



## *Stop National Front with mass labour action!*

# British cops protect fascists

LONDON -- [In the past month] the attention of the British media has been riveted on two significant confrontations pitting thousands of leftists and immigrants against police defending the "right" of the fascist National Front (NF) to stage provocations by marching or assembling in heavily non-white communities.

[On 13 August] some 5000 anti-fascist demonstrators battled 4000 police (a quarter of the entire Metropolitan London police force) in an attempt to break up a march of 500 NFers through Lewisham, a largely Asian and West Indian neighbourhood in South London. This confrontation resulted in 214 arrests and 110 people hospitalized (including 55 cops), as police, equipped with riot equipment for the first time in England (although it is standard fare in Northern Ireland), successfully defended the National Front march.

Two days later in the Ladywood district of Birmingham a crowd of 2000 leftists attempting to break up an election rally of 120 fascists was repulsed by hundreds of police in riot gear defending the meeting hall. The cops also repelled a subsequent attempt by the demonstrators to storm a local police station to release arrested militants.

These events parallel another large-scale confrontation in London last April when thousands of leftists unsuccessfully attempted to block a march of 1000 fascists through a North London suburb. Thus far, all of these confrontations have been three-way standoffs: the left has consistently outmobilised the fascists, the police have successfully defended the National Front marches/meetings, and the fascist vermin have asserted their "right" to openly mobilise in working-class and immigrant districts of Britain's cities.

Despite the fact that the NF is still unable to defeat the "far left" in direct street confrontations, the past five years have seen the emergence of organised fascism as a serious, although still marginal, factor in British politics. The pre-eminent organisation of British fascism, the National Front, and a variety of smaller competing ultra-right sects have not grown dramatically in membership. However, since 1972 the NF has recorded a series of significant electoral successes....

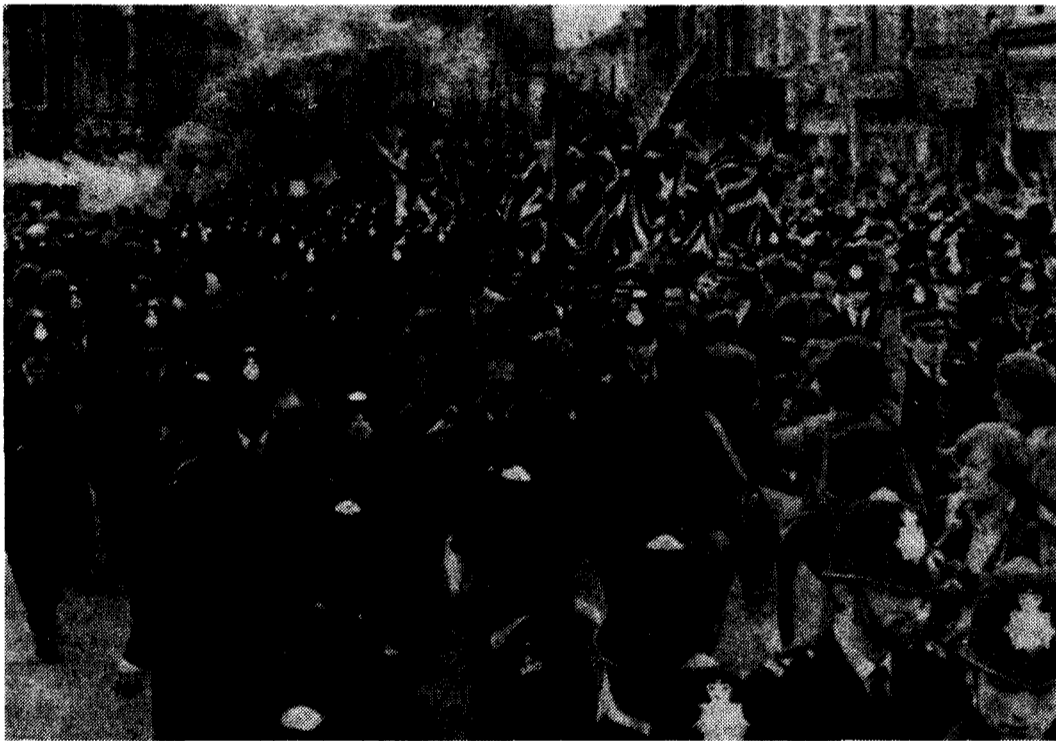
In a 1976 parliamentary by-election in one district of Lewisham, the combined vote of the National Front and the National Party (a 1975 split from the NF), was 44.4 percent, more than the victorious Labour candidate. However, despite the sizeable number of National Front votes and the clear danger that this poses of the possible emergence of a mass fascist movement, these votes do not at this stage represent hard political support for the fascists. Rather they are predominantly "backlash" votes....

While the National Front has emerged as a significant factor at the polls over the past several years, it is not primarily a legalistic, electoralist party. The central activity of the NF is recruiting white lumpens and petty bourgeois through provocation and intimidating marches in neighbourhoods with a large non-white immigrant population. Another favorite activity by these reactionary thugs is to attack left-wing newspaper salesmen by throwing ammonia in their eyes. A recent wave of firebombings of left and immigrant community bookstores is doubtless also the work of the Front or one of its smaller fascist satellites.

Despite their marginal impact on British politics as a whole, the fascist spectrum is a clear and present danger to the radical left and its ability to function. To ignore this threat is to invite disaster....

The recent growth of fascist influence in England must be seen in the context of the acute crisis of British imperialism. There is the *beginning* of a felt realisation throughout all classes that none of the usual "solutions" proffered by either Labour or the Tories can offer the prospect of lasting social stability. The situation in Britain is not, at this point, like Germany 1929. But both the material reality and the popular consciousness of the present economic situation are palpably different from most other industrialised countries which have also seen a growth of fascist influence recently.

The first strongholds of the National Front were in the industrial towns of the Midlands -- dreary cities long immortalised for their "dark satanic mills" -- which had seen a certain concentration of immigration from the former colonies of the British empire. There has been racial conflict in such areas for over a decade now. International attention was drawn to this in 1964 when the foreign secretary-designate of



National Front, defended by one-fourth of London police force, begins provocative Lewisham march.

the incoming Labour government was defeated in Birmingham by an openly racist Tory campaign ("If you want a nigger for a neighbour, vote Labour" said the stickers).

... Despite the fact that non-whites in Britain constitute less than 3 percent of the total population, the fascists depict them as the first wave of a massive influx which is flooding what was once a "green and pleasant land".

The fascist theme is hardly sophisticated: it is "they" (immigrants) who are taking all the public housing; "they" are taking jobs from Englishmen, etc, etc. The National Front et al simply capitalise on the racist hysteria stirred up by the bourgeois press about supposed hordes of East Indians arriving by the planeload, to be

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put up at ratepayers' expense at four-star hotels while others on the dole are holidaying in Spain. The demoralisation of large sectors of the "lower middle class" in Britain, who are saddled with mortgages and are largely defenseless against runaway inflation, and increasing lumpenisation of working-class youth due to rising unemployment constitute the potential social base for a mass fascist movement.

While most of the recent activity of the National Front has centred on cultivating racism and promoting "send them back" as the solution to the crisis of British capitalism, this by no means exhausts the fascists' stock of social issues. Many articles in the National Front's *Spearhead* are clearly modelled on the Nazis' fake-radical social programme in appealing to the increasingly desperate middle class. Thus the NF calls for better housing programmes, improved urban services, full employment, and in local election literature last spring it began to attack the power of the banks.

The recent round of battles between the radical left and fascist thugs is by no means unprecedented in Britain -- in fact, the slogan of "no platform for fascists" is traditionally widely accepted by trade-union militants and in the workers movement as a whole since the 1930s. In 1936, when the blackshirted thousands of [Sir Oswald] Mosley's BUF [British Union of Fascists] tried to march provocatively into London's predominantly Jewish East End, the massive response of the working class to the call of the centrist Independent Labour Party effectively blocked the fascists' path.

Despite hours of fighting, 6000 foot police and the entire Metropolitan London mounted police were unable to clear a path for the fascists through the approximately 250,000 demonstrators. Attempting to lead the fascists down Cable Street, the police were met with massive street barricades and were driven back by showers of stones and bricks from the rooftops. Finally, the police were forced to tell Mosley's vermin that they could not go through, and the fascists had to crawl back to the empty streets of the West End to disperse. It was not the last attempt by Mosley to storm the East End, and it did not stop the BUF immediately, but it was a giant blow for the working class.

All of the various left groups pay lip service to the "spirit of Cable Street". But a group like the Socialist Workers Party (SWP, formerly International Socialists), which does not understand the difference between leading four to five thousand and leading 250,000 will never rise to lead a quarter million workers. Cable Street *should* be an inspiration, but it is necessary to understand that the same military tactics cannot be rigidly applied regardless of the political situation and the balance of forces.

While the slogan "No platform for fascists" remains relatively popular among the more militant layers of the working class, the important question is how this is to be carried out. The leaderships of the trade unions and the Labour Party, as well as the still significant Stalinists, characteristically rely on pray-ins and appeals to the local authorities (particularly if they have a majority of Labour councillors) to ban the fascists.

The major ostensible revolutionary groupings, on the other hand, notably the reformist-syndicalist SWP and the pseudo-Trotskyist International Marxist Group (IMG), attempt to

substitute "far-left" physical confrontations with the fascists and the police who protect them for the hard fight within the ranks of the trade-union movement to establish the basis for mass class action to smash the fascist scum. Especially in the case of the IMG, this physical confrontationism goes hand-in-hand with pleas to the bourgeois state to ban fascist marches and meetings.

It is not necessarily adventurist for a few thousand leftists to attempt to take on a few hundred fascists. For example, Martin Walker of the National Front concedes that the 1962 Mosley campaign was "hammered into the ground" by successful leftist mobilisations. The point is to successfully *break up* attempted fascist mobilisations, not to engage in a string of inconclusive brawls. However, given the demonstrated determination of the state to protect the National Front in all these recent skirmishes with the left, most such attempts will only result in head-on confrontations with the police. In the absence of a mass working-class base for their activities, the attempt of even several thousand leftists to "take on" the cops of the bourgeois state will inevitably result in the victimisation of those subjectively revolutionary militants who engage in such confrontations.

Today it is the responsibility of revolutionaries to attempt to initiate the broadest possible class united front of all working-class organisations to combat the fascist provocations. The SWP, the largest group to the left of the Communist Party, does not attempt to initiate such mobilisations, preferring instead to act on its own in order to gain notoriety in the mass media. This publicity and posturing as a mass party cannot stop the fascists and only succeeds in effectively isolating the "far left" from the mass of Labour Party and trade-union militants.

The only criticisms which the IMG makes of the SWP role in the fight against the National Front

are from the right: it attacks the SWP's "sectarian" desire to build its own group. The IMG proposal is essentially that all of the "far left" get together into a single all-encompassing swamp and carry out the same dead-end substitutionist policies that the SWP is pursuing in its own name today. This was the adventurist tack the IMG took in the June 1974 fiasco at Red Lion Square, where hundreds were beaten and one demonstrator was killed by the cops when protesters against a National Front march tried to break through police lines (see "Fascism: How Not to Fight It", *Workers Vanguard* no 70, 6 June 1975).

The centrist-economists of the Workers Socialist League (WSL) who like to posture as a "real" working-class organisation in contradistinction to the other supposedly petty-bourgeois groups, fail to seriously raise the questions of the fight against racism and fascism in the one place where they have a real base (the Cowley car factory near Oxford), preferring to limit themselves to agitation around higher wages and other simple shop-floor issues. The flip side of the WSL's parochial economism is an all-sided political capitulation to social-democratic reformism.

If in the death agony of British capitalism the National Front or some other continuator of Mosley *does* succeed in finding a route to the ever-growing masses of the discontented, it will require a genuinely Bolshevik party to crush the contemporary Blackshirts. The Labour Party and its panoply of fake-Trotskyist satellites, the local "Eurocommunists", the hardline Stalinists as well as the syndicalist-reformist posturers of the SWP will all, in the final analysis, prove to be roadblocks to the victory of the proletarian revolution. And when the threat of fascism is posed in a more immediate way than it was in Britain in the 1930s, proletarian revolution will be the only alternative. ■

(excerpted from *Workers Vanguard* no 170, 26 August 1977)

## letters

Comrade editor:

At the conclusion of the Sydney University Spartacist Club SRC election leaflet reprinted in last month's *ASP* we call "for a workers government to expropriate the capitalist class, for the dictatorship of the proletariat". To dispel any possible misconceptions we should point out that the slogan "workers government" is simply a popular formulation for the more precise Marxist term "dictatorship of the proletariat" -- not a separate "stage". The working class can only rule through its own state, based on independent workers organisations (ie soviets), which expropriates the bourgeoisie. Unlike the revisionists' call for the return of an ALP government "pledged to socialist policies", for bolsheviks the call for a workers government is always explicitly *counterposed* to the parliamentary, capitalist governments run by the social democrats. The fake Trotskyists of the United Secretariat, in particular, have used the term "workers/workers and peasants government" to cover anything from parliamentary, popular-front governments (Chile) to "third world" bonapartist regimes (Algeria). They thereby blur over the need for the working class to smash the capitalist state through workers revolution.

As you point out in the introduction to the leaflet, Barbara Ramjan of the "united left" slate narrowly defeated right winger Tony Abbott for the SRC presidency at Sydney University. Interestingly, the Communist Group's post-election *Red Letter* was proudly headed "Students reject reaction and elect a communist president". This was news for most students! Throughout her campaign Comrade Ramjan was most upset that right wingers were labelling her a "communist". She protested to one right-wing candidate that he should attack her not for her Communist Group membership, but on her *real* program for the SRC -- social welfare! An additional point: our candidate for SRC president received 47 votes, not 37 as reported.

Peter Musicka  
Sydney University Spartacist Club

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Dear comrades:

An otherwise fine article on the sackings at Tonsley Park Chrysler in the August *Australasian Spartacist* formulates one slogan as follows: "nationalise the car industry without compensation under workers control". By telescoping together two correct demands in this way, the slogan confuses both the role of workers control and the meaning of expropriation (ie, nationalisation without compensation).


The call for workers control in a particular situation, such as the massive layoffs in the car industry, should not be conditional on expropriation or nationalisation. Workers control means

in essence a regime of economic dual power in the factories, within the production unit, characterised by direct intervention of the workers to challenge aspects of capitalist management -- opening the books, regulating aspects of the operation of the plant against the wishes of management, or exercising a veto over management decisions; ie, management still exists and is still trying to assert its traditional authority. Thus incorporating workers control in a demand for expropriation can wrongly suggest a struggle for expropriation *limited* within the framework of capitalism, ie, *accepting* the continued existence of the bourgeoisie. The call for expropriation of a particular industry must rather be linked, as it is correctly in the article, to the struggle for a workers government to carry out a generalised expropriation of industry. Were a failing car manufacturer to be nationalised to shore up capitalism, as the British Labour government did with British Leyland, workers control would remain applicable as a means of resisting the will of another boss, this time the capitalist state's management of the enterprise.

The slogan as formulated could also imply support for the false syndicalist conception that the takeover of individual factories, enterprises or even whole industries by the workers at the point of production can in and of itself lead to the expropriation of the entire bourgeoisie. This is impossible -- the general organisation of the economy and, most importantly, the state power would remain in the capitalists' hands. Our program is not the reformist/syndicalist utopia of "workers self-management", but the management by a workers state of a centralised, planned economy. Of course, under a workers state there would be a continuing need for a different kind of workers control -- as an authoritative, *consultative* voice at the point of production, not in struggle against but fundamentally in harmony with the workers state's economic administration.

Fraternally,  
Marie Hotschilt

*ASP replies:* Cde Hotschilt's point is well taken. Workers control is not an empty formula to be tacked onto a slogan as a substitute for advancing the need for a workers government, as do the Healyites with their all-purpose slogan of "nationalisation without compensation under workers control". Nor is it a stage through which the class struggle must necessarily pass, nor the institutionalisation of improvements in working conditions *as an end in itself* which "left" bureaucrats make it out to be. For an excellent general discussion of what workers control is and its role in the revolutions in Russia in 1917 and Spain in the 1930s, we refer interested readers to an article by Joseph Seymour, "Leninism and workers control", in *Workers Vanguard* no 162 (17 June 1977).

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# Soares government flounders

# Economic crisis in Portugal

We reprint below an article (first published in Workers Vanguard no 168, 29 July 1977) on the deepening economic and political crisis in Portugal by Comrade Mafalda Silva, a Portuguese Marxist. While Comrade Silva continues to have certain political differences with Spartactism, we recommend this article as an informed, revolutionary Marxist analysis of the current situation and the tasks facing Trotskyists in Portugal.

## Letter from Lisbon

According to Portugal's prime minister, Mario Soares, defending himself on television June 7, the Socialist Party minority government is "the only mediator in Portuguese society, polarized between antagonistic and unyielding extremes who seek to crush each other". Without a doubt, Soares, consciously assuming that role, will be responsible for his own fall, which appears increasingly inevitable in the eyes of the "antagonistic extremes" to which he referred: on the one hand, the workers and their organizations, defending their conquests; on the other, reactionary forces internally and externally, who are impatient with the pace at which the "normalization" is proceeding -- that is, the repression which is forcing the workers movement into a generalized retreat, and the capitalist "recuperation". The situation is one of permanent instability: the bourgeois-democratic regime, albeit semi-presidentialist, has not been stabilized. It would be more correct to define the situation as one still open to an abrupt revolutionary shift, although at present successive partial retreats are being experienced which could, according to all appearances, be transformed into a general retreat as the result of one final test of strength, comparable to that in Germany in 1923.

Although the two principal rightist parties -- the Social Democratic Party (PSD -- ex-Popular Democratic Party) and the Social Democratic Center (CDS), which have just formed an informal opposition bloc -- do not have basic differences with the present cabinet and its austerity plan, they are showing an increasing impatience with the indecision of the government, which hesitates, knowing that great confrontations with the working masses are still to come. And in fact, the 15 percent devaluation of the escudo, the wage controls, the abolition of subsidies (which put an end to price controls), the attacks on agrarian reform and the authorization to implement layoffs, among other anti-working-class measures taken by the Soares government, have not succeeded up to now in breaking the workers' resistance and putting an end to the pre-revolutionary situation which was opened with the fall of the Caetano/Salazarist dictatorship on 25 April 1974.

### The economic situation

In order to satisfy the requirements of imperialism, the government will have to carry out a global plan of reconverting the Portuguese economy. The motivation for the imperialist demands can be found in the crisis of the capitalist system -- namely the new recession which is forecast, which eliminates the possibility of the industrialized countries of western Europe continuing to import Portuguese labor, therefore requiring Portugal to reorient its industry; and the necessity of American imperialism to obtain new markets, thus preparing the ground for future investments in Portugal. US imperialism is utilizing the loans granted by international organizations, among them the International Monetary Fund, to guarantee the political conditions which would ensure the viability of such investments.

More specifically, the guarantees required by international capitalism, whose implementation

requires a significant alteration in the relation of forces, include the following points:

*An end to state control of banking and an end to nationalizations.* In fact, the nationalizations following the Spinoist counter-coup of 11 March 1975 turned Portugal into a country with one of the most extensive nationalized sectors in Europe, amounting to roughly 45 percent of the total investment and 25 percent of the labor force. Traumatized by the action of the workers who took over the factories, private industry does not feel secure enough to invest, even though the government proposes to return 400 companies. And the entry of Portugal into the EEC (Common Market) will certainly not take place unless the European banks are authorized to open branches in this country.

*Elimination of workers control.* Even though many workers commissions have disappeared, or have ceased to constitute fragmentary organs of dual power, the workers in many workplaces having shown complete disinterest in them, it is certain that they continue to exist in various enterprises with more or less indefinite functions, and that by struggling to maintain and strengthen them the workers can effectively fight against the denationalizations.

For now, in order to resolve the problems caused by the balance of payments deficit and to promote the conversion of the productive apparatus, the governing social democrats are seeking a rapid expansion of exports, which is the purpose of the devaluation of the escudo and of the preferential credits (as well as fiscal incentives) given to exports.

### Austerity in practice

Even though the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), in the interests of its policy of pressuring in order to obtain ministerial portfolios, has refused to mobilize the agricultural workers against the Socialist Party (PS) agrarian policy -- refusal of credit to the Collective Production Units [expropriated estates run as collective farms under workers management], an end to expropriations and limitation of the sector affected by agrarian reform -- the PCP has raised sporadic resistance to the most flagrant attempts to dislodge the workers on the pretext of the "right of reserve" [holdings guaranteed to former land owners after expropriation of their estates], provoking repeated confrontations with the Republican National Guard (GNR). At Mora, roughly 70 kilometers from Beja, there have been dozens of wounded. The combativity of these workers is obvious; the absence of a more decisive and organized resistance is solely due to the treacherous policy of the PCP leadership.

In the trade-union domain, the PS has been doing everything to break the hegemony of the PCP and the labor federation controlled by it, the CGTP/Intersindical, namely by promoting the so-called "Carta Aberta" (Open Letter) grouping. The latter, however, has completely failed to attract the blue-collar unions, because of its obvious lack of negotiating power. Under the direction of the present minister of labor, the sinister Maldonado Gonalha, the PS has taken off its mask of internal democracy concerning trade unionism and has gone over to repressive measures against Socialist militants who hold positions in the CGTP. Nevertheless the CGTP has shown boundless good will concerning the so-called "social pact", which it is negotiating with the government and whose essential purpose is to limit wage increases to 15 percent by the end of the year, and this when inflation on the order of 30 percent is predicted. The CGTP limits itself to criticizing (that is, counseling) the Ministry of Labor and calls only for defensive forms of struggle, pressuring the existing structures and avoiding at all costs the mobilization of the

workers on the basis of a clear program. Meanwhile, the present rate of unemployment exceeds 10 percent.

In the student sector, the measures taken by the ultra-rightist minister of education, Sottomayor Cardia, in favor of the reintegration of professors purged from the University of Coimbra because of their complicity with the former regime, have provoked repeated mobilizations of the students. The minister responded by closing that university and utilizing the spruced-up police shock troop units in order to attack the strikers and demonstrators. The action of the ministry was so ferocious that many professors who are members of the PS publicly took a position against it.

A wing of the Socialist Party itself, around the former minister of agriculture, Lopes Cardoso, in disagreement with the orientation followed by the PS government, has decided to found a more-or-less dissident "cultural association" -- the *Fraternidade Operaria* (the Workers Fraternity). The formation of this group reflects the difficulties in saddling the working-class base of the party with measures which directly affect it, such as the law concerning layoffs, the restriction of the right to strike, the wage freeze, etc.

Thus, as the result of the actions of Mario Soares' First Constitutional Government, we have a rightist offensive which on the military level seeks to remove even such "moderates" as Melo Antunes and Vasco Lourenco who during the summer of 1975 led the opposition to Vasco Goncalves (backed by the PCP) and who now hold seats in the Revolutionary Council, the organ which represents the last vestige of the MFA (Armed Forces Movement). The Council's (limited) power is increasingly contested by the putschist right wing of the military, which is led by men like Jaime Neves, the executor of November 25, who leads the Commandos regiment; Pires Veloso, the commandant of the Northern Military Region; Soares Carneiro, chairman of the "Association of Ex-Commandos", etc.

The right has seized upon the question of the Azores Islands, an important strategic location in the Atlantic where there is an American military base, as a trial balloon for its reactionary policies. In the Azores -- which were given a statute of regional autonomy by the 1976 constitution, and where the PSD was the victor in the April elections, subsequently taking charge of the regional government -- left-wing elements, including members of the PS, are persecuted by the "separatists" such as the so-called FLA (Azores Liberation Front). The FLA, enjoying official protection, is spreading bomb attacks and pro-independence propaganda, which could only mean the creation of a fictitious client state of the United States.

The PCP, lacking "progressive" military officers, opted to support the president of the re-

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Lisbon, 22 June: 150,000 demonstrate in national day of protest against government austerity measures.

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# US SWP polemic against Spartacist tendency

## Alibis of a social democrat

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The Socialist Workers Party's Direct Action (14 July) recently "reviewed" an Intercontinental Press polemic aimed at discrediting the Spartacist League/US, and by implication our entire tendency, as "sectarian abstentionist". The following (abridged from Workers Vanguard no 168, 29 July) is the first part of a series in reply to that polemic. A condensation of further articles in the series will appear in a future issue of Asp.

### Reply to Pearlman

Since expelling the founding nucleus of the Spartacist League (SL) more than a dozen years ago, the ex-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) has smugly dismissed the SL as an "irrelevant", "sterile" grouping of "ultra-left sectarians". But as the SL consolidated in the US and extended itself internationally, the SWP's cries of "insignificant SL" have become more strident and its carefully cultivated patronizing tone has given way to increasingly ill-humored frenzy.

The Spartacist tendency has succeeded in winning over dozens of former members of the SWP and its international allies of the United Secretariat (USec). A contribution in a recent SWP internal bulletin complains, "We have to admit that, for whatever reasons, a sizable number of members of the Spartacist League are ex-members of our movement" ("We Should Publish an Education for Socialists Booklet against Sectarianism in General and against the Spartacist League in Particular", SWP Discussion Bulletin, July 1977)....

The political destruction of the SL is not a life-or-death matter for the deeply reformist SWP, which is working a different side of the fence. Still, the SWP cannot help being embarrassed at its numerous ex-members who took the SWP's residues of verbal Trotskyism a bit too seriously and found that the legitimate Trotskyist tradition led straight to the SL. For opportunists, the notion that a principled program can ever win any support anywhere is a violation of the fundamental laws of nature. But the Trotskyist politics of the "irrelevant" SL seem to have a way of popping up in the strangest places: from the Central Committee of the USec's French section to the American gay liberation milieu. And now that the SWP has undertaken a "turn" toward the labor movement (seeing a possibility of brain-trusting a wing of the labor bureaucracy), it is annoyed to find SL supporters who have been recognized and active oppositionists for several years in the unions -- an injury added to insult.

So the SWP must have been delighted last year to come into possession of a former Spartacist, whose politics roughly paralleled its own. After years of pretending not to have noticed WV's publication of declarations of solidarity with the Spartacist tendency emanating from former SWP/USec supporters in the US, Canada and Europe, here was finally a chance to hit back. And the SWP has recently seized the opportunity to publicize its recruitment of a former alternate to the SL Central Committee (CC) with an alacrity which belies its protestations of SL "irrelevance".

First, to whet the appetite, the SWP's international factional organ, *Intercontinental Press* (30 May 1977), ran this unusual promotional blurb on the inside of the front cover:

"Coming Next Week

"A review of the policies of the Spartacist League.

"On the Black movement; on the oppression of women; on defense of political prisoners.

With entertaining and illuminating examples to substantiate the polemic."

The tongue-in-cheek tone notwithstanding, it was clear the SWP hoped it had really got "the goods" on us at last. Our appetite appropriately whetted, we waited with anticipation to see what our

defector, Bob Pearlman, would have to say about us and about his new political friends.

Pearlman's two-part article ("Spartacist: Making of an American Sect", *Intercontinental Press*, 6 June and 13 June 1977) was, frankly, a dud. After all, Pearlman -- as a CC member in our democratic organization -- had had access to the "inside story" of the SL over a period of years: our political deliberations, our tactical decisions, our free and sometimes sharp discussions and disputes, the minutes of the proceedings of our highest bodies, a mound of internal bulletins. Pearlman is a competent propagandist and an experienced politician; it is not an accident that despite a certain underlying parochial dilettantism and an oppositional history, he was elected an alternate CC member in 1974 as part of the slate endorsed by the outgoing CC.

Cynical and empty social democrats who inhabit the SWP will no doubt find Pearlman's series comforting. But any reasonably experienced and thoughtful political person who reads his indictment of the Spartacist tendency will be struck by a general impression of SL political seriousness, honesty and organizational growth which emerges from Pearlman's attack. His concluding characterization of the SL as "an American sect" is directly contradicted by the picture which emerges of a dynamic and cohesive organization which has grown severalfold in this country and has broken out of involuntary national isolation to become a distinct international tendency with an increasingly authoritative international collective leadership....

internal SL disputes, some going back many years, regarding his final oppositional course he has neglected to include this kind of documentation.

There are two reasons. First, though Comrade Pearlman's increasing disaffection with our program culminated in differences more than sufficient to justify the launching of a faction counterposed to the SL majority, Pearlman did not attempt to build a factional following for his positions within the organization; this several-year SL member, who was moreover a CC alternate, never proclaimed a faction and resigned without taking a single other SL member out with him. Even after the fact, he never submitted a political resignation statement to his former comrades.

The second reason is more important. The SWP's ability to use Pearlman as a club against the SL would be somewhat diminished by publication of his own oppositional record, as documented in motions on the subjects in dispute. At the time of his departure from our organization, Pearlman's main political stance paralleled the centrist impressionism of the European USec majority (long-time internal arch-enemies of the SWP) more closely than it did the SWP's brand of social-patriotic reformism.

In particular, Pearlman's politics as an SL oppositionist undercut the SWP's main political charge against us, that of "abstention". "Abstention" is how proletarian principle looks to those who orient to "mass" reformist forces which stand politically in the camp of the capitalist Democratic Party: the trade-union bureaucracy, the right wing of the feminist movement exemp-



SL struggled for proletarian solidarity with Vietnamese revolution in SWP/liberal-dominated anti-war movement.

The astute reader will also note something which is not in Pearlman's document. Unlike most polemics produced by disaffected ex-members of democratic-centralist organizations, who generally allege endless bureaucratic suppressions of their views, Pearlman's article never cites a single violation of his democratic rights as a member; in fact, he describes in some detail numerous occasions on which his criticisms and oppositional proposals were debated in the SL.

The organization described by Pearlman is clearly both extremely cohesive politically and extremely democratic. Counterposed positions are shown to have been vigorously debated on occasion, on a multitude of questions. Internal documents are quoted; the reader can observe that dissident spokesmen are sometimes won over, sometimes agree to disagree while carrying out the organization's line, sometimes deepen their critiques and eventually leave the organization. The latter was the case with Bob Pearlman. He simply got tired of being a self-described "minority of one". Those in the SWP who find themselves in the unenviable position of being in opposition in that extremely bureaucratic organization would do well to read Pearlman's polemic with an eye to the "regime" question.

#### Who/what is Bob Pearlman?

Pearlman manages to avoid discussing his terminal differences with the SL and his rapprochement with the SWP. To be sure, some of his political fights -- which purportedly demonstrate his central thesis of SL "abstention" -- are described at considerable length. But whereas Pearlman provides the reader with the precise wording of documents and motions from several

lified by NOW [National Organization of Women], the right wing of the black nationalist movement such as the Muslim religious cult, and so forth.

Needless to say, we do not accept the SWP's terms. Of two qualitatively identical class-collaborationist policies we choose neither as a "lesser" evil, but pose an independent working-class perspective with as much force as we can muster. But wherever there is a class counterposition, wherever there is a legitimate issue of democratic rights, wherever there is the possibility of even a token gain in the fight against oppression, the SL takes sides -- and hard.

Not so the SWP. Pearlman lavishes a lot of praise, for instance, on the SWP's activity as the "best builders" of an anti-war movement politically dominated by the liberal bourgeoisie. In deference to his present political mentors, he refrains from mentioning that there was a class line in Vietnam, which the SWP evaded with a neutralist "self-determination" rhetoric which concealed its social-patriotic softness toward its "own" bourgeoisie....

Pearlman asserts that, "The antiwar movement played a decisive role in making possible the victory of the Vietnamese people over American imperialism. The central role the SWP played in this movement was the deepest expression of proletarian internationalism". Even before he joined the SL, Pearlman could not have written this revolting drivel. The SWP was universally known as the right-wing, pro-Democratic Party pole in the anti-war movement. Literally thousands of anti-war activists, including Bob Pearlman, despised the SWP as the running dogs of the liberal imperialist bourgeoisie, as the "best

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Young Spartacus

SL defended MPLA against South Africa; SWP tailed liberals and abstained.

builders" of Eugene McCarthy and George McGovern....

## Angola

Though Comrade Pearlman's oppositional history in the SL touched on a broad spectrum of issues, from tenant organizing to the national question in Ireland, perhaps his biggest splash came over the question of Angola. He opposed the SL position of no political confidence in the bourgeois-nationalist MPLA combined with our unconditional military defense of the MPLA/Cuban forces against the US-backed South African invasion. As would befit a co-thinker of the centrist Usec majority, Pearlman -- although in the weaselly fashion which often characterized his arguments -- wanted to accord the MPLA political support....

In his series, Pearlman says of this period: "The struggle by the MPLA in Angola against the imperialist-backed forces of the FNLA, UNITA, and South Africa opened up tremendous opportunities for solidarity work in the United States". "Criticizing the MPLA", he writes with the cynical coyness of a smug opportunist, meant "the SL excluded themselves" from such demonstrations. It certainly did present problems at demonstrations led by groups like Youth Against War and Fascism (YAWF) and pan-Africanists, who sought to physically suppress any political criticism of the MPLA. We preferred to tell the truth rather than raise fatal illusions in the "progressive" nationalists.

But where was the SWP in all this? While Pearlman wanted to give covert political support to the MPLA, the SWP was alibiing the CIA-financed FNLA and the colonial-settler-backed UNITA, and scandalously declaring its "opposition to the factional war" at a time when the FNLA and UNITA had been decisively, militarily subordinated to the imperialist invasion! Pearlman's gall in attacking the SL from the pages of the SWP press for being too critical of the MPLA is breathtaking. Not only did the SWP, in a report approved by its national committee and reprinted as a "special feature" in the 23 January 1975 *Militant* accuse the MPLA of "slandering" the FNLA during the 1960s, when FNLA leader Holden Roberto was receiving a regular CIA sustainer; it explicitly denied that the South African invasion had altered the situation:

"It is important to note that the FNLA and UNITA did not serve as puppets of South Africa in this imperialist invasion."

Embarrassed by this disgusting apology for the Kissinger-organized imperialist attack -- the US poured in over \$30 million in military aid to the UNITA and FNLA during the six months of fighting, FNLA was led by white mercenaries contracted by the US, and UNITA forces were integrated into the South African column advancing from the South -- SWPers now try to claim that they did not have a policy of neutrality in this conflict. They base themselves on a resolution of the SWP-led "Leninist-Trotskyist Faction" of the Usec, which stated that, "For revolutionary Marxists and supporters of democratic rights, it was an elementary duty to offer material support to the military struggle against this intervention...."

What they don't mention is that this resolution appeared a full half year after the battle was over, in the *Intercontinental Press* of 11 October 1976! In January 1976, while abstractly calling for "South Africa out of Angola", the SWP report went to great pains to argue against military support to the MPLA, even then. "At some point", it said, "the situation could change in such a way that we would call for material support to the MPLA" (our emphasis).

Constrained to defend the SWP policy, which even today is not so pro-MPLA as his own line, Pearlman resorts to the cheap subterfuge of arguing that the only duty of proletarian revolutionists in the imperialist countries is to campaign on the single issue of imperialist intervention, and *not* to warn against the treachery of the

nationalists in the colonial countries. He pulls a quote of Lenin out of context and concludes: "Lenin cited no obligation of the revolutionists in imperialist countries to 'expose' the national movement and its leadership in the colonial countries". Such nonsense is dangerous in the extreme. What does this make of Trotsky's "exposure" of Chiang Kai-shek during early 1927 when this leader of a "national movement" was fighting the imperialist-backed warlords? Presumably, if we listen to Pearlman, Trotskyists in the imperialist countries should have joined Stalinist-sponsored pro-Kuomintang demonstrations and said nothing in their slogans to warn against political confidence in the nationalist butcher who in April 1927 slaughtered the Shanghai proletariat! This was certainly not the policy of Trotsky!

The SL's real "crime", Pearlman argues, is that it "wishes to merge the struggle against imperialism in the oppressor country with the struggle for the independence of the proletariat vis-a-vis bourgeois-nationalist and Stalinist leaderships in the oppressed nations". What an indictment! If the word "merge" were only changed to "relate" this would be a precise statement of the tasks of Leninists. We stand proudly accused....

While communists in the imperialist countries fight first of all against their "own" bourgeoisies, they cannot fail to warn against political support to the nationalist misleaders unless they forsake their internationalist duty. Would-be socialists in Angola have paid a high price for their illusions in the MPLA, with death for scores of leftists and prison for hundreds. But the ex-Trotskyists do not consider it a duty to warn against such illusions. It was the SWP's Fred Halstead who replied to a question as to who ought to win in Vietnam with the statement, "I don't know -- I'm not Vietnamese". Not a Trotskyist, either.

## "Blacks for blacks"?

Pearlman's present task as an SWP convert is to attempt to smear the SL as a sterile propaganda group, abstentionist on principle from the "real struggles" against capitalism. Where the "real struggle" over Angola is exclusively opposition to US intervention, he claims, the SL wants to quibble about political support to the MPLA. The core of the first instalment of his article is to make the case that this "abstentionism" is particularly true for the struggle against black oppression, as demonstrated by the battle for busing in Boston. But even Pearlman, whose parochialism is notorious, must go beyond Boston to find the source of the SL's alleged passivity in its rejection of black nationalism. We had, he claims, "developed a 'laborist' notion of the Black struggle".

Pearlman's task is made particularly difficult because he is forced to admit that "Spartacist theory on the Black question recognized the 'extra class' character of Black Oppression". This, he writes, "set the SL substantially apart from other anti-black nationalist currents such as the [Healyite] Workers League and the [Maoist] Revolutionary Communist party". He even has to concede that "Spartacist's recognition of 'special oppression' enabled it to respond to the desegregation struggle at an early stage". He notes that the SL's forerunner in the SWP, the Revolutionary Tendency (RT), "claimed that the RT fought in the SWP for participation in the Freedom Rides while the SWP abstained". As late as 1974 he speaks of "the promise of SL engagement in the Black Struggle" anticipated by the formation of a National Consultative Fraction on Black Work.

Having covered his bases, Pearlman tries to show that the SL's rejection of black nationalism meant abstention because nationalism was the "real trend". While the SWP are the "best builders" of the "real", he argues, the SL "merely dreams of how socialist intellectuals would like the class struggle to be". But how real is Pearlman's "real trend"? What is the material basis in American social reality for black nationalism?

Pearlman objects to the fact that the Spartacist League considers the black nationalist movement "largely a negative response to the failure of the organized workers movement with its immense social power, to intervene in behalf of the black masses" (*Young Spartacus*, May 1975). He asks, "But why negative?" and goes on to explain the "material roots" of black nationalism:

"Blacks for blacks" had profound material roots: the expulsion of the Southern Black peasantry, urban migration North and South, the rapid growth of the Black working class, and a large measure of labor movement passivity toward the struggle for black rights.

How could revolutionists characterize this Black radicalization as anything but a positive development?"

What do Pearlman and the SWP learn from the integration of blacks into the northern industrial working class, from the massive urban migration? They learn that black nationalism is progressive!...

In 1963 the SWP abstained from the most militant arenas of the civil rights struggle, while moving to an acceptance that an "independent" petty-bourgeois-led black movement could do the job instead. It was Pabloism, the liquidation of the need for the leadership of the proletarian vanguard party, which had sapped the SWP's revolutionary fiber and soon led it to support black nationalism.

Despite its small forces, the RT and Spartacist did seek to intervene in the upsurge of black struggle around the civil rights movement. The Spartacist League fought in New York CORE [Congress of Racial Equality -- a once-militant civil rights organization] chapters for a perspective of revolutionary integrationism while the far larger SWP was tailing the Black Muslims. Pearlman fails to note the SL's involvement with black self-defense groups in the South (Deacons for Defense), with militant civil rights groups and rent strike organizing in the northern ghettos. We sought to cohere an exemplary black transitional organization, the Harlem Organizing Committee, which was squeezed out as representatives of the "white left" were driven from civil rights organizations and the SL's tiny black cadre fled from the integrated revolutionary movement into insular ghetto nationalism.

Pearlman, like all Pabloists, takes for granted the "impossibility" of intervention into the black movement and the labor movement; this, to the opportunists, is mere abstract propaganda. Likewise they accept the default of the labor movement on the struggle for democratic rights of black people. For them what is real is the desperate response of a black population which sees itself without allies, and so they refuse to fight for a proletarian revolutionary program to end black oppression through a united class struggle.

Pearlman accuses the SL of not recognizing the positive aspects of militant black nationalist rejection of the traditional black leaders. This is simply false; what he really objects to is that we pointed to its severe limitations, and the fact that nationalism is a block to the development of *class* consciousness. As we wrote in "Black and Red -- Class Struggle Road to Negro Freedom" (*Spartacist* no 10, May-June 1967):

"The adherents of 'black power' are usually the most militant elements who have adopted the term partly because of its militant sound and partly because of its repugnance to white liberals ... the 'black power' movement is raising questions whose answers lie *outside* the framework set up by the capitalist class. "However, as yet the movement has not become consciously anti-capitalist.... Lacking a conscious orientation towards the working class, and constantly surrounded by bourgeois propaganda, the movement may yet fall prey to

Continued on page seven

## SWP chicanery on Angola

Militant (US) 23 January 1976

"It is important to note that the FNLA and UNITA did not serve as puppets of South Africa in this imperialist invasion. Instead, it was the FNLA and UNITA that spearheaded the fighting against South Africa in June, July, and August, along with the MPLA."

Militant (US) 23 April 1976

"If the basic war had been between South Africa backed by the United States on one side and the MPLA on the other, as the Stalinists all but say in print, it would be entirely different. Revolutionists would have been duty bound to defend the MPLA against the imperialist invaders.

"But the South African intervention, as dangerous as it was -- and this was pointed out by the SWP -- was not the overriding issue in Angola; it was the civil war for state power."

Militant (US) 17 September 1976

"Revolutionary socialists sided with neither faction in Angola against the other. We completely opposed South African, Portuguese, U.S., and other imperialist intervention in Angola.

"We sided with the Angolan liberation struggle. This means that we supported the military actions taken by the MPLA against South Africa and the imperialist-controlled mercenaries. By the same token, at an earlier stage we supported the actions by the UNITA against South Africa. And we supported the FNLA in its confrontations with the Portuguese military."

# Working Women's Charter conference — Reformist pressure campaign tails ACTU bureaucracy

The Working Women's Charter Campaign (WWCC) was first introduced by the pseudo-Trotskyist Communist League (CL) at an August 1976 conference organised, fittingly enough, by a group of right-wing women bureaucrats, the government-funded Women's Trade Union Commission (WTUC). While an assortment of other fake revolutionaries joined the CL in enthusing over the minimalist charter, only the Spartacist League (SL) condemned it from the start as a reformist gimmick designed to pressure the trade-union bureaucracy for token reforms for women workers.

The centrist CL could only protest that the charter campaign had different intentions:

"The role of the Working Women's Charter Campaign is not that of a 'pressure group' on the ACTU bureaucracy but is rather one of providing some sort of framework for the activity of women themselves in their struggle against their specific oppression.... It was specifically against directing women into a reliance on the ACTU ... that the Charter Campaign was proposed at the August Conference...." (*Militant*, 20 January 1977; emphasis in original)

But working women can be broken from reliance on the sexist, pro-capitalist ACTU bureaucracy only through a program counterposed to that of the bureaucracy, not through the false feminist conception that they are more capable of struggling against their double oppression by "themselves", ie separated from their male comrades and allies.

The "framework" provided by the charter is the reformist framework of the bureaucracy. Though many of its demands are supportable reforms -- eg equal pay for equal work; equal education, employment and promotion opportunities; extension of protective legislation; access to quality child care; an end to all discrimination etc -- the charter as a whole offers no strategy for mobilising women workers against the root cause of sex and class oppression, capitalism. Its striking similarity to the ACTU's own "Charter for Working Women" graphically confirms that the WWCC can, in fact, be nothing but a "pressure group" on the ACTU bureaucracy" -- a point demonstrated beyond doubt by its national conference, held in Sydney on 12-14 August.

For its promoters, which in addition to the CL include the reformists of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), Communist Party (CPA) and International Socialists (IS), the conference was hardly a success. After a solid year of organising, only some 150 women attended, including a handful of lower-level bureaucrats. The WTUC itself never picked up on the charter campaign, endorsing instead the ACTU's charter. But their failure to attract either the masses or the bureaucrats did not discourage the WWCC's fake-left supporters from assiduously tailing the ACTU bureaucracy.

The conference "welcomed" the ACTU charter and faulted it only for being in less "everyday language" than their own and for omitting *two* demands -- extension of the dole to married women and free contraception/abortion on demand. The WWCC's competing supporters did not raise any of the numerous political differences which the lowest-common-denominator charter covered over to facilitate this rotten propaganda bloc. And lest any differences were to arise inadvertently, bureaucratic suppression was rampant. Floor discussion was kicked off with a spurious warning against "disruption" directed at an SLer called on to speak, after which SL speakers were regularly and systematically cut off and disrupted.

The conference's single-minded concentration on the upcoming ACTU Congress in September --

which the conference had been consciously scheduled to precede -- provoked a number of independents into complaining that more attention was being paid to the bureaucracy than to organising rank-and-file women. While this would hardly change the character of the charter campaign, the response by prominent CLer and representative of the Brisbane WWCC group, Megan Martin, gave an indication of the CL's current attitude toward "reliance on the ACTU". She too was all for involving rank-and-file women, Martin replied, but now they had to discuss the ACTU Congress!

It was on the central question of protectionism that the fake Trotskyists of the CL and SWP demonstrated their unabashed intention of tailing the bureaucracy through the mud. Only three weeks earlier, they had inaugurated their reformist "fusion process" with a series of joint forums attacking economic nationalism and the CPA-inspired "People's Economic Program" (PEP) in particular as a "trap for the labour movement". But now -- to avoid alienating the virulently protectionist bureaucracy, or the CPA -- they had nothing to say when Audrey Halstead, Victorian vice-president of the Vehicle Builders' Union (VBU), responded to an SL speaker's denunciation of protectionism by bursting out that she was prepared to fight us on this issue. (And so she should be. With thousands of VBU members facing the sack, the bureaucracy has channelled the union's resources into petitioning Parliament for ever-steepier protectionist barriers.) And they remained silent when CPAer Stella Nord echoed Halstead by decrying the prospect of "open[ing] our gates to be flooded by cheap labour" from Asian countries.

A motion submitted by the SL to the conference denounced protectionism as a "divisive tool of the bosses to set workers against one another, to prevent them from uniting against their real enemy: the capitalist class". To the "capitulation of the trade-union bureaucracy" and schemes such as the PEP, "aimed at bolstering profits and exporting the burden of unemployment to our class brothers and sisters overseas", it counterposed a struggle for jobs for all which "can be brought to conclusion only through achieving a workers government".

When this motion was introduced at a workshop on unemployment, the CL/SWP refused to vote against its bureaucratic suppression. Shamed by the SL, the SWP the next day attempted to introduce its own watery motion, which was also bureaucratically suppressed. But when, despite numerous bureaucratic manoeuvres, the SL motion finally managed to come before the whole conference for a vote, *the SWP abstained!* Its partner in the prospective "deeply principled fusion", on the other hand, driven by vestigial left impulses, voted for it.

The masses of working-class women will not be mobilised against capitalism by kowtowing to their present reformist consciousness or to the cynical treachery of the trade-union bureaucracy. Their failure to seriously oppose protectionism, or to even mention in their respective press accounts of the conference that the issue had arisen, demonstrates that the CL and SWP are far more interested in a piece of the action than they are in fighting for even the principles they claim to support. Only through the struggle for a workers government can such elementary demands as an end to discrimination against women and homosexuals, free quality health care and the socialisation of all household duties be finally and firmly secured. These and other essential aspects of a communist program for mobilising women -- whether through revolutionary caucuses in the unions or through a transitional organisation linked to the revolutionary party -- were outlined in a statement distributed by the SL to the conference:

"Instead of women-only groups to pressure the bureaucrats, we call for the building of an alternative revolutionary leadership organised in the unions in non-exclusionist caucuses based on a class-struggle program ... uniting the struggle against women's specific oppression with the struggle of the working class to overthrow capitalism."

In the words of one SL speaker at the conference, "It's no solution to organise a women's auxiliary to the sellout bureaucracy!" The task of revolutionists is rather to guide every genuine struggle of the oppressed toward the proletarian seizure of state power. ■

## Public employees . . .

Continued from page eight

the union movement as a whole by witchhunting both militant unionists and militant-talking officials. The bourgeoisie demands that its profit levels be maintained in a recession economy, heaping the burden of unemployment and inflation onto the working and middle classes -- and then attempts to incite the frustrated petty bourgeoisie into blaming the workers.

Itself committed to maintaining the rule of capital, the bureaucracy is incapable of leading the unified working-class assault on capitalism which alone can offer a solution to the problems of the unemployed, the middle classes etc. Instead of seriously fighting wage cutting and job slashing through militant, resolute industrial action, it restricts the workers' struggles to ineffectual guerrilla forays sufficient only to aggravate and annoy the petty bourgeoisie. For example, the recent series of rolling one-day job actions by postal workers in support of a shorter work week was far too timorous to win their demand, but did allow Fraser to exploit public irritation with reduced postal service in introducing the new legislation. With the projection of further industrial action by Sydney postal workers this month, they may be the first to face Fraser's new weapon.

The "Trotskyists" of the CL and the reformist Socialist Workers Party, in a harmony that reflects their forthcoming reformist "fusion", join the social democrats of the Communist Party in promoting rotten propaganda blocs designed to pressure the bureaucrats into a more "militant" and more cleverly concealed variety of reformism. That the bureaucrats have thus far chosen not to reward the efforts of their would-be apologists simply reflects their perception that they have no need to -- either they are equally left-talking already or else their credibility with the ranks is not yet in need of refurbishment.

Thus the Working Women's Charter Campaign has hardly been able to get off the ground and a series of nationwide rallies sponsored by the Right To Work Campaign attracted less than 300 people in Sydney and only 20 (!) in Melbourne.

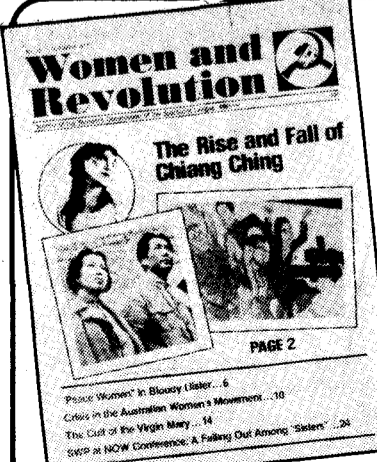
Instead of mobilising the workers in self-defence, the bureaucrats and their loyal "communist" oppositionists divert them into debates over the "morality" of nuclear energy. Instead of attempting to sweep away the increasingly evident obstruction posed by the pro-capitalist bureaucracy to a defence of proletarian interests, the fake lefts ignore the principal betrayals of the bureaucracy and build sand-castle "campaigns" which alibi its refusal to act. For revolutionists, the task is clear: the retreat of organised labour can only be decisively reversed through the construction of a leadership committed to the struggle for proletarian state power. ■

## SWP . . .

Continued from page five

bourgeois politicians with radical phrases or else become hopelessly isolated and demoralized."

What are the real results of the black nationalist radicalization? Where is the revolutionary black leadership which might have emerged from a class polarization within the black movement, had opportunist organizations like the SWP not capitulated to black nationalism? After a dozen years of black nationalist moods, there is not a single mass black organization today which stands to the left of the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People -- a respectable, legalist civil-rights organisation]. Or would Pearlman consider the present-day CORE, which tried to raise mercenaries to fight against the Cubans and MPLA in Angola, a "positive development"? ■



**Women and Revolution**

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# Portugal . . .

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public and abandon, for the time being, the slogan of a "left majority" (PS/PCP). Against the right's call for a "presidential majority" (which would consist of a coalition of the parties which contributed to the election of Ramalho Eanes -- CDS, PSD and PS), the PCP proposes a "democratic majority", that is a PCP/PS/PSD coalition, a replay of the popular-front provisional governments of 1974-75.

## Perspectives

In the meantime, however, all is not definitively lost. The result of the crisis is not necessarily a more right-wing government or a coalition with the right. The emergence of an alternative depends on the mobilization and capacity of response of the workers, on the generalization and coordination of their defensive (where necessary) as well as offensive struggles. Although the conditions of struggle have slowly and progressively deteriorated since November 25, the working class has not yet suffered a decisive defeat. The overthrow of the "military left" (that is, the left sector of the heart of the state apparatus) did not have a direct equivalent at the factory level; even though the situation has been deteriorating and the vanguard elements risk becoming isolated from the masses. Faced with this perspective of dissipation of the pre-revolutionary situation, there is an even more crying need for a revolutionary Marxist vanguard to intervene actively in the struggles. The existing "far left" has already proved itself incapable of advancing with a program of struggle in a united fight against the government's attacks and the fall in the workers' living standards. Thus, the Movement of Popular Unity (MUP) -- dominated by the UDP (Democratic Peoples' Union, a Maoist front) has completely fallen apart, and is now unable to offer an answer for the masses who voted for its candidacy of Major Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho in last June's presidential elections. This situation could possibly favor the appearance of substitutionist currents, lacking faith in the revolutionary potential of the working class, if a revolutionary Marxist pole capable of fighting the demoralization and indicating the revolutionary path does not appear.

Meanwhile, among the organizations which claim to be Trotskyist, the Partido Revolucionario dos Trabalhadores (PRT -- aligned with the minority of the "United Secretariat" [USec] and more recently with the Argentine PST) criticizes the Liga Comunista Internacionalista (LCI -- aligned with the USec majority) for falling into reformism since the latter refuses to unequivocally characterize the present situation as pre-revolutionary, thereby abandoning the strategic perspective of reinforcing the organs of workers power. In actuality, judging that the dominant tendency is toward extinguishing the role of the workers commissions -- which is a fact -- the LCI does not bother itself to fight to revive and centralize them, preferring instead to make them trade-union bodies. Thus they do not concretely threaten the power of the bourgeoisie.

Behind its "orthodox" and revolutionary facade, the PRT was merely hiding one more chapter of its constant capitulation before social democracy, this time through its support to the PS trade-union tendency (Carta Aberta), which is attempting to transform itself into a union federation. The Carta Aberta grouping attacks the CGTP on the basis of formally democratic and abstractly correct pretexts, but it is itself only another bureaucracy, not yet consolidated, which is supported by the government and the right wing for the purpose of breaking PCP domination over the trade-union movement.

The PRT advocates struggling within this tendency, limiting itself to proposing the construction of a "socialist tendency for trade-union democracy", on the pretext that the Socialist bureaucracy has less control over its ranks than the Communist bureaucracy. Thus it bows before the divisive pressures which it should combat and abandons the most advanced sectors of the workers. The PRT's tactic merely aids one bureaucracy, although still in embryo, on the grounds that it is preferable to another. A revolutionary tendency built on the demands of the Transitional Program would oppose the PRT's intervention for being based mainly on defense of trade-union democracy as the central point of struggle.

## Immediate tasks

Against the offensive of capital, in order to defeat the austerity plans, the most urgent tasks which face the workers movement include the struggle for:

- an immediate wage increase for all workers and a sliding scale of wages, against the galloping inflation, against the increase in the cost of living;
- reduction of the workweek without a cut in pay

in order to ensure the existence of work for everyone, against layoffs;

-- defense of the nationalizations under workers control, against their return to their former owners;

-- extension of the agrarian reform, against the "right of reserve".

In order to undertake these tasks, it is necessary to combat trade-union disunity, intervening within the unions to unmask the bureaucracies, whichever they may be. It is necessary to unite and coordinate those organs of workers power which still exist. Above all the conscious intervention of a Trotskyist vanguard is necessary, to fight democratically for the leadership of the autonomous organs and the struggles of the proletariat, uniting them with the struggles of the Spanish and European working class. ■

# Red Flag Union . . .

Continued from page eight

of a Marxist in the Latin countries -- whether someone is a genuine communist -- it is the woman question, the family question, the gay question".

## EXCERPTS FROM JOINT FUSION STATEMENT, 14 AUGUST 1977

"A communist, who is homosexual, or any communist, does not for the most part have the luxury of 'coming out'. A communist seeks to be identified exclusively in people's minds in terms of the party and program they represent. The sexual identity or personal characteristics of the individual are not the concern of others. By being a representative of the communist vanguard one makes oneself a walking target for the bourgeoisie, one invites harassment even above and beyond that suffered by the oppressed masses. Therefore, it is the obligation of the party to do everything in its power to shield its supporters from such victimization." ("Closet Rule Frame-Up", *Red Flag* no 2, July 1977)

The SL and the RFU, having arrived at agreement concerning the essential programmatic elements necessary for the early construction of a party capable of leading a socialist revolution, resolve to merge their human and technical resources and create a common leadership of a common organization.

The fusion conference compared the RFU's evolution with other fusions through which the SL has been built, finding similar characteristics of revolutionary will, critical intelligence, political honesty and emphasis on programmatic clarity. For the RFU, the Communist Working Collective, the Buffalo Marxist Caucus -- groups which emerged from a Stalinist or New Left milieu -- there was a moment when they had to face the question of Stalin vs Trotsky. In these milieux it was suspect even to read Trotsky....

It is more than two years since the SL first confronted the L&RU. And even when the political differences were far-reaching, the collective did not back away from political struggle. One member of the SL delegation noted that these comrades, unlike most of the New Left, came to grips with the key questions facing Marxists: "The permanent revolution, the Russian question, the party question, democratic centralism. Is there a specific program for gay liberation?... The very basic question of divisions in the class and how Leninists deal with them. These are the key questions. And it is because the RFU took these questions on and tried to solve them -- didn't go around them -- that you were able to come to Trotskyism".

When the RFU comrades through their study decided that Trotsky was correct against Stalin, they considered themselves Trotskyists. But they had not yet absorbed fully an understanding of program. It was only when the group recognized that it could not maintain a democratic-centralist organization without a solid programmatic foundation that the comrades made the connection between the primacy of program and the subjective desire to build a Leninist vanguard, in which disciplined political functioning proceeds from essential programmatic unity.

"This party has been built through fusions", Foster noted. The RFU fusion is more than the recruitment of a dozen talented and dedicated individual cadres, for the RFU is more than the sum of its parts. With this fusion the party acquires the collective experience, history and leadership of another organization. The RFU fought its way out of the New Left/gay milieu with demonstrated commitment and a leadership of

proven capacity. The SL as a fused organization will include that leadership on our leading bodies.

The history of the L&RU/RFU was a struggle to transcend a central political contradiction. Its cadres were sectoralists committed to a gay "constituency" who also believed it was necessary to build a revolutionary vanguard party. How that contradiction was resolved in favor of Leninism was an important focus of the fusion conference.

Comrade Shoffner explained that "the real break for people who have suffered from a sectoralist worldview comes over the question of who are our people, who are we struggling for". From its earliest encounters with the L&RU, the SL insisted that only through the instrument of the proletarian vanguard party could the oppressed win their liberation. Comrade Foster told the conference participants, "Communists stand for the historic interests of the proletariat as a whole". A Leninist party is not a federation of special interest groups who come together to figure out a program. The party must contain elements from all sectors of the oppressed, but they come together around the program of proletarian revolution. The SL rejects the polyvanguardist notion that the party imitates the divisions of capitalist society within itself. One speaker noted that constituencies are "infinitely sub-dividable", recalling the "Stonewall 77" Conference where the exasperated FSP wailed that "the reason you guys are going with the monstrous, bigoted Spartacist League is because you're *male* homosexuals, and only we lesbian mothers, who are the most oppressed, can really be revolutionaries".

Foster summed up: "It's only because we're communists that we can be tribunes of the people. Because all the fake-lefts have their own little sector which comes first. The trap is to become a tribune of *your* people and nobody else's".

The fusion conference was a dramatic confirmation of how the living Leninist organization transcends the divisions of capitalist society in struggle against it. The discussions of personnel allocations and organizational priorities demonstrated concretely that the RFU fusion would enable the party to better address its most pressing tasks, not only through directly utilizing RFU comrades to strengthen many aspects of party work but particularly by releasing other party cadres to sink roots in the black industrial proletariat.

It is not an irony, but the logic of Leninism that the fusion enriches not only our struggle against the special oppression of homosexuals but also our capacity to take up the fight against the special oppression of blacks. The RFU has become part of the proletarian tribune of the people and a force for revolution internationally. Comrade Foster's closing remarks stated simply what the fusion means to the combined future of the SL and RFU:

"Comrades: I think it has been evident for some time, and reaffirmed this weekend, that this will be a very good fusion. The comrades of the RFU are exceptionally good comrades. They represent an enrichment of the Spartacist League, and it will enable us to pursue very important tasks. More than that, however, I think the party will be acquiring a banner of decency. It will be a statement not simply to homosexuals but to all the oppressed as to the nature of our party and what it stands for. It is also a statement of our intention in the future under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Friedrich Engels said, 'Freedom is the recognition of necessity', and the necessity is a revolutionary party. So we have a job at hand; let's get on with it." ■

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**Public employees denied right to strike —**

## Bosses reinforce anti-union arsenal

The Fraser government's sudden introduction of the Commonwealth Employees Bill last month demanded an immediate and unambiguous response from the entire labour movement -- a nationwide general strike! At stake is nothing less than the right to strike for public service workers. The legislation, yet to be proclaimed, empowers the government to dismiss or suspend employees who take industrial action -- which is defined so broadly as to include any irregular work pattern -- and to stand down affected non-striking workers.

On 19 August, the day the bill went to the Senate, 1500 workers at the Williamstown Naval Dockyard in Melbourne walked off the job. Stop-work rallies organised the following week by the Council of Australian Government Employees Organisations (CAGEO) attracted some 3000 workers in Sydney and 8000 in Melbourne. But the bureaucrats' bluster about "industrial action on a national scale" -- when the legislation is "employed" -- held out little prospect of action.

This represents a particularly short-sighted form of treachery. Month after month, with numbing regularity, the bourgeoisie has added to its arsenal of anti-union weaponry: the Victorian Vital States Projects Act, Queensland legislation opening unions up to civil-court action, Western Australian legislation restricting the right to picket and outlawing the closed shop, the recent NSW ruling against the OK card system in the printing trades (effectively outlawing the union shop), the Industrial Relations Bureau, the Trade Practices Amendment etc.

The labour bureaucracy responds to every new blow with the hollow promise of action in the future. This course is suicidal. Every new law on the books waits ready to be used at the government's whim and encourages the bosses in their union-bashing onslaught. Every new capitulation by labour's misleaders further demoralises the ranks, making any effective mobilisation in the future more difficult. Rampant unemployment, which the new budget promises only to aggravate, has already taken its toll in sapping the will of the workers to fight back. As the massive strike wave against penal powers which freed Clarrie O'Shea from jail in 1968 proved, it is possible to defeat the anti-union laws. The tide must be turned! A general strike against the latest outrage could have smashed the lot of recent anti-union laws.

Exemplifying the fake lefts' failure to transcend the tepid trade unionism of the labour officialdom was the response advocated by the centrist Communist League (CL) to the new legislation: "a whole day's" CAGEO stopwork. This meaningless, ineffectual protest was the only concrete action proposed in a resolution entitled "Take a stand", whose endorsers included Paul White, a CL supporter active in the Administrative and Clerical Officers Association (ACOA) Reform Group. (A week after the mass meetings, the CL's *Militant* [30 August] only slightly improved this, calling for "a national strike if the legislation is not withdrawn immediately".) Not that this weak-kneed "stand" is at all out of character with the CL's parochial, tailist "action programme for Public Servants" (*Militant*, 19 July), which does not even mention a shorter workweek at no loss in pay, much less the struggle for a workers government. That White can co-habit the Reform Group with the likes of Ann Forward, a supporter of right-wing ALPer Clyde Holding recently elected to the ACOA federal executive, demonstrates that the CL's program for public service workers merely adds to reformist betrayal a thin veneer of "militancy".

A measure of the bourgeoisie's growing boldness was the crude "Pommie-bashing" exercise of Fraser's minister for primary industry, Ian Sinclair. Though not the "language of fascism", as the ever-sensationalist Healyite *Workers News* (11 August) termed it, Sinclair's shrill attack on migrants who import the "British disease" (a codeword for militant trade unionism) is part of a campaign to mobilise popular sentiment against

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Hawke at 23 August Sydney anti-budget rally; more concerned with denouncing anti-uranium eco-freaks than with fighting anti-union laws. Same day, "left" PKIU tops push do-nothing policy to Sydney mass meeting (right) on "OK card" ruling.

## Red Flag Union, SL/US fuse From the gay left to Trotskyism

NEW YORK — The Red Flag Union (RFU -- formerly Lavender & Red Union (L&RU)) and the Spartacist League (of the US -- SL) merged their organizations and political futures at a two-day fusion conference held in August outside Los Angeles. The conference was the culmination of several months of intense organization-to-organization discussion and collaborative political work. For the RFU comrades, the conference symbolized the final step in their drive from a gay-liberation collective to becoming a component of the nucleus of the international Trotskyist vanguard....

The RFU's commitment to serious fusion discussions with the SL proceeded from the recognition of the centrality of program. But when these discussions were begun, there was no way to foresee the explosive protests that brought hundreds of thousands of demonstrators into the streets to protest Anita Bryant's reactionary anti-homosexual crusade. The two groups' aggressive efforts to develop jointly an effective communist intervention into that episodic burst of outrage in the gay communities provided an unexpected testing process for the programmatic convergence emerging in the discussions. Together the SL and RFU wrote leaflets, gave forums, participated in demonstrations, forging the bonds of the future fusion in the heat of living political struggle....

As the fusion discussions progressed, a few members of the RFU pulled back from the road to Trotskyism, hiding behind the Stalinophobic (Revolutionary Socialist League) RSL's refusal to defend the USSR against imperialism. The RSL capitulated to this small minority's lifestyle by making a principle out of gays' "coming out" (this from an organization which does not defend busing or the Equal Rights Amendment!). The insistence of the SL and RFU majority that revolutionists must seek to be known by their program, not by their sexual orientation or any other personal or secondary attribute, was the subject of heated debate at the RFU's "Stonewall 77" Conference, where the political lines were definitively drawn. On one side stood a rotten bloc of the lifestyle radicals, the "Trotskyist" apologists for "Third World" Stalinism like the Seattle-based Freedom Socialist Party (FSP) and the RFU's Shachtmanite minority; on the other, the RFU majority and the SL.

The real political fusion had occurred with the RFU's principled fight against its own right wing.

All who attended the fusion conference -- the SL delegation as well as the RFU and its invited friends -- understood that the fusion was a victory for revolutionary program and Leninist principle. "Who would have thought six years ago that we would be fusing with a group of male homosexuals?" asked George Foster in his opening remarks. He noted that there was a firm programmatic reason: the SL's consistent rejection of the workerist opportunism which tailors its politics to the backward consciousness of the working class as it exists under capitalism. "We opposed this", he noted, "not because we knew that some time in the future we'd find an RFU ... but because it is anti-Marxist and wrong"....

RFU spokesman Michael Weinstein noted that all the opportunist groups tailing the gay-left milieu had assumed they should be the natural inheritors of the RFU. "One of the groups that courted the L&RU", he added, "was the SWP, and it took diligent efforts on our part to convince them that we were in fact their opponents"....

Another SL speaker drew a parallel with the fusion between the international Spartacist tendency and the Organizacion Trotskista Revolucionaria of Chile (OTR). The OTR fusion was similarly a victory for program. When the SL took the position of principled opposition to Allende's popular-front government, we acted on the most basic principles of Leninist class independence. We did not know, when we counterposed ourselves to the opportunist left "mainstream" which tailed the Chilean masses' illusions in Allende, that there was an OTR which would live through that experience also opposed to the popular front.

RFU spokesman Gene Shoffner added that "in talking to comrades of the OTR I learned what a principled commitment to program really means. Because the gay question is a harder question in Latin America". Comrade Foster also stressed the importance of the OTR's eager acceptance of the RFU fusion: "If you have a test

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