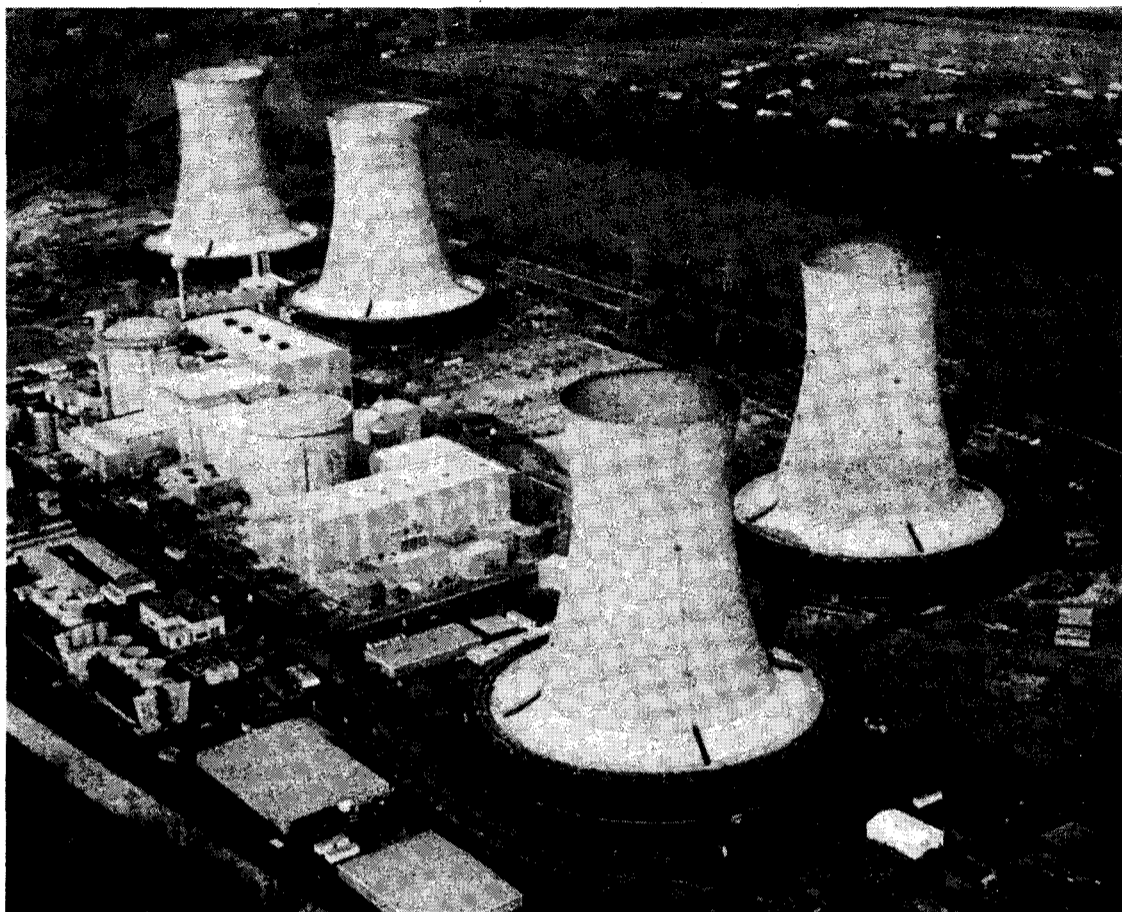




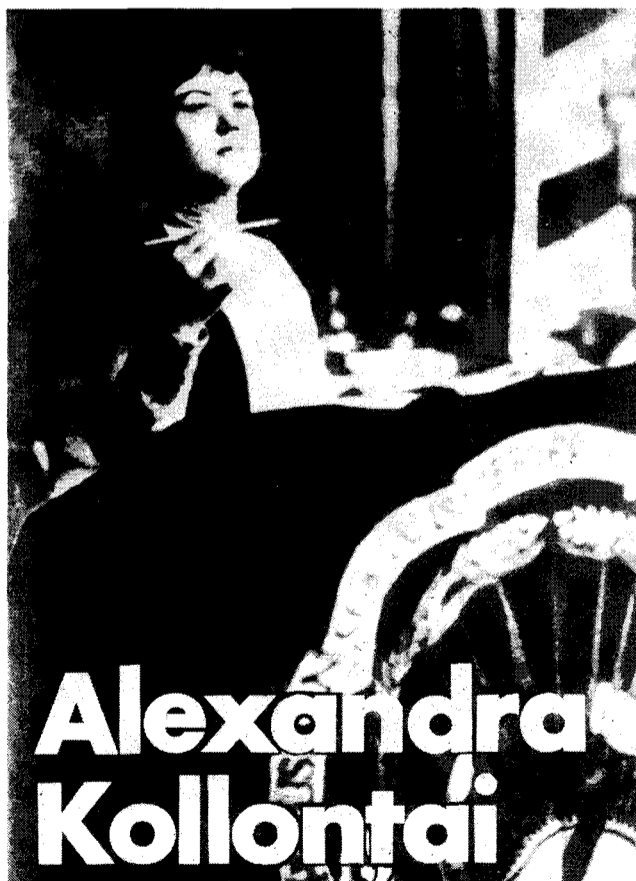
**Eco-faddists
have a field day**

Harrisburg: nuclear Watergate



As the potentially most dangerous accident in the history of US commercial nuclear power cooled off on Three Mile Island, Pennsylvania, the fallout of public reaction was still pretty hot. But, fortunately for area residents, the damage done was measured in the disruption of lives and pocketbooks and not in sickness and death as so many had assumed. For the anti-industrial eco-faddists, however, this accident was *it*. As far away as Germany they chanted "We all live in Pennsylvania!" And while more than 100,000 people prudently fled the area, the no-nuke demonstrators rushed in where nuclear engineers feared to tread.

The accident at Three Mile Island occupied



**Alexandra
Kollontai**

**and the
Russian
Revolution**

Part 2

... Page 4

headlines, fearful nightmares and Hollywood doomsday fantasies. But it was not all fantasy. Something did go seriously wrong at unit number two of Metropolitan Edison's pressurized-water fission reactor.

The accident they said couldn't happen almost happened. Three out of four fail-safe procedures failed, and one can only wonder why the fourth and last fail-safe procedure worked. "It works, it works", said the utility companies, seeming to mimic the nuclear engineer in *The China Syndrome*. But there was little solace to be drawn from these assurances. For too long the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) and its heir, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC), along with the utility bigwigs, had promised the American public that all chance of accident had been "designed out" of the reactors. A public told many times that they had "nothing to worry about" had plenty to be angry about. And the anti-nuclear power lobby grabbed the opportunity to call up doomsday visions based on the false notion that commercial reactors are bombs.

The hot debate on nuclear power is irrational on both sides. Proponents claim that there can be no accidents while the no-nuke alliances of clams, abalones, shads and other organisations similarly located on the evolutionary scale argue that nuclear power is intrinsically more unsafe than other methods of producing energy under capitalism. Of course nuclear energy is far from completely safe and is fraught with unsolved problems. Who besides the AEC/NRC and the atomic industry publicists say otherwise? Not only the problems of waste disposal and accidents, but even the medical effects of long-term exposure to small doses of ionizing radiation are in dispute among doctors and research scientists.

But the alternatives under capitalism are just as, if not more, unsafe. Coal-burning power plants emit as much background radiation as nuclear reactors (coal contains radium and uranium). The possibility of dam accidents or liquefied natural gas explosions, for instance, can pose even greater potential destruction than the meltdown that could result from the worst possible reactor accident. But who wants to pick his poison from capitalism's deadly shelf? Is it better to build a dam or a nuclear reactor over the San Andreas Fault? We will not choose. Marxist revolutionaries are not in the business of technological reformism.

Shut down Three Mile Island!

The Three Mile Island plant should be shut down. We demand it, just as we would demand that a particularly hazardous coal mine be closed. If the nuclear accident proves to be a design error of the Babcock & Wilcox reactor, then we will demand all of these reactors be shut down until the problems are corrected. But to demand that nuclear power must be stopped on the basis of this accident is analogous to demanding that the

entire coal industry be shut down because one mine had a near collapse.

While we strongly support the introduction of new technology, including nuclear technology, we do not take responsibility for the hazardous mess capitalism makes of it. As we said in our earlier article, "Nuclear Power and the Workers Movement":

"There are very real problems of safety connected with nuclear reactors. As throughout industry, we demand union control of working conditions and, where there are specific hazards, actions to shut down dangerous facilities. But beyond this we have no particular interest in determining how the bourgeoisie meets its energy needs. Those who assume that 'wide public discussion' within the framework of capitalist rule will satisfactorily resolve this question are guilty of sowing the worst utopian/reactionary/pacifist illusions." (*Workers Vanguard* no 146, 25 February 1977)

The system works?

The near disaster at Three Mile Island began about 4 am on March 28 when, as NRC official Edson Case put it, "Somebody was screwing around with some of the equipment in the feedwater system" (*Newsweek*, 9 April). The feedwater pumps used in the cooling system shut down. But auxiliary feedwater pumps never turned on because someone had forgotten to close two crucial valves after a test procedure two weeks before. A hundred thousand gallons of radioactive water flooded the basement of the reactor containment building when a relief valve failed to close. Although the crucial failures all took place in less than five minutes, a state of emergency was not declared for more than *three hours*.

Despite the assorted "maximum credible accident" studies which calculated the possibility as 50,000,000-to-1, a serious accident happened. This should not be surprising. The Catch-22 of the endless "risk analysis" studies is that some simple mistake cannot be accounted for. There is no such thing as a no-risk energy source. Thus the question is not whether accidents will happen, but how to reduce their frequency and limit their consequences. Why, for instance, are reactors plopped down in the middle of major population centers? They should obviously be built at a distance and downwind from the cities. But that would mean more expense for siting, construction and transmission lines. And why not test an actual meltdown in the desert to see how to protect against it?

In fact every corner that can be cut is cut, both for materials and personnel. Who is to blame for "human error" that derives from being overworked and overtired? It is reported that the workers at the Three Mile Island reactor were forced to work for 40 consecutive days, with

Continued on page six

Protest against SWP exclusionism!

The following statement has been circulated within the left and labour movement in response to the SWP leadership's formally stated decision to exclude supporters of the Spartacist League from a series of public forums in Iran in mid-March. The exclusion policy has been maintained since that time. Affiliations are listed for identification purposes only.

We, the undersigned, while not necessarily agreeing with the political views of the Spartacist League protest against the exclusion of its members and supporters from public forums sponsored by the Socialist Workers Party as a violation of workers democracy. To the extent that such exclusions are carried out against other left organisations we protest against those actions also.

Ian Alder, Z Ahmad (LTU History Dept), Chris Anderson, John Anderson, Susan Anderson (ALP Balwyn Branch), Graham Ashton, P Bain (co-editor Rabelais/CPA), Garry Bennett (SU SRC/ASWU), Amanda Biles, T Bisson, D Blazer, Debby Boothby, TV Boseley (AMWSU Coburg branch president), Bern Brady, D Britton (HREA/Sec Lidcombe ALP), Chris Bullivant (AUS), J Burchill, Ian Burn, RG Carey, Mary-Rose Casey, Alan Chalmers (SU Gen Phil), Steven Clark (TWU), Tony Cohen, P Cook (LTU History Dept), Pat Corry, Jean Curthoys (SU Gen Phil), Yvonne Darlington, Kerry Davis, Garry Dawson, PJ Deery (LTU Politics Dept), Kim Docherty, ES Earley (ACTTF), Paul Esposito, Gwynneth Evans, A Farrar (SU Gen Phil), OJ Gager (Communist Left), Margaret Gardner (SU Anarchist Group), Jennie George (NSWTF), Jonathan Goffin, A Grealis (AUS), G Green, Ken Greenway (Liaison Officer ACTTF), Bruce Hanna (CPA/ETU), C Hammarford (Adelaide Uni Left Coalition), J Hardy, Paul Harris (ex-SYA), Roger Harris, PJ Harvey (FLAI), Carl Heid (SU DSP/Media Action), Heather Hird (ACTTF Council member), John Hird (ACTTF), M Hollingdale, B Hounslow, D Jackson, Christine Jennett (SU Govt Dept), L Johnson, P Jones (CPA), WP Lowe (AUS), Jim MacArthur (ACTTF), Jenny McCamley, Jeff McCarthy (ARU), Robert McCuaig, DJ McEvoy, S McKenzie, N Maclellan, P McMahon, M MacManus, P McPhee, Michael Matteson (Sydney Anarcho-syndicalists), John Maher, J Masselos, A Mitchell (AMWSU), Rod Mitchell, P Modini (CAR), WG Morgan (ALP, Ringwood branch), L Muir (WAAC), T Murphy (LTU Libertarian Socialists), T Murray (SU Anthropology Dept), WJ Murray (LTU History Dept), L Newman, P Norton, Maurie O'Connor (Macq Uni Anarchist Group), John James Francis O'Neill (IS), Kate Perry, Dr W Peiz (LTU Sociology Dept), James Potter (BLF), Michael Potter (ex-SWP/ALP), Margaret Power, G Proctor (LTU SRC member/AMWSU Williamstown branch secretary), Tracey Ralph, P Rawlinson (CPA), Heather Rees (Clothing Trades Union), Neil Rees (VBU), P Reiss, L Ridley (SU French Dept), M Rowan (FSCAACAE), Denise Russell (SU Gen Phil), C Sarkis, Peter Selig, CM Shute (CPA), Paul Slape (MEU organiser), Jean Smith, Terry Smith, Robert Spence, A Spilzica, D Stephens, P Stevens (SU Gen Phil), Julie Stewart (AUS), F Stilwell (SU Economics Dept), N Theiberger (LTU SRC member), Janna L Thompson, R Thornton (LTU History Dept), S Van Opdorp (ALP), Michael Watkins (ex-SWP), T Warn (TWU), Dominica Whelan, Paul White (ex-SWP), George Wragg (AMWSU, convenor of shop stewards for central workshops area, Yallourn SEC power station), Alf Zeeno.

IS hits hard times

After a decade of the most wretched labor reformism performed as New Left hi-jinx, the US International Socialists (IS) has done something every class-conscious worker can applaud: it has ceased publication of Workers' Power (WP).

WP's demise occurs in the context of demoralisation and yet another clique feud in this congenitally clique-ridden organisation - raging over the usual subject: how best to serve the various labour out-bureaucrats who have been the IS's constant preoccupation since it began union implantation. Both sides in the cliquist feud have discovered that the "socialist" IS is an unnecessary burden to reformist union "work" and irrelevant to the IS's real job - the manipulation of Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), the IS creature upon which rests both sides' dwindling hope of broad reformist influence.

In the open letter which was sent to WP subscribers to announce its dissolution, the IS explained that the working class had failed to appreciate its press:

"From 1975 until today, we have found that the possibilities for building rank and file movements in the unions ... have greatly increased. But the audience for an agitational revolutionary newspaper has not."

What made WP an "agitational revolutionary newspaper" in the mind of the IS was its cynical claim that it was winning workers to the IS by explaining that capitalism was evil and socialism good. So the open letter announces a new "broad-based labor newspaper", which according to an internal document of the majority caucus "cannot be the advocate of socialism, for that would cut it off from too much of the union reform movement" (Labor Perspectives Convention Resolution, November 1978).

The social-democratic New Left workerists of the IS thought opportunism would bring them success. They tailed the union bureaucrats and hailed the Labor Department as it brought the capitalist state's "democracy" into the unions - of course all in the name of the "rank and file". They got nowhere:

"For the IS times were hard. Sticking it out in the working class cost the IS two splits and the loss of some talented cadre. For a period, the political perspectives of the IS seemed up in the air." (IS majority "Convention Resolution")

Where to go from here? Let us offer our suggestion: The IS has taken a step in the right direction by scuttling their awful paper; wouldn't it be another favor to the working class to go all the way? Battler please note.

(adapted from Workers Vanguard no 228, 30 March 1979)

editorial notes

LaTrobe Socialist Left cancels SRC elections

With a brief notice in the 18 April *Rabelais*, the student paper, the LaTrobe University SRC notified the student electorate that their services had not been needed in the previous week's student election for six vacant SRC positions. Faced with flak from the campus right for spending money on an election in which only leftists figured (six of the candidates were members of the Socialist Left, the seventh was Spartacist Club member Neil Florrimell), the Socialist Left amalgam of "left" ALPers, anarchists and Communist Party supporters which controls the SRC decided not to waste money on such formalities as casting or counting ballots. So these "democratic socialists"/anarchists had one of their candidates "withdraw his nomination so as to save the SRC the expense [sic] of holding an election for six positions with only seven candidates standing" and declared the remaining six "elected unopposed" -- without even publishing their election statements. Simple!

The Spartacist Club didn't think so. At the next SRC meeting Comrade Florrimell refused to accept his position, demanding that "proper elections must be held immediately for this position". Florrimell denounced the "Socialist Left's manoeuvre" as a "capitulation" to the campus right's "rabid opposition to any even remotely political activity by student bodies". But for these sandbox social democrats politics and political activity is secondary. While they vituperate against "totalitarian" bolshevism for daring to suppress the bourgeoisie's "democratic rights" after the revolution, they exercise few scruples in maintaining their snug positions in the SRC bureaucracy. In reality what they despise is the principled *revolutionary* program of bolshevism.

For all the Socialist Left's sudden concern with such frivolous expenditures as democratic elections, they have consistently favoured increases in student fees. In 1976 their Independent Left precursor tried to sabotage a mass mobilisation for higher TEAS -- even walking out of the student strike committee -- and instead squandered students' money on a barbecue counterposed to the mass march! In 1977 they

disaffiliated the then Maoist-dominated Prisoners Action Group (PAG) from Clubs and Societies for the heinous "crime" of trying to prevent the manager of the on-campus Agora Theatre from tearing down a PAG poster. Self-styled "socialist libertarian" Ted Murphy has even served as the student stooge on the administration's disciplinary body, the Proctorial Board. In every way the Socialist Left is a small-time student imitation of its class-collaborationist, parliamentarist big brother, the ALP. What reason would these petty bureaucrats have for an election which involved *programmatische* debate?

The motivation behind Comrade Florrimell's refusal to accept this bureaucratic appointment was not some abstract commitment to "student democracy" nor an overpowering awe for the sanctity of the SRC. The SRC is an all but impotent talkshop. But unlike the reformist Socialist Left, we take *our program* -- the program of the revolutionary proletariat -- seriously. We stand on it and we fight for it. We seek to win students to active support of the class struggle of the workers. For us election campaigns are a platform for revolutionary propaganda -- for international class solidarity, for the construction of a revolutionary opposition within the labour movement. Against the class bias and elitism inherent in the bourgeois universities, we demand a policy of open admissions, the abolition of all entrance requirements and tracking, TEAS at least equal to the minimum wage -- to open tertiary education to working-class youth.

We do not accept office -- whether in SRCs or in the labour movement -- on the basis of bureaucratic favours. Even in the case where a bureaucratic manoeuvre eliminated all possibility of an election, a revolutionary would seek some expression of programmatic support from his constituency before accepting office. As Comrade Florrimell said in his resignation statement: "The Spartacist Club will participate in student bodies, as I have done in AUS [as a delegate], on the basis of earned support from students for our communist program". That is the task of genuine socialists on the campuses -- to win students to the communist program. ■

IMG: "Allah über alles?"

You can really see why we call them fake lefts when you watch all the opportunists falling over themselves trying to outdo each other in groveling before the "Islamic Revolution" in Iran. [US] Socialist Workers Party (SWP) spokesman Cindy Jaquith's nauseating defense of the *chador*, the head-to-foot veil which is a symbol of the feudal oppression of women, was bad enough. Only a week before tens of thousands of women were marching in Teheran against "holy man" Khomeini's orders to don the veil, Jaquith was defending it as a symbol of resistance to the shah!

Now from England we receive a report of another disgusting example. Two weeks ago, Brian Grogan, national secretary of the International Marxist Group (IMG -- fraternally linked to the SWP), gave a talk in Birmingham about his recent trip to Iran. Like Jaquith's talks in the US, it was a combination radical travelogue and public relations spiel for Khomeini. His message was mass action in the streets. And naturally Grogan was marching along with them in the demonstration to greet the returning ayatollah, and chanting their chants. The enthusiasm was so great, he reported, that despite his "anti-religious prejudices", this self-styled Marxist soon found himself crying out, "Allah Akbar!" (God is Great!)

"That might shock some purists", said Grogan, looking directly at Spartacist League supporters in the room. But you see, he went on, the slogan was only religious in form. For weeks the shah's helicopter gunships had been flying overhead shooting at the masses. So in shouting "Allah Akbar" the people were saying, "We are great, you (the helicopters) are small". Sort of "the power of Allah is greater than the man's technology", it seems.

Later, during the discussion period, a visiting American auto worker and supporter of the Spartacist tendency challenged Grogan to explain how chanting "Allah Akbar" was any more Marxist than carrying pictures of Khomeini, as the Fedayeen guerrillas have been doing. Without a moment's hesitation, Grogan pulled out his wallet and removed his own "Khomeini card" which he proudly displayed to the audience. No difference at all, you see, except that the Fedayeen are

back in Iran where they are now facing the threats and blows of Khomeini's Islamic police and army.

Eduard Bernstein, the grandfather of such "socialist" opportunists, said "the movement is everything, the goal is nothing". The desire to be with the masses at all costs, the inability to swim against the stream and tell the truth to the working class, is invariably at the root of great betrayals. Grogan's remarks remind us of the following description by an erstwhile German socialist, Konrad Haenisch, describing his feelings after the SPD voted for war credits on 4 August 1914:

"[on the one hand] this driving, burning desire to throw oneself into the powerful current of the general national tide, and, on the other, the terrible spiritual fear of ... surrendering oneself to the mood which roared about.... I shall never forget the day and the hour this terrible tension was resolved; ... until one could, for the first time in almost a quarter century, join with a full heart, a clean conscience and without a sense of treason in the sweeping stormy song: 'Deutschland, Deutschland über alles!'" (quoted in Carl Schorske, *German Social Democracy, 1905-1917*)

Really felt good, didn't it Brian? ■

(reprinted from Workers Vanguard no 228, 30 March 1979)

Australasian SPARTACIST

Revolutionary Marxist monthly of the Spartacist League of Australia and New Zealand, section of the international Spartacist tendency, for the rebirth of the Fourth International.

EDITORIAL BOARD: Len Meyers (managing editor), Inga Smith (production manager), Chris Korwin, David Reynolds.

CIRCULATION MANAGER: Toni Somerset.

Published monthly, except January. Printed by trade union labour. Registered at the GPO, Sydney for posting as a publication - Category B. Subscriptions \$3 for 11 issues; airmail \$5 for 11 issues (except Europe/North America), \$10 for 11 issues (Europe/North America). Address all correspondence to: Spartacist Publications, GPO Box 3473, Sydney, NSW, 2001. Telephone (02) 235-8115.

Opinions expressed in signed articles or letters do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.

Printed by Eastern Suburbs, Randwick, NSW.

Truckies and the TWU

Asp photo



Hume Highway at Razorback, NSW. TWU tops' treachery made the blockade a defeat for labour.

At the height of last month's blockade by lorry owner-drivers, blockade leader Ted Stevens assured a meeting of the militant truckies: "We've got this country by the balls". And the several hundred truckies parked up on Razorback Range could only agree. Within days after Stevens and five of his mates stopped their trucks on the Hume Highway late in the afternoon of 2 April, the antiquated arteries leading into Australia's capital cities had become choked with thousands of giant rigs. They defied police, politicians and even the RAAF, at one point holding up an RAAF truck loaded with ten tons of bombs. Razorback Range became the modern Eureka Stockade, and "Greendog" -- Stevens' CB radio name -- the new media folk hero.

With an enthusiasm which waned in direct proportion to the blockade's increasing impact on the economy, the bourgeois press and Liberal and National Country Party politicians exulted in this "revolt of the small businessmen" (as the 14 April *National Times* dubbed it) and the embarrassment it caused the NSW Labor premier. Wran invoked the spectre of "civil insurrection" and rushed through a draconian Road Obstructions (Special Provisions) Bill. Among the "special provisions" were \$1000 fines and up to three years' suspension of license; police authority to impound, confiscate and sell the trucks; and six months' jail for hindering their removal.

Even "Nifty Nev" knew that his cops were in no position to tow 2000 of the gargantuan machines off the state's highways, and "Greendog" countered that the trucks would be left to "rot to the ground rather than give in". Finally, after nine days, it was Wran who gave in -- agreeing to abolish the state road maintenance tax, increase the load limit from 36 to 38 tonnes and appoint an arbitrator to investigate raising the freight rates paid by the forwarders.

The Australian Road Transport Federation -- consisting of the major forwarding and haulage firms like Brambles, Mayne Nickless, TNT, IPEC and Ansett -- of course opposed the blockade. But so did the Transport Workers Union (TWU), whose membership includes the independent owner-operators though it does not have the legal authority to represent them in arbitration. Preceding the dispute is a long history of disgruntlement by many owner-operators at being in the TWU and a more recent record of frustration in attempting to organise for better rates in the face of bureaucratic inactivity and resistance. Using Fraser's most favoured union-bashing language, TWU federal secretary, Ivan Hodgson, denounced the nation's highways being "held to ransom" (though at least one NSW TWU official who spoke to *ASP* took pains to dissociate himself from Hodgson's attacks on the truckies' action). "We are doing what the Prime Minister, Mr. Fraser, and the State Government want us to do -- work as normal" Hodgson said, demanding police escorts for TWU trucks attempting to break through the blockades (*Age*, 9 April). One truckie complained bitterly:

"We pay \$44 a year membership to the TWU and they expect us to support them every time they go out. But they haven't come near us over this -- they just don't want to know." (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 April)

For their parts, Stevens and other blockade leaders demonstrably sought to disown any connection with the TWU, to the point of walking out of negotiations with Wran's transport minister when TWU representatives attempted to intervene. A list of twelve demands they formulated in the course of the blockade included an end to compulsory membership in the TWU. A week after the blockade ended, they set up the Australian Transport Industry Association (ATIA), with Stevens as its first president and with the prominent participation of Melbourne solicitor, David Galbally, in competition with the TWU.

The ATIA may have little future, given that all drivers who load and unload at TWU-organised

depots and union stores and factories are required to be members of the TWU and recent legislation introduced by Wran will in effect make the TWU sole bargaining representative for the truckies in NSW. Nonetheless it represents a dangerous and ultimately reactionary step, one for which the TWU bureaucrats bear major responsibility. Separated from the trade-union movement, it can only come under the sway of the employers. If it survives, it will present the transport bosses with what amounts to a ready-made, organised force of potential scabs for use against future TWU strikes.

Small businessmen or workers?

The independent owner-drivers are not wage workers, though many of them work in situations quite similar to employee drivers and would be financially better off if they were. They are a volatile but heterogeneous petty-bourgeois stratum that wavers between the working class and big business. Lured by illusions of "an easy quid", as one driver put it, or forced out of their jobs by bosses who find it more profitable to switch to sub-contractors, most of them either work directly for the big forwarding firms or for small fleet-owners who sub-contract for the larger firms. Those who do not have a regular employer must freelance on a load-by-load basis. In either case they bear the expense of purchasing and maintaining their rig, paying for fuel, insurance, taxes etc -- factors which make it ever more difficult for them to make ends meet without working longer hours and ignoring basic safety standards. Many clear little more than \$100 a week after 60-70 or more hours work.

despite the ludicrous assertion (voiced by the trendy liberal *Nation Review* and sundry reformists) that it was an attempt to "destabilise" the Wran government.

A mixed bag of demands

Though much of the truckies' anger focused on the road tax, highlighting a phoney controversy between "free enterprise" road transport and the nationalised railways, even the *Sydney Morning Herald* (7 April) recognised who the small owner-drivers' real enemies are:

"... in aiming to abolish the tax, the drivers are missing the main cause of their financial plight... On the figures presented, the companies seem to be making a disproportionate profit at the driver's expense."

The capitalist extortion which the *Herald* euphemistically passed off as "disproportionate profit" in some cases leaves the drivers as little as \$14 out of every \$90 charged by the forwarders. It is no wonder that in recent years the major freight forwarders (with the partial exception of TNT) have offloaded their haulage on owner-operators and sub-contractors, thus saving the expense of paying union wage rates and maintaining their own equipment.

Abolishing the road tax obviously has nothing to do with this situation, and benefits the large corporations no less than the drivers. Besides, the government will only recover lost revenue in some other way. Even the demand for higher freight rates leads nowhere, since the companies

Continued on page seven

Subscribe!



The Spartacist League is holding a subscription drive for Australasian Spartacist and sales drive for Workers Vanguard from 17 April to 18 May. Figures given below indicate totals sold as of 27 April.

Workers Vanguard sales

	Quota	Sold
Sydney	100	34
Melbourne	60	22
Total	160	56

Australasian Spartacist subscriptions

	Quota	Sold
Sydney	150	60
Melbourne	50	27.5
At large	-	5
Total	200	92.5

Australasian Spartacist 11 issues (1 year) - \$3

surface mail - \$3 for 11 issues

airmail - \$5 for 11 issues (except Europe/North America)

(overseas rates) - \$10 for 11 issues (Europe/North America)

Donation \$ _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____

POSTCODE _____ PHONE _____

Mail to/make cheques payable to: Spartacist Publications, GPO Box 3473, Sydney, NSW, 2001.

The first part of this article, which appeared in the April issue of ASP, described Kollontai's history of struggle against feminism and for a communist women's movement in the period leading up to the October Revolution, refuting the feminist myth that she advocated an "autonomous women's movement" or was centrally responsible for the Bolsheviks' commitment to women's emancipation.

REVIEW

Alexandra Kollontai, Selected Writings edited by Alix Holt

(Part 2)

It was in the period after the revolution that Kollontai's weaknesses came rapidly to the fore, and naturally it is this period of her political life with which anarchists, feminists and revisionists most readily identify. Agitational skills and internationalist impulses alone were no substitute for the political clarity necessary to guide the first workers state past the obstacles imposed by isolation and backwardness. Kollontai floundered in utopian "principles" and blueprints for sexual morality which scarcely addressed the questions at issue and bring to mind Gramsci's observation that "in 'Utopias' the sexual question plays a large and often dominant part".

Months after the insurrection Kollontai resigned her position in the Council of People's Commissars in protest at the signing of the Brest-Litovsk Treaty with Germany. Two years later she led the semi-syndicalist Workers Opposition in factional struggle against the introduction of "bourgeois" production techniques -- eg one-man management and the use of economic specialists left over from the tsarist regime -- as a means of reviving the shattered economy following the civil war. Instead Kollontai argued that the state cede control over production to the "producers" (ie the trade unions) and counterposed to the party leaders "the working masses endowed with a healthy class instinct".

By 1921 there was hardly a working class left, and "healthy class instinct" had been largely starved and bludgeoned into political near-insensibility. The economy had to be rebuilt and the working class revitalised; the forced requisitions of "war communism" could not continue; goods had to be made available through rapidly expanded production, necessitating a retreat into the New Economic Policy (NEP). Even Holt admits that the ideas of the Workers Opposition were "naive and unworthy" of Marxists. But for anarchists and other revisionists who seek a false continuity between Leninism and Stalinism, the Workers Opposition represented a challenge to "bureaucratisation", a theme echoed interestingly enough not only by Holt but by the fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat's (USec) Jacqueline Heinen (see *New Left Review*, August 1978).

The personal and the political

It is in Kollontai's writings on the questions of sexual relations and morality, the bulk of which were written in this period, that feminists and lifestyle radicals seek conclusive evidence of her distinctiveness from other Bolsheviks. This is what "made Kollontai unusual and necessarily suspect", claims Holt's sister British "Marxist-feminist", Sheila Rowbotham:

"Left communists who wrote about the withering away of the family in a far away distant society upset no one. Communist feminists who concerned themselves with what particular women were experiencing at that moment upset many." ("Alexandra Kollontai: Women's Liberation and Revolutionary Love", *The Spokesman*, July 1970)

"Kollontai was pioneering a new line of inquiry", argues Holt. "She was raising the question of

the connections between the personal and the political, which has only now begun to be generally recognised by socialists as being of crucial importance." Most recently, Communist Party (CPA) joint national secretary Mavis Robertson has chimed in to explain the feminist "revival of interest in Kollontai" ("... An Extraordinary Person", *Australian Left Review* no 68, April 1979):

"She asked many of the questions we ['the modern women's movement'] are asking -- the fact that we are still seeking some of the answers suggests the difficult terrain she chose and enhances her relevance for us."

But whatever the "relevance" of Kollontai's views on sexual emancipation to the immediate post-revolutionary period, though necessarily conjectural they had little in common with the idealistic "questioning" of her "Communist-feminist" admirers today. Not surprisingly, Holt and Heinen both condemn her for "economic determinism". Holt ruefully explains that Kollontai gave "prominence to the idea of first bringing women into the area of social production" while ignoring "the need to challenge sex roles".

The idealist conception that oppressive relations can be eliminated within the framework of class society through "challenging sex roles" is a theoretical rationale for *reformism*. The large-scale entry of women into social production is the necessary precondition for the eradication of women's oppression -- which is conditioned precisely by woman's isolation, through the nuclear family, in the household. And only through the creation of classless socialist society predicated upon the manifold expansion of social production can sexual oppression finally be eliminated. This was ABC for any Marxist, Kollontai included.

The "glass of water" -- Bolshevik puritanism?

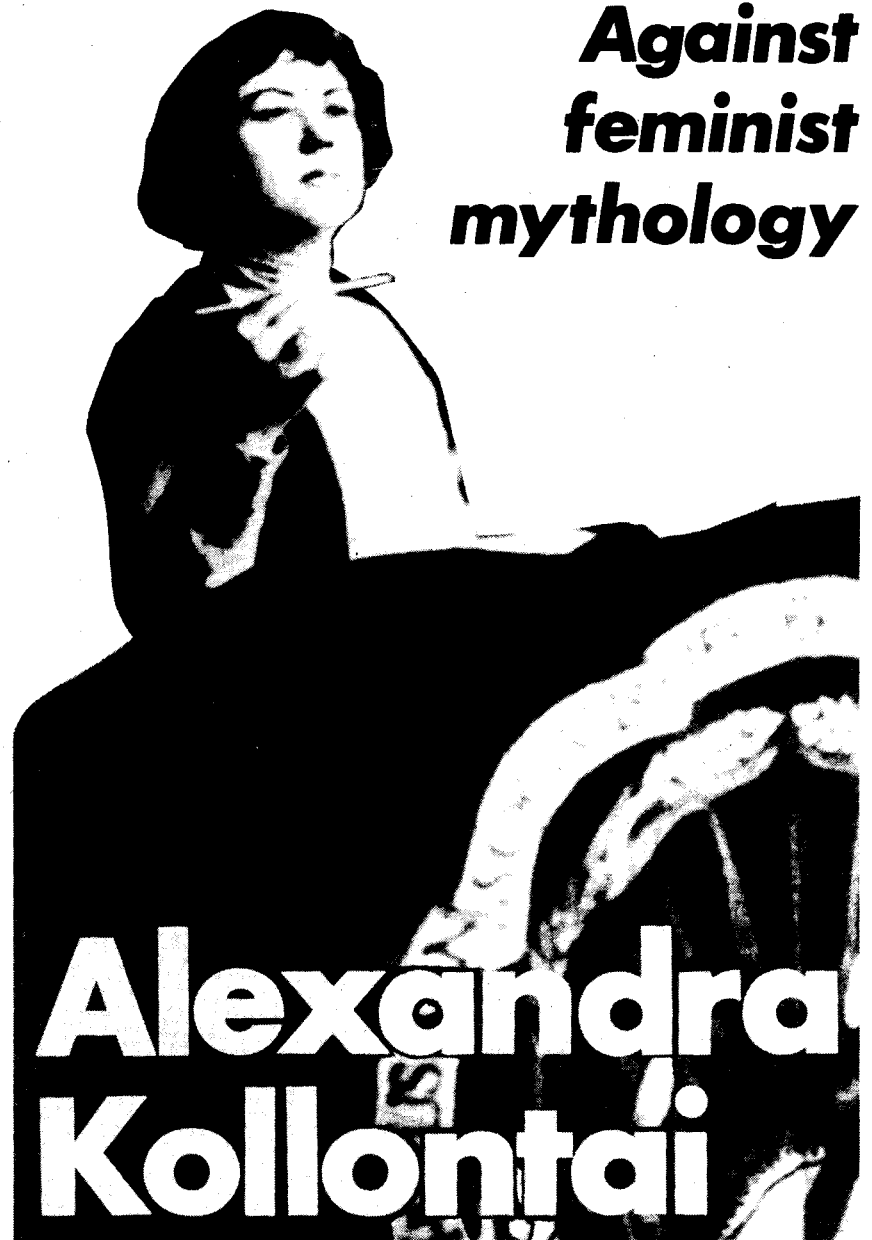
Feminists and their ilk claim that Lenin and the rest of the Bolshevik leadership, in contrast to Kollontai's "swinging" views, were at best insensitive to questions of sexual and personal relationships, if not outright sexist -- which is what the USec-affiliated Socialist Workers Party (SWP) put forward at a forum on women's liberation in Sydney last year. Without exception, they refer to Lenin's famous conversation with German Communist Clara Zetkin in which he attacked the "theory that in communist society satisfying sexual desire and the craving for love is as simple and trivial as 'drinking a glass of water'". Lenin added:

"Nothing could be false than to preach monastic self-denial and the sanctity of the filthy bourgeois morals to young people... "... but quite often this so-called 'new sex life' of young people -- and frequently of the adults too -- seems to me purely bourgeois and simply an extension of the good old bourgeois brothel."

Quite clearly, Lenin was advocating neither sexism nor sexual abstinence. The feminist nostrum that "the personal is political" notwithstanding, the transformation of personal relations necessarily lagged behind the social transformations which had taken place, particularly so in backward Russia: the bourgeoisie was gone, but the "brothel" was not. What the "glass of water" often meant for the young Komsomol woman in particular was that she had to "come across" in order to prove her "emancipation".

Lenin's conversation, based on Zetkin's recollections published four years later in 1924, is widely held to have been an attack on Kollontai

Against feminist mythology



Alexandra Kollontai

and the Russian Revolution

-- a thesis fostered by Stalinists and feminists alike. In reply Holt implies that the conversation itself is a fabrication, based on arguments which were current in 1924 -- when Kollontai was under attack for her sexual views -- and not in 1920. Whether the conversation took place as recorded or not, it certainly corresponds to Lenin's views. In any case, Kollontai's views on the question of sexual promiscuity do not appear to have been remarkably different. In a 1923 "Letter to Working Youth" subtitled "Make way for Winged Eros", Kollontai deplored "wingless Eros" ("momentary and joyless sexual relations") for leading to physical excesses and exhaustion, hindering the development of "inner bonds and positive emotions" and resting "on the dependence of the woman on the man and on male complacency and insensitivity".

In a recent document on the woman question, the "consistent feminists" of the USec (with whom the SWP is affiliated) express what really stands behind the attempt by all manner of revisionists to render the Bolsheviks "puritans":

"Underestimation of the subjective factor and of the specific oppression of women in the family ... certainly had its effects on the non commitment of broad layers of women who later stood by passively as the bureaucratic counterrevolution developed."

Exorcised of Pabloist *newspeak*, this says that *Leninism paved the way to Stalinism*, a classical anti-communist bugbear promoted by anarchists and social democrats alike. Complementing this is the SWP's longstanding position that the Thermidorian destruction of the gains of women or gays could have been blocked if the Russian Revolution had given rise to strong "autonomous" gay and women's movements (see, for example, the SWP's statements to the 1974 Socialist-Feminist Conference and 1978 National Homosexual Conference). This denies not only that the best and most conscious women fighters were to be found within the ranks of the Left Opposition but in effect repudiates the Trotskyist position that a



1932 Rabotnitsa. By then women's gains through October Revolution had been seriously undermined by Stalinist degeneration.

workers political revolution became necessary to overthrow the bureaucracy.

Sexual morality and Stalinist degeneration

The so-called "morality debate" in the early twenties in which Kollontai figured so prominently was not simply a speculative discourse about the "withering away of the family in a far away distant society". Questions of morality and personal relations, which had been decidedly secondary in the struggle to make the revolution and safeguard it against the White Terror in the civil war, were now posed concretely by the destruction of the old culture and the absence of a new one. Furthermore the disputes over morality also presaged the consolidation of a counter-revolutionary bureaucratic caste around Stalin. To be sure, Kollontai had always devoted more attention to sexual matters than had many other leading Bolsheviks. But the concern expressed in her essays and fictional pieces for the personal and cultural ravages of the NEP, for example, though observant and at times poignant, was by no means unique -- Trotsky's *Problems of Everyday Life* being but one case in point.

The problem confronting the workers state in the period following the civil war was that the old family and old forms of personal relationships were indeed disintegrating on a massive scale -- but there were no stable replacements. The creches were overflowing with homeless children; women who had left their husbands -- or more likely, been left by their husbands -- were wandering the streets in search of work; prostitution was increasing dramatically. The nuclear family could not be "abolished"; it had to be replaced, and the economic foundations were just not available. Holt glibly asserts that "neither the members of the government nor Kollontai were ever fully aware of their problem". This is absurd -- even a cursory reading of Kollontai's writings of the period, much less Trotsky's, demonstrates that they were all too painfully aware.

Problems of Everyday Life addressed many of the same questions as did Kollontai's writings, and many others: the old family and the new; the "struggle for cultured speech"; vodka, the church and cinema; youth and sexual hygiene; the housing question and privacy in personal relationships (even in impoverished Russia, Trotsky recognised that a barracks existence was not in consonance with "great progress in terms of culture and humaneness as well as of sexual relations"); the need to make newspapers more readable. Throughout Trotsky emphasised the necessity to raise "the standard of culture and education of the working class" and to improve "the material conditions of the class" as much as possible given the meagre resources of post-revolutionary Russia.

But unlike Kollontai, Trotsky recognised that questions of culture and personal relations were secondary reflections of the fundamental political and economic issues which had to be fought out. With the failure of the German revolution in 1923, it was evident that backward Russia would have to go it alone for an extended period. The bureaucracy which had grown powerful during the NEP began to crystallise around Stalin as a distinct caste pursuing its own *independent* interests. Making a virtue out of necessity, Stalin and Bukharin turned Russia's imposed isolation into a hitherto unheard of "theory" that socialism could be built in a single country, "at a snail's pace", through concessions to the peasantry. "Enrich yourselves", Bukharin entreated the kulaks. Trotsky counterposed the necessity for planned, steady industrialisation to be carried out at the expense of the kulaks, and argued for the utmost vigilance in seeking out opportunities to extend the revolution internationally (most notably, in Britain in

1926 and China in 1925-27). While Kollontai was preoccupied with "winged Eros", Trotsky wrote not only *Problems of Everyday Life* but was fighting within the party for a "New Course" of expanded industrialisation and revitalised proletarian democracy.

The impotence of Kollontai's opposition to the bureaucracy is reflected in her "last stand" against the Stalin regime. In 1925 the party leadership under Stalin and Bukharin proposed a new marriage code which placed de facto marriage on an equal legal footing with registered marriage and stipulated that property acquired during the marriage was to be held in common. The new code was opposed by the peasants and the Nepmen for further disrupting the stability of marital relations. On the other hand it was seen by Kollontai and others as *reinforcing* the institution of marriage by making women out of work dependent on their husbands and ex-husbands for support.

The problem of course was that no change in the marriage code, no matter how well-intentioned or carefully thought out, could resolve the fundamental underlying problems -- which



Soviet peasants learn to read. "Raise the standard of culture" said Trotsky.

Kollontai studiously avoided. She intervened with a proposal for a general insurance fund to provide support for homeless women and children and for marital contracts which would specify property arrangements within the marriage, simply begging the question of how a state which was too poor to provide directly for homeless women and children could afford a general alimony fund to do the same thing indirectly.

From Lenin's foe to Stalin's lackey

Those who seek to make of Kollontai a "democratic", "humane" alternative to Stalinism (and by implication, Leninism) are compelled to explain why Kollontai deliberately refused to join forces with the Left Opposition. Holt apologetically "explains" that after four years of diplomatic assignments abroad Kollontai "was no longer able to comprehend social developments". CPAer Robertson echoes this theme, castigating those who imply that Kollontai "compromised herself to survive" the Stalin era. Rebutting a little

known thesis that Kollontai's 1927 novel *A Great Love* was based on an alleged affair between Lenin and Inessa Armand and written on Stalin's orders to embarrass Lenin's wife Krupskaya, Robertson replies that if it were true, "then we would have to believe that she had lost all sympathy with the opposition in the Bolshevik Party.... If Kollontai had consciously aided Stalin in 1927, there is no reason why she did not aid him later, especially in the mid-1930s."

Robertson's tortuous attempt to locate Kollontai in the ranks of the Left Opposition should at least put paid to the SWP's analysis that the social-democratised CPA remains Stalinist. But it is false to the core. Kollontai *did* consciously aid Stalin in 1927, and it had nothing to do with her novels. A year after rejecting a personal appeal from Trotsky's emissaries to join the Left Opposition, the former leader of the Workers Opposition again appointed herself spokesman for "the masses" -- this time in defence of Stalin:

"... we need not only unity in our actions but unity in our thinking [!]. The masses instinctively understand this. That is why they are so opposed to the Opposition." ("The Opposition and the Party Rank and File", 1927)

As Trotsky put it in his autobiography (*My Life*): "She waged many a battle against the 'Lenin-Trotsky' regime, only to bow most movingly later on to the Stalin regime".

With the expulsion of the Left Opposition and the subsequent brutal purges, the regime's reactionary policies became ever more glaringly apparent. "The retreat not only assumes forms of disgusting hypocrisy" wrote Trotsky in *The Revolution Betrayed* in 1936, "but also is going infinitely farther than the iron economic necessity demands". In that year the Soviet Union officially abandoned the Marxist understanding that women's primary role in society, like man's, lay in social production, asserting instead that it was motherhood.

Women communists and women's oppression

In seeking to explain Kollontai's refusal to intervene in the debate which was to shape the future of the proletarian state and the Communist movement internationally, Holt links Kollontai's "retreat from politics" with "a general inability to cope with the problems that faced the party in the twenties", noting elsewhere that "Kollontai's political career fits the broad pattern of women taking a back

seat and not aspiring to the realms of theory and leadership". It is certainly conceivable that coming off the crushing defeat of the Workers Opposition Kollontai chose, consciously, to restrict her role to that of a commentator on socialist personal relations.

The relatively lesser role of women in history is not just a male-chauvinist falsification; it reflects a simple truth: *oppression oppresses*. Even within the ranks of the communist vanguard, women do not automatically or completely transcend the marks of the brutal and many-sided oppression to which they are subjected under bourgeois society. Both in her autobiography and in her fictional pieces on the new Communist woman, Kollontai for example expressed the painful tension between a desire for a satisfying personal life as a woman and the isolating pressure of political struggle and leadership.

Nor do male-chauvinist prejudices cease to exist the moment the bourgeoisie has been overthrown, much less among communists struggling within bourgeois society. Robertson notes that Kollontai had to confront the "familiar" accusation "by male comrades of feminism and of giving too much time to women". Robertson is indeed a feminist -- which Kollontai was not -- but her feminism, and that of a whole generation of experienced women cadre in the CPA was in no small part a reaction to the male chauvinism prevalent in the then-Stalinist CPA, and which necessarily exists in any reformist organisation as a reflection of the bourgeois ideology it embraces. Even in the case of the still revolutionary Russian Communist Party *after* the revolution, Lenin was compelled to observe:

"Unfortunately it is still true to say of many of our comrades 'scratch a Communist and find a Philistine.' Of course you must scratch the sensitive spot, their mentality as regards women."

But the women cadre of a *communist* organisation do not revel in their oppression -- by meekly submitting to a role as "loyal subordinates" or by setting themselves off in "women's caucuses" -- but seek to transcend it. They struggle to make their ideas and their influence felt as *proletarian leaders*, not as voices for oppressed womanhood. And in a healthy revolutionary organisation, as was the Bolshevik

Continued on page six



Famine during civil war in Russia. Kollontai's preoccupation with sexual morality and workerist utopianism ignored the desperate economic situation confronting the beleaguered workers state.

Kollontai...

Continued from page five

Party of Lenin, sexist attitudes are fought politically by the entire party, on the basis of communist consciousness, which is expected to transcend sexual distinctions. The Bolsheviks never supported the conception -- as do the CPA and the USec -- that women comrades had to be sheltered in male-exclusionist women's caucuses within the party. Such separatism professes an acquiescence to male chauvinism inside the party and an incapacity to forge a cadre including communist women leaders.

Unlike Kollontai's latter-day apologists we do not excuse her betrayals. Nor do we ignore her achievements -- as a Bolshevik, as a proletarian internationalist. We do not relegate her to the status of representative of the oppressed woman in the Russian Revolution. We do not laud her for exploring personal conflicts when the fate of the revolution demanded political clarity. The feminists can claim for their own Alexandra Kollontai the oppressed capitulator. We claim Alexandra Kollontai the proletarian fighter. ■

Harrisburg...

Continued from page one

shifts sometimes stretching to 12 hours! Also, the company instituted a speed-up drive and disciplined workers for following prescribed safety regulations in carrying out repairs and inspections.

The tragic truth is that in the US the social values and the irrationality of capitalism are "engineered" into even the most sophisticated technology. The "Gus Grissom theorem" retains its full force in matters of public health and safety. The astronaut, who later died in a rocket accident, observed that he was frightened every time he went up and reflected that all the machinery upon which his life depended was built by the lowest bidder. A corollary of this theorem is that capitalism never makes it as good, or runs it as well, as technology would allow.

Nuclear hypocrisy and Watergate moralism

It is post-Watergate liberal cynicism that gives the present panic over nuclear power its special flavor of bourgeois hypocrisy. It is not a sober concern for safety, but rather an irrational moralism that moves the clamshells and their friends. Thus the underlying theme of the anti-nuclear power film, *The China Syndrome*, is not much different from that of the Watergate movie, *All the President's Men*. In both cases the crusading liberal press is responsible for reforming a wronged America through public exposure. Behind the campaign to expose the lies and cover-ups (some real, some cooked-up) is the effort to clean up capitalism for the bourgeoisie, to get a better "oversight" of the FBI, or, in the case of nuclear power, a more favorable "regulatory climate".

Since the smoke first covered Manchester, England, the working class has been dying of industrial accidents and poisoning of all kinds. But what does it matter to the anti-nukers that every year thousands die from work in the coal mines? Although there has not yet been even a single death attributable to a commercial nuclear reactor, it is that possible accident which has captured their attention. After all, radioactive winds might blow into their neighborhoods, perhaps even onto a college campus.

The truth is that the mines are murderous for the miners, for the communities which surround the mines and for those who transport the coal. Not only have mine accidents caused the death of

some 100,000 people, but lung diseases disable and kill. A full 46 percent of US coal miners contract black lung (*Harrison's Principles of Internal Medicine*, 1976). More than 3000 die from it every year, according to the *Journal* of the United Mineworkers. And the technology exists to make the mines considerably safer with ventilation and adequate equipment. But it is too "expensive" for mine operators.

Of course this creeping death is not sensational enough for the anti-nukers to bother with. But for us the life of a middle-class housewife in a Harrisburg suburb is not worth more than the life of a coal miner, a textile worker with brown lung from cotton dust, an auto worker stricken with asbestosis. Such irrational moralism is the stuff of the eco-faddists.

Hiroshima was no accident

Although the anti-nukes trade on the deeply felt fears of Hiroshima devastation, the battleground of the war over nuclear power is the commercial plant; and the main enemy is the accident. The military uses of nuclear power are rarely raised by either side. Yet more than 90 percent of all nuclear wastes derive from military uses. The anti-nukers know well that the US is not going to dump its nuclear arsenal; nor do the main components of this political current have any appetite for the US to do so. After all they would not want "their country" to be "defenseless".

The clamor over nuclear energy as a technology is part of a bourgeois ideology which leads attention away from the main danger: imperialist militarism. Thus since the end of the war, popular culture has been deluged with "fail-safe" stories in which the world is accidentally thrown into nuclear holocaust. The idea that the imperialists would consciously decide to use the weapons they avidly produce is off limits. Thus French existential philosopher Jacques Maritain offered sophisticated contributions to the theme of a new "atomic age", in which the fact of potential human annihilation provided a new ethical basis for "the future of mankind". In contemplating social death, civilization was confronted with the existential condition for a new humanism.

For the Stalinists this mystification of nuclear technology has been an excuse for detente illusions. Remembering that the USSR has a rather large commitment to nuclear energy, the [pro-Moscow] US Communist Party (CP) has taken a pro-nuclear stand, along with the Meanyite labor bureaucracy. Taking responsibility for the bourgeoisie's hazardous use of nuclear power, the CP gives its argument a pacifist-detente twist: if only the movement were for SALT and "disarmament", everything would be okay.

When it comes to the dangerous pacifist notion of disarmament, the reformist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) will not be outdone by the CP. In fact the SWP is so anxious to be in the liberal anti-nuke movement that it is happy to dump the defense of the Soviet Union to do it. It is nuclear weapons which make general disarmament necessary says the SWP. The Soviet Union should "take the initiative". And why? Because with nuclear weapons the world can be blown up many times over. This is the refrain of bourgeois liberal pacifism and has nothing in common with Trotskyism. How welcome would these "best builders" of the anti-nuke movement be among the clamshells and other ecological molluscs if they had anything resembling a Trotskyist position on the Russian question as it applies to nuclear weaponry?

So, life is complex. It is not so easy to do strict cost-accounting on human lives -- adding up the risks and subtracting from the benefits -- outside the framework of the real political world. For instance, it is reported that there was more radioactivity dropped on Pennsylvania by the latest Chinese nuclear bomb test than escaped from the Three Mile reactor accident. As Trotskyists we support such tests and we ask: what could be more dangerous for the international working class, for the future of the whole world, than to allow the US to have a monopoly on nuclear weapons? The mad bombers of Hiroshima, Dresden and Vietnam would extract oceans of blood in nuclear blackmail, and then who knows what else they would do if they thought they could profitably "nuke" their way to worldwide US imperialist domination.

A nuke in your future?

The accident at Three Mile Island is generally described as a disaster for the nuclear power industry. Moreover, with soaring costs and legal and legislative obstacles, most forecasts were gloomy even before the cooling system failed on MetEd's reactor. But all it would take to turn this around is another substantial price hike by the oil producers' cartel, OPEC. The energy trusts and the capitalist government want to make the working class pay for the "energy crisis". First they phony the figures (world oil production is not down), then redirect the supply to create artificial shortages and extort legislation to make it more profitable to produce in

the US. MetEd even wants to pass the costs of the shutdown of Three Mile Island on to the general population by substantial rate increases! We demand that the corporations pay the damages and that the greedy energy trusts be expropriated without compensation!

Carter's austerity program meshes with the conservationist fetishes of the ecology faddists. But those who claim to stand for protection of the environment should give some thought to the human costs of increased reliance on fossil fuel. How many miners will die in accidents and from lung diseases to appease these energy preferences? How many urban lungs clogged with the soot from burning coal and oil; what long-term environmental effects of pouring ever more massive amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere? The petty bourgeoisie is appalled by the social deterioration around them, the reckless pollution of the planet, the mendacity of the government. But they are unable to distinguish between capitalism and technology as the culprit.

Marxists stand on the side of technological progress. While refusing to take responsibility for the capitalists' energy choices, we are decidedly against those who would arrest the development of the productive forces essential to the future of mankind. The anti-nuke protesters who seek the "greening of America" display a profoundly racist disregard for the populations of the economically backward countries, which can emerge from poverty only through a tremendous increase in industrial production. And all the while they close their eyes to the very real dangers of imperialist war, the stark choice between socialism and barbarism. Under the symbols of "flower power", the no-nukes crowd opts for barbarism. ■

(abridged from *Workers Vanguard* no 229, 13 April 1979)

Workers defence...

Continued from page eight

SPA; the main point of the rally was to continue relying on the patently unreliable Wran government: "The whole labor movement is entitled to expect that the Labor Government will instruct the police to protect all citizens when it is requested" (*Socialist*, 25 April). The Labor government is no more pro-labor than is a Liberal government, and -- particularly given Fraser's move to reinforce ASIO, unchallenged by Labor -- the SPA's call for a government inquiry into the cops' role at the concert has dangerously reactionary implications. Just as the cops who came to "investigate" the stabbing spent most of their time investigating SPA supporters, so will an inquiry be turned against the SPA itself (and the left as a whole).

The SPA's call for an inquiry by the federal minister of immigration "into right-wing Vietnamese organisations [and] deportations of criminal elements" (*Socialist*, 25 April) is no less dangerous. Mackellar already ordered one such investigation a year ago, which led nowhere. Given its role as junior partner to US imperialism -- as reflected in its pro-China "tilt" during the recent war -- the Fraser government is hardly likely to take action to curb right-wing opponents of the Stalinist regime in Vietnam. This year's Anzac Day parade in Sydney featured a forty-man contingent marching under the flag of the Thieu dictatorship and behind GOARNV chairman Vo Dai Ton, a former colonel in Thieu's army and his deputy minister of information (read: torture). To the cheers of rabid Australian militarists, Ton vowed to return to South Vietnam to "fight for freedom from the communists" (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 26 April).

But, officially or not, this is still "White Australia". If the federal government did choose to unleash a serious "inquiry" into the Vietnamese community here it could only be for the purpose of fomenting anti-Asian hysteria -- the "yellow peril". The same Labor Council which did not so much as consider mobilising trade-union defence guards to smash the fascist Vietnamese was all too prepared a year ago to support the blanket exclusion of all Vietnamese (except those who were "officially approved"). And virtually without exception, the fake lefts tailed behind the chauvinist clamour against the "boat people", albeit under the guise of opposing "refugees from a social revolution".

At the time of the outcry over the "boat people", we raised the slogan "No asylum for Indochinese war criminals" for those like Ton and his ilk who were "high-ranking military officers

Latest issue!



Spartacist no 26
English language organ of the interim Secretariat of the international Spartacist tendency.

Price: 50 cents

Order from/pay to:
Spartacist League,
GPO Box 3473,
Sydney, NSW, 2001.

Spartacist League

MELBOURNE (03) 62-5135
GPO Box 2339, Melbourne, VIC, 3001

SYDNEY (02) 235-8195
GPO Box 3473, Sydney, NSW, 2001

of the old regime or other war criminals":

"These vicious professional anti-communist killers should not be allowed to escape punishment for their heinous crimes against the workers and peasants of Vietnam..." (ASP no 51, March 1978)

But we were careful to differentiate between them and those who were merely hangers-on of the *ancien regime* or simply seeking a higher standard of living, emphasising that "while decidedly unenthusiastic about the arrival of such well-oiled 'refugees' we do not join in the chauvinist-motivated clamour for their expulsion".

Smash the fascists!

Conditions of skyrocketing inflation and depression-level unemployment offer a fertile culture for the growth of fascism. Last year an Australian branch of the National Front was formed, and the Australian National Alliance has been quietly spreading its racist filth in Sydney. In South Australia the Ku Klux Klan is trying to recruit high school youth to such demands as the segregation of Aborigines and the expulsion of all Asians (and a coastal watch for Vietnamese refugee boats!). Though the Vietnamese paramilitary rightists share a common target (the organised workers movement) and a common method (terror) with these scum, they are no more capable of being part of a mass fascist movement in Australia than is the fascist ultra-Zionist Jewish Defense League in the US -- a central plank of native Australian fascism must be anti-Asian racism.

But a bloc in action against the left between native fascists and the Vietnamese terror groups cannot be excluded. These professional anti-communist killers, like their Cuban counterparts in the US (known as *gusanos*, Spanish for "worms") are out for hire as dedicated and willing mercenaries for bourgeois reaction here. Thus Major Ashley-Riddle and other extreme right wingers in the NSW Liberal Party are intimately connected with Ton and the GOANRV leadership.

For the workers movement it makes no difference whether these murderous gangs are native or foreign, large or small. They must not be allowed to grow; they must be crushed now, in the egg. The counterrevolutionary scum of Saigon who now roam the streets of Sydney must be taught a bloody lesson. Now! The reliance of the labour bureaucrats and the fake lefts on the capitalist state and their opposition to workers defence guards, the embryo of the proletarian militia of a future workers state, is part and parcel of their defence of the capitalist system. No confidence in the bosses' state -- smash the fascists and right-wing terror groups through united-front workers defence guards based on the trade unions! ■

Truckies...

Continued from page three

will either pass the costs on or switch to cheaper rail transport. The answer is neither tax reforms nor reformist squabbles over whether rail or road can be made more efficient by driving the workers harder, but -- expropriate the profit-gouging transport giants without compensation!

As for the other blockade demands, some -- like a moratorium on repayments, a guarantee against victimisations and equal pay for all drivers -- were clearly supportable by the workers movement and in the interest of the small driver-owners. The demand for an end to compulsory membership in the TWU was just as clearly reactionary. Likewise, raising the load limit strikes a blow at the safety standards for all drivers in the industry.

So the truckies' blockade demonstrated the power of transport workers to shut down the country if they pull out all the stops. But the only real winner in the great truckies' "victory" was the transport companies, not the drivers; the real loser was the trade-union movement. And the responsibility for this defeat rests squarely with the criminally short-sighted policies of the TWU tops. Yet the reformist left has either enthused over the truckies' militancy or offered apologies for the bureaucracy's betrayals -- without exception ignoring the

Sydney Spartacist League public office

2nd floor
112 Goulburn St,
Sydney

Thursday: 5.30 to 9.30 pm
Saturday: 12 noon to 5 pm

Revolutionary literature

serious danger to the TWU posed by the rift between the independent drivers and the union.

How the TWU could have won

By joining with the truckies and undercutting the anti-union sentiment which existed among the ranks of the owner-operators, by raising demands directed against the big companies which emphasised the common interests between the one-truck owner-drivers and the employed drivers, the powerful and well-organised TWU could easily have prevented the formation of the ATIA. But instead of driving a wedge between the owner-operators and the small employers, winning the former over to the union and excluding the latter, the TWU tops drove a wedge between the owner-operators and the union. Every TWU truck throughout Australia should have stopped rolling as soon as the first rigs pulled over on the Hume Highway! Sympathy for the truckies was not absent, as evidenced by one Razorback truckie's report to ASP that TWU drivers at Cooks River railway goods yard in Sydney went out on strike in solidarity when the yard was blockaded and by a strike at IPEC following a stand-down of line-haul drivers.

In fact 35,000 TWU drivers were already out on strike when the blockade started, in support of a claim for an \$8 wage rise. Two days later the TWU tops called them back to work -- to ward off Fraser's threat to deregister the union. Had they stayed out, shutting down the entire transport industry nationwide and calling on the full support of the trade-union movement, it would have been Fraser that backed off. Now the TWU ranks are confronted with a potential army of scab drivers and a "Road Obstructions" Act which is much more likely to be used against a militant TWU strike than against the truckies.

The growing number of owner-operated trucks in the industry threatens to undercut established union hours, wages and conditions. A class-struggle leadership in the TWU would have demanded the extension of union rates (on an hourly basis) and conditions to all drivers in the industry while requiring the companies to pay individual owner-operators the cost of operating their equipment plus its replacement value. It would fight to defend and extend the conditions of the employee drivers through such demands as a 30-hour week at no loss in pay and a full cost-of-living escalator to replace the stingy "indexation" rises and the paltry wage claims which never quite "catch up" with inflation.

That was the course pursued by the American Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in the 1930s, when it was still a revolutionary Trotskyist organisation and instrumental in transforming the Teamsters from a small, weak craft union into an industrial giant. In *Teamster Politics*, Farrell Dobbs describes how the Teamsters, under the leadership of the then-revolutionary SWP, won over the owner-operators by improving their pay and conditions:

"Careful examination of all the factors involved convinced us that those owning one truck, who did their own driving, should be approached as fellow workers....

"The validity of that policy was confirmed by its results. In the major struggles of that period against the trucking employers generally, the union's owner-operator members served loyally. They volunteered their trucks to transport pickets and shared in the picketing. A significant number of our casualties in battles with the cops were from among this category of workers....

"It will be noted that [in demanding union rates plus costs of operation] the union was concerned only with the cost of operating the equipment, not with helping to secure any profit from the operation. If we had supported any notion of earning a profit on the vehicle itself, impetus would have been given to the petty-bourgeois aspirations inherent in the ownership of trucking equipment. Our aim was the opposite."

Of course the US SWP has long since departed from its class-struggle past, as reflected in the reformist politics of its Australian co-thinkers. The 26 April *Direct Action* account of the truckies' blockade does not even hint at a class-struggle program for TWU militants.

Transport workers have nothing to gain -- and much to lose -- from allowing the small owner-operators to be ground down by the trucking bosses. The truckies, like the lower strata of the petty-bourgeoisie in general, will either be won to the side of the proletariat -- firmly under its leadership and organisation -- or they will become cannon fodder for bourgeois reaction as the class struggle intensifies. The TWU bureaucracy is incapable of effectively organising them for the same reason it is incapable of defending the conditions of employee drivers. Committed to a policy of collaborating with the employers and their state, it will do nothing to seriously challenge either their profits or their laws. To defend their jobs, their conditions and their union, TWU members must replace Hodgson and his ilk with a leadership based solidly on a program for winning the class struggle, smashing the state and expropriating the employers. ■

Khomeini jails left supporters Free the Fedayeen!

Last month, the Western press was full of stories about the execution of former Iranian premier Hoveida, for years the right-hand man of the bloody butcher shah Pahlavi, and selected other of the shah's torturers and executioners. While the media hypocritically prated about "human rights" for these participants in torture, assassination and mass murder, they passed over in silence the arrest by the Bazargan government of 70 members of the militant left-wing People's Fedayeen guerrillas. The Fedayeen had allied themselves with rebellious Turkoman tribesmen in the northeastern frontier region, and were rounded up as the "revolutionary" army succeeded in crushing the revolt at a cost of several hundred dead.

Like the Kurds who rose up a couple of weeks earlier, the Turkomans were demanding regional autonomy and return of lands seized by court favourites during the shah's reign. However, the UPI reported on 4 April that Bazargan had reneged on earlier pledges which led to a ceasefire in Kurdistan, and is now denouncing "autonomy in (the) guise of separatism which threatens national unity". At the same time, according to the US Stalinist Daily World (6 April), Ayatollah Khomeini's hand-picked prime minister blamed "Trotskyites and Maoists ... aided by remnants of the satanic regime of the shah" for "provoking" the struggles of the national minorities. Naturally the Kremlin flunkies chimed on this slanderous amalgam, adding in time-honoured fashion the charge of "CIA agents".

The arrest of the Fedayeen was not the first attack on the left by the anti-communist Islamic regime. In March women demonstrating against the ayatollah's injunction that they wear the head-to-toe chador (veil) were assaulted by Muslim fanatics armed with knives and stones and fired upon by Khomeini-loyal troops. Earlier the Shi'ite "holy man" had ordered the guerrilla groups to give up their arms, which they refused to do. And when the Hezb-e Kargarane Socialist (HKS - Socialist Workers Party) attempted to hold a public meeting in Teheran on 2 March, armed Islamic marshals dispatched by the Komiteh collaborated with knife-wielding Maoist Khomeini supporters whose violent disruption caused the cancellation of the meeting. In the most recent incident, on 22 April, 30 people were injured when the local headquarters of the Fedayeen in the southern city of Abadan was attacked by hundreds of Islamic reactionaries.

The Fedayeen earned the mullahs' wrath particularly by calling for a boycott of Khomeini's phoney plebiscite on an "Islamic Republic", something the would-be Trotskyist HKS lacked the political courage to do. Ironically, only three weeks before, the guerrilla group had called for ending the women's demonstrations on the grounds that they would weaken the Bazargan government (Le Monde, 14 March). But the attacks were utterly predictable. As we of the international Spartacist tendency wrote in Workers Vanguard no 223 (19 January):

"Ayatollah Khomeini ... has made the policies of his proposed Islamic republic perfectly clear.... The legal enslavement of women would be reinforced. The chador ... would be mandatory.... The rights of minority religions will also come under attack.... Khomeini's appetite to suppress the left has been made clear time and again."

But this did not stop virtually the entire Iranian "far left" from tailing after clerical reaction.

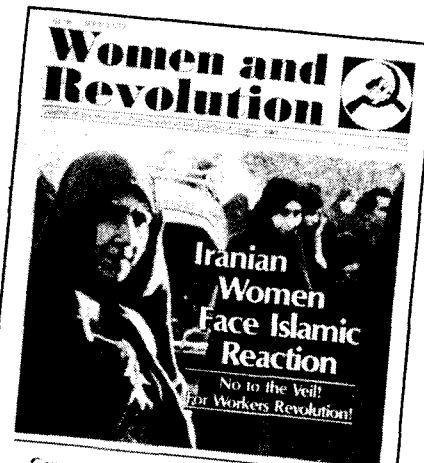
The basis now exists for a united-front defence of the left in Iran against the attacks of the new theocratic rulers. Free the Fedayeen militants! Full democratic freedoms for all working-class and secular-democratic organisations! Stop the attacks on democratic rights of women! For the right of self-determination for national minorities!

(adapted from Workers Vanguard no 229, 13 April 1979)

Journal of the
Women's
Commission
Spartacist
League/US

SUBSCRIBE
4 issues - \$2

Order from/pay to:
Spartacist League,
GPO Box 3473,
Sydney, 2001.





Sydney unionist knifed by Vietnamese rightists

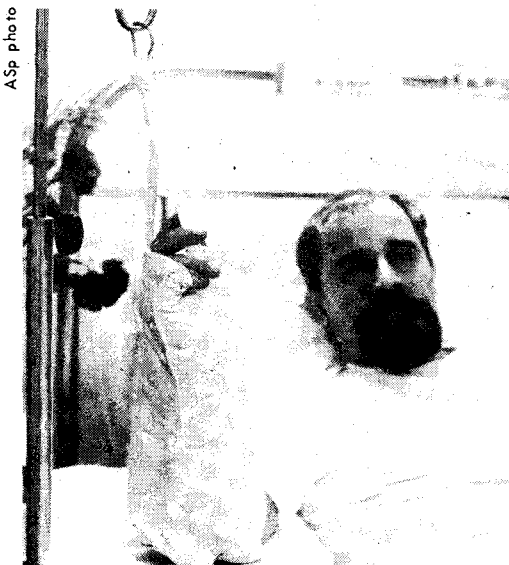
Form workers defence guards!

On Friday, 20 April, right-wing thugs savagely assaulted three Sydney trade unionists outside a concert to aid Vietnam at Sydney Trades Hall. Nick Kalafatis, a shop delegate in the Building Workers Industrial Union (BWIU), was dragged from the Trades Hall steps to the footpath and stabbed in the arm. Had he not managed to escape his assailants, he might now be dead. Watersiders Harry Black and Mick Power were viciously beaten about the head; Black had two teeth knocked out. Several other trade unionists also suffered injuries in the brutal assault.

For more than two hours before the attack, some 200 Vietnamese right wingers demonstrated outside the Trades Hall with anti-communist placards -- shoulder-to-shoulder with an Australian Maoist bearing the Eureka flag -- blocking the entrance and harassing those going in. Two *ASP* salesmen inside the lobby reported seeing the right wingers openly brandishing sticks; knives and knuckledusters were also seen. Yet when representatives of the Young Socialist League (YSL -- youth group of the pro-Moscow Stalinist Socialist Party of Australia [SPA]), the concert's organisers, requested that the cops standing across the road prevent the "demonstrators" from intimidating those going in, the cops refused.

This is only the latest incident in a campaign of rightist terror at least a year old. In February 1978 two left-wing Vietnamese students in Perth were bashed up in their flats. Two months later another Vietnamese was stabbed in a refugee hostel in Adelaide. In July a gang of these thugs attempted to assault a visiting Vietnamese official at Sydney's Mascot airport. Organised in such revanchist groups as the Vietnamese Association of Australia (VAA) and the fascistic Greater Overseas Alliance for the National Restoration of Vietnam (GOANRV), they are the human refuse of the reactionary Thieu regime driven out by the Vietnamese workers and peasants four years ago -- imperialist-trained professional anti-communist hitmen. Speaking from his hospital bed, Kalafatis warned: "Next time they'll kill someone if they're not stopped".

Kalafatis is right. The vermin responsible for this bloody attack must be jailed and prosecuted. But it is all too clear that the bourgeois state's cops and courts turn a blind eye to



Left: Nick Kalafatis, in hospital following attack.



Right: Saigon police chief Loan murders NLF prisoner, 1968.

right-wing violence against the workers movement. The bourgeois dailies, which sensationalise every incident -- real or fabricated -- of "left-wing terror" have passed over this attack in virtual silence. The ultra-rightist paramilitary and fascist organisations who target the workers movement for their attacks serve the same interests as the cops -- the capitalist ruling class. They will not be stopped by pleas for "police protection". Even when the bourgeois state legislates the suppression of the fascists, nine times out of ten, such laws end up being used to suppress "extremists" of the left.

Defend May Day! Form workers defence guards!

The Trades Hall attack posed a brazen challenge to the very right of workers organisations to hold meetings and organise. It demanded immediate action. At the 26 April NSW Labor Council meeting which followed the attack, the Spartacist League (SL) distributed a leaflet calling on delegates to put forward and support a motion:

"to organise workers defence guards based on the trade unions to defend left and labour public functions from right-wing attack. The first task of such defence guards must be to provide defence of the May Day march...."

May Day is the workers day; a well-organised defence guard at the May Day march would not only ward off attack but serve the fascists a warning: Stay away!

Little was to be expected from the right-wing ALP Trades Hall bureaucracy, which responded to the fascistic attack by warning the YSL that further violence could cost it use of the hall.

But not one of the delegates -- who included supporters of the SPA, the Communist Party (CPA) and the ostensibly Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) -- even raised the question from the floor.

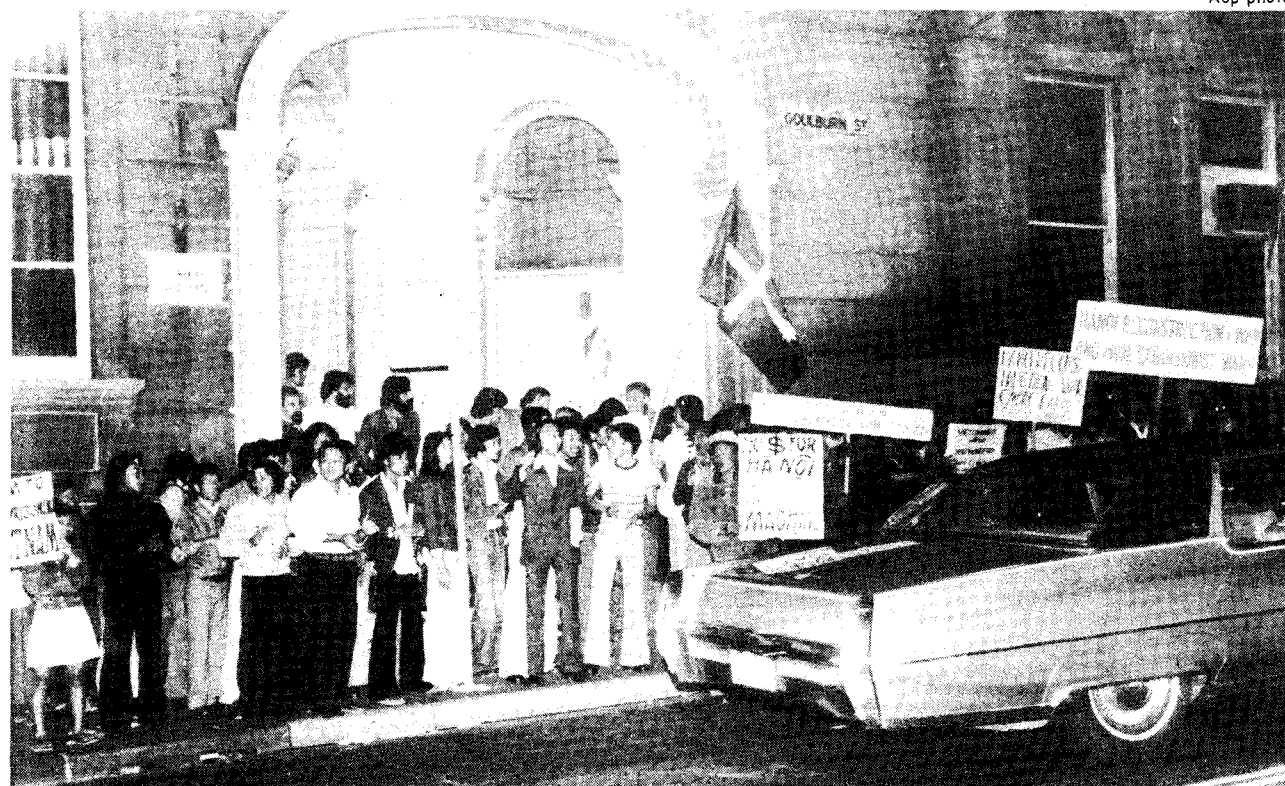
The formation of workers defence guards to counter right-wing attacks is an integral part of the Trotskyist Transitional Program. Not only does the SWP not raise such a call either in the labour movement or in its tiny article on the attack tucked away on page 5 of the 26 April *Direct Action*, but in the past it has supported "free speech" for the fascists to organise their terror gangs. Despite their front-page headlines the CPA and SPA have also downplayed this attack and ignored the question of workers self-defence -- anything to avoid embarrassing the Wran Labor government. With obscene gall the 25 April *Tribune* compares the "fascist attack" with the "state vandalism" of razing Brisbane's "historic" Belle Vue Hotel, denouncing the unpopular Bjelke-Petersen while avoiding any criticism of the Wran government over the concert attack.

No confidence in the bosses' state!

A 27 April Trades Hall rally in solidarity with Kalafatis organised by the YSL could have been the occasion for a massive show of strength by the entire labour movement. But the SPA did not even draw in the ranks of the BWIU, Watersiders and Seamen's Union, unions in which its supporters play prominent roles. They turned down the SL's offer to participate in the rally's defence and rejected an SL proposal for floor discussion of future defence actions. For all his talk about the unity of the labour movement, BWIU state president Tom McDonald effectively excluded the Maoists from any possibility of participating in a united front against fascist attacks, referring to a conspiracy between the Maoists and the right wing against the labour movement as a whole. Does this mean that the ranks of the Maoist-dominated Builders Labourers Federation (BLF) are to be written off in the struggle to defend the workers movement against fascist attacks? BLF members themselves must demand that their union leadership mobilise defence guards not only to ward off right-wing attacks, but to defend future strike pickets.

The Maoists certainly deserve the contempt of every working-class militant for their criminal participation in a demonstration which threatened at knifepoint all working-class militants who defend the Vietnamese revolution. This is the most blatant expression yet in Australia of the thoroughly counterrevolutionary character of China's anti-Soviet alliance with US imperialism. Four years ago, when the Maoists were among the most militant antiwar activists, a Eureka-flag-bearing Maoist would likely have been leading an attack on these right-wing scum; now he was to be found in their midst! In the course of self-defence against the fascistic attack, it would have been quite proper to treat the Maoists there the same as the right wingers; but this has nothing in common with the sectarian Stalinist rivalry between the Moscow- and Peking-liners.

A united workers front is of no use to the
Continued on page six



Maoist anti-Sovietism leads to participation in fascistic Vietnamese demonstration at Trades Hall, Sydney, 20 April.