

Walter Mead

Shelly has asked me to find a lectern to put her notes on. Shelly I'm afraid I couldn't find a lectern but I did find something else here. A dishpan, I'm not sure it will make a very good lectern, but I can't think of a better symbol for women's liberation than turning a dishpan into a lectern. Will that that help?

Shelly Bogen:

It should help. I'm going to talk about the Student Movement and in particularly how we in the Revolutionary Union see the Student Movement fitting into this whole picture of revolution. And I'd also like to talk somewhat about maybe **decomputizing [ph]** what I'm going to say about the Attica Brigade, which is an anti-imperialist student organization, which the Revolutionary Union helped to build and continues to work in throughout the country.

I'm from the University of Wisconsin – Madison. I don't know if people have heard about it before. Maybe if some of you who have know about the University of Wisconsin has a history of militant student struggle, particularly around the war and the support of the black liberation struggle. And today that Student Movement is being rebuilt after several years of a real low in the Student Movement. And I think that the growth of the Attica Brigade around the country in particular and also in Madison attests to that fact and I'll get on to talk about that later on.

Well, as I said the Student Movement is rebuilding. Yet, something happened the other day, I ran into an old friend of mine and had been in the – used to go to school at the University of Wisconsin and he'd been away for about two years. And I bumped into him and he said, "What's happening? What happened to the movement here and all the radicals?" He said, "I read in Time Magazine the other day that fraternities and sororities were the biggest thing around. And that they hadn't heard a peep from the rebellious students." Well I think that what's the press would like us to believe. I don't think they want to spread any ideas that the Student Movement might be building again. Because I don't think they're interested in spreading the word that the Student Movement is on the rise because they recognize too that rebellious students, as they call them, organized and united are a real threat to the people that rule this country. As Tim laid out, who are the imperialists the monopoly capitalists. And we in the RU see that the Student Movement can be a really important contingent in the revolutionary struggle against a decaying system of imperialism.

But before I go into the role of students in particular and talk about that, I'd like to give some sort of a background, a little background about the Student Movement to illustrate how it developed. And also to, I think it's important to have a good grasp of your history so that you can determine how to move ahead from there. And the Student Movement has a proud history and just hearing some of the stuff that came down at this college here, I think that what happened here attests to what happened to the rest of the country, too. The Student Movement largely inspired by the Black Liberation Struggle in the early 60's took up the struggle started by third world students in particular, for Civil Rights and for Black Liberation. The Student Movement also in particular and is most well known for the struggle it took up against the war in Indochina. And especially through the vehicle of massive demonstrations went all out to fight the aggression of the United States at Indochina.

In particular, I can remember things like in Madison and other places around the country that students threw off recruiters from General Electric and from Dow Chemical Company because they didn't want anything to do with these mass murderers or these people they knew were perpetuating a lot of exploitation and misery around the world. Also, students in the late 60's following the lead of the Black Panther Party in particular, put out the call to free all political prisoners. Students also spread the idea of

women's liberation to the broad masses of people. But nowhere was the role of the Student Movement more clearly defined than the massive outbursts of protests of the invasion of Cambodia. And the murders at Kent and Jackson State. And people remember around then like in 1970 over 200 campuses and thousands students demonstrated in the streets and went on strike. And partly, because of this, Nixon's troops were limited to 60 days in Cambodia and the following year the invasion of Laos was limited to ARVIN troops, which were company routed and withdrawn.

Of course, the courageous fight of the Vietnamese people was the main reason for this defeat, for this limiting of imperialist intervention. But the masses of people around the world and the particular students who protested were a powerful force in limited this imperialist aggression. And the building of such a massive Student Movement of the 60's didn't come easy. It took a lot of hard patient work and a lot of years to build it up. And one thing we learned through all this work, because the best way you learn things is always through struggle and through work, is that the Black Liberation Struggle and the fight of the Vietnamese people, the struggle of workers, the struggle of women, and the struggle against things like cut backs in education was all connected. It all fit together. We found out that what had fit together was that it all came from a system called imperialism that perpetuated this type of oppression of people at home and people around the world.

We found out it was the same Rockefeller who murdered Attica, would shut down minors in Colorado and who plundered around the world. It was the same General Electric who exploited workers at home as well as workers in Southern Asia. We found out it was the same Kennedy who planned the Bay of Pigs invasion on Cuba. It was the same Johnson who invaded Indochina and Nixon, who now wheels and deals in the Mid-East and pretends to be innocent boy in the face of Watergate. And who's lowered, who tells us to turn down the temperature to I think it's 68 degrees or something because it's more healthy. And in fact is pulling this energy freeze on the American people because the capitalists of this country don't want to spend money to tap the oil resources of the United States.

It's these same people, these same presidents, Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon, and even Rockefeller, who's a governor who have very cozy and profitable relationships with the capitalists in this country, with the people who rule this country. So we began to understand the enemy, that was really important to students, and it really advanced our understanding and advanced our movement a whole lot. We began to understand that the enemy that was imperialism was a system. So then we understood to change things we had a really big task. It wasn't just to perfecting the system; we had to move a mountain almost. The system wasn't just going to be tuned up or something; we needed a whole entire overhauling. And this is a very significant fact of the Student Movement because then we began to consciously rebuild the movement as an anti-imperialist movement. As a movement against the system of imperialism, which oppresses people in the United States and abroad.

But once we came to that understanding, we had to tackle the question, how do you defeat a system, a huge, monstrous system like this? How do you defeat imperialism? And in fact, many people who had become cynical through the student struggles after 1970, especially after the Cambodia uprising. Because we looked back on the Student Movement and said, "We demonstrated, we petitioned, and we worked, we really sweated, it took years and years and years to build this movement." So we think this second aspect of the Student Movement is also really important. And thirdly, we feel that the Student Movement in its own right, students themselves can play a very important role. If you just think, if students didn't show up for the many demonstrations, what a difference it would make to the Revolutionary Movement. Think of examples, like in Columbia, the student strike there how students really concreted the aide of the struggle of the third world people in the community. Tim was talking about the Farah Strikes, students have begun to really rally around the Farah Strike and do a lot of strike support work.

Again, the thing about kicking recruiters off campus like GE recruiters, IT&T, Dow Chemical, so that they can't - telling these recruiters that they don't want them to use the university as their software, as their brains to oppress people around the world. So the Student Movement can play these very important roles, however, after the upsurge in the 70's, 1971 and 72 were really slow years. They were slow years in Madison and I know around most of the parts of the country. But right now we feel that the Student Movement is on the rise. It's on the rise as an anti-imperialist movement. And it's on the rise because of struggles in the real world are propelling us forward. The growth of the Attica Brigade and other student organizations attest to this fact. And so, I'd like to **computize [ph]** all this by explaining some of the work we in the Revolutionary Union and Communists do on the campuses.

First of all is, we're involved in the Attica Brigade, which as I said is a mass democratic anti-imperialist student organization. And I'll talk about that in a minute. We work with an organization on my campus in particular called the US China Peoples Friendship Association, which builds a friendship between American and Chinese people. Involved in Farah Strike Support committees and such coalitions as Coalition to Throw Nixon Out. But I imagine that a lot of people here would be interested in the Attica Brigade. I don't know if people heard about it before but news has been getting around about the Brigade. So I'll go into that now. Well, the Attica Brigade is an anti-imperialist organization that's united around two principles. It's a principle of support for national liberation struggles abroad as exemplified by the National Liberation Front of Vietnam and support for the struggles of oppressed people at home. And concretely what this means, the first principle, we'll take first, is that students in the Attica Brigade, especially in the East Coast where it started worked to implement the Peace Treaty in terms of participating in demonstrations and doing a lot of mass work to win over people to support for the Peace Treaty. Recently when this war broke out in the Mid-East, Attica Brigades around the country did a lot of support work on explaining to people that the struggle of the Palestinian and other Arab people against imperialism. This is particularly important and we came up against a lot of flack when we did things like forums. Because I think that the American press does a whole lot for Israel and just about totally obscures the situation of the Palestinian people.

Done a lot of work around and oppose the university complicity with imperialism as well. For instance, in Madison there's this huge building and up on the 18th floor is something called the Army Mathematics Research Center and they do all sorts of research like biological and chemical warfare for the Army. And there's been a movement being rebuilt against that on campus to get rid of it, to shut it down. And against students helping to organize a boycott of Rhodesian chrome and things like that. In terms of support for the struggle for oppressed people at home, just some particular examples is recently there's been a tour of Attica inmates. The brothers who were indicted from the Attica uprising three years ago and they've been speaking about their struggle and their trial and just what went on in the prison and what type of oppression they faced. There's been some support work done around that in defense of these political prisoners.

Also, when Southern U happened there was a lot of demonstrations planned in solidarity with the students of Southern University. Students involved in the Farah Strike Support Committee and in support committees for the farm workers, planning activities around March 8 International Women's Day and also particular struggles on the campuses that relate to students like open admissions programs and programs like on my campus is cultural centers, Afro-American Cultural Center and a proposed Chicano Center that was slashed – with the recent slashes to social services. And there's a big struggle that developed to get those cultural centers back on campus. So all in all, there're about 35 chapters of the Attica Brigade on the East Coast and the Mid-West. And we the RU, see the Attica Brigade as a real vital student organization. We helped to start the RU – we helped to start the Attica Brigade in 1971 and we work in it now and help to build it around the country. Many people ask us, "Why the name Attica Brigade?" A lot of

times people think we're sort of like an Attica Defense committee or something like that. Well I can explain why we chose the name Attica Brigade by going to some of the history of the Brigade as well as the politics of it. The Attica Brigade first appeared in New York on November 6, 1971. And on that day about 800 students marched under the banner of a large anti-war demonstration. The banners and the slogans this contingent proclaimed that it's politics were anti-imperialist against a system that oppressed people at home and abroad. And it tied in the struggles at Attica Prison with the struggles of the people in Viet Nam, seeing them as part of the same fight, the fight against imperialism. However, it wasn't until the spring of 1972 that the Attica Brigade began to build as a permanent anti-imperialist organization. And since then there are Brigades from Baltimore to Kent State to Rhode Island College.

The Attica Brigade is a mass organization because we see the necessity be as strong as possible; we want to win. And we see the necessity to unite as many people as we can in this struggle. And we in the Attica Brigade decided to be an anti-imperialist organization say as opposed to being a single-issue organization or united around socialist or communist principles. Because in a single-issue organization it doesn't allow to raise people's consciousness that all these struggles have tied together and we felt that that was really key. And also, we felt the unity of the organization shouldn't be socialism or communism because though there are socialists and communists who work in the Attica Brigade, because there are many people who see the need to fight imperialism as a system yet haven't worked out all their ideas about socialism and communism. China and all sorts of different questions, pretty high-level questions. And we felt that if the unity of this organization was socialism or communism it would exclude a lot of people who are really anti-imperialists.

The Attica Brigade is a multi-national organization. And what I mean by multi-national is that it includes people from many nationalities, third world and white people in the Attica Brigade. However, we in the Attica Brigade also see the importance in helping to develop in encouraging the development of national forms of organization. There are forms of organizations that are organized, particularly Puerto Rican students or Black students, Chicano students. And the reason for this is because we understand that this society as it teams with national oppression, with racism and national oppression. And multi-national unity isn't like "snap." You have a real tight organization of third world and white people together and their fighting together and are going to stay solid just like that. But it's going to take a long time to build that type of unity and it's got to be principle unity. And so therefore, many third world students see the need to help, to join national forms of organization to really unite Black people, to unite Puerto Rican people. And through the struggle, through working closely with these national forms of organization the Attica Brigade will really be able to form a principle unity – to forge a principle unity with these other organizations in the struggle.

And talk somewhat about tactics because that's been somewhat of question a lot about the Student Movement, students sort of running around trashing and stuff like that, people wonder about it. From the Attica Brigade's active involvement in the struggle and mass work, we've learned that in order to win we need to fight for a long time because imperialism doesn't give up easily. The Attica Brigade feels that the concept of politics in command is correct and especially politics in command of tactics. We don't see that any one tactic is always good or always militant. We see the need to decide things on a political basis. In other words, who do you want to reach and what point do you want to make?

And to win, we realize that mass militant action is needed. But we don't see that militancy is always how much damage you can do, how much trashing you can do or how tough you look or something like that. But what we see real militancy is that it has two aspects. One, it is advances peoples understanding of the system that we are up against and, two, it builds peoples strength and ability to struggle. See understanding without fighting means one's an armchair intellectual and doesn't do anything about what they know. But struggling without understanding means just sort of have bursts of energy with no real

goal and no real target. So we see that it's always important to struggle harder and to understand more at the same time.

We in the RU see the Attica Brigade and the Student Movement as a whole rising up again. But this time on a much firmer basis because we have a real understanding of the system we are fighting. And more important, we're grasping a real understanding of how to fight imperialism. We're confident that if we do our work well, and practice with the people's interest in mind the Student Movement will surely be a powerful force, a powerful contingent in the struggle against imperialism and can really become a fighting ally of the proletariat in the struggle for proletarian revolution in socialism.