today the largest and most proletarian in composition of any Trotskyist group in the world. YSA members must surely have heard of the march of 3000 Young Socialists in London behind the banners of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, calling for Labor to power on a socialist program, fighting the Tories and exposing the agents of the Tory system in the Labor Party bureaucracy. Does our movement support the youth fighting behind Keep Left, or does it give support to the rival newspaper, Young Guard, organized by a group of state capitalists in league with the tiny handful of Pabloite youth in England? This latter centrist group takes an equivocal stand on the critical test of the witchhunt against Trotskyist youth. Which group do we solidarize ourselves with? Also, YSAers should question why the latest issue of the International Socialist Review slanders the SLL as not supporting the Labor Party in the British election or the SWP effort in the U. S. election when just the opposite is true.

The building of a revolutionary movement cannot take place if theoretical development and criticism are complacently ignored. I ask all YSAers to do the following:

Explain how the line on the troops slogan and our "faith" in Malcolm X have advanced the Negro struggle.

Explain the rapid disintegration of the Unified Secretariat.

Explain the continued growth and vitality of the SLL.

Explain how P.L. has taken the initiative in all spheres of activity in the radical movement.

These explanations, I submit, are more warranted and more important than any organization action taken against me. My tendency poses no threat to the majority, other than a political one. Answer our political charges -- or bear the political consequences.

Comradely,
Fred M.