

March 21, 1968

The preparations for the April days of protest against the war take place in the context of a deepening crisis for American imperialism and a rapidly expanding antiwar consciousness among the American population. The conjunctural defeat in Vietnam, the gold crisis, and the "urban crisis" all contribute to the radicalization now occurring. As a result, the antiwar movement, through the Spring actions, has an opportunity to influence greater numbers of people than ever before in its history.

These trends and events are having a profound effect on the American ruling class itself. The spectre of military defeat at Khesanh, and no perspective for immediate victory in Vietnam, are severely deepening the crisis and split in the American ruling class, a crisis that compares with previous ruling class crises during the Civil War and the depression.

That was best exemplified by the Rusk-Fulbright confrontation, where alternative ruling class tactical perspectives publicly and bitterly clashed. Most striking were Sen. Wayne Morse's statements that if this war is not ended they're going to face "uprisings" right in this country. He overstates the case but in doing so indicates the degree of differences. The deepening ruling class split is also reflected in recent editorial decisions by CBS and NBC, the Washington Post, the Wall Street Journal and Newsweek to come out against the war. This general ruling class crisis and split effects the entire population, and allows plenty of elbow room for a rapid growth of antiwar sentiment.

The most noticeable growth in antiwar sentiment has occurred in the student arena--not only here in the United States, but around the world. The New York Times, in its accelerated editorial campaign against the war, keeps commenting that as a result of the war the allegiance of the youth here and abroad is being lost. The current wave of protest throughout most of Europe, Eastern Europe included, and in Japan, helps make their point.

The suspension of graduate deferments has led to expanded antiwar activities on many campuses. For instance, at Columbia a two day "moratorium" on classes was held recently to protest the war and the draft. 75% of the classes were not held for two days, with indirect approval from the university administration. A similar event took place at the University of Buffalo early this week.

Such developments frighten the ruling class which sees itself losing the allegiance of the nation's youth. Thus, the New York Times praises the McCarthy campaign for trying to pull these youth back into the fold.

There has also been a dramatic, public development of antiwar sentiment among GIs. Releases from Khesanh show this sentiment graphically. A common theme is the plight of these GIs and their reaction to it. It was even reported that often at night the GIs

there gathered together to sing antiwar songs such as "Where Have All the Soldiers Gone." Also, while not an activity we would advocate, over 50 GIs have now been given asylum in Sweden, which has precipitated friction between the Swedish and American governments, and reflected growing Swedish opposition to the war.

Such sentiment in the armed forces is a prime worry for the Johnson administration. Johnson reflects this worry by regularly visiting military outposts, a practice he may want to forego if the sentiment continues to spread.

In the trade union movement, the Reuther-Meany clash will continue to create room for antiwar expression. Here in New York the Social Service Employees Union Peace Committee took on a project to place an ad in the New York Times supporting April 27, signed by SSEU members and public employees. So far, there has been a favorable response in the SSEU (which recently voted in a referendum to support withdrawal of troops from Vietnam) and from several American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) locals.

The Labor Leadership Assembly for Peace, which held its conference in Chicago last fall, will be put under greater pressure to act by developments such as these and the more general Meany-Reuther fight. While its purpose is to keep rank and file discontent within the confines acceptable to the bureaucracy, it can play a role in opening up rank and file discussions on the war and its social effects.

On April 22, the SCLC "Poor People's March" on Washington will take place. The fact that this action (opposed by the NAACP and the Urban League) occurs during an election year underlines the depth of antiwar feelings in America's ghettos. Through reports sent into the National Black Antiwar Antidraft Union (NBAWADU), and from local trailblazers, it is clear that on many campuses Afro-American groups--study groups or cultural groups or local NBAWADU chapters--have recently formed. These groups have been looking for ways to link up with the Student Strike and April 27, and ways to work with the Student Mobilization Committee or the NBAWADU. The NBAWADU conference in New York on April 13-14 will be important. It will be a chance to begin to organize these newly formed groups into a national formation.

In summary, it is now clear from all these developments that opposition to the war is more widespread and unprecedented opportunities exist for the antiwar movement around the Spring actions, especially April 27.

At the same time, however, we are not the only ones looking at these developments; the McCarthy and Kennedy campaigns are designed, at least partially, to get the protesters off the streets and into the Democratic Party. The CP is right there with them, of course, trying to help them by opposing and trying to delay April 27, and counterposing a mobilization of forces to "dump Johnson."

As a way of justifying this, the CP has put forward a "This-is-the-year-of-repression" line which has gained some support beyond the CP.

That is, they refer to recent governmental attacks (Spock 5, Orangeburg, the DuBois Club SACB hearings, etc.) as indications that ruling circles are preparing a massive repression against the "peace and freedom" forces. This, in their words, it is imperative that these movements unite for their own defense around a "peace and freedom" program, and, by implication, field an electoral ticket if Kennedy-McCarthy fail.

This line is patently false on the face of it. In an election year, with a deeply split ruling class, and a growing, massive movement against the war, it is not a propitious moment to conduct a repression. This is not to say they are incapable of doing it, and they obviously have gone after some militants such as H. Rapp Brown.

It is also true that once the ruling class has united around a candidate or a perspective for the war, which they eventually must, then they will be in a more secure position to conduct a witchhunt. Therefore, now is the time for the antiwar movement and radicals to build their ranks as much as possible, so as to be in the strongest position, if a repression should occur.

The general election year atmosphere is prodding all forces toward an electoral expression. The "independents," particularly, who have no party or base or candidates of their own, are looking for a home. Many, in the established peace groups and in a section of the antiwar movement's leadership, look to the McCarthy-Kennedy electoral campaigns as an alternative pole around which activity can be established. This creates a certain drain on the antiwar coalition. At this point it has been reflected primarily in reduced financial contributions and a noticeable dragging of feet in the preparations for April 20-30.

Even given such competition, the spring actions will be large and can have a deep political impact on the American population. By mobilizing hundreds of thousands of protesters, the antiwar movement has a greater opportunity to effect the war-policy makers than ever before in the experience of this young movement's history. The demonstrations this spring can have a greater impact on the GIs than any previous demonstrations, especially if the demonstrations are sympathetic to the plight of the GIs. In Philadelphia, for instance, the theme of April 27 is "Support Our Men, Bring Them Home." Building, uniting and projecting massive spring actions, therefore, is the most important thing the antiwar movement can do to keep the pressure on the Johnson administration, exploit the ruling class division, and provide a concrete alternative to capitalist "peace" electoral action.

The following is a summary of some of the preparations for the spring actions:

### April 24 - Choice 68

Both the SWP campaign committee and the SMC report an enthusiastic response. Over 50 letters concerning Choice 68 have come into the SWP campaign office in the last week. More requests than ever before for literature and speakers have been received by the SMC. The Student Mobilization Committee has put out several pieces of literature on Choice 68: a leaflet and a sticker are out and a button is being produced, also. In addition, in several areas trailblazers from the SMC are on the road, working to turn out the withdrawal vote for Choice 68.

### April 26 - Student Strike

The cancellation of deferments for graduate students has already provoked two strikes which the SMC has supported. The April 26 strike is now beginning to gather international support. The JGS in Belgium is already starting to build the strike. Significantly, the International Union of Students (IUS) which is the CP's international student group, has called an emergency session in Prague this coming week, to discuss the student strike.

The Black Antiwar Antidraft Union is also beginning to establish contact with several Latin American student groups, who are supporting the student strike.

Here in the States, the student strike is gaining significant support. The Detroit SMC has won wide endorsement for the strike, ranging from faculty members to the Arab Student Association, to black fraternities. In Berkeley, evidently, there is an equally broad group that is organizing the strike. In New York, a local city-wide SMC representing 25 campuses has developed for the first time in the history of the New York antiwar movement. Even the newspaper of the Bernard Baruch School of Business at City College of New York supports the student strike. The New York High School Student Mobilization Committee recently held a conference of 125 people and projected building the strike among high school students with a special emphasis on trying to involve the United Federation of Teachers (UFT). Several other areas have held SMC conferences which have generally been enthusiastic and large.

### April 27 - Mass Demonstrations

In New York the march routes are now being negotiated with the police, over 200,000 leaflets have gone out, over 60,000 stickers, and thousands of buttons have been produced. The Parade Committee has agreed upon a perspective of a massive march, similar to April 15, which will attempt to involve as many new groups as possible. While there have been fewer funds available, and some plans have been delayed, the New York march will no doubt be one of the largest in the antiwar movement's history,

In Cleveland Ohio, there will be a march down the main street, Euclid Ave., and there will also be demonstrations in Columbus and Cincinnati.

In Chicago, there are ambitious plans for turning out the biggest march in Chicago's antiwar history. A Committee of the Chicago Peace Council, the Chicago Parade Committee, has gained broad support.

Many other areas are planning big demonstrations, but the concrete plans are not yet known.

What remains of the National Mobilization Committee has called a conference, March 23-24 in Chicago, to discuss what the antiwar movement ought to do in this election year, particularly at the Democratic Party convention. Despite objections, this has been organized as a closed conference, by invitation only.

The conference will be closer to a "dump Johnson" conference than an antiwar movement conference, and the CP will clearly dominate, although forces around Dellinger and a few SDSers will also be there. All literature put out by the organizing "staff" in Chicago has called for a demonstration that will expose the "undemocratic" character of the Democratic Party.

However, given the results of the New Hampshire primary and the Kennedy announcement, it is possible that even within this narrow grouping a dispute will arise over electoral politics and the feasibility of an August demonstration. The conference could mark the demise of the NMC, which has wobbled on its last legs for several months.

We will have observers at this conference but our main concern and effort at the present time is to build the antiwar actions on April 24, 26 and 27.