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# Students for a Stalinist Society

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1969

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It seems to be finalized: Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the cutting-edge of the Movement in America, the mass organization (somewhere between 45,000 and 80,000 people: depending on whose statistics you happen to believe in) of the New Left in America, the working-coalition of the revolutionary Left in America: SDS has been fragmented and dogmatized and ossified. The Maoists (PL: for Progressive Labor Party) and the New Stalinists (several varieties, amalgamated into RYM: for Revolutionary Youth Movement) have succeeded at last in culminating two years of factional combat. RYM have excommunicated PL, and PL have excommunicated RYM (for historical precedents: please consult a textbook of medieval history, The Great Schism of the Western Church). All other tendencies within SDS have been victimized in the process (or soon will be) and must obediently accept the power-manipulations of one elite or the other ... or else face expulsion on grounds of 'Anti-Communism'.

Two years ago, many Anarchists in this country were in agreement that it was desirable and necessary that we co-operate in an attempt to build a Coalition of the revolutionary Left. SDS seemed to provide the most practical and principled organizational-base for such a coalition. Originally, SDS was founded in the old days of the CR movement by a bunch of dewy-eyed Liberals, ritualistic Social Democrats, and unregenerated Anarchists. The Liberals furnished the vision, the Social Democrats provided the driving force, and the Anarchists concocted the organizational conception (decentralization, local autonomy) and the style. But, two years ago, SDS was transformed into a Coalition of the revolutionary Left (the New Leninists, the New Trotskyists, the Maoists, the Anarchists, the Marxist-Humanists, the Guevarists, the castrati, various independent types of revolutionary socialists, etc., etc.): the organizational conception and style remained unchanged; the vision and the driving force were altered: no longer meliorism, but revolutionary socialism.

On our part: we Anarchists were of the opinion that the only basis for such a Coalition had to be a freely-accepted and open

agreement, that the nature and direction of the Coalition had to be undogmatic – and non-rigidified and experimental, that the attitude and style of the Coalition had to be free-wheeling, and that the form of the Coalition had to be decentralized and non-coercive. We were of the opinion that there were important priorities: direct action against the weakest manipulatory institutions of the American Leviathan, and the organization of a mass movement preparing to crush Capitalism and destroy the Government (the Empire: economic and political). As to factional combat: we were of the opinion that if it wasn't irrelevant ... it was certainly dysfunctional. We were of the opinion that non-exclusionism as policy would prevent the disasters of 'previous Revolutions: that the Coalition could survive only as long as every tendency was free to follow their own programmatic conceptions and no group was placed in the position of being forced to compromise principles.

What was the result? Did we expect too much? Were we impractical? I don't think so. The result of our informational agitation and resistance organizing, the result of community alternatives and offensives against the pig-power, the result of direct action against the most blatant aspects of coercion, militarization, and racism by the Establishment (the Corporations, especially, and the Universities): the result of our thinking, our analysis, and our activity: THE YEAR OF BLOOD, from the Insurrection at Columbia to the Battle of Berkeley. The attempt on the part of the Establishment to create a new, managerialist class (as a first stage in the process of transforming Monopoly Capitalism into Technology Capitalism) has been seriously sabotaged if not hopelessly prevented. Huge segments of the raw material for this new class have revolted (from San Francisco State College to Harvard and the University in Madison) and the Hayakawa methodology of discipline and the Morrill Hall Doctrine of (Corporate Liberal) pre-emptive co-optation have failed. We have won for ourselves a breathing space: time to expand and escalate both creative and classical approaches to revolutionary activity and organization. We have grown up at last: we are no longer a

liberation; individual aspirations and collective needs must coincide only by mutual agreement. We are struggling for a classless society. We are struggling for liberty and socialist-humanism. We are struggling for Anarchy.

movement of vague, utopianistic sentimentality, we are no longer a movement of self-righteous, smug, moralistic indignation, we are no longer a movement of spastic and occasional activity; we have transformed ourselves into a movement of conscious revolutionary activity, we have transformed ourselves into a movement of conviction and willfulness, we have transformed ourselves into a movement of struggle for a liberatory society. The unity of thought and action: this has been the basis of our self-transformation. Our actions have been constant and continuous: we have not dissolved our energies in a single uprising; but, on the contrary, each new uprising has created the impulsive thrust of the next. Our actions have been educative: but they have not been symbolic. They have been concrete. The Movement in America, during the last year, has constituted itself as a serious threat to the survival of the military-industrial complex.

## **Honesty is no Threat to Socialism**

However: the time has now come when we must re-examine our situation and clarify our thinking. If we do not, then the fragmentation that PL and RYM have succeeded temporarily in forcing on SDS ... will develop into a general ossification of the Movement, an artificial sectarianism or a wishy-washy optimistic smugness. Some of us have kept quiet for too long. After all, we were told: "Shut up!", "Don't do the Man's work for him!", "Keep quiet!" And, after all, some of us did not want to appear as if we were disrupting our own organization, some of us did not want to provide any ammunition to the parties of the Right in their constant and increasing attacks against SDS, some of us did not want to have anything to do with evidence against our brothers in the Movement before the Judiciary (the divine liturgy of Law and Order). But: self-imposed censorship is a fraud. Whatever damage and danger it was supposed to prevent, has already been committed against us.

If I have learned any lesson within the last three months, it is simply that honesty is no threat to socialism (at least the libertarian variety: the functional, joyous, personalized, delirious, sexualized community of the Anarchists) and that by maintaining our critical convictions, our reasonable commitments, our skeptical attitude, and our libertarian principles, we are more likely to prevent than cause sectarianism. What was described as self-imposed censorship was not self-imposed: it was not voluntary, it was not reasonable, it was not practicable. It was imposed on pain of public opinion by the National Office (controlled by RYM). It was part of a plan of manipulation. It was part of a struggle for power. The time has come when we must examine our situation and actively criticize the mistakes of the past few months. We must rescue our revolutionary potential from the wreckage of SDS.

The yellow press has concocted the myth that the fragmentation of SDS (“Two, Three, Many SDSes”) by PL and RYM was caused by a clash of ideologies: the beliefs of one side antagonizing the other, the slogans of one side betraying the other, the scheming of one side outdoing the other, the Utopia of one side repulsed by the other. As is usual with the yellow press, they had part of the picture: the smaller part. Though it is true that there was a clash of opinions (for the last two years) between PL and RYM (prior to the Convention: known as ‘the National Collective’), primarily centered around definitions of ‘imperialism’, ‘racism’, ‘working class’, etc., this was only a symptom of the disease.

Actually, the ideologies of PL and the National Collective (RYM) are nothing more than two collections of absurdities. RYM and PL do not even respect their own Divine Abstractions: they change absurdities, they switch absurdities, they conveniently forget previous absurdities, they even exchange absurdities. Thus, for PL, the ideology of PL is important only in what it is used for. And, for RYM, the ideology of RYM is important only in what it is used for. Honest and valid analysis is ignored: for them, there is no unity of thought and action.

The Anarcho-Communists and Anarcho-Syndicalists are also pushing their points of view in a fresh reconsideration: by action. The Resistance, previously organized around the country on a single issue (i.e., anti-conscription activity) basis, has recently abandoned the single-issue approach in favour of working out a general strategy of anti-imperialism (with Anarcho-Syndicalism the professed objective of a large and loud segment of the Resistance) and resistance to all aspects of authoritarianism.

Luckily, the Revolution does not depend on the survival of any single organization like SDS: even though some people find such an organization to be desirable and very comfortable, urging everyone into the grasping-greedy arms of Holy Mother Organization. Revolutions, however, have a spiteful habit of refusing to follow the most perfect of human timetables: they are always popping out at times and places where they are least expected, and never appearing where we hope the hardest. The Revolution in America is no longer a matter of partisan invective: it is, growingly, a fact. The Revolution in America is no longer the private property of a few elitist intellectuals: it belongs to everyone. The Revolution in America is no longer a matter of petty manipulations by some Vanguard party: the Revolution is being made by masses of the people in motion: preparing to pull down the Government and Monopoly Capitalism ... and build a new society. The New Stalinists will, not prevail. The collapse of SDS is almost irrelevant. The masses in motion are the Revolution.

We are struggling for Anarchy. As a prerequisite for such a new socio-economic order, we must have massive redistribution of wealth on the basis of need, production for use, and control of the socio-economic process by direct democracy. At the same time, the collectivization of the economy must allow us to create a decentralized socio-political environment in which we are free to develop autonomous communities on the bases of cultural diversity, the ability to initiate activity, and the principle of federalism. Socio-economic liberation must extend and complement personal

Movement and the Progressive Labor Party of proposing a vision of revolutionary society that is repulsive to any person of sensibility: a dreary, colorless, oppressive, sexless, rigid, passive, thick, hierarchical Calvinist Paradise. I accuse the Progressive Labor Party and the Revolutionary Youth Movement of inaction: if they cannot control an insurrection, they will not take part in it, they will even oppose it; throughout the past year, every major incident of political importance committed by the Movement has been brought about entirely by local initiative ... and in spite of the abstractionizers. I accuse the Revolutionary Youth Movement and the Progressive Labor Party of being crude imitations of the Capitalist Establishment: a hollow Totalism, the childish incantations of a victimized proto-bureaucracy, the envious whimperings of a prospective military-industrial complex: the one becomes the other.

Is there any possibility of rescuing our revolutionary potential out of the wreckage of SDS? I certainly hope so. There are already several indications of activity in that direction: at the Convention, a group of Anarchists from New York established a Radical Decentralization Project as a means of ignoring the Stalinist-motivated fissure and making a direct appeal to the mass membership of SDS. Since most of the grass-roots members of SDS are not Leninist ideologues, and since most of them are free-wheeling in approach, if not consciously anti-atrophy, it is highly probable that the schismatic Stalinists will be confronted by more of a swelling opposition on the Left than they had bargained for. Also: another group of libertarians has proposed the formation of a third SDS as rival to the two authoritarian alternatives. However, I am very skeptical that much will come of a single approach. Many Anarchists and Marxist-Humanists have already burned their SDS-membership cards, in rage. In one sense though, the disintegration of SDS will be a productive development: it has finally forced the far-Left to take independent action in pushing for the Revolution. The Radical Libertarian Alliance has recently been formed; it is a loosely confederated network of Stirnerite groups and individuals.

According to PL (the Maoists), the Progressive Labor Party is the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Vanguard Party; it is the only Vanguard Party; it is the True Vanguard Party. PL believe that historical inevitability has been revealed to them through divinely-inspired Sacred Scripture: the Old Testament (the writings of Marx and Lenin), the Apocrypha (the writings of Trotsky), and the New Testament (the writings of Mao Tse-tung). PL believe that Sacred Scripture must be read in a literal manner (which means, subjectively). PL believe that Mao Tse-tung has come to save mankind from the wages of sin. PL believe that Stalin was sent to make ready the way of Mao. According to PL, the Working Class is the pillar of the heavens and the earth. The Working Class is perfect; the Working Class is all-virtuous; the Working Class is good. There is no racism in the Working Class; there are no flaws or personal faults in the Working Class; the Working Class is beautiful. In short, for PL, the Working Class is not a poor and powerless socio-economic caste situated at the point of production; the Working Class is nothing more than a subjective abstraction. This reaches the level of ludicrousness when young Harvard PLers dress in the costume of the workers on weekends and fervently profess to be automatically part of the Working Class. PL rejects anyone who thinks that the black liberation movement is a unique aspect of the Revolution in America. PL believe that the Last Judgment will occur only after 'the Working Class' has been solidly organized within the One, True Vanguard Party. At that time, Mao Tse-tung will lead the saved souls into the New Jerusalem — or something like that — maybe.

According to RYM (the Leninist-Stalinists: the New Stalinists), the Revolutionary Youth Movement is the elite of the future Marxist-Leninist Party. RYM believe that historical inevitability has demonstrated itself in the Third World: the movements of colonial rebellion and national liberation. RYM believe that we have entered the final stage of class struggle; the class struggle has been 'internationalized'. Consequently, for them, it is irrelevant to have anything to do with the Working Class at home; it is irrelevant to pre-

pare for a Social Revolution at home; it is irrelevant to do anything constructive at home. RYM believe that the primary task of a revolutionary youth movement in America is to support the struggles of the Third World: the movements of colonial rebellion and national liberation. RYM believe that the Vanguard Party of the 'internationalized' class struggle is that of Ho Chi Minh (cf., the Government in Hanoi and the National Liberation Front). RYM believe that the Internationalized Vanguard Party will bring Imperial America to its knees. RYM believe that all actions at home must be calculated to cause as much internal damage to the Empire as is possible. RYM believe that the black struggle in America is nothing more than the revolt of a colony against the Mother Country, the White Mother Country. RYM have solemnly proclaimed the Black Panther Party to be the Vanguard Party of the black national liberation movement. A few nasty blacks (ignorant petit-bourgeoisie, obviously) have suggested that this is just another example of racist paternalism, that the black liberation movement is perfectly capable of creating its own leadership, that the black community is capable of fighting for the Revolution without being manipulated. RYM have attacked these miserable, nasty blacks. RYM believe that 'good' black leaders must be supported and that 'bad' black leaders must be fought. A 'good' black leader is not someone who fights the Establishment, resists oppression, and struggles to build initiative, independence, and social justice in and for his people; a 'good' black leader is some one who has the CORRECT opinions about historical inevitability. RYM believe that the Revolution will occur in America only after Ho Chi Minh's army has been victorious. RYM believe that — every day, in every way — Ho Chi Minh's army is doing better and better. RYM believe that Ho Chi Minh's military adventures have been concretely and objectively successful. RYM believe that Ho-Ho-Ho's English language publications must be interpreted subjectively (which means: read in a literal manner). According to RYM, after the White Mother Country of the American Empire has been totally destroyed by the black colony and the Third World and the

and RYM, they were afraid of burning their fingers, however, and quickly got the hell out of it. Naturally, when it was all over, they still didn't understand what had happened. Perhaps it is also worth mentioning that there were a few libertarians who were critical of PL but not equally critical of RYM: personally, I have no desire to play the part of Zhelesniakov to some new Lenin. I think it worth remembering that in revolutionary activity — those who are fooled, are beaten. The Anarchists are very seldom fooled. And, since we do not play games of power, there is only one way to beat us, there is only one way to eliminate the grass-roots influence that we may have: by killing us. In America, with the struggles of the Movement for Revolution and a new society, and the emergence of a New Stalinism, I think that we have been brought down to it again: either we fight or we die.

## A Thousand Squabbling Splinters

I accuse the Revolutionary Youth Movement and the Progressive Labor Party of crimes against the Movement: for the sake of petty power, they have endangered the spontaneity and driving impulsiveness of the Movement; for the sake of controlling the situation, they have threatened to hack the Movement into a thousand squabbling splinters; for the sake of subjectivist abstractions, they have resurrected the grim and murderous pallor of Stalin; for the sake of their own illusions of glory, they have piously plodded on with a puritanical attempt to restructure an authoritarian vision of the past rather than deliriously plunge into a patternless attempt to crisply build a new society, a liberatory society. I accuse the Progressive Labor Party and the Revolutionary Youth Movement of adopting the tactics of thugs: they have taken to sending gangs of brutal sadists to barbarously pound the shit and the sweat and the blood out of anyone who has grievously committed the mortal sin of openly criticizing them ... however mildly. I accuse the Revolutionary Youth



The dull oxen of P L, however, continued to hold their own controlled Convention in the same building: they voted on resolutions for SDS, they elected national officers for SDS, they made future plans for SDS. They had been outwitted, but they would show RYM: they would have their own SDS. In the meantime, RYM reconvened their own controlled Convention in another building: they voted on resolutions for SDS, they elected national officers for SDS, they made future plans for SDS. They felt very smug in the justification of their apostolic succession, the bourgeois forces of Law and Order had awarded them legal title to the equipment, money, etc., of the National Office. They had outwitted the Maoists, but the power-lust of the fleshless faces of RYM was not satisfied: they had to eliminate the uncontrollable elements. One of their resolutions, newly-made for SDS, declares that all members of SDS must support the ‘revolutionary’ Governments of Vietnam, Cuba, China, and Albania. [Can you guess who gets eliminated by that one?] Another resolution declares that all opponents (i.e., someone who is guilty of criticism) of SDS are ‘Anti-Communists’ – both outside the organization and within it. This is nothing more than the strategy of Joe McCarthy turned inside out: RYM identify themselves as ‘Communists’, and then say that anyone who criticizes them must be an ‘Anti-Communist’; a ‘Communist’, after all, would never think of criticizing them, obviously. This resolution also declares that ‘Anti-Communists’ must be fought ‘by any means necessary’.

Perhaps it is worth mentioning at this point that a sombre flock of youthful members of the CP (the young ‘Old’ Stalinists) were present during the agonizing farce of the Convention: they were very colorless and grey and quiet and huge; they didn’t seem to understand what was happening; they were severely silent. Naturally: when it was all over, they supported the winner. Perhaps it is worth mentioning that the SWP (the Socialist Workers Party: the old-and-young ‘Old’ Trotskyists) were not present during the Convention. Despite the fact that – previously in the year – they had agreed to enter the Coalition of SDS and play games of power with PL

Revolutionary Youth Movement (inspired by all sorts of groovy, hip cult customs), Ho Chi Minh from above will lead the faithful remnant into the end of history: the Golden Paradise. RYM, of course, will provide the elite-party for the Utopian Marxist-Leninist Government.

## Subjective Abstraction

The ideology of PL is entirely based upon a subjective abstraction: if we have the correct attitudes about the Working Class and the Vanguard Party of the Movement, the Vanguard Party of the Working Class: then we will be successful. This is absolute subjectivism. Plato would be jealous; Bakunin (and Marx) would be dismayed if not terrified. PL are not revolutionary socialists: they are an extreme type of irrational liberalism. On the contrary, the ideology of RYM is entirely based upon a subjective abstraction: if we have the correct attitudes about the Third World and the black colony and historical inevitability and Ho Chi Minh and the Revolutionary Youth Movement: then we will be successful. This is absolute subjectivism. Plotinus and St. Augustine would be impressed; Kropotkin would only vomit. RYM are not revolutionary socialists: they are an extreme type of irrational liberalism. But, after all, neither RYM nor PL are particularly concerned about consistency and valid analysis. Thus, for PL, the ideology of PL is important only in what it is used for; and, for RYM, the ideology of RYM is important only in what it is used for: a struggle for power, a battle to control the Movement. Now we have been brought down, to it: expediency as means and end.

Last year, the National Collective (so-called because they control most of the national and, to a great extent, regional leadership positions of SDS) convened a National Council of SDS in Austin, Texas. A National Council is a periodic gathering of representatives of the local chapters to determine policy on urgent, immediate, and im-

portant matters between the annual Conventions. However: there were several peculiarities about the Austin NC. Firstly, Austin is a highly remote place, most delegates would have difficulty in getting there, only those with independent sources of money could do so with ease. This instantly excluded most of the far-Left: we are not noted for our ability to waste finances, and most of us were involved in local struggles at the time. Secondly, there was even confusion about this location: word was sent out that the location had been changed; then, word was sent out that the location had not been changed. Thirdly, no one was quite sure as to what was on the agenda. Fourthly, even if anyone had known what was on the agenda, it would have done little good, the NC had been called at such short notice that there was no time for adequate discussion and decision by the local chapters. Thus, the NC opened at Austin with a manipulated assembly of delegates: with only a vague impression of the intent and purpose of this meeting, and inadequate and indecisive instructions from the grass-roots membership of the organization, and the non-existence of the skeptical balance provided by the far-Left.

At the Austin NC, the thin-lipped Jacobins of the Progressive Labor Party and the thin-lipped Jacobins of the National Collective (soon to be renamed the Revolutionary Youth Movement) engaged in a struggle for control of SDS. The struggle took the form of debates surrounding resolutions and position papers presented by the combatant sides. It was tacitly recognized that whichever sect's resolutions were victorious by majority rule vote ... that sect would win the battle ... and proceed to enlarge and escalate its control over the organization. On and on it went, great reams of incomprehensible sophistry, the endless drone of imaginationless rhetoric, huge hunks of archaic language lifted from the more tawdry moments of Lenin's journalistic vituperation, big ulcerating sores upon the intellect (stinking like the pus that fills them), a metaphysical nightmare invoked by the dry and dusty Shamans of a withering creed: a continuous babble, a constant prattle, chant follow-

seize the platform and scream out incomprehensible and hideous slogans at the exhausted assembly. Then, the masses of the faithful, as if by cue, would frantically rise and shake their fists in the air while calling on the eternally divine Ho Chi Minh to miraculously intervene and bring racism to an end. The New Stalinists, it seems, were sharp and spiteful and vindictive. At this point, the Maoists would reoccupy the platform and begin again to shout out their mechanical slogans at the exhausted assembly. This solemn ceremony was repeated and repeated for three days. Occasional attempts by the Anarchists, a small group of Marxist-Humanists, the delegates of the Independent Socialist Clubs, and a caucus of revolutionary socialists from the University of Chicago to introduce rationality into the Convention, were overwhelmingly drowned by bloodcurdling cries of 'Anti-Communism'.

Finally, the self-proclaimed Revolutionary Youth Movement brought representatives from the Black Panther Party to the platform. The Black Panthers denounced the Maoists. The Black Panthers said that the Maoists are racists. The Black Panthers said that the Maoists ought to be expelled from SDS. Several nasty blacks (FBI agents, obviously) suggested that the Black Panthers had been manipulated by RYM who were only trying to get at their enemies. These nasty blacks suggested that RYM were guilty of racist paternalism. The evidence is not completely clear, however, as the Black Panthers also seemed to have manipulated RYM so that they could get at their own enemies. At this point, the Convention was dissolved into separate meetings for a day. The next day, after the restoration of the general assembly, RYM, having clarified their strategy, proceeded to denounce P L as racists and expel them from SDS. Then, a masterly bit of modern Machiavellian cunning, RYM dissolved the session and abandoned the building in procession: since they alone controlled the apostolic succession of the leadership of SDS, only those who followed them out continued to be part of SDS.

excluded again: the only Anarchists that got to the Convention were those already in Chicago: a New York group, and a few isolated delegates. Despite this miserable showing, several Movement publications seemed to be openly titillated that the Anarchists were capable of convening an independent oppositionist caucus, in the Wobblie Hall. Unfortunately, it wasn't enough to implode a libertarian perspective into the Convention; it wasn't enough to prevent the authoritarian chaos of the Convention; it wasn't enough to prevent the wreckage that followed.

The Convention, I am told, was like a plastic hallucination of totalitarianism by the Living Theatre, a spatial whirlwind of dreams and deceit and ritualized illusions and personal anguish, a jumble of passionate pretense and screaming people and prurient gnawing frustrations, a fantastic fragmentation of time falling back upon itself and on the pale tomb of Stalin, strange people in strange apparel that would move and flare and carry with them a dull but leering glare in the eyes: there was a young man with very thin arms and an angular face and long slender fingers; his flesh was white as the leprous moon; he was rhythmically beating the air and chanting the name of Ho Chi Minh.

## Session Dissolved

At the Convention, the liturgy of exclusionism went on and on for three days. First, one side would clumsily grab the initiative and, forcibly occupying the platform, shout out ferocious and mechanical slogans at the exhausted assembly. Then, the masses of the faithful, as if by cue, would collectively rise and reveal little red prayer books that they would frantically shake in the air while calling on the divine Mao Tse-tung to miraculously intervene in the proceedings. The Maoists, it seems, were sharp and spiteful at the shame they had suffered in Austin: with vengeance, they had packed the Convention. The other side, not to be outdone, would victoriously

ing chant, slogan after slogan. Finally, the rigid oxen of the Progressive Labor Party were outdone by the fleshless faces of the National Collective. The National Collective had learned a new trick. Previously identified as New Leninists, they suddenly discovered that they could outquote Stalin to the Maoists. The Maoists, being bulky, and strangers to spontaneity, as sexless as a nun, dissolved in cries of paranoia: whimpering, muttering, threatening. The rigged assembly voted. The Toughs had lost. The Toughs had won. The National Collective emerged victorious. The Austin NC was the rock that shattered SDS: the Convention was only a 'priestly' epilogue. The damage already had been done. As an incidental ploy in their push for power, the National Collective also presented a resolution calling for total support to Ho Chi Minh (something like the pious obedience and unquestioning worship that is due an Oriental Emperor), this was interpreted as a blatant attack against the Anarchists, Marxist-Humanists, and other libertarian socialists: an attempt to exclude them from the organization; an attempt to prevent them from fighting the idiocy of power games. After the Austin NC, I was casually removed from all SDS mailing lists; I no longer received New Left Notes, etc. My continuous objections to the National Office met with no reply. I soon discovered that this was not a localized phenomenon: selectively, many Anarchists around the country had also been victimized. Repeatedly, the national membership of SDS was warned by Movement publications to beware of the Anarchists: they were told that we are entering a stage of history (obviously revealed by the fluctuations of the stars) when the Anarchists will have great influence. They were told that the Anarchists are 'dangerous' and must be fought and destroyed.

## Anarchist Conference

Some time before the SDS Convention, the Solidarity Bookshop group (in Chicago) wrote to me (among many others) trying to find

out if there could be any kind of consensus as to holding an informal Anarchist Conference in the same city and at the same time as the SDS Convention. Everyone who knew about it was excited for two reasons, it was thought necessary and desirable that we clarify our position, and there was the possibility that we could implode a libertarian perspective into the Convention. Preparations were made to inform all the Anarchists on our mailing lists ... as soon as we could. There were just two tiny problems: no one knew where the Convention would be, and no one knew when it would be.

The National Office was required to convene a general Convention during the Summer. It was also required to hold the Convention somewhere in the Midwest. The National Office delayed and hesitated and complained: an appeal was sent out to the local chapters asking them to find the needed facilities. The National Office bragged that the Convention had been forbidden in over a hundred locations. The Mass Media, in hysteria, frothing with the excitement of a situation that had been pushed beyond the point of no return — whining in compulsive terror, a dreadful electric staccato of Calvinist obsessions — pontificated that the Convention had been forbidden in over five hundred cities. The parties of the Right, we were told by the National Office, had played out the Establishment into preventing the Convention.

In Minneapolis, in the meantime, Doctor Moos, president of the University, banned the Convention: the leadership of the local SDS chapter, after consulting a lawyer and moaning about civil liberties for a week, let the matter drop. I was amazed — Minnesota, unique among the many states — has a long history of social democracy, protection of dissent, rule by the Farmer-Labor Party, and concern for civil liberties. This, of course, is no big thing. Usually, all the words are changed; the things remain the same. Usually, the Corporate Liberals of Minnesota create the appropriate plan of preemptive co-optation in each new emergency ... and teach it to the national politicians. The national politicians, in turn, regularly allow the parties of the Right to take their vengeance on Minnesota

by preventing the regional Establishment from following the humanistic letter of its own benevolently despotic plans: a sort of cosmic backlash. This, of course, is no big thing for revolutionaries. However, it does mean that our point of confrontation with the Establishment in Minnesota is almost never on an issue of the right to organize (as it usually is everywhere else).

I was certain that if a crisis was made of the situation, Doctor Moos would easily relent. Inquiries were made to the Minneapolis chapter, and even Duluth suggested as an alternate location. We were simply told “the matter has already been taken care of”. I soon discovered, however, that this was not a parochial phenomenon: many Anarchists around the country informed me that the same wishy-washy approach had been made to holding the Convention in their areas. But we put the matter completely out of mind: rumors were in general circulation that the Convention had been postponed until later in the Summer. Several Anarchists who had been chosen as official delegates to the Convention were so certain of this delay that they wandered off to California to enjoy themselves while they were waiting.

## Far-Left Excluded

Suddenly, one night, on going down to watch Walter Cronkite’s news programme on the television, I was told that the first day of the Convention had been concluded. I went into a total rage for the rest of the week: much of the far-Left had been excluded again. On the second day of the Convention, I received a letter from the Solidarity Bookshop group informing me that they had just found out about the Convention: that it had been suddenly called for Chicago during the following week. Their letter, although sent by air mail, had taken longer than a week to reach me: on the same day, I received a letter from Florida that had been mailed by regular postage just two days before. Needless to say, much of the far-Left had been