40. The Deepening Faction Fight in the International

The ultraleftism exhibited by the Weather Underground and other factions of SDS was not a trend confined to the United States. The turn towards the strategy of guerrilla war on a continental scale in Latin America made by the 1969 World Congress of the Fourth International reflected a related current in Europe. Like ourselves in the US, the parties of the FI in Europe and elsewhere had made gains in recruiting youth. By the end of the 1960s, strong ultraleft and adventurist currents had appeared in the worldwide youth radicalization. This pressure took its toll on the parties of the FI.

Why were we, the YSA and the SWP youth, able to avoid, by and large, the pitfalls of ultraleftism? How did we become educated in political positions that armed us against adventurism and sectarianism, the two manifestations of ultraleftism? I believe it was the influence of the older comrades, the working-class leaders of the party who had had real experiences leading workers in struggle. The prestige of the SWP with comrades in Canada, as well as the influence of their older leaders, had a similar result among the younger Canadian comrades.

Until the 1969 World Congress, the SWP and the Canadian League for Socialist Action had excellent relations with the International Marxist Group, the fledgling FI group in Britain.

For language reasons, it had fallen to the American and Canadian organizations to help build the FI in Britain after Healy's Socialist Labour League broke with the movement. The Canadians had sent Ernie Tate, originally from Ireland, and Scottish-born Jess Mackenzie, to London to work with the British comrades.When Tate and Mackenzie made plans to move back to Canada following the 1969 World Congress, Connie and Alan Harris, who were English and had been recruited in Canada, returned to Britain and replaced Ernie and Jess in helping build the IMG. They built up a literature service that relied heavily upon books and pamphlets we published through Pathfinder Press. Eventually, this would become the British outlet for Pathfinder.

After the 1969 World Congress, with the sharp division between the majority and minority, this political cleavage extended into the IMG. The Canadian LSA, along with the SWP, supported the minority position. Connie and Allen, members of the British section, also decided for the minority. So Caroline and I, and Connie and Allen, became pariahs to some extent among the majority of IMG comrades. This got worse as time passed.

In the fall of 1969 and the early part of 1970, relations with the comrades of the majority became more strained. In Britain, we worked mainly with Connie and Allen, and a few people they had attracted around them. We usually stayed at their apartment when we were in England, in the Brixton area of London, and we became close friends.

Shortly after I arrived in Europe at the end of 1968, I happened upon a discussion between Ernest Mandel and a member of the German Socialist Students (SDS) in Ernest's apartment (I was early for a meeting with Ernest). They were speaking English, and the German student was belittling the huge October 1968 march in London against the war in Vietnam. I was somewhat taken aback — since the IMG had spearheaded the action — when Ernest seemed to agree with the student's criticism that the march should have included violence.

Later in 1969, after the World Congress, I was witness to an abject capitulation by the majority of the IMG that turned my stomach. Gerry Healy, who had become a bitter enemy of the Fourth International, was denouncing the London march as "petty bourgeois." So he put on a "proletarian" march and meeting, to show how it should be done.

I went over to London to observe the action. A few thousand took part. The march was led by a contingent of youth carrying red flags, which were very colorful. Connie, Alan and I marched along with the crowd and attended the meeting of about 1,000. Healy asserted the October 1968 march of 100,000 was meaningless since it consisted mainly of students, while the march of a few thousand that day struck a real blow to the warmakers because it was allegedly working class in composition.

Actually, there were many young workers on the October march, and there were many students on Healy's march. The huge crowd of 100,000 very likely included many more workers than Healy's march.

I had expected such crude "workerism" from Healy, but not what came next. Tariq Ali, a leader of the majority of the IMG, was also scheduled to speak. Instead of defending the October march, he agreed with Healy! Naturally, the crowd of Healy supporters were elated.

The only other thing I remember about the meeting was the actress Vanessa Redgrave giving the fund appeal, a breathy proposal "to give our all for Gerry!"

Healy was emerging as a cult figure in the SLL.

I was a member of the Bureau of the United Secretariat, and that became important in helping to keep the factional struggle in bounds, since we could help set the agendas for meetings of the United Secretariat and the International Executive Committee. We found Ernest to be an ally in keeping the FI together. While disagreeing politically, we would work together with him on agendas and on the minutes of the meetings, making sure that neither side was misrepresented.

For important meetings of the United Secretariat and of the International Executive Committee, other leaders of the SWP on the IEC would come over. In this first year, these were mainly Jack Barnes and Joe Hansen. After one of these meetings during the 1969-70 winter, Jack, Joe and I went to London. There, among other things, we visited the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, where some supporters of the FI worked.

I was so cold on that trip that Jack and Joe insisted I get some warm woolen British clothes, including heavy pants, a jacket and an overcoat, paid for with party funds.

The delegates of the majority left the April 1969 World Congress full of enthusiasm for the projected launching of rural guerrilla warfare in Bolivia. In their view, any kind of a democratic opening, any kind of retreat, even temporary, by the native ruling class and the army in the face of mass struggles was excluded. Any mass actions would be ruthlessly suppressed. The only way out was rural guerilla warfare. This would turn into a civil war and lead on to victory.

Within a few months of the close of the World Congress events shifted sharply in a direction opposite to the one predicted. Actually, the first manifestation of this new mass upsurge began on May Day 1968, a year before the World Congress, when there were militant mass demonstrations and meetings against the military dictatorship in cities across Bolivia. The dictatorship mobilized the armed forces and police, but the power of the mass mobilization forced them to back down and allow the demonstrations to continue.

The name of the martyred Che Guevara, who had been murdered the year before, and references to the guerrilla force he led, were prominent in these actions. The comrades of the Bolivian POR (Revolutionary Workers Party) mistook this sentiment as a call for immediate rural guerrilla warfare. These actions opened a new phase of advance by the mass movement and a retreat by the military.

Bolivia has had many military coups, but the one that took place in September 1969 led to a military government which recognized the necessity of making concessions to the masses. The trade unions began to function openly once again, and

the workers' movement emerged from the underground. The Bolivian Workers Center (COB by its initials in Spanish), the union coordinating group, rebuilt its strength.

From April to June 1970, workers took advantage of this opening to stage another wave of mass mobilizations. Students, teachers, part of the urban middle class, and some peasant groups joined. The ruling class split. One sector was for a bloody crackdown and closer ties to Washington. The other sought to utilize the mass mobilizations to gain some independence in relation to the imperialist behemoth to the north. Within the military, General Rogelio Miranda favored a crackdown, and General Juan Torres sought to win the confidence of the mass movement.

The mass actions deepened, and the military regime was badly shaken. In October, the military ruler stepped down, turning the government over to the rightist Miranda. Masses of students and workers exploded into the streets to block the rightist takeover. Torres declared his opposition to the new junta. Students began to build barricades in the streets to stop forces loyal to Miranda, and the COB ordered its members to block the streets and prevent troop movements in the capital, La Paz.

"Armed detachments of peasants joined the action. Armed civilians freed political prisoners. The homes of ultrarightist military men and civilians were assaulted. The buildings of three leading newspapers were occupied. Jubilant tin miners seized the police stations." The mass uprising enabled Torres to take power, reflecting "a situation in which neither the proletariat nor the bourgeoisie could gain the upper hand for the time being."[1] Torres made concessions to the masses, while blocking attacks on the ultrarightist forces — attempting to keep both the working people and the right in check.

The ultraright attempted another coup in January, 1971, but was beaten back by another mass mobilization. But the working class lacked a resolute revolutionary leadership determined to carry the masses' fight to victory.

The class-collaborationist Communist Party and reformist or wavering trade union leaders put their faith in Torres to hold back the ultraright. As a result, the forces which could have been mobilized behind the workers in a bid for power began to weaken. The workers became confused and hesitant. The counterrevolutionaries began to regain confidence. The CP and reformist trade union leaders did nothing to prepare the workers, peasants and their student and middle class allies for the inevitable confrontation, which came in August.

The counterrevolutionaries staged a mass demonstration in the city of Santa Cruz, under the guise of a religious event. Torres attempted to arrest the rightist generals, which triggered a military attempt to seize power backed by 150,000 soldiers. Torres did nothing. The CP and the other fakers did nothing, waiting for Torres to act. The

army ranks began to go over to the counterrevolution. The working class, which had not been armed to any significant degree, responded to their desperate misleaders' last-minute call to resist the heavily armed foe and were quickly defeated. The coup was successful.

There was no revolutionary party, no revolutionary leadership of the masses. Our comrades of the Trotskyist POR had joined with other forces as far back as July 1969, just as the mass movement was rising, in an attempt to set up a guerrilla band in the countryside. They had abandoned the mass movement in both the city and countryside, which they believed was doomed without a successful guerrilla war, to establish an isolated band that the army easily hunted down. By October 1969, the army had killed all but six of the heroic but misguided band, and captured those six.

In spite of this experience in Bolivia, the majority leadership in the Fourth International pressed on with the guerrilla orientation in Latin America, now turning their attention to Argentina.

After the 1969 World Congress, a semi-insurrectional mass movement against the Argentine military dictatorship arose in two important industrial cities, Rosario and Córdoba. These two explosions set off a long period of renewed working class struggle.

The Argentine section of the FI, the Revolutionary Workers Party (PST) had split before the 1969 World Congress into the PRT(Combatiente) and the PRT(Verdad). The reaction of the PRT(Combatiente) and of the FI majority leaders to this new period of urban working class struggles was to shift from emphasis on rural guerrilla warfare to urban guerrilla warfare, at least for the time being. The PRT(Combatiente) became the official section of the International while the Verdad group was given the status of a sympathizing organization.

The PRT(Verdad) sought to build their current in the unions and other mass organizations, advancing slogans and proposals to push the mass movement forward. When the masses forced a democratic opening, the PRT(Verdad) quickly moved to establish a legal party to fully exploit the possibilities of reaching workers and youth.

The factional struggle in the FI would take some years to resolve. I would continue to play an important role in the FI, even though Caroline and I returned to the states in May 1970.

41. MAY 1970, THE GREAT STUDENT STRIKE

The YSA convention in December 1969 decided to go all out to build the national conference of the Student Mobilization Committee set for mid-February, 1970, in Cleveland. This conference was attended by 3,500 participants, including many high school students. This was the largest decision-making meeting of the entire antiwar movement, and indicated that a broad new layer of student antiwar leaders had arisen across the country.

Fred Halstead, who was there, estimated that about two-thirds of the participants were not former members of SDS or any other organized radical tendency. Of those in socialist youth groups, the majority were in the YSA, reflecting a changed relation of forces in the radical movement.[1]

Besides the YSA, representatives of most of the radical youth groups were there, including the International Socialists (whose origins went back to the old Young People's Socialist League and the Shachtmanites); the Young Workers Liberation League, as the youth group of the Communist Party now called itself; Youth Against War and Fascism, associated with Workers World; and one of the derivatives of the disintegration of SDS, the Revolutionary Youth Movement.

The main debate at the conference was the same one that existed since the 1965 National Coordinating Committee conference in Washington — single issue vs. multi-issue. Or more exactly, should the antiwar movement continue to focus on the war or become a new radical organization.

At the very bottom of the dispute lay the issue of mass action methods of struggle versus less mass-oriented forms of protest. At this conference most of the arguments against a focus on the war were ultraleft. But in the real world outside, the alternative to mass action against the war was the same as in the past: yielding to the pressure to support the Democratic Party doves. 1970 was another election year.

SMC executive secretary Carol Lipman introduced a proposal called the "Mass

Action Focus for Spring." All the other organized groups were opposed. So an aspect of the conference discussion was a battle between all these other groups and the YSA.

While opposed to the mass action perspective, these groups could not agree among themselves on what multi-issue perspective to support, and could come up with only an unclear counter-proposal. Frustrated, they began to redbait the YSA, something that did not endear them to the independent antiwar fighters. C. Clark Kissinger (the same person who led the initial SDS 1965 march on Washington) was elected the conference parliamentarian, and became alarmed at the redbaiting. Although he was from the Revolutionary Youth Movement, he said, "We don't want anyone voting for our proposal out of opposition to the Young Socialist Alliance. We are firmly opposed to anticommunism and it's been manifested greatly at this conference."[2]

Leading up to the conference, there was a debate between Nelson Blackstock, the YSA National Organization Secretary, and David Friedman of the International Socialists, published in *The Militant*. The IS had put its proposal for the conference in the *Student Mobilizer* published for all SMC members.

Friedman boasted, "We are not alone in recognizing the impotence of the single-issue, mass march approach." This sentiment was common among the other groups opposed to the SMC. In part, this expressed widespread frustration that Washington didn't stop the war as a result of the demonstrations. Johnson and Nixon always adopted a public pose that they didn't care at all about the mass protests. Later, when the *Pentagon Papers*, secret documents about the war, were published, it was revealed just how much Johnson and Nixon feared the protests and took them as personal affronts.

The IS proposal was for the SMC to adopt "a whole program of working class demands,"[3] including opposing all candidates of the Democratic and Republican parties. This would not only have meant excluding the majority of SMC members, but even some of the other groups at the conference the IS blocked with. The IS claimed that this approach would lead to building a mass working class break with the two capitalist parties.

The debate at the conference was full and democratic. The *Cleveland Press* reported, "Despite the emotional fervor with which most of the students embraced their ideas, an overwhelming democracy prevailed. Nearly everyone who wished got a chance to speak."[4] The Lipman proposal was adopted by an overwhelming majority.

Keeping the focus of the SMC on the war did not mean the conference did not take up other issues. It adopted many positions, among them against racism, for women's equality, against the oppression of homosexuals, for defense of the Black Panther Party, in support of a current nationwide strike against General Electric (in

many areas SMC supporters joined the strikers' pickets) — stressing the relationship between these issues and the war in Vietnam.

But the SMC did not project itself as an organization with a program for these struggles. It was a non-exclusionary movement that welcomed all young people who wanted to fight against the war, whatever their views on other political issues.

The SMC support to the GE strike highlighted the ground gained by the antiwar fight. In previous wars, the government insisted that all citizens had to get behind the war effort, which meant that the unions should call off their struggles during the war. But the war in Vietnam had elicited so much opposition that even the union bureaucrats didn't feel much pressure to do that, and the union ranks weren't ready to make sacrifices for the war.

In the first months of 1970 many were fooled into thinking the war was "winding down." This sentiment helped explain that most socialist or radical left groups, with the notable exception of the YSA and SWP, were casting about for some new issue or issues on the theory that the war was gradually going away.

A plenum of the SWP national committee was held at the end of February. I gave the report on the international political situation and the discussion in the Fourth International. The war was central to my report, and to the report on the American political situation given by Jack Barnes. In spite of Nixon's talk of bringing down the number of US troops in Vietnam, the reality was moving in the opposite direction, that of widening the war into Cambodia and Laos.

Gus Horowitz analyzed the state of the organized antiwar movement. The broad national coalition, the National Mobilization Committee, in contrast to the SMC, was in disarray, although the coalition in Cleveland was cited as a bright spot and would soon become the base for building a new national coalition. However, the report and consensus of the NC meeting was that all indications pointed to antiwar sentiment deepening among Americans.

The Moratorium had called for demonstrations to be held on April 15. The SMC conference had voted to mobilize for April 15, and to call for a student strike April 14. The SMC became the central driving force for actions on both dates. Even the Moratorium Committee backed off its original commitment to building April 15.

Given the situation in the antiwar movement, and the widespread belief that Nixon was winding the war down, the April 14 student strike and April 15 demonstrations were not as big as the Moratorium of the preceding October. Nevertheless, hundreds of thousands turned out.

In a front page feature article in *The Militant*, Gus Horowitz summed up the situation and the tasks of the antiwar movement, under the headline "Nixon escalation

will accelerate mass opposition."

"What are Nixon's real intentions in Vietnam? What is the real mood of the American masses? What course of action should be taken by a serious and responsible antiwar leadership?" he wrote.

"These three questions have been brought into sharp focus by events of the past weeks, in particular the mid-April antiwar protests, Nixon's April 20 troop 'withdrawal' speech, and the April 19 announcement by the national Vietnam Moratorium Committee that it is disbanding.

"The answers are clear: Nixon's policy is designed to continue and expand the war; mass opposition to the war continues to grow and deepen; the national antiwar leadership must be rebuilt with the goal of mobilizing for larger and more effective mass antiwar actions."[5]

On April 29, there were news reports that US forces had invaded Cambodia from Vietnam. The next day Nixon confirmed the invasion, and resumed bombing of North Vietnam. He justified the escalation by claiming it would shorten the war. Feeling suckered by the administration's previous promises the war was winding down, students and others jumped into action.

The first big actions started right while Nixon was giving his speech. Students at Princeton University met and called for a student strike the next day, May 1. Throughout the day, there were mass meetings at hundreds of campuses and the strike caught on, spreading across the country. Fred Halstead reports, "a strike information center was set hastily set up at Brandeis University … over the weekend, and the SMC as well as the National Student Association also spread the strike call. But in truth, no national groups initiated, controlled or directed the strike. It simply exploded with unprecedented force across the country, organized by whatever local antiwar activists there were."[6]

Caroline and I were following these events in the *International Herald Tribune*, and listening to the English language broadcasts of Radio Luxembourg and the US Army station, in our apartment in Brussels. Then, on May 5, we heard the news that the Ohio National Guard had been called out to confront demonstrators at Kent State University, and that the Guard had opened fire. Four students were shot dead, and many others wounded.

We called the SWP national office, and agreed to come back to New York immediately to give a hand as the party and YSA mobilized to participate in these historic events.

Coming into New York from the airport, we saw banners flying on different campuses. The Metropolitan Museum of Art was occupied by artists, with powerful

banners and large posters by the entrance.

The Kent State killings were like gasoline thrown on a fire. Hundreds of campuses, more than one million students, were on strike.

At the University of California at Berkeley, the University of Illinois, and others, strikers introduced and urged others to adopt a new tactic. The strikes at first sought to shut down campuses. But now the strikers began to open up the schools, take them over and use them as centers for antiwar organizing among the population as a whole. The "Antiwar University" engulfed many of the most important campuses.

The Militant became one of the most important sources of news about the strike nationally, and for a time we were publishing twice a week.

This movement became the greatest student strike in world history.

The organization of the strikes at most campuses had two levels. One was the mass broad decision-making meetings. The second was the election of steering committees to make hour-by-hour decisions. The day after Caroline and I landed in New York, we participated in the steering committee at Columbia University, where back in 1965 Caroline had helped organize the Columbia Committee Against the War in Vietnam in preparation for the first SDS march. The steering committee meetings were open, and this one was typical in its freewheeling debate and discussion. The committee functioned virtually 24 hours a day, with new people participating as others got tired, had to eat, and so forth.

When the news of the invasion of Cambodia first broke on April 29, the leaders of the New Mobilization Committee met and decided to call a demonstration in Washington for May 9. Even though this didn't leave enough time to organize the buses and trains to bring people to Washington on the scale of previous demonstrations, 100,000 participated. By May 9, the Nixon administration pulled back from threatened use of police and troops against the action.

The Washington demonstration was part of a wave that rolled across the country. These were even larger and more sweeping than the October Moratorium, and much angrier.

"The upsurge tore an open rift in the ruling class," Fred Halstead wrote. "Powerful sections made it clear to the administration that it was too dangerous to try to handle opposition to the war with the kind of public approach [of redbaiting the protesters and threatening the use of force] Nixon and Agnew had been using. This schism was manifested even within the Nixon cabinet. On May 6, for example, a letter was released to the press in which Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel warned President Nixon that 'youth in its protest must be heard.'"[7] Articles and editorials in the major capitalist newspapers made the same point.

The Nixon administration was silent for three days. It seemed that no one was running the country as the antiwar forces continued to mobilize. Then the administration began a tactical retreat from its open confrontation with the movement.

While the Washington demonstration was being held on May 9, in Augusta, Georgia, a 16-year-old mentally retarded Black man was beaten to death in the county jail. Demonstrations in the Black community demanded an investigation. On May 11, police fired on a gathering of Black youth, who erupted in response.

Georgia Governor Lester Maddox saw a "Communist conspiracy," and sent in state troopers and the National Guard. Maddox told reporters they were "going in with live ammunition. We're not going to tolerate anarchy in this state," according to *Militant* reporter Randy Furst. In addition to Randy, we also sent Clifton DeBerry, who was running for governor of New York, and Linda Jenness, the party's candidate for governor of Georgia, to Augusta.

The state's armed forces killed six Black men that night and wounded many others. "From eyewitnesses, I learned that all six men were shot in the back," Jenness wrote.[8]

On May 15, two students were shot dead at a predominately Black college in Jackson, Mississippi. Randy Furst went from Augusta to Jackson to get the story. He wrote, "the grass in front of Alexander Hall at Jackson State College is stained with blood. There is blood on the walls and floor inside the [women's] dormitory.

"Two unarmed Black students were shot to death here by state troopers and city police May 15. Fourteen others were wounded. The murders came on the second night of antiwar demonstrations at Jackson State."[9]

The cops came onto the campus "with a machine gun and high-powered rifles," according to a statement put out by students. "They marched to Alexander Hall, the girls' dormitory. They forced about 50 students into the yard in front of the dormitory. Minutes later, the cops began began shooting the students. Then the cops shot into the girls' dormitory. Many girls were wounded, some in the head."[10]

The national press downplayed the Augusta and Jackson shootings. While racism played a part in this, fear of the antiwar movement taking an even more massive form in the Black community played a bigger part. The press was on a campaign to dampen the student upsurge, and wanted to bury the stories. The SMC, however, featured Kent State, Augusta and Jackson State in its antiwar agitation across the country.

One effect of the Jackson State massacre was that many predominantly Black campuses now joined the student strike.

The May 1970 student upsurge did not ignite the working class to take similar action for their own demands, including opposition to the war, as the May 1968 student rebellion in France had. But it did deal a blow to support for the war in the unions and

in the union bureaucracy.

David Thorstad, writing in *The Militant*, reported: "The labor monolith has begun to crack. For the first time since American imperialist aggression in Indochina escalated into full-scale warfare more than five years ago, the solid front of support for the war … has begun to crack."[11] This was evidenced by the fact that many union leaders across the country were speaking at the mass meetings on campus and off during the antiwar upsurge.

In New York, unions for the first time sponsored their own antiwar demonstration on May 21. This drew 25,000, in response to an organized physical attack on antiwar demonstrators by construction trades unions, whose leaders were close to the Nixon administration. In San Francisco, 452 union leaders signed their names to a full-page newspaper advertisement calling for immediate withdrawal from Vietnam.

The national convention of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, held on May 7, passed a resolution against the war. Jacob Potofsky, president of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, blasted Nixon and the war at the union's convention May 25. Patrick Gorman, secretary-treasurer of the Meatcutters, wrote in an editorial in the union's newspaper, "No rational segment in the makeup of America puts a stamp of approval on our war involvements."[12]

Walter Reuther, head of the United Auto Workers, on May 7 (two days before he was killed in a plane crash) sent a telegram to Nixon endorsed by the UAW's top officers critical of the war. He said, "However this dangerous adventure turns out militarily, America has already suffered a moral defeat beyond measure among the people of the world … At no time in the history of our free society have so many troops been sent to so many campuses to suppress the voice of protest by so many Americans …"[13]

Soldiers from many bases also held their own protests around the country on May 16, traditionally Armed Forces Day. But the brass at many bases felt it the better part of valor to seal their bases to prevent soldiers from demonstrating.

The *New York Times* reported, "What had only been a trickle of mail and telegrams to Congress in the days following the president's announcement of the Cambodian invasion, swelled to a flood shortly after the shootings of four Kent State students May 4."[14]

The student strike and antiwar upsurge began to ebb by the end of May. Fred Halstead cites a number of factors that led to this ebb. One was the fact that the strike hadn't spread to other sectors of the population. "There was only so far it could go so long as it was confined to a student base." Also, the students had won important concessions at many campuses, and forced a change of stance by Nixon. And, where

schools were closed as a result of the strike, students dispersed.

Nevertheless, the upsurge changed the political atmosphere in the United States. Halstead wrote, "Henceforth the mood in the country would not be quite the same. Antiwar referenda in the scattered places where the movement could get them on the ballot would carry by majorities rather than just receiving large minorities. Significant trade union endorsement of antiwar activities would become the rule rather than the exception. The great bulk of the young soldiers going to Vietnam as replacements would be opposed to the war even before they got there. And the ruling class lived in fear of another upsurge which might go further than that in May, 1970."[15]

42. NEW ASSIGNMENTS

On our return from Europe, Caroline was assigned to *The Militant* as a staff writer, while I became part of the national office.

After Caroline and I came back to the US, there was no one at the FI center in Brussels who supported the minority in the International. A young couple from Canadian League for Socialist Action filled the gap. But it soon became apparent from their letters that the woman comrade was experiencing mental and emotional problems. I flew to Brussels to help them, and they decided to go back to Canada, where she obtained treatment.

After that, I was often called on to aid people in the party or the YSA who suffered from mental/emotional illness to find appropriate treatment.

In the summer of 1970, during the week of August 9-16, the SWP and YSA held a national educational conference. We rented Oberlin College in Ohio for the affair. We used the dormitories to house the participants, the cafeterias in the dormitories to feed them, and recreational facilities during breaks in the educational schedule.

Classes and workshops were held in the college classrooms. Many of these were held at the same time, and people chose the one they were most interested in for each time slot. Major talks and a public rally were held in Finney Chapel, which had a large seating capacity.

About 700 members of the SWP and YSA attended, as well as invited guests, including comrades from other countries. This was the largest national gathering our movement had ever held up to that time.

The town of Oberlin, where the college is situated, was a quiet grassy place during the summer, when the students were gone. But the arrival of so many people meant that for a week, the stores, movie theater and other establishments were quite busy. The newspaper distributor was inundated with requests for copies of the *New York Times.*

There were six major talks throughout the week, under the general heading "Towards an American Socialist Revolution." I gave the first lecture, discussing the

historical and economic roots of the radicalization. As I approached the pulpit in Finney Chapel, I was somewhat nervous before the large audience, and I knocked over a glass of water put there for the speaker. Flustered, I gave Nixon's well-known salute with both arms raised and each hand flashing the "V" signal. The crowd laughed, and that made me relax.

I had written my talk out, and read it. Nothing is more boring than a read-out speech. Normally, I did not write out my talks, but used brief notes, and made up the talk as I went, so that I could see the reactions in the audience, and adjust my talk accordingly. Afterward, Farrell Dobbs gave me some pointers.

The other speakers were Peter Camejo, Derrick Morrison, Mary-Alice Waters, George Breitman and Jack Barnes. A theme that went through all of these talks was our support for struggles of the oppressed nationalities, of women, gays, of students and the antiwar movement. We saw these struggles as part of, not counterposed to, the historic struggle of the working class to take power and begin the construction of socialism. This stance put us in a small minority among the parties claiming to be socialist.[1]

George Breitman compared the radicalization with those of the early twentieth century and the thirties. Caroline wrote the article in *The Militant* summing up the conference. She wrote, "The central conclusion coming out of the 1970 Socialist Activists and Educational Conference was summed up by George Breitman.… Breitman said: the present radicalization is as genuine and authentic a radicalization as any this country has experienced in this century; it is the biggest, deepest, broadest and most dangerous to the ruling class."[2]

Was it the deepest and broadest radicalization of the century? I believe the answer is yes. At no time in the history of the United States had such a movement against an imperialist war waged by our own government been seen. In fact, the radicalization of the thirties was cut short by the cooptation of the newly radicalized workers into the imperialist war effort during the Second World War.

This radicalization saw the emergence of the Black liberation struggle, the Chicano movement, the Native American movement, and other oppressed or discriminated-against peoples. National oppression wasn't eliminated, nor was institutionalized racism. It will take a socialist revolution to do that. But the Jim Crow system of racist segregation in the South, in place since the counter-revolution following the Civil War, was smashed. This struggle had huge repercussions in the rest of the country. Racism among whites was dealt a big blow. This was unprecedented.

During the early years of the century, there was a radicalization of workers reflected in the rise of the Socialist Party and the Industrial Workers of the World. Another

aspect was the upsurge of the women's movement around the right to vote, which was won. The new wave of the women's movement in the 1970s, coming out of the new radicalization, stood on the shoulders of the previous suffragettes. This new movement raised far deeper questions of women's role in the family, in the workplace, and in society as a whole.

Sexual taboos were breached. Until this time the words "abortion" and "contraception" were usually not talked about in public. Yet here was a movement that made the legalization of abortion one of its central demands. The idea that women have the right to control their own bodies and reproductive life, and that without those rights women cannot be free of their oppression was a new and startling one, even blasphemous for some.

The new radicalization was more profound than those before because it went deeper into these social questions, into the roots, which is the original meaning of the word "radical."

But what made us so confident at this Oberlin conference was our belief that the radicalization would extend to the working class as a class. We knew that workers were greatly influenced by the different movements of the radicalization, but they had not yet begun to move as a class. Our hopes that this would soon happen proved to be wrong. If we had had the advantage of hindsight then, Breitman's generalization would perhaps have been more tempered. But better to err on the side of overestimation of the objective situation, than to be left behind. We were on the cutting edge.

The enthusiasm of the conference was expressed in a foot-stomping, cheering rally, where the participants donated $38,000 over and above what they paid in dues and financial pledges the year round. Some of this money came from young people from middle-class families (and a few from wealthy families) who came into inheritances and wished to put this money to use in the enterprise of building a revolutionary party. This source of funds expanded in the next years.

In the following years we continued to grow. National meetings at Oberlin College would become part of our life as a party and youth organization. We would usually hold SWP conventions one year, and an educational conference the following year. For some time, each year saw "Oberlins," as we called these gatherings. The number in attendance kept growing

43. Chicano Moratorium and Mass Marches for Women's Rights

Within two weeks after the end of our Oberlin conference, two events indicated that we had read the situation correctly. On August 26, the anniversary of the victory of the suffragettes' fight to obtain the right to vote for women, the new women's liberation movement took to the streets across the country. On August 29, 20,000 people, mostly Latinos, joined the Los Angeles Chicano Moratorium against the war, and were viciously attacked by the police.

During the preceding months, beginning around mid-1969, the women's liberation movement had been coming together and becoming more visible. Certain key demands and concepts were emerging from the grassroots discussions of many different "consciousness-raising" groups. These often began as group discussions of personal problems arising from women's oppression but became increasingly political as the basically social character of the individual problems was thrown into sharp focus by collective discussion.

One of the demands emerging from the discussions, the demand to repeal reactionary laws prohibiting abortion, became a focus for sizable protests with sharp demands on the government.

On March 28, 3,000 marchers, mainly women, demonstrated in New York City for the repeal of the state anti-abortion law, as the state legislature was considering a bill to do just that. The march was organized by a broad coalition of various groups. Ruthann Miller chaired the rally following the march, which was addressed by representatives of the National Organization for Women, New York Radical Feminists, Women's Health Collective, High School Women's Liberation, and others.

The blows that had been dealt to redbaiting were evident in the fact that Ruthann Miller was well-known to all the organizers as the SWP candidate for Comptroller in

the state elections.

Shortly after the march, the legislature passed the bill repealing New York's anti-abortion law, and it was signed by Governor Nelson Rockefeller. The *New York Times* reported that Rockefeller commented, "Women's liberation played an important part in the passage of this bill."

The largest of the August 26 demonstrations was the march of more than 35,000, mostly women, in New York City. There were men on the march, too, and I was one of them. Most SWP and YSA members, both men and women, participated. Ruthann Miller was the coordinator of the event, which the party and YSA strongly supported. She was also one of the broad range of speakers.

Another speaker was Jo O'Brien, who brought greetings from the British women's movement. She also was a member of the British IMG, and was part of the minority in the IMG that was critical of the turn made by the Fourth International in 1969. Many of those in the International who agreed with the SWP on the turn to guerrilla war were also looking to the SWP for leadership on other questions, including women's liberation.

At this time, the FI majority in the main tended to adopt a "workerist" orientation, seeing women's liberation as a diversion from the real class struggle. Soon, however, the power of the movement created an uprising in the ranks of women in the majority, and they were won over. In fact, some in the majority became ultra-feminists, influenced by anti-Marxist trends in the movement that counterposed feminism to the class struggle. Similar trends appeared spontaneously in the SWP and YSA as well, but were overcome by experienced leadership (including that of Marxist women like Evelyn Reed, Mary-Alice Waters, Betsey Stone and Caroline Lund), Marxist education, and democratic discussion.

We were not only out ahead of many in the International in recognizing the revolutionary role of the fight for women's rights, but were in the forefront among socialist organizations in this country.

Jo O'Brien, who was the editor of the British *Socialist Woman* magazine, had just finished a national speaking tour organized by the SWP and YSA. When she was in New York, she stayed with Caroline and me at our apartment.

August 26 was a working day. In New York, the march and rally were held after working hours, which helped the attendance, but more could have participated on a weekend. In most of the 40 cities demonstrations took place during working hours. Nevertheless, there were impressive actions: 8,000 in Philadelphia, 7,000 in Chicago, 5,000 in Boston, 3,000 in Cleveland, and 2,500 in San Francisco.

Caroline wrote the *Militant* article on the day's events. "The turnout for the 5:30

march and subsequent rally in [New York] exceeded all expectations of the organizers of the demonstration," she wrote. The march started at Central Park and went down Fifth Avenue and over 40th Street to Bryant Park. "The New York cops were planning to herd the women into only one lane of the four-lane Fifth Avenue, but were finally forced by the sheer masses of demonstrators to stop traffic and let them fill the whole street."

Caroline noted three aspects of the action. "One was a commemoration of the courageous women who fought for and won women's right to vote 50 years ago.

"The second thrust was the projection of the three major demands of the strike: free abortion on demand; free, 24-hour child-care facilities controlled by the community; and equal education and job opportunities…."

"The third aspect of the demonstrations was the more general concept of women's liberation … — the complete liberation of women."[1]

The movement questioned the role of women in society, in the workplace, and in the family. The reflections of the sexist social relations of capitalism in the relationships between individual men and women, long taken for granted, were analyzed, dissected and challenged.

The relations between men and women in the radical movement were being re-examined and changed as a consequence of the new confidence that the women's movement gave to women who had originally become radicalized around other issues. This was true of the Socialist Workers Party and the Young Socialist Alliance as well. There was some turmoil in our movement as a result; it affected personal relations. But mainly there was a thirst for an understanding of the origins of the oppression of women and the ups and downs of the struggle against it, as well as thinking and debating what we thought the next steps for the new movement should be.

* * *

We recruited a capable group of Chicanos, as more militant Mexican-Americans began to call themselves. One of the centers of the movement was Denver, where the Crusade for Justice had been formed. The Crusade's president was Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales. In March 1970, the Crusade hosted a Chicano Youth Liberation Conference.

Miguel Padilla covered the four-day conference for *The Militant.* It was the biggest and broadest meeting of the Chicano movement to date, he wrote. It included Puerto Ricans and Dominicans in the United States, as well as other Latinos. Some 2,500 attended.

The conference decided to build a Chicano political party to fight for Chicano freedom and self-determination. One of the participating organizations was an already

existing Chicano party, the Texas Raza Unida Party, which had recently been formed.

Some participants argued for proclamation of a new nation of Aztlan in the areas the US won from Mexico in the 1848 Mexican-American war, rather than the call to build a Chicano party. Antonio Camejo, Peter Camejo's brother and an SWP member in Berkeley, spoke at the conference, expressing the opinion that a political party would be the best vehicle for mobilizing, educating and organizing the Chicano people in a struggle that could win the right to self-determination.

The example of the Texas Raza Unida Party carried the day, and the proposal to build such a party nationally was adopted.

The conference also supported a call that came out of the antiwar workshop, led by Rosalio Muñoz of the Los Angeles based Chicano Moratorium Committee, to call another Chicano Moratorium against the war for August 29 in Los Angeles. The Moratorium committee had organized two previous events, in December 1969 and February 1970, which drew 1,500 and 2,000 participants.

In June, we organized a tour of Atzlan[§] by Antonio Camejo and Froben Lozada, who were SWP candidates for state office in California. Their main object was to gather more information about the burgeoning movement, and to help build the Moratorium.

The impact of the May antiwar student strike and mass demonstrations, and the change in consciousness those events created throughout the US, was indicated on August 29, when ten times more Chicanos turned out than in February.

From the beginning, the march and rally had been advertised as a peaceful and legal demonstration, and that's what it was. But as was often the case, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department had other plans.

Antonio Camejo wrote in *The Militant* that the march went peacefully through the East Los Angeles barrio. In addition to the 20-40,000 people on the march, "thousands lined the march route to cheer. Mass chants of 'Chicano power,' 'Raza si, guerra no,' and 'Viva La Raza' set the march's tone," he wrote.

"Thousands of banners also captured the marchers' militancy: 'Be Brown and Be Proud,' 'Our Fight is in Atzlan, Not in Vietnam,' 'Brown is Together,' and 'Aztlan, Love It or Leave it.'" The latter slogan was a take-off of the right-wing slogan seen on some bumper stickers, "America, Love It Or Leave It," directed against the antiwar and Black power movements.[2]

[§] Atzlan was the name militants began to use to refer to the area that Washington had conquered from Mexico in 1848, as well as Texas, which also had been taken from Mexico. Atzlan included California, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada and Colorado.

The speakers were to include Rosalio Muñoz, Corky Gonzales, and Cesar Chavez, leader of the United Farm Workers. Muñoz had started to speak when the cops, utilizing a minor incident at a nearby store as a pretext, confronted the crowd. Moratorium monitors "locked arms and placed themselves between the sheriff's men and the rally," Froben Lozada reported in *The Militant*. East Los Angeles was not in the city of Los Angeles, but was under the jurisdiction of the county, which is why the Sheriff's Department was the instrument of repression that day.

"At this point," Lozada wrote, "about 500 sheriff's deputies poured out of police buses on Whittier Boulevard, dressed in full riot regalia, and charged the mass rally. They attacked without warning, neither notifying the monitors nor announcing with bullhorns that they wanted the rally to disperse. They brutally clubbed and beat about 50 Chicanos and had the crowd dispersed in about 15 minutes."

The deputies then turned on the Chicano community as a whole. "As the crowd fled from the area, the deputies gave chase, firing tear gas grenades and guns," Lozada wrote. They chased people into their homes, and into bars. In one bar, a well-known Chicano journalist for the *Los Angeles Times*, Ruben Salazar, was murdered when a deputy shot him in the head at point-blank range with a gas grenade. Salazar was popular in the community. Rosalio Muñoz was quoted, "The one man who could get our ideas across through the mass media was the one man killed by the sheriffs." Salazar had reported first hand from Vietnam, from the Dominican Republic during the revolution, and from the big student demonstrations in Mexico City.[3]

Two others died of their injuries in the following days.

Just after the police riot started, other sheriffs had arrested Corky Gonzales as he was driving to the rally to speak. He and a group were in an open truck on their way from Denver. A group of Chicanos crowded into the back of an open truck was "suspicious," the sheriff said. So they stopped the truck, and then arrested the group on "suspicion of armed bank robbery." While these phony charges didn't stick, the cops got what they wanted — to disrupt the rally by preventing speakers from getting to it.

According to the sheriff's department, "Hundreds of provocative acts were committed by known dissidents who came to the location to incite and foment trouble." This was his excuse for the murder of Salazar and the police riot. While not very convincing, the cover story showed that his men were looking for dissidents like Corky Gonzales.

I was alone in the SWP National Office that day, so it was I who got the telephone call from Lew Jones, who was in L.A. to help organize our response. He gave me a rundown on the days events, and we planned out how we would get coverage for *The*

Militant, and what proposals he would make to the Los Angeles branch for participation in protests against the police riot and murders.

Cesar Chavez, who had been scheduled to speak at the rally, was leading an effort to organize Chicano and Filipino farm workers in the California fields into the United Farm Workers of America. These were some of the most exploited and oppressed workers in the US. The heroic fight that the UFWA was waging against the growers and their official and unofficial armed thugs inspired youth to join the UFWA's boycott of scab grapes. Many of us didn't eat grapes for years, unless they were from some place like Mexico or Chile.

44. Black September and Martial Law in Québec

In the summer of 1970, the United States, with the acquiescence of the Kremlin, sought to impose a settlement of the Israel-Palestinian conflict that would force the Palestinians to recognize the Zionist conquest of a large part of Palestine, and the expulsion of most of the Palestinian population from their homes. Every Arab country supported Washington's plan, except Syria, Iraq, Algeria and Southern Yemen.

The Palestinians refused to accept the deal. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) stuck to its call for a democratic, secular Palestine. The PLO recognized the Jewish immigration to Palestine, and their proposal was that the Palestinians and Jews live as equals in a single state. The state would neither be exclusively for the Jews nor the Palestinians, but would recognize the equal rights of both peoples in a secular state. This meant rejection of the Zionist idea of establishing a Jewish state in all of Palestine. A democratic, secular Palestine was — and as I write this over three decades later, still is — the most fair and democratic solution. But the Zionists and their sponsors in Washington rejected it.

The population of Jordan in 1970 was 55 percent Palestinian. The PLO had a strong base of support in Jordan, as well as in Syria and Lebanon. The Jordanian monarchy's acceptance of the Washington plan signaled that King Hussein was looking for a confrontation with the Palestinian majority.

In the summer, Hussein, under the prodding of the US, attempted to eliminate the presence of the more radical groups in the PLO, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Military moves against these two organizations were begun by Jordanian troops. The king was banking on the largest organization in the PLO, Fatah, remaining on the sidelines.

Fatah refused to allow any section of the Palestinian fighters to be smashed, and joined the resistance. The Jordanian government launched a massive attack on the Palestinians. Given the demographics, this meant civil war.

The PLO brought tanks it had in Syria into Jordan, but the king's military was better armed, and possessed an air force. While the tank force fought hard against Jordanian armor, the PLO had to withdraw the remaining tanks to Syria for lack of air cover.

The PLO took over much of the capital, Amman, but the king's forces faced lightly armed civilians there, and shelled the populated areas from isolated strong points, inflicting many civilian deaths.

In other areas, the PLO was in complete control. In the city of Irbid, they had more heavy weapons, and they set up elected councils of the citizens to run the city. A *Newsweek* reporter who was there dubbed the central council a "soviet," comparing it to the elected soviets set up in the first phase of the Russian Revolution.

At a number of key points, both Iraq and Syria had opportunities to intervene and give military support to the PLO. But although they claimed to be on the Palestinians' side, they did not become directly involved.

The outgunned PLO was defeated, with heavy casualties among fighters and civilians. This big setback became known among the Palestinians as "Black September."

The daily press in the United States revealed that both Israel and the US were prepared to intervene militarily if it looked like Hussein was in danger of losing the civil war. Both countries were ready to fight to save the reactionary Jordanian kingdom rather than see a democratic and militant government emerge in Jordan. This illustrates Washington's policy of supporting the Arab emirates and kingdoms to safeguard its interests in the oil-rich area. Israel's role as a garrison state set up and maintained by Western imperialism to keep the Arabs in line, was revealed once again.

People who were radicalizing, especially among youth and African Americans, were eager to understand what was happening. Gus Horowitz and I wrote a series of articles for *The Militant.* These articles began with the history of the first moves by Western imperialism, especially the British and French, into the Mideast — and the resistance put up by the Arabs — up through the Zionist conquest and the role of the US in the Middle East.

* * *

In October, repression in the United States' northern neighbor drew world attention to another situation of national oppression, that of the French-speaking inhabitants of Canada. About one in four Canadians lived in Québec, where more than 80 percent of the population spoke French as their first or (in most cases) only language.[§]

[§] The following historical sketch is by Canadian Marxist Richard Fidler. In 1759, during the Seven Years War, Britain defeated the French empire in a famous

On October 5, a small terrorist wing of the Québec liberation movement, the Québec Liberation Front (FLQ, its initials in French) kidnapped James Cross, a British diplomat. The FLQ made a series of demands as preconditions for his release. One was the publication of a manifesto that outlined the poverty, unemployment, suppression of Québecois culture and attempts to suppress the French language and other facets of the national oppression of the Québecois, and made the case for independence. Another demand was the release of 23 FLQ prisoners convicted of various acts of terrorism, bombings and armed robbery, and their safe passage to Cuba or Algeria.

After some stalling, the authorities decided to publish the manifesto, but rejected the other demands. Perhaps they thought that the manifesto's radical contents would not be well received by Québec public opinion.

If that was their calculation, it backfired. There was wide sympathy with the statement and support to a negotiated settlement. As historian John Conway wrote,

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battle at Québec City, gaining control over the entire northeastern portion of North America. Although they lost their 13 colonies to the south a few years later in the American Revolution, the British continued to rule Québec directly for almost a century. In 1837-38 they brutally suppressed an armed insurrection of their colonial subjects and hanged or exiled the leaders.

In 1867, the recently reunited USA looked to expand north as well as west. The British countered by joining Québec with three largely English-speaking colonies under a new form of home rule to constitute Canada. Making up more than a third of the population of the new white settler state, the Québecois saw their relative weight and influence radically decline in subsequent years as the Canadian state expanded westward and northward. Canada's constitution and laws afforded little protection to their language and culture and gave no recognition to their national character. Québec, as the saying went, was "a province like the others."

Economically and socially it was quite unlike the others. During the first half of the Twentieth century Québec became one of the most industrialized and urbanized provinces in Canada. But even at mid-century the French-speaking population lagged far behind those of British or other ethnic origin in income, employment and other social indicators in this, the one province where they made up the overwhelming majority. Only the aboriginal peoples and very recent immigrants ranked below them. With their distinct language, territory and history and emerging consciousness as a distinct people, the Québecois were an oppressed nation within Canada.

The situation changed in the 1960s. Inspired in part by the colonial revolution and the new stage of the Black struggle in the US, a wave of reform swept the province resulting in a vast expansion of post-secondary education and healthcare facilities, nationalization of public services previously run by the Church or private, largely Anglo interests, and a huge increase in jobs and trade union membership in both the state sector and privately owned industry. This nationalist ferment, commonly referred to as Québec's "quiet revolution," grew more radical throughout the decade and took on an increasingly pro-independence orientation. "Québec libre" — a free Québec — became the rallying cry for hundreds of thousands of Québecois youth.

"Everywhere people from all walks of life — priests, students and professors, trade unionists, randomly selected 'persons in the street' TV interviewees — began to draw a clear and sophisticated distinction that was very unsettling to the authorities. They liked the FLQ's analysis and political message but disliked their terrorist tactics."[1]

On October 10, the authorities said they would agree to no further demands. The FLQ responded by kidnapping Pierre Laporte, the Québec labor minister.

The two main trade union federations in the province, the Confederation of National Trade Unions, and the Québec Federation of Labor (AFL-CIO), and the teachers union, urged the government to meet the FLQ demands.

On October 14, troops were sent to Ottowa, the Canadian capital. On October 15, troops began to be positioned in Montreal.

The faculty of the humanities and social sciences at the University of Montreal voted to strike to back the FLQ demands. Students at the University voted to join the strike, and on October 15, 5,000 students attended a meeting to hear speakers urging the students to organize support for the release of the FLQ prisoners.

Early the next morning, the federal government invoked the War Measures Act, abrogating all civil liberties throughout Québec and occupying the province with 5,000 Federal troops. (Technically the act covered all of Canada, but it was aimed at Québec.) The FLQ was outlawed, and a regulation issued that for purposes of prosecution, anyone who had even attended a meeting of the FLQ was considered a member and subject to five years in prison. The regulations gave a blank check to the police to arrest anyone without a warrant. Individuals could be held without charges for 21 days, and up to 90 days without trial. Immediately 242 people were arrested — most of them supporters of Québec independence but few with any connection to the FLQ.

Art Young and Penny Simpson, two members of the Socialist Workers League (LSO in its French initials), our sister organization, were among those arrested. They were well known as opponents of the FLQ's terrorist tactics, but were picked up because they supported an independent, socialist Québec. By the end of the arrests some days later, 465 had been incarcerated, "their homes and offices ransacked and searched, their families and neighbors terrorized."[2]

We had already sent two reporters, Mary-Alice Waters and Randy Furst, up to Montreal. Mary-Alice was fluent in French.

A government spokesman, in a speech widely played up in the press, claimed that a secret police report demonstrated that the FLQ (which probably never had more than 100 members) "are infiltrated in all the vital places of the province of Québec, in all the key jobs where all the important decisions are made.

"If we had not acted, the separation of Québec would have been a fact, a month or a year from today."[3]

Another government official referred to the big student meeting of October 15 to show "the whole coming together of an infiltration of FLQ doctrine in certain areas of society in Québec — in the unions, among universities, in the media …"[4] The FLQ "doctrine" as contained in their manifesto had wide support, and this is what the authorities were attempting to suppress, using the FLQ's terrorist tactics as the excuse.

A leader of the Creditiste party called for the summary execution by firing squad of all FLQ leaders.

The press and government circulated wildly inaccurate stories, including that the FLQ had 3,000 armed members ready to launch an insurrection to be followed by a bloodbath. Reactionary forces across Canada took advantage of the crisis to crack down on political dissent. In British Columbia, the province's cabinet issued an order to fire all teachers and professors who, in the opinion of the police, shared the FLQ's views on separation.

The day after the invocation of the War Measures Act, Laporte's body was found in an abandoned car on a federal government air base. Later evidence showed that the FLQ group guarding Laporte panicked when the minister tried to escape by jumping through a glass window, and strangled him with a gold chain he was wearing.

The murder of Laporte was a blow to the Québecois' mobilization, and became another pretext for the government to intensify its crackdown. The mass meetings, demonstrations and student strikes were stopped dead. This was one more example of how terrorist strategies harm the struggle of the oppressed.

The police finally found the FLQ cell that was holding Cross, and he was released unharmed. Sixteen people were eventually sentenced in connection with the Laporte kidnapping and murder but were all released within a decade.

Imposition of virtual martial law yielded exactly nothing the authorities could cite as justification for their crackdown. Nothing was found as a result of the arrests and searches to back up government claims of an "apprehended insurrection."

Efforts to get the full story behind the government assault on Québec have been unsuccessful, largely as a result of the government's keeping secret its files on the affair.

But some facts later came out. These were summarized by John Conway: "RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] security service agents have admitted to stealing dynamite; setting off bombs; writing FLQ communiques; breaking into a left-wing news agency's office; breaking into the PQ [Québec Party, a bourgeois nationalist party] office to steal membership lists and financial information; opening mail; routinely

gaining access to confidential medical files; committing arson to destablize the FLQ; using kidnapping, unlawful confinement, and threats of violence to frighten FLQ members and associates to become informants."[5]

The government probably knew of the FLQ's plans before the kidnappings, if they didn't have a hand in organizing them. Terrorist groups are easy target for *agents provocateurs*. Whatever the full truth, the authorities utilized undercover agents for a crackdown on the rising tide of Québecois nationalism.

45. April 24, 1971

The broad national antiwar coalition, the New Mobilization Committee, split in the summer of 1970.

The issues involved were the same ones that had erupted before, particularly in election years: should the antiwar movement "move beyond" the issue of the war and become a multi-issue formation or should it continue to make opposition to the war its central task, while relating the war to other issues and movements such as the fight against racism and the labor movement.

This time, however, some who had accepted our view during the recent period backed the other approach. The radical pacifists, the Communist Party, and people from the former SDS initiated a conference in Milwaukee to set up a new coalition. The Cleveland antiwar coalition, supported by the Student Mobilization Committee, called a conference to organize the next antiwar actions. Both conferences took place in June.

The Cleveland conference, attended by about 1,500 people, established the National Peace Action Coalition (NPAC). We were the only organized left tendency to support NPAC, but new allies stepped to the fore. The conference elected five coordinators: Jerry Gordon of the Cleveland coalition; James Lafferty from the Detroit committee; Ruth Gage-Colby of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; John T. Williams, vice president of a Teamsters local in Los Angeles and Black activist; and Don Gurewitz from the SMC. Gurewitz was the only SWP member among the coordinators.

The Milwaukee conference was smaller. Some participants wanted to organize physical confrontation with the authorities, pacifists favored non-violent direct action, and the Communist Party continued to seek a "multi-issue" movement oriented toward the left wing of the Democratic Party. The conference called for massive civil disobedience in Washington in May 1971. The meeting endorsed the call by Rosalio Muñoz for the upcoming August 29 Chicano Moratorium.

The coalition that came out of the Milwaukee meeting reorganized itself in early

1971 as the People's Coalition for Peace and Justice (PCPJ).

At its founding conference, NPAC called for demonstrations at the end of October in many cities. Rosalio Muñoz spoke at this conference as well, and NPAC joined in the call for the Chicano Moratorium.

The SMC endorsed these decisions. The October demonstrations were smaller than the antiwar activities a year earlier. Many activists put their energies into supporting "peace" candidates, mainly in the Democratic Party. The Nixon administration campaigned to convince the American public that it was winding down US participation in the war through "Vietnamization" and the withdrawal of some American troops. Congressional "doves" toned down their criticism. Many were lulled into thinking the war was ending.

But Nixon's claim that he was winding down the war only deepened antiwar resistance inside the armed forces. What soldier wanted to be the last one killed in a war that was ending? Soldiers were part of the young generation that was the backbone of the antiwar movement. They had friends, girlfriends and even parents who were opposed to the war. New recruits included many who were against the war before they got to Vietnam. A Marine Corps historian wrote in the June 7, 1971 *Armed Forces Journal*:

"The morale, discipline and battle-worthiness of the US Armed Forces are, with a few salient exceptions, lower and worse than at any time in this century and possibly in the history of the United States.

"By every conceivable indicator, our Army that now remains in Vietnam is in a state approaching collapse, with individual units avoiding or having refused combat, murdering their officers and non-commissioned officers, drug-ridden, and dispirited where not near mutinous.

"Elsewhere than Vietnam the situation is nearly as serious."

He concluded:

"All the forgoing facts — and many more dire indicators of the worst kind of military trouble — point to widespread conditions among American forces in Vietnam that have only been exceeded in this century by the French Army's Nivelle Mutinies of 1917 and the collapse of the Tsarist armies in 1916 and 1917."

The government was trying to whip up a witch-hunt on the campuses. FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover released an Open Letter to students, with an approving cover letter from Nixon. Hoover blamed radicals, including the YSA, SDS and the YWLL (youth group of the Communist Party), for campus unrest. The letter attempted to press college administrators to curb antiwar activity.

In an article in the Veterans of Foreign Wars magazine, Hoover singled out the

YSA and the SMC. The article was titled "The Red University: Goal of Trotskyist Communism in the US."

"A college student strode across the university campus," Hoover wrote in a melodramatic style. "He was a clean-cut young man, his hair cut short, wearing a pair of brown trousers and a white sports shirt. There was nothing of the beatnik or hippie type in his appearance." Then what was so sinister about this young man? He was carrying a copy of the *Young Socialist!*

Hoover then quotes from an article in that issue of the YS:

"The concept of a 'Red University' oriented toward the needs of the working class and the oppressed first arose in Europe," the YS article said. "The concept means that the university ought to be transformed from a factory producing robots into an organizing center for anticapitalist activities, a generator of revolutionary education, an arena for mobilizing youth in the struggle for the complete transformation of society."

Hoover gave his readers a little history lesson, explaining that the "Trotskyists are old-line, orthodox Marxist-Leninists, basing their idealogy [sic] on the teachings of Marx, Engels and Lenin," as opposed to the "Stalinist Communists of the Communist Party, USA."

The nation's top political police officer wrote, "The Trotskyists, especially its [sic] youth group (YSA was founded in the late 1950's), have shown a vast membership growth and resurgence in the last 24 months until YSA is today the largest and best organized youth group in left-wing radicalism. Trotskyist influence is especially strong in the youth field, particularly on the college campus.

"For example, at YSA's National Convention in Minneapolis last December, roughly 1,000 members and observers were in attendance. Enthusiasm was high. The convention was effectively organized and run. A number of new recruits were obtained." He noted YSA successes among high school students and GIs.[1]

The redbaiting did not work. The great mass of students saw it for what it was, an attempt to curtail student political rights and activity. The YSA turned the tables on Hoover, effectively using his claim that it was the largest and best organized radical youth group as a recruiting tool.

Nixon's and Hoover's attacks on antiwar students had a grotesque spinoff. In response to the murder of the four Kent State students by the Ohio National Guard the previous May, a grand jury indicted — not the Guardsmen who opened fire — but 25 Kent State student leaders. The Kent State student newspaper characterized the indictments as "demented." This attempt to turn the victims into the criminals sparked condemnation from student bodies across the nation. Only three of the accused were

convicted, of misdemeanors, and got light sentences.

In the November elections, antiwar activists in a number of cities had placed referenda opposing the war on the ballot. A number of these resulted in victories. In San Francisco, a referendum calling for immediate withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam won by 107,785 votes to 102,731. In Detroit, a similar referendum won by 63 to 37 percent. In Massachusetts, there were three options in a state-wide referendum. There were 558,975 votes for "withdraw our armed forces in accordance with a planned schedule"; 347,462 for "withdraw all our armed forces immediately"; and 150,984 (less than 15 percent) for "win a military victory."

Shortly after the elections, Nixon resumed bombing of North Vietnam, which he had halted as part of his peace gambit. This shattered the complacent assumption of many activists that the war was just about over. The National Peace Action Coalition's December conference drew 1,500 people. The NPAC convention called for demonstrations in San Francisco and Washington for April 24, 1971.

The SMC held a national conference of 2,500 in February, at Catholic University in Washington. The FBI sought and failed to derail the conference by covertly encouraging conservative Catholics to put pressure on the university to cancel it.

After considerable debate, the SMC meeting adopted proposals to call for a day of antidraft actions on March 15, and to support the April 24 actions. Supporters of PCPJ had proposed instead support for a planned confrontation with the authorities in Washington, DC on May 1.

Shortly before the SMC conference, Nixon ordered US troops stationed in Vietnam to invade Laos, where a liberation movement with close ties to the Vietnamese anti-imperialist fighters was gaining ground. This escalation was a wake-up call for millions of people who had been lulled by Nixon's peace talk in the autumn.

Hundreds of groups and prominent individuals threw their support behind the call for April 24. For the first time, the Committee for a SANE Nuclear Policy endorsed an action that called for the immediate withdrawal of US forces from Vietnam. Many union officials, active duty soldiers and members of Congress signed on. Representatives Ron Dellums and Shirley Chisolm signed fund appeals for April 24.

Despite their differences, NPAC and PCPJ came to agreement on supporting a peaceful, legal march in Washington on April 24 and held a joint news conference to announce this. The PCPJ called for support to its additional demands for a "$6,500 Guaranteed Annual Income," and "Free All Political Prisoners." In the days after the march, those who favored civil disobedience would hold non-violent civil disobedience actions.

As April 24 approached, the movement snowballed. Nineteen Senators and 50

Representatives sponsored a bill calling for withdrawal of US forces by December 31. Senator Vance Hartke of Indiana introduced a bill for immediate withdrawal, endorsed April 24, and spoke at NPAC press conferences.

The right wing went bananas. Representative Richard Ichord, head of the House committee that succeeded HUAC, charged that NPAC was dominated by the "Trotskyite Socialist Workers Party" and PCPJ, by the Communist Party. An editorial cartoon in the *Boston Herald* pictured Leon Trotsky shouting "Forward March!"

For five days before the demonstration, veterans held their own actions. The Vietnam Veterans Against the War set up a tent city a few hundred yards from the Capitol building. Some 1,200 took part. They staged guerrilla theater, re-enacting "search and destroy" missions against the Vietnamese people. There was a silent procession past the White House led by legless vets. Some tried to turn themselves in to the Pentagon as war criminals, and scores of GIs threw their medals and decorations on the capitol steps.

The Justice Department obtained a court injunction to disband the encampment, which was quickly upheld by the Supreme Court. But the veterans refused to budge. A clash between the veterans and troops appeared imminent. The Justice Department thought retreat was wiser, and the ban was lifted.

April 24 was the largest demonstration in US history. When the lead contingent of active duty soldiers and wounded Vietnam veterans started to march, buses were still on the road, headed for the protest. They were backed up for 20 miles. Traffic in the capital was at a near standstill. The protest was too big to estimate because no one could see it all from any position, but there must have been at least one million people.

How well I remember that glorious day! Like many others I was overwhelmed with emotion at the sheer power of the action.

Fred Halstead reported: "The breadth of the antiwar forces was manifest not only by the size of the crowds but in the diversity of the organized contingents.... There was an all-Black contingent and a Third World section embracing Blacks, Latinos, Asian Americans, Iranians, and Palestinians, each bearing their own banners. There was also a group of left-Zionists.... A delegation of Native Americans; religious groups; students from scores of colleges; political parties and organizations; hundreds of local and regional antiwar committees and coalitions; pacifists; gays; lesbians; Women Strike for Peace; Another Mother for Peace; Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; the National Welfare Rights Organization; Business Executives Move for Peace; professional bodies of doctors, teachers, lawyers, and law and medical students; multitudes of government workers; a contingent of reservists and national guardsmen; high school students; handicapped people; and others.

"All these groups carried banners against the war. With encouragement from the sponsors many also seized the event to proclaim their own special concerns, grievances and demands.…

"Tens of thousands of trade unionists marched, their affiliations identified by placards and banners, in many cases defying top union officials …

"Almost from the start the antiwar movement had been agitated by the controversy over 'single issue' versus 'multi-issue.' Here in gigantic living reality was a practical resolution of that false dilemma."

In San Francisco about 300,000 turned out, the largest demonstration the West Coast ever seen. The breadth of the participation was similar to that in Washington. "The Chicano, women's and gay contingents were the largest Northern California demonstrations ever of these groupings under their own banners."[2]

The *New York Times* said that the "effect of any single outpouring like today's cannot be measured, but the cumulative effect of the popular protest here over the years is abundantly clear. The marching minority now feels itself becoming a national majority."[3]

In the following week, there were a series of non-violent civil disobedience protests organized by pacifists of a few hundred each.

The organizers of the May Day actions billed to "stop the government" moved the date from May 1, a Saturday when government offices were closed, to Monday May 3. The PCPJ organized civil disobedience marches on the Pentagon and the Justice Department that day. Another group associated with the PCPJ, which called itself the May Day Tribe, sought to block traffic at intersections and bridges during the morning rush hour.

The armed forces of the state had more or less stayed out of sight on April 24. But the actions of the May Day Tribe were smaller, and their announced objective to shut down the government made them more vulnerable. The protesters were met by 5,000 Washington cops, 8,000 soldiers and Marines, and 2,000 National Guardsmen.

These demonstrations were subjected to brutal attacks. More than 7,000 were arrested that morning, including many bystanders. Clubs, tear gas and even speeding cars were used to break up groups of demonstrators. All told, 12,000 of the 15,000 demonstrators were arrested and many were hurt. The cops attacked medical and first-aid workers who were helping the injured, and destroyed their medical supplies.

NPAC and SMC placed the onus for the violence entirely on the government. Eventually, the brutal and unconstitutional actions of the government against the demonstrators became widely known and condemned.

Debbie Bustin, speaking for the SMC, declared: "The student antiwar movement

is telling the warmakers: No more Kents! No more Jacksons! Free the Washington, D.C. 12,000! Bring All the Troops Home Now!"[4]

Another SMC spokesperson, Jay Ressler, explained, "May Day showed that civil disobedience will remain as an approach of many people within the movement. The SMC does not organize or endorse civil disobedience actions, but we do support the right of people who feel that their conscience demands they engage in civil disobedience to show their moral commitment….

"In a real sense civil disobedience is an attempt to show a moral commitment to ending the war and thereby persuade the warmakers to end the war. But the warmakers do not understand moral persuasion; they understand only power — the power of the masses of the American people. April 24th did what May Day couldn't do."[5]

46. A Campaign Party

Following the 1970 conference at Oberlin College, I began taking on important party organizational tasks. Our national officers were James P. Cannon, National Chairman; Farrell Dobbs, National Secretary; and Jack Barnes, National Organization Secretary. Increasingly, Jack took on the duties of National Secretary, and I, those of the Organization Secretary.

One of my duties was to oversee party finances. The financial secretary, Barbara Matson, was responsible for the bookkeeping and for keeping contact with the branches on financial matters. She and I collaborated to project budgets for the different party institutions, review our performance, and set financial goals for branches and members.

Our finances were improving with growth and the inspiring political developments. The bedrock of our financial system was the party members. Each member paid nominal dues, at that time $2 a month. Members made voluntary weekly pledges to their branches, which were much higher than the dues. While the leadership encouraged higher pledges, we didn't stand in judgment over what party members felt they could give.

Each branch had a financial secretary, who would keep track of branch finances, and propose branch budgets to the branch executive committee for approval by the branch. The branch budget included a pledge to the national party. This pledge to the national party was a dollar amount per capita. The remainder of the membership's pledges was used for branch expenses.

Most branches had rented headquarters where branch and YSA meetings were held, as well as forums. The headquarters served as a place for organizing sales and other branch campaigns, and for meetings of comrades assigned to particular areas of work, such as the women's movement or the antiwar movement. The headquarters usually included a bookstore. They were also gathering places where members and supporters discussed informally, and where branch dinners and parties could be held. By the late 1960s, most branches supported a full time organizer.

Developing awareness and a sense of responsibility among the members about

financial contributions and the party's financial needs was necessary to meet the new opportunities.

There were special fund drives, usually twice a year. Members would make contributions to these fund drives over and above their regular pledges. These fund drives were publicized in *The Militant* and appealed to readers who were not members to contribute.

At the 1970 Oberlin conference, we went one step further, following the initiative of George Novack. George not only wrote books on philosophy from a Marxist standpoint and many political essays, but was also a highly skilled and imaginative fund-raiser.

We held a rally for all conference participants, and took pledges for a special fund. All members and supporters at the rally participated. A new element was the appeal to some of our recruits, who came from well-off, and occasionally wealthy, families, to contribute all or part of windfalls, such as inheritances, or trust funds that came due.

Before the rally, we knew of some comrades ready to make such larger pledges. The rally was organized like an auction. George first asked if anyone could make relatively large pledges, and then worked down in stages to smaller pledges, so everyone could participate. The effect was a cumulative enthusiasm, rhythmic foot-stomping, and applause and yells of astonishment at how much was being pledged. At times, the foot stamping sounded as though it might bring down the balcony of Finney Chapel where the rally was held. That's how we came out of the conference with $38,000 pledged, which was augmented later by pledges from members and supporters who were not at the conference.

Such special fund drives became a part of our yearly gatherings at Oberlin. There were members and supporters who were able to make substantial donations from windfalls during the rest of the year. Some would be in the range of tens of thousands of dollars, and a few one hundred thousand or more. The rallies and special donations became a part of our budget, and enabled the party to increase *The Militant's* staff and number of pages, print more books, modernize our print shop and carry out other projects.

Our financial strength was an intrinsic part of our emphasis on organizational details. It's not enough to have good ideas. Those good ideas have to be translated into effective action, and that takes competent organization.

I believe we were the best organized socialist party in the US, including in the area of our finances. Many others in the broader movement thought we must be getting help from abroad — the speculation was that Cuban gold or maybe sugar was involved,

but that wasn't the case.[§]

The Oberlin conference projected a campaign in the fall of 1970 to win 15,000 new subscribers to *The Militant*. I worked with Helena "Flax" Hermes, the paper's business manager, in organizing this campaign through the branches. Helena's nickname was "Flax," for the color of her hair.

The subscription campaign was a big success, with new readers surpassing our goal by 776 subs. Most of our subs were sold on campus and in the Black community.

Each week in *The Militant* a scoreboard listed how many subs were sold in each city. I wrote an article in the paper summing up the accomplishments of this campaign: "The target of 15,000 new readers was the highest of any *Militant* subscription drive since [the strike wave in] 1945, when over 22,000 were sold. Last spring, for example, *Militant* supporters sold 7,500 new subscriptions, which itself was then the largest such campaign since 1945.

"In 1945, there were 23 cities where *Militant* salespeople functioned. In [the fall of 1969] subscription drive, people in 41 cities accepted quotas. During the spring of this year, 55 cities were listed on the scoreboard. In the just-completed drive, there were 87 cities" listed. This geographical expansion reflected some expansion of the SWP into new areas, but primarily the rapid growth of the YSA.

The SWP was a *campaign* party. We set goals and then mobilized the whole party and YSA to achieve them. This was the legacy of the older generation of working class party leaders and members which the new generation had absorbed. When "there is a big job to be done like this drive," I wrote, "it is important to approach it on an organized, highly centralized *campaign* basis. The fact that this was done, especially in the final weeks of the drive, assured its success."[1]

In the spring of 1971, we scaled back our subscription goal to 7,500 renewals or new readers. One reason was that the party and YSA were mobilized to build the April 24 antiwar demonstrations. A more important factor was that the party entered into an intensive discussion period leading up to its convention in August.

[§] Years later, the Communist Party experienced a major split after the Soviet Union collapsed. Those who were expelled or broke away formed the Committees of Correspondence, which I was a member of for a time after my departure from the Socialist Workers Party (see Volume 2). I saw first hand that the financial consciousness of these ex-CP members was very low. The reason became apparent with the disclosure of letters between Gorbachev and CP head Gus Hall. These letters indicated that the Soviet government had been backing the American CP with huge subsidies.

47. THE 1971 SWP CONVENTION

The Young Socialist Alliance held its convention December 27-31, 1970 in New York City. There were 1,220 registered participants from 34 of the 50 states.

One indication of the emergence of the YSA as the strongest socialist youth group in the country was the presence of other organizations which observed the gathering and sought to meet and influence participants. The Young Workers Liberation League (youth group of the Communist Party), and Youth Against War and Fascism (youth group of the Workers World Party) attended. The CP paper, the *Daily World*, was sold from a table, and Socialist Party people also sold their literature.

Others set up literature tables, including the New York Women's Strike Coalition, Boston Female Liberation, the Red Women's Detachment, the Irish Republican movement, and representatives of the Palestine liberation movement. Personal greetings were delivered to the gathering by representatives of sections of the Fourth International from Canada, Great Britain, France, Italy, Belgium, Israel, Australia and New Zealand.

A panel on the Palestinian struggle included representatives from the Organization of Arab Students in the US, the Israeli Socialist Organization, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Committee Against US Intervention in the Middle East, the Washington-based Palestine House and the YSA.

Twenty-one high school and underground newspapers covered the convention.

The mainstream media paid far more attention to this convention than to any gathering of ours since the 1940s. New York's three major TV stations covered the five-day gathering, and the *New York Times* ran two lengthy news articles. Both UPI and AP wired stories that were picked up by newspapers around the country.

The *Daily World* claimed that only 300 people attended and, as usual, slandered the YSA as "objectively" counter-revolutionary. At one time, the CP was able to get away with such dishonest reporting, but this time it made them look foolish.

Elected delegates came from all the YSA chapters, but all YSA members who were not delegates were also invited to attend the convention sessions and to participate

in the many workshops. Five hundred non-members came as well, and 125 joined the YSA at the convention. Others joined soon after.

Reports and resolutions were presented on the international class struggle; the political situation in the United States especially as it related to youth, the antiwar and women's liberation movements; the struggle of Blacks, Chicanos and other Latinos, and Native Americans.

There were discussions of defense of democratic rights in the face of the Nixon administration's red-baiting, and of ultra-rightist attacks. Candida McCollum from the US Committee for Justice for Latin American Political Prisoners, gave a report on a trip she and I had just made to Mexico City, where we met with political prisoners, including Trotskyists.

A small group of delegates questioned the majority positions on the depth of the youth radicalization as revealed in the May 1970 student strike, and the emphasis on deepening the YSA's roots on the campuses. They proposed shifting the axis of YSA activity toward the trade unions. Most of these delegates were members of the SWP, so we knew there would be a challenge to the party's course in the upcoming SWP convention in the summer of 1971.

We aimed to prepare a draft political resolution as soon as possible. The Political Committee and National Committee could then discuss the document, propose changes, and adopt the general line of a resolution which could be distributed to the party membership before the opening of the three-month discussion period leading up to the convention. There would be discussion in the weekly branch meetings and special additional meetings, and all members could submit articles or resolutions to the party's *Discussion Bulletin*.

Jack Barnes was assigned by the PC to write a draft of the political resolution. While he worked on the draft at home, other party leaders including me kept the ship afloat. A few weeks went by, and we heard nothing from Jack. Then Farrell Dobbs approached me. He said Jack was having difficulty putting words onto paper, and asked if I could give him a hand. I agreed, and for the next few weeks I would walk the two miles from my home to his, arriving at 9 a.m. sharp, to work on the draft all day.

The first day I found that Jack had not written a single thing. He had a form of writer's block. He was a good editor, but couldn't for the life of him make a first draft. On that first day, we attempted to put something down, with both of us trying to write together. By 6 p.m., we had managed to squeeze out one tortured paragraph of a few sentences. We were so discouraged that we decided to splurge on a meal at O'Henry's Steak House, preceded by a few martinis.

I thought about the problem that night, and came up with a proposal that I put to Jack the next morning. I told him to start off talking about what he thought the general character of the resolution should be, since he had been thinking about it for weeks. This gave us a structure. Then I proposed that he talk about how the resolution should begin. He did so, and then I drafted that part in my own words. Then he would give some ideas of what should come next, and I would again dig out what I thought was pertinent and write it down.

While I wrote, Jack would go over what I had written, making changes. When I was finished with the next part, he would start editing that; I read and rewrote what he had finished editing. We went back and forth like this. By the end of the second day, we knew we had a procedure that would work, and we soon had a completed draft, which we gave to the Political Committee.

The members of the PC discussed the draft, and made oral and written suggestions. Since the PC included talented and experienced people like Joe Hansen, Farrell Dobbs, George Novack, George Breitman and Tom Kerry, the resolution became a powerful statement of our collective thinking. It then went to the members of the National Committee, who made more suggestions, and after the NC adopted it, we distributed an updated version to the membership as a whole on time for the start of the preconvention discussion.

The minority tendency also submitted a counter-document at the beginning of the discussion called "For a Proletarian Orientation."

Due to the fast moving developments in the US and the world, we were up to our necks in political activity while also making time for discussion. We were leaders on every level of the antiwar movement leading up to April 24, 1971, for example. But the intense activity spurred on the discussion. More articles by members were printed in that year's discussion bulletin than in any previous, and the discussion in the branches was lively and controversial.

For the first time in the SWP's history, a resolution on women's liberation, prepared by Mary-Alice Waters, was presented for discussion and adoption at the convention. This discussion was stimulated by the demonstrations in many cities on March 8, International Women's Day. Demonstrations at state capitals demanded the right to abortion.

In June, a meeting of different women's organizations in New York called a convention to establish a nation-wide coalition to fight for repeal of anti-abortion laws in each state. These laws had been adopted by overwhelmingly male legislatures, some even before women had the right to vote.

"On July 16-18, the 123rd anniversary of the first women's rights conference in

Seneca Falls, N.Y., more than 1,000 women gathered in New York City to work out a united plan of action aimed at winning total repeal of all laws restricting the right of women to abortion," Caroline Lund wrote in *The Militant.*[1]

The conference founded the Women's National Abortion Action Coalition, and called for demonstrations in the fall. This campaign became a focus of our women's liberation work until the Supreme Court legalized most abortions in 1973.

Another first for the party was a resolution on Chicano liberation, prepared by Antonio Camejo.

The Third National Chicano Liberation Conference was held in June in Denver. The movement had grown, and independent Raza Unida parties had been formed in Colorado, Texas, Arizona and California.

In the spring, Caroline and I took a short vacation in a cabin on the wooded estate of Flax Hermes' parents in Connecticut. We were relaxing outside, when I saw Joel Britton walking up the driveway, from the train station. I knew my vacation would be interrupted. He had Antonio's draft, and I had to edit it, which took a couple of days.

The discussion on the two counterposed political resolutions was fundamental. The dispute was not limited to whether to organize a campaign to send our young comrades into industry at that time. It revolved around a key concept of Marxism.

For Marxists, the struggle between the two major classes in capitalist society, the capitalists and the wage workers, is the central driving force of the development of modern society. What then to make of the fact that movements of Blacks and other oppressed nationalities, of students, and of women had come to the fore, while the basic organizations of workers as workers, the trade unions, had lagged behind or even been hostile to these developments?

We placed all these struggles in the framework of the class struggle between capitalists and workers. We saw them as manifestations of the working-class struggle, not as alien or counterposed to the working class. We saw the antiwar movement, for example, as an expression in the US class struggle of the international confrontation between US imperialism and the workers and peasants of Vietnam. The movement expressed the fundamental interests of the exploited workers of the United States in blocking the expansion and strengthening of our imperialist rulers.

The history of capitalism in the United States is completely intertwined with slavery, the Civil War, and the creation of the Black oppressed nationality after the failure of Reconstruction. Their revolt was not only the movement of a section of the working class (by the 1960s most Blacks were wage workers) but a cause which the workers movement must champion if it is ever to achieve unity and be successful in overthrowing capitalism.

The oppression of women goes back much further, to the origins of class society and patriarchy in antiquity. Capitalist society continued that oppression in new forms. All women from every class are oppressed by the patriarchal institution of the nuclear family, and are discriminated against in the major institutions of society. Women workers are routinely paid less than male workers, are excluded from many job categories, and suffer sexual harassment on and off the job. Women cannot be liberated short of a socialist revolution; and a socialist revolution led by the working class could not hope to succeed without championing women's liberation and without a broad upsurge of women, especially working women.

The majority's political resolution drew together these threads of the new radicalization, and reaffirmed in a new way a fundamental idea of revolutionary Marxism: To lead the class that would lead humanity to freedom, the revolutionary working class party must become the fighter against every form of oppression and exploitation. In Lenin's words, the revolutionary working class party must become the "tribune of the people," leading not just the working class in the overthrow of capitalist exploitation of wage labor, but the whole of society against every injustice.

The lessons of the movements of the new radicalization had to be incorporated into our program, and this is the vital work that the 1971 convention accomplished.

The rest of the organized left rejected this approach. A common view was that the movements of the new radicalization were not part of the key struggle. With the exception of the Black struggle, they were looked on, usually with a withering sneer, as "middle class" because of the large middle class as well as student components of these movements, or as secondary questions to be solved in passing by a socialist revolution. Even concerning the Black struggle, most other socialists rejected our view that a socialist revolution would be a *combined* revolution for Black self-determination and a revolution by the whole working class to overthrow capitalism. The idea that the movements of the new radicalization were part and parcel of the road to power for the working class was for the most part rejected.

This "workerist" approach of our opponents on the left was reflected inside the SWP. While not so crass as many of our competitors, the "For a Proletarian Orientation" supporters moved toward these views.

Based on our long involvement in the labor movement and our conviction that only the working class as a class could lead a revolution in the United States, we responded to the rise of new forces in the unions such as the development of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers in the auto union in 1969-70, and of the Miners for Democracy in the coal industry, and the United Farm Workers. At the convention, we held a panel discussion on our work in 20 different unions.

Our resolution reaffirmed the central role the working class must play in a socialist revolution. But it recognized that the working class as such had not yet thrown its weight into the struggle. We were over-optimistic, however, in projecting that this would begin to occur in the next period.

The Fourth International and the SWP had a history of opposition to Zionism and the establishment of the Jewish state of Israel. We reaffirmed and extended this tradition in a resolution adopted at the convention, "Israel and the Arab Revolution," prepared by Gus Horowitz.

The imperialists sponsored, and the Zionist movement organized, colonization of Jewish people from Europe and later Middle East countries into Palestine. They expropriated Palestinian lands and homes in wars backed by imperialist countries. This plunder is still taking place and even intensifying today.

We recognized that the large Jewish immigration and the rooting of subsequent generations in the territory of Palestine was a fact. The Palestine Liberation Organization, which developed a mass following by waging a militant struggle against the occupation of Palestinian lands after the 1967 war, rejected the demagogy of some Arab rulers who called for the Israeli Jews to be driven out of Palestine. The PLO, and particularly Fatah (its leading organization founded by Yasir Arafat), initiated the call for establishing a democratic and secular Palestine in which Jews and Arabs would live as equals. Within this framework, the Palestinian Diaspora could return to their country, and affirmative action measures to overcome the oppression of the Palestinian nation could be instituted.

Many European leaders of the Fourth International opposed this Palestinian slogan. They insisted that Israeli Jews had the right for self-determination, that is, the right to set up a separate Jewish state in Palestine as part of a socialist revolution. This position cut across the rights of the Palestinians to overcome their historic displacement and oppression by the creation of Israel. The Israeli Jews were the oppressor nationality, and calls for a Jewish state in Palestine, even if only in the future, could only have a reactionary meaning. It also represented a utopian dream that perhaps a smaller Israel could be forged that would not oppress the Palestinians. If and when Israeli Jews renounce that oppression, why wouldn't they want to live together as equal citizens with the Palestinians, as the PLO was offering?

A small minority in the SWP supported the majority in the FI on this issue and presented documents and oral arguments in the debate. Later we published both sides of the dispute in an educational bulletin.

After the convention ended, an educational conference was held at Oberlin College, somewhat like the one we held the year before. There were lectures and discussions

on Marxist theory, the history of the YSA and SWP, debates in the women's movement, the history of the US labor movement, and many other topics.

I gave a talk on the sexual revolution that was taking place among youth, and the contributions of the German psychoanalyst Wilhelm Reich. There was something of a renewal on the left of interest in Reich. The independent socialist magazine *Monthly Review* carried articles on his ideas, for example.[§]

As a result, the talk on Reich was very well-attended. The questions and discussions after were serious and reflected the ongoing problems youth face in relation to their own sexuality and sex as a political issue. But my main focus was the contribution

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[§] Reich had been a follower of the early ideas of Sigmund Freud. From his experience as a psychoanalyst, he became convinced that emotional illness and sexual misery that were widespread in the population were basically socially caused. Individual treatment with psychoanalytic techniques, however useful for the individual, could never get at the root causes of the emotional problems of the masses. Becoming a socialist, he recognized the necessity of a socialist revolution before the foundations for a healthy psychological and sexual life for the masses could be created.

On the social and historical level, Reich was attracted to the explanations of Marxism. He rejected Freud's idea that humans had the same basic unchangeable nature throughout history. Freud tried to explain human history by generalizing from the psychology he observed in present day humans in capitalist society.

Reich held that the deep psychology of people in capitalist society was rooted in the bourgeois family. In this he was in close agreement with Freud. But he argued that Marxism gave the explanation of the changing history of the family in its different forms as it evolved along with the transformations in the modes of production throughout human history.

Reich joined the German Social Democratic Party, and ran clinics for young people grappling with their sexuality and the sexual oppression and repression that results from the bourgeois family and society. He then joined the Communist Party.

With the victory of Nazism in Germany, and the consolidation of Stalinism in the USSR, Reich became disillusioned with the proletarian revolution. He retreated from the historical materialism of Marx back into psychology-based theories, finding the reasons for the defeat in Germany and the USSR in the supposed intrinsic psychological defects of the masses.

He became entrapped in a vicious circle, believing that the salvation of humanity could come about only through a social revolution, but that the social revolution was precluded as long as human sexuality was distorted, and it would remain distorted as long as there was no social revolution.

Reich lived in exile in the United States. His mental health deteriorated, and he developed increasingly bizarre ideas. He became a target of the witch-hunt, and was jailed for fraud because he attempted without success to put one of his ideas into practice — a box that would concentrate "orgone energy" to cure a wide range of emotional and physical ills, including cancer.

Wilhelm Reich died in prison, a largely discredited figure. His later views and therapeutic techniques retain a small cultish following to this day.

Reich had made in understanding aspects of the psychology of masses of people under capitalism, especially in his *Mass Psychology of Fascism*.

Reich noted the manipulation by demagogues of the sexual fears that represent part of the psychological substructure of racism. What Reich wrote about in this regard could be applied to the US. In America's Jim Crow South, whites were mobilized against Blacks by the taboo against Black males having sex with white women. Most lynchings of Black men occurred because of real or imagined transgressions of this type, often of the most trivial nature such as "looking the wrong way" at a white woman. But there was no taboo of white men having sex with Black women. Both sides of this sexual mythology were utilized to keep Blacks in their place.

Reich also helped us understand the role of sexual repression in disciplining class society in general and women in particular. George Orwell captured this in his anti-utopian novel about totalitarianism, *1984*. In his book, the rulers had set up an "Anti-Sex League" among the members of the ruling party which helped maintain obedience and directed repressed sexual energy into hatred for the party's enemies, real or imagined.

* * *

Just after the educational conference, we held a rally in nearby Cleveland to launch our 1972 election campaign. Our candidates were Linda Jenness for President and Andrew Pulley for Vice President. The campaign opened more than a year before the election, because we had the opportunity to reach more people than ever before. It turned into the largest and most effective socialist electoral effort since Eugene V. Debs' campaign from jail in 1920.

Soon after the convention, in late August, Nixon announced a freeze on wages and prices. This was presented as an anti-inflation measure (based on the fabrication that rising wages are the prime cause of inflation). In fact, inflation was powered by deficit spending for the war. As in other times when wage-price freezes had been introduced, wages were frozen by the corporations with government backing, but prices kept going up. The result was a direct government attack on the working class's standard of living, the first since the aftermath of World War II.

Nixon also took the dollar off the gold standard. The dollar had been pegged to a certain amount of gold, at what had become an increasingly unrealistic rate. Theoretically, other countries could turn in the dollars they held to the US treasury and receive a disproportionately large amount of gold in return. This hadn't happened in the post-Second-World-War period, because the dollar was "good as gold" and had become the international currency. But with the inflation of the dollar, its real value fell while its value in gold was held to a high point.

Nixon let the price of gold in dollars float. This was aimed at preventing sharp deterioration of the US position vis-à-vis its trading partners, primarily its imperialist competitors**.**

Some older members of the National Committee in the San Francisco Bay Area predicted an immediate change in working class consciousness that would make the resolution we had just adopted irrelevant, and that we should make a big turn to union work. On the Political Committee, Tom Kerry was inclined to this view**.** Other experienced trade unionists like Farrell Dobbs and Frank Lovell, were more skeptical, though open-minded about what might happen.

If the prediction had come true, the gains we had made in our understanding of the radicalization — and the basic approach of the resolution we had adopted — were still valid, whatever tactical changes might be required. This would simply mean that the resolution's expectation of a broad response of workers to changing economic conditions had been fulfilled more quickly than any of us expected. A radicalization of the workers could only have deepened the radicalization of youth, women, Blacks and other oppressed nationaIities.

I was uncomfortable with basing action on predictions and not on visible movement within the working class. There was tension on these points in the Political Committee.

I was functioning as the de facto National Secretary. Farrell Dobbs had begun writing his first book on the Teamsters in the 1930s, *Teamster Rebellion*, which covered the 1934 strikes in Minneapolis which the Trotskyists had led. Jack and Mary-Alice had taken a well-deserved vacation camping somewhere in Wisconsin, and then would move to Europe to help on the United Secretariat. I was in the position of acting as the point man resisting what I feared was an attempt to overturn the convention decisions.

I had a talk with Farrell, who proposed a compromise. We would urge the branches to try out plant-gate sales at workplaces. *The Militant* would feature articles about how the wage-price freeze would mean attacks on the workers' standard of living. We called on the union leadership to call for an emergency "Congress of Labor" to organize to fight Nixon's move. This campaign would help us see just what the reactions of the workers were. The PC adopted this course.

I also wanted to at least let Jack know what was afoot. By calling the National Parks Service I got a ranger to roust Jack from his campground to a phone. He agreed with the proposed course.

The AFL-CIO bureaucracy initially spoke against the wage-price freeze, but soon capitulated to Nixon. Rank-and-file workers didn't know how to respond, and there was no movement from below against Nixon's decree. The difference in the party leadership turned out to be a tempest in a teapot.

48. The End of the War

As the huge April 24, 1971 march approached, support began to develop in unlikely places. Some office workers for the FBI, for example, volunteered to help out in the NPAC office, and got fired by the agency. Even in fairly high levels of the government, there were people who became committed opponents of the war.

Two researchers for the Rand Corporation, a government think tank, had access to a top-secret report created by the Pentagon that documented the involvement of the United States in Vietnam from 1945 up to mid-1968. The report comprised 47 volumes, some 7,000 pages. Only 15 copies of the report were made. Since it was supposed to be seen only by a handful of people with top security clearances, it told the truth, in contrast to the lies the government had spoon-fed the public about the reasons for the war.

The two researchers were Daniel Ellsberg and Anthony Russo. They secretly copied the entire study, and gave it to the *New York Times* in March 1971. The *Times* worked for three months preparing a series of articles based on the documents, which would become known as the Pentagon Papers. That the top editors of the leading capitalist newspaper were prepared to publish state secrets meant that important sectors of the ruling class had decided that the war had become unwinable, and were putting pressure on the Nixon administration to end it.

The first article appeared in the *Times* on June 13. The Nixon administration got a court injunction to stop publication after the first three were printed. But other major newspapers printed excerpts. At the end of the month, the Supreme Court by a six-to-three vote lifted the injunction and allowed publication.

This was an extraordinary development. Ellsberg and Russo violated "national security" laws (though not the Constitution). And so did the *Times*. But the administration could not stop publication of the Pentagon Papers, or even prosecute Ellsberg and Russo, so great was opposition to the war.

What the Papers documented was what the antiwar movement had been saying all along, and more. They proved that successive administrations — under Truman,

Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon — progressively deepened US involvement in an attempt to defeat the Vietnamese people's struggle for national liberation and social progress.

During World War II, the liberation movement fought the Japanese occupation. After the war, they fought the French who returned to re-conquer their rebellious colony. After the French defeat in 1954, the country was divided in two, with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in the North, and the Republic of Vietnam in the South. South Vietnam came increasingly under US control through puppet governments.

The 1954 division of the country did not reflect the situation on the ground. The Vietnamese had defeated the French throughout the country. But Washington insisted upon an international conference to determine Vietnam's fate. President Eisenhower had considered using atomic weapons to stave off the French defeat. This was the context in which Moscow and Beijing came to the conference. They agreed to the division of Vietnam, and pressured the liberation forces to yield. The US hoped to use the South as a launching pad to reclaim the whole country.

In the South, however, a peasant uprising began against the landlords who returned to reclaim their land after the 1954 division of the country. The fight for land reform became intertwined with the fight to unify the country. The Pentagon Papers documented in detail that the US was intervening in a revolutionary civil war in Vietnam, not defending South Vietnam from aggression by North Vietnam, and had been doing so since 1945.

NPAC held a conference of some 2,300 in July, 1971, in the midst of the exposure of the Pentagon Papers. The conference called for demonstrations in October, in cities around the country. They were large but not as large as the spring action. This did not signify any lessening of antiwar sentiment, which was still growing. But Nixon had continued to withdraw troops piecemeal, and those that remained were now supposed to be largely kept out of combat, which was to be taken over by the US.-backed Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN). Nixon's trip to China in February 1972, to seek a détente with Beijing, also led many to think the war would be over shortly.

Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had devised the strategy of seeking détente with both China and the USSR. In return for normalizing relations somewhat with both countries, Kissinger wanted them to compete with each other to put pressure on North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front to accept terms in the Paris negotiations more favorable to Washington.

But while Nixon was talking peace, the US was stepping up the air war. After Christmas, the heaviest bombing of the North to date was launched, which marked a

major escalation of the air war over Laos as well as Vietnam. Hanoi and the NLF responded with a major offensive in the South by NLF troops and, for the first time, by North Vietnamese regulars. The offensive was not a guerrilla action, but a conventional one. The South's army was badly mauled in the first encounters, but the revolutionary offensive was slowed, but not broken, by massive use of US air power. Nixon ordered the renewal of massive bombing on Hanoi and the port of Haiphong.

There was a pickup of antiwar activity on campus in response to these events. NPAC had called for demonstrations on April 22, 1972, which were held in New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco.

I participated in the demonstration in New York. It was held in pouring rain. It was also unseasonably cold. There was a sea of umbrellas, 100,000 of them. John Lennon sang and led the crowd in chants of "Out Now!" I was with a French comrade, whom we knew as Vergeat. He was a very likeable person, and spoke excellent English. He was in the United States to work with Gus Horowitz to attempt to write a common Fourth International document on the Mideast. (The effort failed.) Looking out over the cold, wet but determined crowd, he turned to me and said, "This is a great victory for you," meaning the SWP.

On May 8, Nixon announced that he was implementing a blockade of Haiphong and other North Vietnamese ports. Immediately, demonstrations broke out across the United States. The *New York Times* reported, "The coast to coast outburst of demonstrations was the most turbulent since May 1970 …"[1]

A march on Washington was called for May 21in a spirit of unity by NPAC, PCPJ, and other groups such as SANE and Americans for Democratic Action which were more mainstream.

The blockade appeared to represent a reckless escalation of the war. Most of the aid Vietnam received, including from the USSR, was through Haiphong. This raised the possibility of a major confrontation with Moscow.

China's response to the blockade was low key, demonstrating the success of the Nixon-Kissinger policy of détente with China. Nixon had also scheduled a trip to Moscow for May 22. The whole world was watching, waiting to see what the Kremlin would do. Would it go ahead with the trip in the midst of the blockade and the war's most intensive bombing of North Vietnam? Unfortunately, that's what the Soviet regime did.

China and the USSR achieved détente with the US on the backs of the struggling Vietnamese. I was sickened by the photos of Nixon and Brezhnev smiling and shaking hands while this torrent of death was being rained on Vietnam. The antiwar forces had been kicked in the gut, and the May 21 action was relatively small, 15,000.

Two weeks before Nixon's trip to Moscow, Max Frankel wrote in the *New York Times*, "If the Moscow meeting still begins on schedule two weeks hence, then the situation in Vietnam will now be a principal item on the agenda … In the name of 'saving the peace' between themselves, the major powers could finally attempt to impose a bargained peace on Indochina."[2]

Although it would take some time — which included the most massive bombing of the war against North Vietnam during the Christmas 1972 period in an effort to force more concessions from the Vietnamese fighters — the Paris peace talks resulted in an agreement signed in January, 1973. The US would withdraw its combat troops. A cease-fire was agreed to. South Vietnam was carved up into zones controlled by the Saigon government and others by the forces of the NLF and North Vietnam which, unlike in the 1954 Geneva Agreement, were not required to withdraw to the North. Both sides could replenish military equipment as it became used up.

But since the US had used the last months before the accord to massively build up Saigon's army, and the USSR and China didn't do the same for the revolutionary forces, this provision was to Saigon's advantage. The US also kept thousands of "civilian advisers" to the regime in the South — a thinly disguised military support network.[§]

The agreement and withdrawal of the last US combat troops meant the end of the antiwar movement as a mass movement. NPAC and the SMC still maintained themselves with skeleton staffs, in reserve, in case Washington once again sent troops.

But the war did not cease. The Saigon regime almost immediately broke the cease fire, and fighting continued for two more years, with another 200,000 deaths.

In early 1975, the revolutionary forces launched an offensive, which rapidly led to a rout of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), the South Vietnamese army. The NLF and North Vietnamese troops were unable to move forward fast enough to keep up with the retreating ARVN troops, whose discipline was disintegrating. The revolutionary forces had to fight some bitter battles with the defenders of the US-run regime. But ARVN, for the most part, was no longer an army but a fleeing swarm of individuals tearing off their uniforms and abandoning their equipment and weapons, which fell into the hands of the NLF-North Vietnamese troops.

The rout demonstrated clearly that the out-gunned revolutionary forces retained their morale, while the ARVN's was collapsing. That's because the revolutionaries were fighting for what they believed in — the unity of Vietnam and an end of the

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[§] The combined aid that the USSR and China delivered to North Vietnam from 1966 to 1972 amounted to $4.1 billion. In the same period, the US sent $101 billion to South Vietnam.

capitalist-landlord regime. The ARVN troops believed in nothing except saving their own skins.

By this time Nixon had resigned — the first US President to do so. His resignation came about as a result of the Watergate scandal, itself a consequence of Washington's inability to win the war, and a decade of civil rights, antiwar, and other protests across the United States. Vice President Gerald Ford became President. On April 10, Ford asked Congress to provide another $1 billion to the tottering regime in Saigon by April 19. This proposal was a result of panic; the money couldn't even be delivered to prop up the regime because that regime was disintegrating.

There were spontaneous demonstrations in parts of the country demanding the complete withdrawal of the US from Vietnam. A demonstration for jobs called by sections of the labor movement for April 26 in Washington became also an antiwar event of some 60,000. Many carried signs reading "Jobs, Not War."

On April 30, the last remaining US troops in Vietnam, the Marine guards at the US Embassy, were lifted off the roof by helicopter in a vivid scene watched on TV around the world. Some Vietnamese who were desperate to escape the revolutionary tide hung on to the helicopter's skids.

Four hours later, the revolutionary troops marched into Saigon, which would soon be renamed Ho Chi Minh City.

It is hard for me to express the deep joy I felt as I watched these scenes on TV and in the newspapers. The US masters of war had been defeated. Vietnam was united and under a worker-peasant regime.

I was proud to have played a small part in this victory. I was proud of the SWP for its part. I was proud of all the antiwar fighters in the US and around the world, whatever differences we may have had. And I was especially proud of the people of Vietnam, this poor nation that stood up to the most powerful and evil war machine on Earth, and defeated it.

49. FUNCTIONING AS NATIONAL SECRETARY

At the August 1971 SWP convention, some of the young leaders of the French Communist League proposed that the SWP again send a team of young leaders to work in the International center in Brussels. No SWP leader had resided in Europe since Caroline and I left in May 1970. They urged that the US representatives live in Paris, where they would also work with the young leaders of the CL. The proposal was an effort to begin overcoming the factionalism that had developed in the Fourth International since the 1969 World Congress.

Farrell and Jack called me to a meeting at Jack's apartment. They proposed that we send Jack and Mary-Alice. Jack was functioning as National Secretary although Farrell formally held that post. They recommended that I replace Jack in that role.

I never imagined myself as the central executive officer of the party. My talents lay in being part of the leadership team that the National Secretary organized. But I understood the importance of this attempt to deepen our international collaboration, and with some trepidation, agreed to the proposal.

I have already written about the small flap in the party leadership concerning the Nixon wage-price freeze. I did not have the rapport with some of the older party leaders that Jack had, especially with Tom Kerry. Most of the younger party central leaders tended to leave it up to Jack to work most closely with the older leaders. However, my relations with Farrell Dobbs were quite close, and he helped me on a few important occasions during this period.

Shortly after the August convention, a great prisoners' uprising took place at the New York State prison in Attica, a rural town in upstate New York. This event deepened and extended the radicalization. We sent Derrick Morrison to Attica to report for *The Militant*.

The rebellion was organized mostly by the Black and Latino prisoners, but some whites were leaders also. There was little racial animosity during the uprising. The

prisoners took over several cell blocks and held 41 guards and civilian prison workers hostage.

Their basic demand was to be treated as human beings. They declared: "The entire incident that has erupted here at Attica is a result … of the unmitigated oppression wrought by the racist administration network of this prison.... We are men.... We are not beasts, and we do not intend to be beaten or driven as such...."[1]

They made many concrete demands about prison conditions, the rights of religious prisoners, access to lawyers, the end of arbitrary punishments, the needs of Spanish-speaking prisoners, changes in the prison administration, and the right of prisoners to elect committees to negotiate with the prison authorities.

After four days, during which a committee of public figures acted as a go-between, negotiations between the prisoners and the state seemed to be progressing. In reality, the Rockefeller administration was readying a full-scale armed attack.

The result was a massacre that murdered 50 people, including about 10 of the hostages. The Governor's office issued reports, presented as fact in the major media, that prisoners were cutting hostages' throats and castrating them. But the hostages, like the prisoners, were proven to have been murdered by police bullets in the unrelenting barrage.

Wounded prisoners were denied treatment. All were forced to strip naked and lie on the floor while being beaten with truncheons, kicked, and otherwise abused. News of the atrocity leaked out, but it was 30 years before the government admitted wrongdoing and some victims were compensated.

As we decided at the 1971 convention, our activity that fall centered on the speaking tours of Linda Jenness and Andrew Pulley which opened our presidential campaign. In tandem with the tours, we aimed to win 30,000 introductory subscriptions to *The Militant*, the most ambitious goal we had ever set. When this subscription drive ended in November, we had sold more than 32,000. And, of course, we were building the fall antiwar actions.

We also joined in a very broad effort to save the young Black professor Angela Davis, an antiracist activist who was a member of the Communist Party. She was being railroaded on charges of having helped unjustly jailed Black militants who attempted to escape their captors.

In 1969, the regents of the University of California fired her from her job as assistant professor of philosophy for being a member of the Communist Party. A judge overturned the firing. In 1970, the regents tried again, this time citing her efforts to defend Black Panther Party victims and three Black inmates in Soledad State Prison being framed up on charges of murdering a guard. Jonathan Jackson, a brother of one

of the inmates, worked with Davis on the Soledad case.

In June, 1970, Jackson walked into a courtroom where a Black inmate of San Quentin prison was on trial for assaulting a guard. He gave weapons to the defendant and two other prisoners who were there as witnesses, and they seized five hostages, including the judge. San Quentin guards and police opened fire, killing Jackson, the defendant, one of the inmate witnesses, and the judge.

Based on the fact that Jackson had worked with Davis in the Soledad defense, Davis was charged with murder. She avoided capture and was put on the FBI's "10 most wanted" list, and was characterized as "armed and dangerous." She managed to remain in hiding until October, and the drama of the hunt for her made her case a *cause célèbre*. After her capture, the fight against the attempted judicial railroad won wide support from the Black and antiwar movements, Chicano struggle, women's movement, and other struggles.

Finally brought to trial in May 1972 she was found not guilty by a jury from which Blacks had been excluded.

The Militant commented, "Angela Davis is free! A massive protest movement that reached into every corner of the globe freed her.

"Millions saw her fate as their own. To Blacks, women, prisoners, and radicals she was the victim of the same racist oppression, sexist discrimination, and illegal harassment they face daily…

"The capitalist government from President Nixon to [California] Governor Reagan tried to make an example of Angela Davis. They framed her because of her affiliation to the Communist Party and her political activities."[2]

The Militant hailed the trial outcome as a victory of all who fought for a better and more humane world.

Earlier, in March, the Soledad defendants were found not guilty. This was a setback to the prison authorities who were using the prosecution to suppress the rising movement within the prison. Two days before the trial began, one of the defendants, George Jackson, the brother of Jonathan Jackson, was murdered by guards.

The prosecution and the judge whipped up a scare campaign, claiming the remaining defendants were so dangerous that they had to be flown to the courthouse each day by helicopter, and in leg and arm shackles.

The defense lawyers, however, destroyed the prosecution's case, proving that three of the witnesses were directly threatened with reprisals if they didn't testify, and that other evidence had been obtained through bribery.

The Davis and the Soledad verdicts showed the growing distrust of many concerning the government's attempts to victimize radicals and other defendants. This

phenomenon became known as "the revolt of the juries."

Instead of another subscription drive in the spring, we sought to raise the number of single issues sold by the party branches and YSA chapters. Our goal was to make street sales a more regular part of weekly branch activity. Total weekly sales were then about 4,000 per week, and, in collaboration with the branches, a goal of 7,000 was set. In the course of the drive, sales rose to 8,000.

On January 30, 1972, British paratroopers shot and killed 13 peaceful and unarmed Irish nationalist demonstrators in Derry, a city in the British colony of Northern Ireland. Many more were injured. The event became known as "Bloody Sunday."

The massacre triggered demonstrations throughout Ireland, and the world. The humanitarian mask of British imperialism was ripped off and its ugly face revealed for the world to see in the television news footage of the slaughter.

A new stage of the Irish struggle began. The SWP strengthened ties to the Irish movement, both to Sinn Fein and to younger leaders that had emerged in the Peoples Democracy civil rights movement, especially Bernadette Devlin. Gerry Foley, a mainstay on the staff of *Intercontinental Press*, visited Ireland to present first-hand coverage and interviews for our press.

Early in February, rebellious auto workers at the General Motors' plant in Lordstown, Ohio, struck against speedup. We had been following this local, which was mostly young, and which had drawn some attention nationally for its militant actions.

The Women's National Abortion Action Coalition (WONAAC), which SWP and YSA women helped build, held a broad conference in Boston on February 13 that drew 1,308 participants. The conference debated and resolved many issues facing the movement. One of these echoed debates in the antiwar movement. The International Socialists presented a motion to exclude all politicians from the Democratic or Republican parties from speaking on WONAAC platforms.

Women at the meeting who were candidates in Democratic Party primaries explained that would exclude them. The measure was really aimed at driving out the many women who supported them as well, and assuring control of the movement by left sects**.** Linda Jenness spoke for the SWP, pointing out that she was running against the Democrats and Republicans, but that she was "glad to work with women from those parties" to fight to repeal the laws banning abortion. The IS motion was roundly defeated.

On March 12, a National Black Political Convention was held in Gary, Indiana. About 8,000 Blacks attended, attesting to the growing interest in Black political action. While Black Democrats and their allies kept the discussion and decisions within

boundaries they could live with, there was evidence of interest in independent Black political action among the more militant participants.

On May 11-14, 1972, the SWP National Committee held a meeting in New York. I gave the political report, which focused on the Vietnam War and Nixon's latest escalation. I also described the new economic situation which had produced Nixon's wage controls. This measure signaled a new ruling class offensive against the living standards of working people.

Peter Camejo, who had recently made a tour of various countries in Latin America, reported on his experiences. This included the continuing debate in the Fourth International on the orientation toward rural guerrilla war in Latin America. The debate was becoming more concrete because Latin American groups were following different orientations and thus the counterposed lines had been tested in life. Jack Barnes and Mary-Alice Waters gave reports on the situation in the Fourth International as a whole.

While I was functioning as National Secretary, Betsey Stone and Lew Jones took on most tasks of the National Organization Secretary. Betsey concentrated on keeping in touch with the branches and helping them with their problems. Sometimes this would entail asking members to move to a different city to strengthen the branch there. Lew worked with the national office and the national party departments. Lew and Betsey gave reports on the organizational tasks of the SWP.

Larry Seigle, the campaign manager for the Jenness-Pulley ticket, outlined plans for the campaign. Just after the national committee meeting, Linda Jenness, who spoke Spanish, made a speaking tour in Mexico, Peru and Argentina. Her anti-imperialist and socialist message was well received, and there was extensive media coverage in those countries.

During our National Committee meeting, a wave of strikes in Québec protested the jailing of three union leaders for defying strike-breaking injunctions. Once again the Québecois workers showed their vanguard role in relation to their English Canadian counterparts.

On May 27, 25,000 people, mostly Black, marched and rallied in Washington D.C. on African Liberation Day.

The next day, 500 dissident coal miners, organized by Miners for Democracy, met in Wheeling, West Virginia, to choose candidates to oppose the corrupt United Mine Workers bureaucracy headed by Tony Boyle. Boyle was under indictment at the time for the murder of Miners for Democracy leader Joseph Yablonski and his family. Boyle was eventually convicted and imprisoned.

Frank Lovell reported on the miners' convention for *The Militant*. Joel Britton was the editor and thought that Frank's article was too favorable to the Miners for

Democracy. Both Frank and Joel came into my office to discuss the article. I sided with Frank, and Joel accepted our judgment.

The National Committee meeting marked a new stage in the transition in leadership from the old generation to the new. Farrell Dobbs would often make the point to me that as materialists (in the philosophical sense) we had to admit the fact of death and that the older people wouldn't be around forever.

James P. Cannon, the party's National Chairman, resisted stepping down from the National Committee. A formula was worked out, largely by Farrell's intervention. Cannon was elected National Chairman Emeritus. Jack Barnes was elected National Secretary, replacing Dobbs. I was elected National Organization Secretary, replacing Barnes. The post of National Chairman was left vacant. As part of the transition, Farrell Dobbs and George Novack proposed they leave their positions as regular members of the National Committee and be elected instead to advisory status on the National Committee. They joined Tom Kerry who already held that position. All three were also elected as consultative members of the Political Committee.

50. Discussion on Gay Liberation

Since women are oppressed as a sex, the women's movement raised many questions about sexuality and how it has been shaped and distorted in our society to perpetuate the oppression of women, such as in the sexual objectification of women, the transformation of sex into a commodity, and the possessive relations bred by this system.

Feminist women had to face hostility from backward males and females who thought feminists were "uppity" and "unladylike" for fighting for their rights. They were accused of being "unfeminine" — in other words, lesbians or lesbian-like. Fear and prejudice reinforced by these characterizations led to a debate in the women's movement over whether lesbians could participate in the movement as equals. Like redbaiting, lesbian baiting was divisive and was roundly rejected by principled feminists. This fight and victory was one source of the new gay and lesbian liberation movement.

Another was the tendency of radicalized youth to revolt against the debilitating and hypocritical sexual norms of a sick racist and sexist society. Gay and lesbian people suffered especially under these norms. A turning point came in 1969, when police raided a gay bar, the Stonewall, in New York City's Greenwich Village. Such raids were commonplace since homosexuality was outlawed in most states. The cops would routinely make some arrests and get their jollies off by clubbing bar patrons, who had to keep silent in many cases to avoid being exposed.

That night, however, fear was overcome by human solidarity, and the so-called "queers" fought back, much to the shock of the cops. News of the fightback rapidly spread throughout the country, giving a new impetus to the fight for gay rights.

As I explained in a previous chapter, the SWP had earlier been moving toward a policy of excluding homosexuals from membership. This ran against the grain of the overwhelming support the new gay liberation movement quickly gained among radicalized youth, including in the SWP and YSA. We were forced by the rise of the movement itself to come to terms with this issue of human rights.

The gay liberation movement and our membership policy was a subject of informal discussion at our first Oberlin conference in August 1970. Many comrades, including party leaders, who had been "in the closet," began to come out. Our first leadership challenge was to repudiate the policy of barring homosexuals from membership. This was done in a report by Jack Barnes adopted by the Political Committee in November 1970. The report also explained the rise of the gay liberation movement as part of the radicalization, and the progressive content of the fight of gays and lesbians against their oppression.

At the May 1971 plenum of the National Committee, a short motion was adopted that gave "unconditional support to the struggles of homosexuals for full democratic rights including full civil and human rights, and against all forms of discrimination and oppression they suffer under capitalism." The Political Committee also organized an information-gathering assessment of the movement. Gay and lesbian comrades began to attend meetings of various groups, and wrote reports on what they had found out about them.

There was a sharp reaction of unease in a section of the party with this initiative to learn more about the movement. It became clear that a division was brewing. A section of the party recoiled at having any direct participation in the gay liberation movement. The leadership thought that a democratic political discussion was necessary, so that these members would not feel they faced a *fait accompli*.

At the August 1971 SWP convention, we ratified the positions adopted by the May NC. But we also called a halt to the information-gathering participation in the movement, and authorized the new National Committee elected by the convention to open a written discussion on the gay movement among the membership in the Discussion Bulletin.

We waited until the May 1972 plenum of the NC to open this discussion, to give some time for members to soberly consider the question. The written discussion was to be followed by a decision of the National Committee.

I wrote the initial article to kick off the discussion. I did this as an individual, and the Political Committee did not take any position as a committee at this stage. Everyone else on the Political Committee was all too happy for me to play the leadership role in the discussion. As could be predicted, the discussion was lively and sharp, and lasted about three months in the summer of 1972.

My article discussed the ways gays and lesbians are oppressed, and reaffirmed our unconditional support to their struggle. It noted that in "1969 and 1970, gay liberation organizations appeared in major cities and on campuses across the country. The 'coming out' of organized gay liberation groups reflects a growing mood,

especially among young homosexuals, to reject self-hatred and to affirm their humanity, as well as a desire to fight discrimination."

I also summed up what we had learned about the movement. A section of the movement had turned inward, away from action, and became part of the ultraleft and commune-oriented current among young people. Activist groups remained, but the situation was very uneven throughout the country. In some areas, groups had collapsed, in others there were viable organizations. There was no national gay liberation organization that could be a framework for our organized participation. Therefore I proposed that "it would be a mistake to attempt to carry out a national party intervention in the gay liberation movement at the present time." Where local struggles occurred, I wrote, the branches should decide how to relate to them, within the framework of the totality of the tasks the party had decided on.

While this proposal became an issue in the debate, there were two other points I raised which became controversial.

One was that I proposed the party not take a position on why homosexuality exists. This question was (and still is) in the early stages of scientific study, and in any case, is beyond the purpose of a political party. The other was a sketch of what I thought about the origins of the oppression of gay people.

I noted that gays are not a class in the Marxist sense of having a defined relation to the means of production. Nor are they an oppressed nationality. They play no special role in the family, as women do, or in any other social structure. The oppression faced by gay people stems from prejudice against same-sex sexual activity. The traditional sexual morality that outlaws same-sex sexuality is a product of the family system in capitalist society, and consists of strictures of sexual conduct which help preserve family relationships in class society, including the subordination of women. Discrimination against gay people is a result of this deep-seated prejudice.[1]

The discussion centered in the main on criticisms of my initial article, from opposing points of view. One side, represented by Nat Weinstein and my brother Roland, opposed any participation by the party in the movement. The other side argued that we should go beyond the proposals I made, both in terms of the extent of party involvement in the movement and of taking a position on a whole range of questions dealing with sexuality.

Roland Sheppard summed up the argument of his side in the discussion: "The question, at the present time, is whether to actively intervene [in the working class] to take these prejudices [against gays] head on. It must never be forgotten that we are a very small propaganda group-party with no mass base and isolated from the [working] class in general. I have not seen anything written which would demonstrate that we

would not be further isolated from the class if we take up [the gay liberation] struggle, or that we would not have needless barriers to the party when the class starts to radicalize."[2]

Nat Weinstein had the opinion that only those homosexuals who were out of the closet were subject to oppression, and that the great majority would never come out of the closet. This majority of homosexuals suffered only a "psychological oppression."[3]

On the other side, there was a gamut of positions, ranging from disagreeing with my assessment of where the movement stood all the way over to arguing that homosexuality was superior to heterosexuality and was in and of itself revolutionary. Some contributions tried to predict what sexual relations would be like in the communist future, and that we should take a position on the question. Others said that the gay liberation movement had the same social weight as the Black and women's movements.

I wrote a reply near the end of the discussion, taking up the main arguments from both sides. This article became the framework for the drafting of a "Memorandum on the Gay Liberation Movement" that I prepared for the Political Committee. This was submitted to the April 1973 plenum of the National Committee.

While I was working on this draft, Farrell Dobbs asked to talk to me. I had intended to include the position I had already written that, given the state of the movement, we couldn't project an organized national party participation in it, but that we leave it up to the branches to relate to concrete local activities and organizations. Farrell came right to the point. He said that the opposition in the party to having anything to do with the movement was based "purely and simply on prejudice." But, he said, if we stuck with the position I had outlined, it would split the party, and we therefore had to reject any reallocation of our forces to the movement by the branches. In other words, we had to capitulate to prejudice. Farrell was never one to mince words.

It was true that Roland Sheppard and Nat Weinstein spoke for a substantial layer in the party. One central party leader who agreed with them was Tom Kerry for example, although he didn't write anything on the subject.

Harry Ring had written an article in the discussion urging that we reject the notion, still prevalent in psychiatric circles, that homosexuality was a mental illness. He wrote, "it is difficult for me to conceive how a materialist can characterize as 'unnatural' a phenomenon that appears in humankind and animals; in every known period of human history; in all forms of societies; and flourishes so readily in conditions of sexual segregation such as prisons, armies, schools, etc."[4]

Farrell had great moral weight with me. Jack Barnes and I talked it over, and came to agreement with Farrell's point. I dropped the position in the memorandum that the

branches should relate to local struggles and organizations. However, I sharpened our political position of support to gay liberation, including Harry Ring's point about homosexuality not being a mental illness. We summed up, "This development of the gay liberation movement is progressive. It confronts and helps break down the reactionary morality that helps preserve class society. The struggle of gay people for their rights is directed against the capitalist government, and is in the interests of socialism, which can only be built by the mobilization of the working class and its allies in the historic task of rebuilding society, eliminating every vestige of discrimination and oppression spawned by class society, including the oppression of gay people." This position formed the basis of our public stance in our press and election campaigns.

I also rejected taking any position on the relative merits of homosexuality or heterosexuality. We pointed to the fact that the social weight of the gay liberation movement was much less than that of the women's or Black movements.

The memorandum was adopted unanimously by the National Commiittee, and was approved at the party's convention in the summer of 1973. The great majority of comrades agreed with it, including gay and lesbian members. Some didn't and over time left the party. We lost some good people as a result. One of these was Howard Wallace, who would go on to become a leading figure in the gay and labor movements in the San Francisco area.

Another member who quit was a young writer for the party, David Thorstad. After he left, he became a founder of the North American Man-Boy Love Association, which advocates pedophilia. The memorandum stated that the sexuality of all of us is distorted in a class-divided and still patriarchic society. Because of this, it is a mistake to idealize any of the sexual manifestations of today's society as the way humans will be once they are free in a classless society.

Pedophilia — whether heterosexual or homosexual — is basically the use of adult status, power, authority, and influence to sexually exploit children and youth**.** It is a sickness, and does severe psychological damage to the young victims. When NAMBLA was formed, we characterized it as reactionary and as a threat to the broad support that the fight for gay rights was winning.

Our decision not to allocate forces to the gay liberation movement hurt us in another way, in addition to losing some good comrades. We missed getting to know some activists and potential leaders. Workers World continued to participate in the movement, and recruited some strong individuals as a result.

Looking back, I now do not think the party would have split over the question of involvement in local gay rights struggles. Those who opposed any intervention in the

movement were, I believe, in agreement with the party's overall course, and would not have attempted to set up a rival organization.

The radicalization was coming to a close, although its achievements and consequences would remain an important factor in US politics for decades to come. The gay liberation movement, as part of the radicalization, retreated as a mass-action movement although the changes in cultural norms and decline in prejudice resulting from the radicalization made possible further advances for gay rights over the years.

After the dust settled over time following the 1973 convention, some party branches in fact did begin to participate in the movement where warranted. In 1976, the New York branch, for example, had a large fraction of comrades, both gay and straight, who related to it.

As a party in the late 1960s and early 1970s, we were marked by the times. Prejudices in the society and the working class were reflected in the party, as were the new forces breaking down those prejudices. On the question of the liberation of gays and lesbians, the International Socialists and Workers World were ahead of us. But we were way ahead of most other socialist groups, especially those who were of Stalinist origin, whether of the pro-Moscow or pro-Beijing variety. While the Bolsheviks had abolished anti-homosexual laws in the revolution, the Stalinist counter-revolution had re-imposed them. The Communist Party USA and the various Maoist groups all held the view that homosexuality was a counter-revolutionary "bourgeois" deviation.[§]

[§] For a discussion of the Maoist position, see Max Elbaum's *Revolution in the Air*, Verso, 2002.

51. The 1973 Party Convention

More than 1,100 people attended the educational conference held at Oberlin College in August 1972. It centered around international questions, particularly those that were being debated in the deepening factional struggle in the Fourth International.

The conference kicked off the final months of our 1972 presidential election campaign, and many local and state campaigns. Young Socialists for Jenness and Pulley (YSJP) organized tours to reach out to young people at campuses and high schools across the country once school opened. The YSJP was broader than the YSA, signing up young people who wanted to support the socialist campaign. On many campuses YSJP participated in mock presidential elections in the fall (the voting age was still 21, so many students couldn't vote in the regular elections), and got substantial votes for the SWP ticket. Many who were first attracted to the election campaign joined the YSA after the elections.

We carried out a big expansion of the national headquarters at 410 West Street. The company that owned the building was going out of business. They approached us to see if we would want to buy the building, offering to turn over their low-interest loan from the Small Business Administration to us. This covered the bulk of the price they were asking. We raised the remainder by getting some big donations from party members. I talked this over by telephone with Jack Barnes in Paris, and we came to the conclusion that this was a good deal. Our operating costs for the whole building and loan payments and taxes amounted to not much more than we were paying in rent for part of the building.

Party members and friends from around the country volunteered to rebuild the bottom two floors of the building, providing a new home for our publishing house and printing plant. We greatly expanded the plant, buying a web press and other equipment.

In November, WONAAC sponsored a rally in Washington, D.C. demanding an end to laws banning abortions or contraception, as well as opposing forced sterilization of women. The rally was attended by some 3,000. This was smaller than it could have

been. As part of a broad shift toward subordination to the Democratic Party, NOW refused to support the action and red-baited it as an SWP affair. While SWP and YSA women were the backbone of WONAAC, it had an important component of independent feminists in its leadership. But the red-baiting had an effect on the size of the demonstration.

The struggle of the United Farm Workers to organize the largely Mexican and Filipino workforce in the California fields heated up in 1973. The growers resisted with court injunctions limiting picketing, which the UFWA rejected. There were mass arrests of workers as a result. Another weapon in the growers' arsenal was the corrupt leadership of the Teamsters union. The growers encouraged and allowed the Teamsters to sign up farm workers on the basis of sweetheart deals with the growers, and the union chiefs sent goons to attack UFWA workers.

The UFWA stepped up its call for a boycott of table grapes from California. This struggle struck a chord in the tens of thousands of young people who had been radicalized in the fight against the war and racism. All the significant tendencies in the radical movement supported the boycott.

Wages were still frozen under Nixon's decree, but — surprise! — prices weren't. A brief struggle erupted in 1973 over the soaring price of meat when housewives organized to call for a boycott to drive the prices down. In San Francisco, unions organized a labor demonstration around the issue. Nat Weinstein was one of the organizers of the effort. I went to San Francisco to discuss the issue with Nat.

The United Labor Action Committee, representing the most progressive unions in the Bay Area, organized the demonstration, which was held on April 26. The official slogans were "Smash these chains: Highest price rises in history! Wage Controls! Five Million Unemployed! Unequal taxes that favor the rich! $8 billion cutback in health and social service programs!" Between 3,000 and 5,000 participated, mostly workers.

Early in 1973 a group that came out of SDS called the National Caucus of Labor Committees, led by Lyndon LaRouche, decided that it was going to violently crush the Communist Party, in what they publicly called "operation mop-up." They accused the CP of obstructing their effort to take over the National Welfare Rights Organization. They had trained themselves in the use of special clubs called nunchakus, made of two pieces of wood connected by a swivel. The swivel gave a terrific swing to the outer piece of wood, which could do more damage than a solid club. They trained to use other weapons as well.

Their first attack on April 11 targeted supporters of the Young Workers Liberation League, the youth group of the CP, at Temple University in Philadelphia. The surprise

attack with clubs and pipes injured a number of people. *The Militant* ran an editorial calling for repudiation of the NCLC campaign. We called for a united defense of all organizations attacked by the NCLC, and were successful in winning broad support on the left and from civil libertarians to denounce the NCLC.[§]

Even with their own supporters under a potentially deadly attack, the Communist Party responded in a divisive way. The *Daily World*, the CP paper, tried to link the NCLC to "Trotskyites."

On April 23, the NCLC attacked a meeting held at Columbia University to hear candidates for Mayor of New York City. On the speakers platform were a Democratic contender, CP candidate Rasheed Storey and Joanna Misnik, who was speaking for Norman Oliver, the SWP candidate. About 60 NCLC supporters armed with nunchakus and other clubs, and brass knuckles, charged the platform. SWP and YSA members, as well as CP members and Columbia students defended the candidates.

The defenders had to break off chair legs in order to defend the people on the platform, whom the NCLC thugs were trying to reach. They were after Storey in particular. SWP and YSA members, who outnumbered the CP supporters at the

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[§] LaRouche had been a member of the SWP. He was among the sectarians repelled by the party's identification with the Cuban revolution and Malcolm X. He was expelled by the New York branch for being a member of Tim Wohlforth's Workers League — the US section of the split from the Fourth International led by Gerry Healy in 1963 — after the Wohlforth grouping left the party in 1964. Prior to his expulsion, I discussed this charge with LaRouche and he admitted being a member of the Workers League. The expulsion seemed to be basically okay with him.

When Ethel and I were in the process of moving to New York in the summer of 1961, I went down from Boston a number of times to search for work. On one of these occasions, I was billeted at LaRouche's apartment, where he lived with his companion.

LaRouche told me he was a "time study" person. If true, this meant he was hired by capitalists to figure out how to speed up workers. I thought this was not an occupation that a socialist should be involved in. However, during the next five years or so before he was expelled, he was never hired in that capacity. He was supported serially by the women who lived with him.

After he left the Workers League, in the later 1960s, he joined SDS and formed a group within it, the National Caucus of Labor Committees. This ultra-sectarian group developed a fanatical hostility to Black demands for affirmative action hiring in the construction industry, which it described as a fascist plot against white construction workers and working-class unity. It was as leader of the NCLC that LaRouche moved to the far right.

LaRouche's so-called "socialism" always struck me as technocratic and hyper-intellectual, with no relationship at all to real workers' struggles anywhere. It seems clear that, in a perverted way, he used what he learned from Trotsky's descriptions and analysis of fascist organizations to build his own fascist group.

meeting, formed a cordon to get him out safely, and Storey thanked them for their help. In the end, the attackers retreated, taking their wounded with them. Six members of the SWP were hurt.

But the meeting was broken up.

I wasn't at the meeting, but following it, Larry Seigle and others who were in the thick of the fight showed up at my apartment to lick their wounds and discuss our response.

In retaliation for the SWP and YSA's role at Columbia, the NCLC announced that we were now targets also. On May 5, in Detroit, they attacked an educational meeting sponsored by the SWP and YSA. This time we were prepared to defend the meeting with a squad of marshals with baseball bats. The NCLC goons were driven off with many casualties on their side. One SWP member, Don Bechler, had to be treated at a hospital. That night, the International Socialists, Workers League and Spartacist League joined us in physically defending an SWP mayoral campaign meeting, and the NCLC didn't attack. A number of groups, including members of the YWLL, agreed to defend a meeting scheduled for our vice presidential candidate, Andrew Pulley, on Detroit's Wayne State University.

The NCLC, apparently despairing of attacking well-defended meetings, decided to go after individuals. They jumped three members of the SWP from behind on a street in New York. They used nunchakus and pipes. Jesse Smith suffered a broken arm and many bruises. Ken Shilman and Rebecca Finch were beaten but not seriously hurt.

The NCLC pulled back from their campaign following this incident.

The NCLC had claimed to be socialist. But their violent campaign against socialist organizations was a strong signal that they were moving far to the right. We began to hear stories of NCLC members recruiting people in bars to "get the commies" before their attacks. The police were very reluctant to arrest any of the thugs, some of whom had an appearance and behavior that led us to suspect they were cops.

In his newspaper, LaRouche publicly attacked the actress Jane Fonda, a favorite target then and now of the far right**,** for her support to the antiwar movement. They went on a ferocious campaign against struggles to protect the environment. One of their slogans was "feed Jane Fonda to the whales."

The LaRouchites put forward the racist theory that the big majority of Blacks were deformed by drugs that the Rockefeller family had forced on the Black community. LaRouche attacked financial capitalists (bankers) as the source of the ills of modern society, as opposed to the good and productive capitalists. These were adaptations of Hitler's fascist program to American society. From being an ultra-

sectarian socialist, LaRouche had become the leader of a new, small but dangerous fascist group.

The Watergate scandal began to unfold early in 1973. It arose out of a break-in by a group of thugs who were captured while in the Democratic National Committee's offices in the Watergate apartment complex in Washington, D.C. during the 1972 presidential election campaign. Nixon, the victor in that campaign, was eventually proven to have ordered the break-in, looking for anything that could be used against the Democrats in the elections. Nixon was forced to resign in disgrace, and there were more far-reaching results.

The government's dirty tricks against the Black and antiwar movements came to light, such as J. Edgar Hoover's campaign to discredit Martin Luther King. "Cointelpro" (Counter-Intelligence Program) was exposed as a many-year FBI campaign to infiltrate, disrupt, discredit, and victimize dissident groups. Coupled with the government's lying about the Vietnam War revealed in the Pentagon Papers, the Watergate revelations raised public distrust of the government to an unprecedented high.

One morning I suggested to Jack, who had returned from Paris, that perhaps the antiwar movement should file a lawsuit against the government, in order to force release of more information. Jack smiled and urged me to listen to Larry Seigle's report to the Political Committee that afternoon. Larry proposed that the SWP and the YSA sue the government. I was quickly convinced by his argument that if we tried to get all the tendencies in the antiwar movement to file a suit, we would get bogged down in a continual debate over different approaches. A single all-inclusive suit would be unworkable.

The SWP and YSA filed the suit in July 1973 against Nixon and his White House cohorts and other government officials. The suit charged Nixon and others with "illegal acts of blacklisting, harassment, electronic surveillance, burglary, mail tampering, and terrorism against the SWP and YSA, and their members and supporters." Leonard Boudin, the foremost constitutional lawyer in the country, filed the suit. In addition to the SWP and YSA as organizations, there were named plaintiffs, including me, Jack Barnes, Peter Camejo, Farrell Dobbs, Willie Mae Reid, Linda Jenness, Andrew Pulley, Norman Oliver, Evelyn Sell and Morris Starsky. It would take over a decade, but we finally won this suit.

* * *

In the spring of 1972 I worked closely with Wendy Lyons, who was our national antiwar director. We made a number of trips together to talk to leaders of NPAC as

well as to branches. We became close.

In the summer, the triangle of me, Wendy, and Caroline caused considerable emotional turmoil for the three of us. It also cut into my time, and I didn't give as much time to organizing the party leadership as I had. I was spending about eight hours a day in the national office, as opposed to our usual ten or twelve hours. I didn't make many political errors while functioning as National Secretary, in my opinion, but I was becoming an organizational bottleneck by the beginning of 1973.

At the same time, we decided to bring Jack and Mary-Alice back from Paris. The experiment of trying to work together with the young French leadership had come up against sharper political differences, which I'll take up in Volume Two.

The upshot was that we decided to send Wendy and myself to Los Angeles, where the branch was in need of leadership strengthening. I also needed some R&R. So the triangle was settled — for a time.

We held a meeting of the National Committee at the end of April, 1973. The political report was given by Lew Jones. In his report he explained that with the withdrawal of most US troops from Vietnam, the continuing war was no longer the central issue in US politics, but we had to be on the alert if the US once again invaded.

While I didn't give the report to the NC plenum, I was the primary writer of the draft political resolution for the party convention to be held in August. Because of this, we decided that I would give the political report at the convention. Normally, the National Secretary, Jack Barnes, would have given the report, but he had been out of the country and needed time to re-acclimate to US politics.

The convention centered on the disputes in the Fourth International, including the question of projecting the strategy of guerrilla warfare for Latin America. There were minority tendencies with their own written resolutions, and one of these, the Internationalist Tendency, which emerged to a large extent from the "For a Proletarian Orientation" tendency of 1971, sided with the majority in the International. At the time, the International majority was critical of our views on Black nationalism, the Chicano movement, women's liberation, the role of students in the radicalization, and other issues, which the "For a Proletarian Orientation" tendency tended to agree with. So in a sense we had a rerun of the debate at the 1971 convention.

The convention gave the IT spokesperson, Hedda Garza, equal time to debate me under the political report. Two leaders of the International majority, Livio Maitan and Pat Jordan, participated in the debate. Afterwards, Farrell Dobbs congratualted me on a job well done. My presentation seemed to resonate with the great majority of convention participants.

More than 1,400 people attended, our largest convention to date. Forty-four percent

were women, and 55 percent were under 25 years old. Some new blood was brought onto the new National Committee. More young Blacks and more women, including Caroline and Wendy, were elected.

The pre-convention discussion bulletin had included 240 articles from party members on all sides of the issues — more than 1.5 million words in all. On top of that were the oral discussions in every branch. Some branches held discussions two or three times a week. It was by far the most thoroughgoing discussion that the SWP had ever had, more comprehensive, in fact, than any other group associated with the Fourth International and, I believe, more comprehensive than any discussion held in any group on the left anywhere in the world. Not only did our discussion provide a model, but our discussion bulletins were also circulated around the world so that the issues relevant to the discussion in the Fourth International could be brought to the attention of our international comrades everywhere.

The convention participants bought $5,700 worth of literature from the Pathfinder table.

In my report, I pointed out that there had been a downturn in protest activity in the Black, women's and other movements. I reiterated that the central contradiction of the radicalization remained the fact that the workers as workers had not yet thrown their weight onto the scale, but we were hopeful that this would soon change.

52. WHAT THE RADICALIZATION ACCOMPLISHED

There were two engines driving "The Sixties" — the Black liberation struggle and the fight against the war in Vietnam. The sit-ins at lunch counters by university students began the most active phase of the struggle, which extended into massive protests and upheavals in overwhelmingly working class Black communities across the nation.

The antiwar movement began as an initiative by socialist and radical pacifist groups. It began out of the mainstream, with no power to stop the war or even have much effect on its course. The segment of the population that first began to actively oppose the war was a minority of students on college campuses**.** At the same time the deepening struggle for Black liberation was having a profound and widening impact on a generation of young people, Black and white.

As the war escalated, the antiwar minority on the campuses became a majority, and began to involve other young people and sectors of the social and political mainstream. Throughout the years 1965 to 1973, the movement won over more and more people, but the students, including high school students at a certain point, remained the spearhead.

Opposition to the war became the majority opinion, especially among Blacks and other oppressed nationalities, and in the working class as a whole. Soldiers were drawn in more and more, including soldiers in Vietnam. Finally, the army began to disintegrate as a reliable fighting force. With US imperialism unable to make headway in breaking the popular revolt in Vietnam, the tide turned and the US was forced out. None of this would have happened if the Vietnamese people hadn't put up the amazing fight they waged, at great cost in lives and to the infrastructure of their country.

It was the heroic and inspiring Vietnamese resistance to the US invasion that finally led the great majority of Americans to the conclusion that the moral and political justifications offered for the killing and maiming of hundreds of thousands of US

young men and millions of Vietnamese were unconvincing or downright lies, and that the war was not worth the blood sacrifices that Washington demanded. A smaller group, but numbering in the millions, came to recognize that the Vietnamese people had morality and justice on their side.

The exposure of the government's lies about the war (reinforced by the Pentagon Papers and the Watergate scandal) led the majority to develop a deep distrust of Washington. Attitudes resulting from all these factors became known as the "Vietnam syndrome" of opposition to any more Vietnam-type wars. This sea change in attitudes remains a problem confronting the rulers in conducting their war against Iraq today.

Because the war was fought in the name of anticommunism, opposition to the war led to a breakdown of this scourge in the antiwar movement and in wide sections of the population. More democratic rights were won.

The antiwar movement in the United States and throughout the world played a key role in ending the war. This was the first great accomplishment of the radicalization of "the Sixties."

The other great accomplishment was the destruction of the Jim Crow system of legal segregation in the South along with a wide range of its reflections and extensions in the North. This was a big transformation in the social and political structure of the United States.

After the Civil War, in the period of Reconstruction led by the Radical Republicans, substantial gains in education, political rights, and other areas were made by the former slaves. But by the late 1870s, the ruling class of the United States (not just the new layer of agricultural landlords and other businessmen of the South, but the industrialists, bankers, and railroad men of the North) sponsored a counter-revolution, including the use of gangs of thugs to terrorize Blacks. This counter-revolution resulted in the imposition of a new form of white rule, Jim Crow segregation and discrimination, including denial of the Blacks' right to vote, throughout the South.

The cesspool of the Jim Crow system in the South infected the whole of the United States. Outside the South, there was widespread *de facto* segregation and oppression of Blacks in jobs, housing, education and in every sphere of life. The overthrow of the Jim Crow system had far reaching effects throughout the country.

It was the movement of Black people, in the South and the North, that was primarily responsible for destroying this setup. This mighty mobilization of Blacks pushed back white racism and won sections of the white population to the cause.

The momentum of the movement went beyond the dismantling of the Southern system of legal segregation and oppression of Blacks. *De facto* segregation in the rest of the country was pushed back a long way, too. Attitudes changed, among Blacks as

well as whites. The official policy of the governments, both federal and state, became opposition to racial discrimination. This opened the door to more challenges to racist policies.

Affirmative action contributed to enabling many more Blacks to land better-paying jobs in auto, steel, and other industries, and also made it possible for a layer of Blacks to get university educations and move into the middle class. Some even have become millionaires, sitting on the boards of *Fortune* 500 companies. This minority among Blacks was able to move out of the still *de facto* segregated Black communities.

The institutionalized racism that still permeates society can be seen in the gap between whites and Blacks in terms of unemployment and wages, in differences in infant mortality, life expectancy, and in most social indicators. It is also evident in the poverty in the Black ghettos. Since housing remains segregated for the majority of Blacks, education is also segregated and has become more so for most Blacks. Black schools are underfunded and the attitudes toward educating Black children remain permeated with racist prejudice**.** School busing has achieved a better education for some Black children, but most are in inferior schools. Racial profiling by the cops is normal throughout the country. Even better off Blacks face this and other forms of systematic racism. Cops can shoot Blacks on the most trivial of pretexts and still avoid prison. It is considered a big event if one of the killers is put on trial or fired. Conviction and imprisonment are extremely rare.

By the end of the 1960s and the early 1970s, however, the militant Black leadership was in disarray. This reflected both the impact of deadly police repression, and the subsidence of the movements following victories in defeating Jim Crow and ending the Vietnam war.

SNCC tended to converge with the "urban guerrilla warfare" posturing of a section of the Black Panther Party, and ultimately disintegrated. Some former SNCC leaders, as well as other militants, were drawn into the Maoist dead-end. The BPP itself split in 1970, into two groups, one favoring "armed struggle" largely in the abstract, and the other doing social work such as providing breakfasts to Black children and running candidates for office in Democratic primaries. Neither approach succeeded in building a leadership that could take the struggle for the liberation of Blacks to the next steps.

The Lowndes County Freedom Party (the first Black Panthers), went into the Alabama Democratic Party which was now open to Blacks. John Hulett was elected sheriff as a Democrat. Black politicians began to win elections, mostly as Democrats. Former SNCC leaders John Lewis and Julian Bond, and former Black Panther Bobby Rush, the victim of a cop shooting and now a Chicago Congressman, were examples. The thrust toward independent Black political action was blunted and sidetracked

into the Democratic Party which meant accepting and adjusting to its capitalist politics. (A temporary exception to this trend was the National Black Independent Political Party, a short-lived attempt to form a Black party in the early 1980s.)

The assassination of Malcolm X cut short his attempt to found a new political organization. Some say that Malcolm just wasn't organizationally savvy enough to leave behind a group that could continue to build on the program he was elaborating. This is false. Malcolm X was a driving force in the transformation of the Nation of Islam from a small sect of a few hundred centered in Detroit into a national organization of tens of thousands with a widely-distributed newspaper. His organizational skills were more than adequate. He was very far advanced politically compared to his small handful of followers but the US rulers denied him the time he needed to overcome that gap. In retrospect, it was too much to expect that they would be able to continue the work he had begun.

The direction Martin Luther King had begun to take, trying to link up with struggles of Black workers, and other workers, and take up the fight against imperialist war, was cut short by his assassination while building support for the striking sanitation workers in Memphis.

Before the victory of the civil rights movement had come from what used to be described as the "talented tenth" of church leaders, small businessmen, educators and the like who lived in the Black community. But because of gains like affirmative action, the more successful layer, including higher-paid workers, could now live outside the ghettos, and tended to become alienated from the Black masses they left behind.

The institutional racism in American society is as much a part of the institutions of US capitalism as are the corporations and banks, real estate operators, educational institutions, courts and prisons, and the Democratic and Republican parties. Like other oppressed and exploited people in the United States, Blacks are being increasingly challenged by life itself to develop an anti-capitalist program and outlook, which includes struggles for democracy and immediate practical demands but also goes beyond them.

Out of the antiwar and Black movements came the movements of other oppressed nationalities, of women and of gays, as has been described in previous chapters. The radicalization led to major changes in attitudes in wide sections of the population.

There were important struggles of some sections of the working class, but the radicalization did not reach the stage of a generalized radicalization of the working class. This was the primary cause of the winding down of the radicalization. The Sixties went pretty far, but without the workers stepping forward, the radicalized layers became disoriented or burned out. And the masses, having achieved some

gains, became weary of conflicts that seemed to lead nowhere.

A minority reached socialist conclusions, however. They became committed to the working class, partly through the forms of the class struggle they participated in and partly though achieving a theoretical understanding. Some began getting industrial jobs. Various Maoist groups and the International Socialists made concerted efforts in this direction in the early 1970s, but they counterposed this tactic to the radicalization as a whole. The SWP and YSA did not make a general turn to getting industrial, union jobs at that time. Members recruited in the 1960s off the campus were generally becoming white collar workers, such as school teachers, upon graduation. Some SWP members also took industrial jobs.

The radicalization had a massive impact on the SWP. Coming out of the witch-hunt years, the SWP had become smaller in numbers, and older. Of course, it had recruited young people throughout those years, but not many and, usually, not for long. The process that led to the foundation of the Young Socialist Alliance in 1960 — even with only about 130 members — situated the SWP to participate effectively in the youth radicalization which was just beginning.

The recruitment and training of young people saved the SWP as a revolutionary organization at that point. Revolutionary socialist organizations generally do not last long in unfavorable times, and the SWP had been running out of time. The new layer of young people, and the opportunities provided to intervene in real struggles, gave the organization another lease on life. The older generation, that came out of the labor radicalization of the 1930s which was renewed for a time after World War II, was able to pass the torch on to the new generation.

The older leaders — especially Farrell Dobbs —understood that this process, in order to succeed, had to go all the way to replacing the older central leadership with a new one from the new generation. He sought to accomplish this in a phased way, while the older leaders were still around to train the new leadership. The transition in leadership was essentially completed by the end of the 1960s. Thus the SWP was in good shape to face the challenges of the next decades — or so we thought. The next volume of this political memoir will discuss the contradictions of the period from 1973 through 1988.

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Chapter 6

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2 *Ibid.*, September 25, 1961.
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2 *Ibid.*, April 16, 1962.

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2 *Ibid.*, May 13, 1963.
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3 *Muhammad Speaks*, March 18, 1963.
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1 *The Militant*, January 17, 1966.

Chapter 23

1 *The Militant*, May 27, 1966.
2 *Ibid.*, June 6, 1966.

Chapter 24

1 *The Militant*, May 2, 1966.
2 *Ibid.*, May 9, 1966.
3 *Ibid.*, July 11, 1966.
4 *Ibid.*, July 25, 1966.
5 *Ibid.*, August 22, 1966.

Chapter 25

1 *The Militant*, December 19, 1966.
2 *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, December 28, 1966.

Chapter 27

1 *The Militant*, May 1, 1967.
2 *Ibid.*, June 12, 1967.
3 *Ibid.*, August 7, 1967.
4 *Ibid.*, August 21, 1967.
5 *Out Now!* by Fred Halstead, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1978, p. 335. *Out Now!* is the best and most complete history of the anti-Vietnam-War movement in the United States.

Chapter 30

1 London *Observer*, May 26, 1968.
2 *The Militant*, June 21, 1968.
3 *Ibid.*, July 12, 1968.

Chapter 31

1 *The Militant*, May 24, 1968.
2 *Ibid.*, July 26, 1968.
3 *The New York Times*, July 17, 1968.
4 *The Militant*, August 2, 1968.

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1 *The Militant*, September 6, 1968.
2 *Ibid.*, September 20, 1968.
3 *Ibid.*, September 27, 1968.
4 *Ibid.*, October 4, 1968.
5 *Ibid.*, September 19, 1969.

Chapter 38

1 This resolution is reprinted in *Black Liberation and Socialism*, edited by Tony Thomas, Pathfinder Press, 1974, New York.

Chapter 39

1 *The Militant*, October 24, 1969.
2 Ken Hurwitz, *Marching Nowhere*, W.W. Norton, New York, 1971, pp. 143-144 (quoted in Halstead, *op. cit.*, p. 490).
3 *Ibid.*, October 24, 1969.
4 *Ibid.*, December 5, 1969.
5 *Ibid.*, November 28, 1969.
6 *Ibid.*, January 16,1970.
7 *Ibid.*, January 16, 1970.
8 *Ibid.*, January 16, 1970.

Chapter 40

1 "Argentina and Bolivia — the Balance Sheet." This document was submitted to the discussion in the Fourth International. It was coauthored by Hugo Blanco, Peter Camejo, Joseph Hansen, Anibal Lorenzo, and Nahuel (Hugo) Moreno. The latter two were leaders of the Trotskyist movement in Argentina. It is reprinted in *The Leninist Strategy of Party Building*, Joseph Hansen, Pathfinder Press, 1979, New York, p. 231. Parts of this chapter paraphrase this document.

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1 Halstead, *op. cit.*, pp. 527-528.
2 *The Militant*, February 27, 1970.
3 *Ibid.*, February 20, 1970.
4 *Cleveland Press*, February 16, 1970.
5 *The Militant*, May 1, 1970.
6 Halstead, *op. cit.*, p. 537.
7 *Ibid.*, p. 556.
8 *Ibid.*, May 26, 1970.
9 *Ibid.*, May 26, 1970.
10 *Ibid.*, June 5, 1970.
11 *Ibid.*, June 5, 1970.
12 Halstead, *op. cit.*, p. 546.
13 *Ibid.*, p. 546.
14 *The New York Times*, May 16, 1970.
15 Halstead, *op. cit.*, p. 561.

Chapter 42

1 The speeches by the author, Barnes, Breitman, Morrison, and Waters were reprinted in *Towards and American Socialist Revolution*, Pathfinder Press, New York, 1971.
2 *The Militant*, September 4, 1970.

Chapter 43

1 *The Militant*, September 11, 1970.
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3 *Ibid.*, September 3, 1970.

Chapter 44

1 John Conway, *Debts to Pay: A Fresh Approach to the Québec Question*, James Lorimer & Co., Toronto, 1997.
2 *Ibid.*
3 *The Militant*, October 30,1970.
4 *Ibid.*, October 30, 1970.
5 John Conway, *op. cit.*

Chapter 45

1 Reprinted in *The Militant*, October 16, 1970.
2 Halstead, *op. cit.*, pp. 611-612.
3 *The New York Times*, April 25, 1971.
4 *The Militant*, May 21, 1971.
5 *The Student Mobilizer*, June-July 1971.

Chapter 46

1 *The Militant*, December 11, 1970.

Chapter 47

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Chapter 48

1 *The New York Times*, May 10, 1972.
2 *Ibid.*

Chapter 49

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2 *Ibid.*, June 16, 1972.

Chapter 50

1 *SWP Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 30, No. 1 in June, 1972.
2 *Ibid.*, No. 7, in June, 1972.
3 *Ibid.*, No. 5, in June 1972.
4 *Ibid.*, No. 9, June, 1972.

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