

P.O. Box 471 Cooper Station
New York, N.Y. 10003

June 1, 1974

TO ALL AT-LARGE MEMBERS

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed is the "Declaration of the YSA Majority Faction" which was received by the National Office yesterday. It is being sent by the National Office to all locals and at-large members.

Comradely,

Rich Finkel

Rich Finkel
YSA National Secretary

DECLARATION OF THE YSA MAJORITY FACTION

May 31, 1974

This declaration initiates the Young Socialist Alliance Majority Faction. An exceptional measure of this nature is necessitated by nationally-coordinated violations of YSA discipline by members of the YSA "Internationalist Tendency" (IT). In order to understand this decision, it is helpful to review how this new situation has developed.

The YSA's Tradition of Democratic Discussion

In preparation for the December 1973 YSA convention in Chicago, the YSA carried out the most extensive political discussion in our 14-year history. Eleven printed preconvention discussion bulletins were distributed to all YSA members, containing 72 different contributions on the issues facing the YSA and the international Trotskyist movement. Every issue of the International Internal Discussion Bulletin, the Socialist Workers Party Discussion Bulletin and the Internal Information Bulletin were made available to all YSA members.

In addition to the weekly discussions and debates in YSA locals preceding the convention, the YSA National Executive Committee (NEC) organized a special national tour of 21 different cities for international representatives of both the International Executive Committee Majority Tendency and the Leninist-Trotskyist Faction of the Fourth International.

At the end of the YSA's three-month preconvention discussion period, all locals elected convention delegates on the basis of the platform of either the outgoing NEC or the IT. The overwhelming majority of YSA members voted for the positions of the NEC; seven percent of the membership voted for the positions of the IT.

To ensure the fullest possible clarity on the issues in dispute, the convention delegates granted representatives of the IT equal time to the NEC reporters on every political question on the agenda -- a generous amount of time considering the numerical size of the IT. The delegates also chose to grant the IT proportional representation on the incoming YSA National Committee.

In the period following the December 1973 YSA convention, IT members were elected to local executive committees in Berkeley, San Francisco, Madison, Chicago, Houston, Washington D.C. and other cities. In February the NEC further demonstrated its willingness to include the IT in all YSA activities by financing the trip to the World Congress of an IT member who was part of the YSA's small leadership delegation that observed the gathering.

May 11 Violations of Discipline by the IT

During the May 11, 1974, demonstrations in defense of Chilean political prisoners, IT members openly flaunted the demo-

cratically-arrived at decisions of YSA locals. Because of the actions of IT members, two public faces of the YSA were presented to participants in the demonstrations.

On the one hand, YSA locals voted that the political participation of all YSA members in the demonstrations would be through building the United States Committee for Justice to Latin American Political Prisoners (USLA), carrying banners and signs in support of the demands raised by USLA, handing out USLA materials, as well as through organizing sales of The Militant and Young Socialist and distributing SWP election campaign materials.

On the other hand, IT members decided behind the backs of YSA locals to carry out different political activity: sales of the Canadian Old Mole newspaper and distribution of the September 19, 1973, statement by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International on the coup in Chile.

The issue raised by the actions of the IT has nothing to do with the political content of the materials distributed by the IT. The issue is the right of the YSA to decide on the political activities of all its members. This has been our tradition ever since the Bolshevik concept of membership in a democratic-centralist organization was spelled out in 1903. This has been a basic principle of the YSA since its founding in 1960.

Unilateral public interventions by YSA IT members occurred in New York City, Washington D.C., Minneapolis and Chicago. Prior to, during and after the weekend of the May 11 actions, YSA IT members in Houston, Portland, St. Louis, Madison and Ann Arbor carried out unilateral and unauthorized sales of the Old Mole or distribution of the September United Secretariat statement on Chile.

In addition, members of the Socialist Workers Party "Internationalist Tendency" conducted identical breaches of SWP discipline in other cities where there were not YSA IT members. In fact, wherever possible the IT functions as a single disciplined faction of both YSA and SWP members, carrying out common public activities in violation of the decisions of both the YSA and the SWP.

The crudest breach of discipline by YSA IT members was carried out in Washington D.C. In this case, the IT proposed a motion to reprint and distribute the United Secretariat statement. The Washington D.C. local then decided on other priorities for its intervention at the May 11 demonstration and pointed out that the United Secretariat statement would be available in a back issue of Intercontinental Press at the YSA's literature table for the May 11 action. Despite the democratic vote by the local, copies of the United Secretariat statement were distributed by IT members at the demonstration.

In Houston, IT members are circulating their own bulletin and other materials to selected YSA members, without informing

the NEC or requesting approval for such actions. This is in clear violation of the right of the YSA as a whole to have its constitutionally-elected leadership bodies organize and control the YSA's internal bulletin and guarantee that such materials are made equally available to all YSA members in a democratic manner.

The actions by the IT violate the YSA Constitution and the rights of the membership as a whole. Like all other YSA members, IT supporters have the right to appeal any decisions or policies they disagree with to the highest bodies of the YSA, but until such decisions are changed, all members are obligated to carry out the democratically-arrived at decisions of the majority.

Such indisciplined actions are incompatible with YSA membership. If any individual or group of comrades can decide unilaterally on their own political activity and if the decisions of the YSA units of organization are not binding on all members, the YSA's ability to act as a centralized fighting organization is destroyed. It would turn the YSA into a public federation of warring factions, tendencies and cliques. The majority would be unable to speak in the name of the organization, and the YSA's ability to function in a disciplined manner would be crippled.

To justify their actions, some IT members have argued that because they are in ideological agreement with the "International Majority Tendency" (IMT) of the Fourth International, they therefore have the right to determine the tactics to be followed by the YSA in this country. This argument is a mockery of Leninist concepts of democratic-centralism. In fact, the Political Resolution submitted by the IMT and adopted by the February World Congress states: "The task of the International center cannot consist of making authoritative decisions about the tactics of national sections; this is forbidden by the International's statutes."

Why a Majority Faction is Necessary

Prior to these most recent events, supporters of the decisions of the December 1973 YSA convention saw no need to organize a majority tendency or faction. The YSA, however, is now facing a unique situation in the history of factional disputes within our organization: that is, the existence of a minority "tendency" that insists upon its "right" to carry out unilateral public activities in flagrant disregard for the democratically-arrived at decisions of the majority.

In order to forestall any possible disruptions of the YSA's day-to-day activities, it is now crucial for the YSA majority to organize itself into a disciplined faction formation. Majority supporters must be able to meet to discuss on both a local and national level the questions raised by the IT's actions. Local and national consultation is absolutely necessary to deal with this problem.

The National Executive Committee, the elected leadership of the YSA, has already referred the question of the May 11 violations of YSA discipline by IT members to the upcoming plenum of the YSA National Committee which will meet on July 4-7, 1974.

Platform of the YSA Majority Faction

The YSA Majority Faction platform is: 1) Support for the general line of the YSA NEC Political Resolution adopted by the December 1973 YSA convention; and 2) Support for carrying out the provisions of the YSA Constitution.

Majority Faction Functioning

The Majority Faction will elect a steering committee empowered to act in the name of the faction at a faction meeting to be held prior to the July 4-7, 1974, YSA plenum. Until that time the initiators of the Majority Faction will function as an interim steering committee, empowered to act in the name of the faction.

Members of the Majority Faction are required to observe faction discipline within the framework of the platform listed above. Majority Faction discipline does not transcend the discipline of the YSA; the faction is being established in order to help ensure that YSA discipline is observed.

Members of the Majority Faction must conduct themselves in a completely loyal manner to the YSA, maintaining their YSA-building activities in an exemplary way. Financial contributions to the Majority Faction must not entail the lowering of the member's current regular YSA sustainer.

How to Join the Majority Faction

All YSA members who agree with the platform and goals of the Majority Faction should apply to join the faction. All applications must be approved by the interim steering committee. After local caucuses of the Majority Faction are established, comrades may apply to join the faction through its local caucuses. All members of the Majority Faction must inform their YSA local leadership of this fact.

All communications to the YSA Majority Faction should be addressed to Delfine Welch, 414 E. 9th St., Apt. 11, New York, New York 10009.

Signed by

Malik Miah, Lower Manhattan YSA Local
Geoff Mirelowitz, Brooklyn YSA Local
Andrew Pulley, Lower Manhattan YSA Local
Delfine Welch, Brooklyn YSA Local