PL-SDS and the politics of disruption

By TONY THOMAS

Does the antinvar movement have the right to hold meetings, demonstrations and rallies without being disrupted? Was the physical ejection of members of Progressive Labor Party (PLP) and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) who disrupted the July 2-4 National Peace Action Coalition convention the right way to deal with such intrusions? Taking place within the increasingly violent atmosphere for silencing them.

When marshals and ushers asked them to vacate the speakers’ platform in an attempt to "trash" the demonstrations, the April 15 antinvar rally held by PLP was broken up by SDS and PLP-inspired disruptors shortly after 7:30 p.m.

Similarly, following the May 1970 student upsurge, in which PLP opposed turning the universities and high schools into organizing centers for the antinvar movement, PLP launched a series of physical attacks on Young Socialist Alliance and Student Mobilization Committee activists.

The center of these attacks was the Boston area—once a PLP stronghold—which had become one of the main centers of the antinvar movement. On May 3, 1970, Bob Brenneran, an SM and YSA activist who was a marshal in defense of the Boston April 15 selection, was attacked at a YSA educational conference by eight SDS members who beat him after knocking him down.

On May 24, a national steering committee meeting of the SMC held in Boston was attacked by over 50 PLP and SDS members led by SDS National Secretary John Pennington. John McCann, an SWP member who was coordinator of the fight that led to the success of March 31, 1970 antiwar referendum, was savagely beaten at this meeting.

PLP’s proposals were rejected by increasing majorities at the NPAC conferences in June and December 1970. Hazin left the NPAC, he would lose all hope of influencing the country and “settle” the disputes in their own way. This would lead to serious victimization of all those involved and the real issue was whether a small minority opposed the inclusion of Senator Vance Hartke and Victor Reuther, an official of the United Auto Workers, as speakers in the July 2 rally that opened the national conference.

The people of La Raza have been subjected to all the mass movements. That march we won’t easily forget. La Raza has come of age; it has become a strong political organization. La Raza has a clear and consistent program. It has a clear and non-fantastic goal. It is the center of these attacks was the Boston area—once a PLP stronghold—which had become one of the main centers of the antinvar movement.

When antiwar organizations around the country rejected PLP and SDS proposals that capitalist politicians and reformist labor leaders be excluded from the April 15, 1970, demonstration, the NPAC committee’s resolution to "trash" the demonstrations. The April 15 antinvar rally held by PLP members who opposed the inclusion of Senator Vance Hartke and Victor Reuther, an official of the United Auto Workers, as speakers in the July 2 rally that opened the national conference—was attacked at a YSA educational conference by eight SDS members who beat him after knocking him down.

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