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# Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacist League

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—a bulletin series consisting of material  
hostile to Trotskyism and the Spartacist League

## BULLETIN NO. 1

—Reprint of “Spartacist League: Anatomy of a Sect”

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—Reprint of the Spartacist League’s critique “Mandelites Falsify History to  
Attack SL”

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**SPARTACIST LEAGUE: ANATOMY OF A SECT**  
**Contribution to an Analysis of the North American Left**

**EDUCATION FOR SOCIALISTS BULLETIN**

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## INTRODUCTION

Of all the self-proclaimed Trotskyist organizations which exist outside of the framework of the Fourth International, the Spartacist League (with its creation, the Spartacist International Tendency) is among the most tireless and energetic in its war against the International. Especially in the United States and New Zealand and Australia (and, most recently, in Canada) supporters of the Fourth International have been confronted on numerous occasions by zealous partisans of Spartacist, determined to prove that Trotskyism survives only in their own tendency.

The Spartacists have, in this ideological struggle with the Fourth International, notable advantages over many of the other pseudo-Trotskyist formations. Their cadre are usually articulate and well-educated in sectarian "Marxism;" they have consistently maintained principled positions on such issues as feminism and nationalism; they have established a generally commendable record of support for other left tendencies under attack from the bourgeois state and have refrained from the use of violence against other left groupings (itself not a minor achievement in light of the record of most other left formations in the U.S.). In a period in which other ostensibly Trotskyist tendencies have been characterized by bizarre deviations and hysterical excesses -- from the Posadista call for a pre-emptive nuclear strike by the USSR (with socialism rising triumphant from the ashes) to the shrill "fascism is around the corner" clamor of the American Wohlforthites (coupled with the Healy/Wohlforth blatant opportunism and authoritarian party regime) -- the Spartacist League has presented a sober, solid, down-to-earth tone that is refreshing.

These features, however, coexist in Spartacist with fatal weaknesses. The Spartacist League is the heir of two decidedly mixed traditions -- that of the International Committee (IC) and the SWP's former Revolutionary Tendency (RT) -- and has been totally unable to transcend the weaknesses of these legacies. The International Committee developed during a period of stabilization of the class struggle and isolation of revolutionaries on a world scale. During that period, 1953-63, the world Trotskyist movement was split and deformations developed. The Spartacist League is in many ways the best inheritor of the OCI-SLL tradition; but it shares with these tendencies a common list of failings deriving certain aspects of the IC, which can be schematically summarized as Stalinophobia, a coupling of dogmatism in theory with opportunism in practice, lack of understanding (in practice) of the need for a democratic-centralist International, and most

importantly -- the use of the term "Pabloism" as a bogeyman, an ultimate term of abuse to place a party or individual beyond the pale. Pabloism has, in this context, taken on the aspect not of a rejected trend which developed in a specific period of the Fourth International, but rather that of a contemporary lurking force, ready to gobble up revolutionaries. As Comrade Henri Weber of the French FCR has noted, for these offshoots of the IC, "Pablo occupies the same place as Satan in revealed religions. The struggle against 'Pabloism' takes on the same importance as the struggle against the 'evil spirit' in the faith of our grandmothers."<sup>1</sup>

(It is not coincidental that in conflicts developing between these groups, "Pabloism" is tossed around in any and all circumstances in a manner reminiscent of accusations of heresy under the Inquisition. For example, both sides in the heated exchanges between the U.S. Workers League and the Spartacist League in 1970 accused each other of the dread heresy; this was also the case in the vituperative debates between the British SLL and the French OCI in the wake of the Banzer coup in Bolivia, and most recently in the split between the OCI and the tiny Vargaist grouping.)

To these weaknesses were added those of the Revolutionary Tendency within the Socialist Workers Party: a trend toward retreat not only from what they regarded as revisionism in the SWP, but from active involvement in mass struggle in general; and a buttressing of Stalinophobic impulses due to the origins of the RT leadership in the left Schachtmanite current (which rejected Trotsky's analysis of Stalinism as a parasite on the workers' state by rejecting the workers' states themselves). During the SL's ten years of existence, the United States has experienced a broad radicalization culminating in the mass movements of Black people and the struggle against the war -- yet, until 1971 the Spartacist League declined steadily in membership. In its failure to relate to and link up with these struggles, the SL became decisively stamped with the character of a sect, elevating its weaknesses to the level of "principles." This past history strongly calls into question the ability of the SL to intervene in future struggles of the working class.

Thus, the origin and history of the Spartacist League led to the development of what can only be termed a sect in the scientific, Marxist sense of the term. The Spartacist League uses Marxism not as a guide for action, but as a protective dogmatic screen to keep out the possible corrupting influences of the real struggles of the workers. Often perceptive analyses of the flaws existing in mass formations

such as the antiwar movement or trade union oppositional caucuses are used by the SL as a de facto excuse for abstention from meaningful participation in these mass struggles.

The purpose of this essay is to examine the origins of the Spartacist League and the views and activities of the SL today. Only through such a perspective can we begin to understand not only what Spartacist is, but how and why such a formation came into being and, most importantly, why the Spartacist League does not offer a viable Marxist political alternative to serious revolutionaries concerned with the task of making a socialist revolution.

PART I: BACKGROUND TO SPARTACIST

ORIGINS (I): THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

On November 16, 1953, The Militant, weekly newspaper of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in the United States, published a "Letter to Trotskyists Around the World." In the same month the SWP published the document "Against Pabloite Revisionism," its theoretical explanation of the split in the Fourth International. These two polemics marked the onset of a broader split in the International and the genesis of the International Committee (IC).

The Spartacist League broadly defines itself as a continuator of the "International Committee tradition." This pamphlet is not intended to provide an explanation of why the International Committee arose, nor can it draw up a complete balance sheet of the line and activity of the IC. It will merely indicate the general context in which features of the IC to which the SL fell heir arose.

At the beginning of the 1950's, a combination of factors put the world Trotskyist movement in a difficult and unexpected situation. The predictions and assumptions that World War II would bring about the downfall of Stalinism and a terrible crisis in the capitalist world did not take place in the manner in which Trotsky (among others) had projected. While there was an extension of the socialist revolution in Asia (particularly highlighted by the victory of the Chinese Revolution in 1949) and a similar extension of the workers' states beyond the bounds of the USSR into Eastern Europe (accompanied by the success of the Yugoslav Revolution), the revolution in the advanced capitalist countries failed to materialize because of a combination of two factors: the ability of the imperialists under the leadership of the American bourgeoisie to restabilize world capitalism and the betrayals of revolutions in the advanced countries by Stalinist parties acting under the direction of the Kremlin bureaucrats. The new revolutions did not immediately upset the strength of the Stalinist bureaucracies and parties; their short-term effect, in fact, was to improve the prestige of the Stalinist parties. At the same time, the restabilization of the capitalist economy led into a long-term economic boom which has only recently come to an ebb. These factors not only affected the consciousness of the masses, but also restricted the growth of the revolutionary organizations which make up the Fourth International.

With the outbreak of the Cold War and the accompanying witch-hunt in many of the advanced capitalist countries, the pressures upon the organizations and cadre of the Fourth International were tremendous. The sharpening of the Cold War gave birth to the expectation that a third World War between the capitalist

countries (led by the U.S.) and the workers' states (led by the USSR). This expectation was shared by all of the representatives of the Trotskyist movement, including such leaders as Michel Pablo, James P. Cannon, Gerry Healy, and Pierre Lambert. The tactic of entryism was devised at the Third World Congress of the Fourth International primarily as a response to this expectation.

### Entryism

Entryism was meant to serve the purpose of allowing the rather small nuclei of the sections of the Fourth International to enter into the large Stalinist and Social-Democratic parties under particular world conditions. In France and Italy, for example, the CP's contained the bulk of the politicized workers; in the event of war between the capitalist governments of these countries and the USSR, it was expected that they would ally themselves with the cause of the workers' state. The tactic of the Fourth International was to move its small and isolated forces into these parties to vie for the leadership of the workers there against the reformist misleaders. However, reality did not follow this schema. A global war did not break out; instead, the revolution went into ebb in the industrial countries while continuing in the colonial world. Today we can look back and see very clearly the errors on the part of the world Trotskyist movement; but at the time, when the arms race was being geared up, when the war in Korea was a hot reality, when the war in Indochina was occurring, when military pacts such as NATO and SEATO were being put together, the situation was far less clear. This was not the first time (and undoubtedly will not be the last) that important conjunctural errors will be made by revolutionary Marxist leaders. These mistakes were caused in one sense by an all-too-heavy reliance on the projections put forward by Trotsky in the period of the outbreak of World War II. Trotsky's error on this point was later to serve as a pretext for certain cadre to desert the Fourth International, giving as their excuse the "failure" of Trotskyism. Later, a more convenient excuse was to be found in the demonology of "Pabloism." (A similar response would be to scrap Leninism because of the predictions of Russian revolutionary leaders about the imminent spread of world revolution following World War I.)

Two major patterns developed within the Fourth International from these historical events. One pattern, which much later found its fullest expression in his departure from the Fourth International, was cut by Michel Pablo. Pablo exhibited both a certain political opportunism and faulty organization practices which were to prove deleterious to the Fourth International. To damn the positions of the FI because of the later development of Pablo, however, is equivocal to

junking the theory of permanent revolution because one of its prime authors -- Parvus -- later became a reactionary government bureaucrat in the Weimar Republic. (Let us at least admit that Pablo did not go the way of Parvus.) Pablo's major error was a theory of economic catastrophism in which the capitalist states would be forced into launching a global war against the workers' states. This economic catastrophism gave birth in practice to cntryism sui generis which, in retrospect, can be seen to have led certain instances to organizational opportunism. This-- coupled with hyperbureaucratism in the organizational sense -- was the real error of Pablo, rather than any project of liquidationism on the part of Pablo personally or the leadership of the FI in general. This is demonstrated today when we see the tremendous growth -- both numerically and politically -- of the forces of the Fourth International.

#### The International Committee

At the other extreme, a pattern developed which sought to preserve the vanguard role of Trotskyism by denying as long as possible the existence of revolutionary developments in the real world which did not come out of Trotskyism. The relative isolation of the sections of the Fourth International from one another, coupled with the severe repression faced by many sections, helped in strengthening this tendency and developing "national Trotskyist" formations, of which certain sections of the IC (especially the OCI and SLL) became the best examples.

Although it raises various criticisms of the IC, the SL shares a basic political outlook with some of the groups which have emerged from that experience. At the core of this outlook are three conceptions under which the International Committee was led to express its dogmatic and sectarian view of the proletarian revolution, and which define a form of social-democratic deviation: Stalinophobia, lack of understanding of the need for a democratic-centralist international, and professional "anti-Pabloism." These points require some analysis if we are to understand Spartacist thought.

(1) Stalinophobia. The groupings which made up the IC -- primarily the SWP (fraternal), the French Organisation Communiste Internationaliste (OCI) headed by Pierre Lambert, the grouping under Gerry Healy in Britain which was later to become the Socialist Labour League (SLL, now the Workers Revolutionary Party) and Palabra Obrera (headed by Nahuel Moreno) in Argentina -- lost no opportunity in proclaiming that the Fourth International (the "Pabloite faction") was guilty of capitulation to Stalinism. Pablo's arguments in "Where Are We Going?" (written

in January, 1951) that "the Communist Parties retain the possibility in certain circumstances of roughly outlining a revolutionary orientation," was ceaselessly cited as the final, damning quotation.

Throughout the 1950's, however, certain components of the IC demonstrated in varying ways what can only be termed Stalinophobia, a social-democratic and subjective response to world events. This subjective and emotional response to Stalinism led to serious errors.

One example of this came in the Korean War. After the outbreak of the war, a six-member minority of the Political Committee of the SWP adopted what was in essence a "Third Camp" position: both the imperialist troops (with Syngman Rhee's puppet forces) and the troops of the Korean People's Democratic Republic (a workers' state) were denounced in terms which seemed to imply that they were equally "wrong." For the first three weeks of the war, The Militant, while admirably dissecting the involve of the American bourgeois state in the war, took at best an agnostic attitude toward the Kim Il-sung regime in the north. It was only after a heated intervention from James Cannon that The Militant and the SWP Political Committee re-evaluated their position and unambiguously supported the side of the workers and peasants in Korea.

While the Spartacist League (as will be seen) freely admits many of the errors of the IC (while failing to draw any political consequences from these errors), it is strangely silent on this episode. It cannot, in fact, offer comment, because to analyze this episode it is necessary to view it in the whole context of Stalinophobia within the IC -- which would mean attacking itself.

On the question of the "de-Stalinization" process after the death of Stalin, the prtial liberalization measures taken by the bureaucrats to stave off the masses' aspirations for genuine proletarian democracy, sections of the IC simply denied that any such phenomenon was taking place -- in any form. Any analysis to the contrary was viewed as a capitulation to Isaac Deutscher's theory of the self-regeneration of the bureaucracies of the workers' states. This denial was embraced and elaborated upon by the followers of Lambert and Healy. In the words of Comrade Pierre Frank, "As to de-Stalinization, these groups almost completely deny the processes that have taken place in the Soviet Union since Stalin's death. They consider that acknowledging the existence of liberalization measures is a 'capitulation to Stalinism.' They are incapable of differentiating between the 'liberalization' that has taken place and 'democratization' -- which does not exist at all."<sup>2</sup>

Another example of Stalinophobia within the IC came in regard to the revolutionary victories in Yugoslavia and China. Here, Trotskyists were confronted with workers' states headed by parties which they had long characterized as Stalinist. These states owed their origins not to installation by the Soviet Army, but rather to the leadership of popular revolutions. The attempts to analyze this phenomenon from the late 1940's and 1950's were all the more agonizing because, for Trotskyists, the question was vital. What is significant for our purposes here is that, in regard to these questions concerning how such parties could lead proletarian revolutions, the IC could do no better than imitate an ostrich and deny that these parties had led revolutions. When they finally recognized that workers' states did exist in these countries, they explained that the masses had more or less spontaneously made a revolution, sweeping the unwilling Stalinists along at their head. The role of the Chinese CP, therefore, was not that of a leader, but rather that of a roadblock, a hindrance to the spontaneous upsurge of the workers and peasants. To formulate this theory, sections of the IC were forced to take their first steps toward the concept of a "transitional state"; ie, China as a whole did not become a workers' state in 1949 (with the victory of the Red Army and the proclamation of the People's Republic) but only in 1952-53 when, as a result of the need to mobilize the workers and peasants in the Korean War, the administration and factory management was purged and the decisive sectors of the economy were formally nationalized. Thus, in the name of an "orthodox" attack upon "Pabloism," sections of the IC moved toward the notion of a new bourgeois state which could peacefully transform itself into a workers' state through economic reforms.

The roots of Stalinophobia within the IC were varied. One of them has been hit upon by the Spartacists themselves in a different context: the reliance of the IC upon "orthodoxy" rather than upon the application of Marxism in a scientific manner. Correct policies were determined by the mechanical extraction of quotes from the classics, rather than an analysis of the reality of events. The SL points out that, in this period, "the Trotskyists had lost a real grasp of theory," and had reduced dialectical materialism to "static dogma."<sup>3</sup> We can already note the first steps toward the evolution of the consciousness of the sect here: Marxist theory begins to serve the function not of a dynamic mode of analysis, but rather of a screen to protect the party from the real world.

A second source of Stalinophobia must be traced to the concrete reality in which the component sections of the IC found themselves. This was the period in

which the Stalinists were suppressing even the mildest disaffection in the wake of the Red Army's march into Eastern Europe and of the renewed purges of Stalin's last years. The Cold War served as the pretext for a wave of savage repression in the capitalist states, of which the McCarthy period in the United States was perhaps the most severe. In such a context, errors were inevitable (such as the SWP's characterization of McCarthyism as "Fascism on the march.") The Healy group in Great Britain, immersed in the pro-imperialist British Labour Party (without even an independent press organ) was subject to similar pressures. Social-democratic pressures also came to bear on the French Lambertistes (OCI), as they were ejected from the Stalinist-dominated CGT and chose to take refuge in the CIA-engineered splinters of the "Workers' Force" (CGT-FO). As for the Argentine Palabra Obrera, Stalinophobia conveniently complimented its maneuverings on the fringes of the bourgeois-nationalist Peronist movement.

(2) Lack of understanding of the need for a democratic-centralist international

It is almost unnecessary to provide examples of this fatal weakness of the IC, as the Spartacist League has provided a large number of its own, which are useful whenever the SL attacks the Fourth International today as an "opportunist federated rotten bloc."<sup>4</sup>

The SL states that "The precarious internationalism of the American SWP, maintained through intimate collaboration with Trotsky... did not survive the assassination of Trotsky in 1940 and the onset of the world war."<sup>5</sup> Citing as proof Cannon's statement that "We don't consider ourselves an American branch office of an international business firm that receive orders from the boss,"<sup>6</sup> the SL asserts that the IC was "always partly fictitious and partly a formalization of blocs of convenience by essentially national organizations,"<sup>7</sup> and a "paper international tendency."

It should be stressed that this did not mean that parts of the IC (including the SLL and OCI) never issued statements in which they verbally stressed the importance of a democratic-centralist international; on the contrary, we can find numerous examples of such a verbal affirmation. Parties which consider themselves to be "orthodox" Leninists and Trotskyists, after all, can hardly be so blunt as to jettison a cornerstone of revolutionary Marxism. Peng Shu-tse, leader of the small Chinese exiled party, complained that the IC functioned like the Second International; a World Congress, originally scheduled for 1957, was never held at all. In practice, however, the majority of the IC groups did not make the slightest effort to correct the situation, for all their verbal assurances; in practice, sections of the IC (notably the followers of Healy and Lambert) required either that an international body become nothing more than an extension of their own views

(a la Gerry Healy's current "International Committee") or that such a body be postponed indefinitely.

The Spartacist League is vociferous in its attacks upon this aspect of the International Committee. The SL even cites several quotations from Trotsky which stress that "Opportunists find international control intolerable and they reduce their international ties as much as possible to harmless formalities..." and that "international unity is not a decorative facade for us, but the very axis of our theoretical views and our policy..."<sup>9</sup> Healy and Lambert, of course were (and are) equally familiar with these quotations; we shall see later how well (or how poorly) the SL's international practice matches up with its assertions. What the SL does not (and cannot) even say, however, is how such an opportunist marriage of convenience, a grouping which they define as "an opportunist federated rotten bloc," a grouping founded upon "sterile dogma" and hostility to international democratic-centralism could wage a principled fight against "Pabloism."

### (3) Anti-Pabloism as a raison d'etre.

The first proclamations of the SWP in 1953 (and soon hereafter of the International Committee) were very violent in tone. In Cannon's words, "We have finished and done with Pablo and Pabloism forever, not only here but on the international field... We are at war with this new revisionism..."<sup>10</sup>

The "war" ran into two major difficulties in the early 1950's: neither the "Pabloites" nor the "orthodox" IC member parties were performing according to the battle plan. On the basis of what they considered to be an ambiguous response by the IEC of the Fourth International to the East German workers' upsurge of 1953, the International Committee predicted further "capitulations" to Stalinism. Instead, when the Hungarian Revolution broke out in 1956, both the International Secretariat of the Fourth International and the IC took almost identical stands in favor of the revolutionary workers' uprising against the Stalinist bureaucracy. Peng Shu-tee glumly admitted that the major charge against the "Pabloites" -- liquidationism -- was being disproved by the practice of sections of the FI, in France and elsewhere. Indeed, the entry work of these sections into the mass parties of the working class and their defense of the Algerian Revolution showed the possibility of major organizational and political gains.

Any major criticisms of the International Secretariat ran into major difficulty in regard to the IC itself. There was virtually no criticism of the "Pabloites" which the IC could make which did not rebound with (at least) equal vigor on sections of the IC. The SWP, for example, had attacked the Clarke-Cochran

tendency, identified with Pablo, for proposing to orient toward the periphery of the Communist Party; this was seen as a capitulation to a Stalinist party. After the expulsion of the Clarke-Cochran opposition, however, the major axis of SWP work in the 1950's was in fact toward the Stalinist periphery, particularly the forces identified with John Gates who bolted from the CP in 1956 (many of whom, unfortunately, were to drift into bourgeois liberalism) and the former Progressive Party strata around such figures as Corliss Lamont who worked with the SWP in the joint "Independent Socialist" campaign in New York in 1958.

A continual embarrassment was Gerry Healy. The SL is being kind when it says that "The Healy grouping, whose revolutionary competence was seriously called into question from the beginning by Healy's own tarnished history, represented politically a reflexive action against Pabloism which never broke from its essential theoretical method."<sup>11</sup> Translated, this means that Healy never saw anything wrong in denouncing the sections of the Fourth International for deep entrism at the same time that the Healyites were dissolved completely into the Labour Party left wing (led by the demagogue Aneurin Bevan) and were busily engaging in hawking The Tribune.

Perhaps we should not speak of embarrassment, however, until we come to Argentina. For if the Fourth International was but poorly represented in that country by Juan Posadas, the IC had to claim the Moreno group as yet another shading in what the SL terms "a formalization of blocs of convenience by essentially national formations." How could one speak of "orthodoxy" while Moreno was running pictures of Juan Peron, the "revolutionary general" on the masthead of Palabra Obrera (or while Moreno was busily "correcting" the "Europeans" Marx and Trotsky on the role of the national bourgeoisie and peasantry in Latin America)? How could one complain of "capitulation" to Stalinism in regard to China while Moreno was praising Mao? In fact, in such a situation, how could one criticize any aspect of the International's practice?

The IC criticized the Fourth International's support of the Algerian liberation struggle under the FLN not solely for failure to criticize the FLN's inadequacies. But the record of sections of the IC, especially the OCI, is one of dogmatic abstention coupled with tail-endist opportunism. The OCI continued to support Messali Hadj's MNA long after its condemnation of the FLN as "putschist" was exposed as actual tacit collaboration with the French government. When the OCI was finally forced to disavow Hadj, it gave no concrete support to the revolutionary struggle in Algeria, under the cover of purist denunciations of the FLN and "Pabloites

Given the unpleasant reality of non-capitulating sections of the Fourth International and blatant opportunism (thinly veiled by sterile dogmatism) coming from a number of the IC sections, the question of the "war against Pabloism" took on a new light. The question was no longer one of a constant, vigilant struggle of a small and isolated revolutionary current to avoid being swept away by existing mass currents -- a struggle in which there will always be errors because of objective factors and human limitations. Rather, the concept of "Pabloism" began to take on religious overtones. Spearheaded by Gerry Healy, the "anti-Pabloites" began to construct an almost Manichaeian world view in which objective considerations and actions paled before a priori assessments. The "anti-Pabloites" began with a given theory -- that the International was Pabloite -- and interpreted every action accordingly. The SLL and OCI knew that they were witnessing Pabloism and knew that Pabloism engaged in liquidation; all they had to do was find examples of this phenomenon in practice.

Thus, the elevating of "Pabloism" into an all-embracing bogeyman must be seen as a part of the already-described turn by a part of the IC into a formally "orthodox" schematism. If the Fourth International was not "Pabloite," ie, was not performing to expectations, then the IC had no reason for existence at all. The majority of the International Committee eventually reached this conclusion and reunified with the International Secretariat at the 1963 World Congress. An intransigent minority, however, viewed the reunification as a "capitulation" to the Pabloites (who were, of course, capitulating in turn to the Stalinists, Social-Democrats, and just about everybody else, it would seem) and maintained a rump IC, now led by Gerry Healy and Pierre Lambert. It is at this point that the second originating factor in the SL's history -- the Revolutionary Tendency in the Socialist Workers Party -- comes into the picture.

## ORIGINS (II): THE REVOLUTIONARY TENDENCY

The period during which steps toward the reunification of the International were being taken offered an opportunity to synthesize the past experience and break with some of the IC's shortcomings. Instead, the Spartacist League acquired some of its distinctive brand of politics: it rejected the SWP's correct turn to the International Secretariat and to mass work while making some correct abstract criticisms of the SWP's new line, and it reinforced a Stalinophobic heritage with a new dose of sectarianism toward the Cuban revolution.

As the period of repression in the United States began to ebb in the late 1950's, the SWP began to make an effort to establish ties to motions among the masses of the American people. For all its shortcomings, the 1958 "Independent Socialist" campaign represented a first such effort. The victory of the Cuban Revolution and the SWP's courageous defense of that revolution (exemplified in the early 1960's by the Fair Play for Cuba Committees) made it possible for the Socialist Workers Party to reach out to advanced layers in much the same way the European sections of the Fourth International had done in defense of the Algerian Revolution in the 1950's.

The opposition that arose to these initial developments within the SWP represented both pretensions of "orthodoxy" and the beginnings of a sectarian trend toward abstention from mass struggle. The RT identified the source of the SWP's difficulties as "Pabloism". The RT sided with Gerry Healy and Pierre Lambert in their frantic efforts to prevent the reunification of the Fourth International, and supported the ultimate Healy-Lambert decision to remain outside of the Fourth International, setting up instead a rump "International Committee" of their own.

### Revolutionary Tendency Criticisms

In "Witch-Hunt in the SWP", a protest at the expulsion of RT leaders Mage, Robertson, White, Ireland and Harper from the SWP (published in the first issue of Spartacist in February-March, 1964), the RT cites as examples of revisionism (in order): the SWP analysis of Cuba as a comparatively healthy workers' state (as opposed to the RT view that it was deformed at birth), "all sorts of softening and accommodation" towards "the bureaucratic regimes of the Soviet bloc", and the breaking of the SWP from "the revolutionary Marxists of the International Committee of the Fourth International, to ally with Pabloists who had for years been press agents for the more radical bureaucratic strata within the working

class and colonial liberation movements."<sup>13</sup> Each of these can be seen as an extension of the analysis which had permeated sections of the IC from its inception.

Coupled with these criticisms are attacks upon the SWP Freedom Now Resolution of 1963 (the first projection of a line supporting Black nationalism and a separate Black party) and the condolence letter sent by the SWP to Mrs. Kennedy, which it stated was "not different in kind from that of the American Communist and Socialist Parties." A general criticism is made that the SWP had become "more deeply enmeshed vicariously in the alien aspirations of impressively larger movements. . . ." <sup>14</sup> IC "orthodoxy" and venom toward "Pabloism," "left" criticisms of SWP practice, and uneasy generalities about "vicarious involvement" in "alien" movements are all jumbled together at once. This initial document was a good cross-section of RT analysis.

In the same statement we find the charge that the SWP "became caught up in an interrelated pattern of gross abstention from struggle in its own right, together with a sectarian hostility toward genuinely leftward moving, and therefore potentially competitive, forces."<sup>15</sup> This sort of statement, which abounds in early Spartacist articles and position papers, must be seen in retrospect as (at least) a verbal attempt to go beyond sectarianism in its relations with other groupings on the left. Except for a period where it led to tail-ending the Progressive Labor Party (PLP), this analysis was never fully implemented. Similar statements from sections of the Fourth International today are exultantly produced as examples of "capitulation" to whatever the given section is supposed to be capitulating to (centrism, new mass vanguard, etc. . . .).

#### Schachtmanite Influence

Another peculiarity of the Spartacist League was established at that time: a strengthening of the Stalinophobic outlook of sections of the IC. This was accomplished through the influence of a large segment of the leadership of the Revolutionary Tendency which had come from Schachtmanism. While Max Schachtman himself had moved into ultra-right state department socialism, the left Schachtmanites maintained the conception that Stalinism was a general phenomenon related to the emergence of a new exploiting class, the bureaucratic managers, which had nothing in common with the workers state or socialism. For them, the only workers state they recognized was the people in arms organized in mass democratic bodies, and running a planned and democratically controlled collective economy. Unless this ideal form of the proletarian revolution was achieved, any revolutionary

motion was demeaned as totalitarian and deemed unworthy of unconditional defense against imperialism (third campism). The Spartacists' conception of deformed workers states as being only slightly "superior" to capitalism, and qualitatively inferior to healthy workers' states, leads to the same kind of sectarian third campism in practice. It leads to underestimating the gains for the masses which a workers state of any kind represents: protection against the armies of imperialism and native capitalism, the tremendous development of productive forces, witnessed in Eastern Europe and China, for example.

This attitude toward real proletarian revolutions was welded into the Spartacist League's very essence by their formative experience with the movement in solidarity with the Cuban revolution. Thus, under the guise of an intransigent commitment to the ideal revolution, with workers councils under a Bolshevik Party, they adopted a sectarian attitude toward the revolution as it actually unfolded in Cuba. At a time when defense of the Cuban revolution was one of the key tests for American revolutionaries, the Robertsonites found themselves in a bloc with the various groupings of the rump International Committee. All of them saw in the new Cuban state only the expression under one form or another of petty-bourgeois nationalism. Consequently they downgraded the importance of its significance for Latin America, and relegated its defense against U.S. imperialism to a low priority.

For the Wohlforth segment of the Revolutionary Tendency (soon to break away to form the "Reorganized Minority Tendency"), this was most clearly manifested in their analysis that Cuba remained a capitalist state because it had not been "structurally assimilated" into an existing workers' state (being an island on the other side of the planet from the U.S.S.R. and China) and had not had a revolution led by a revolutionary Marxist party (i.e., the followers of Gerry Healy and Tim Wohlforth). That this mode of analysis placed the status of Yugoslavia in doubt in particular did not disturb Wohlforth, who had grudgingly allowed the existing workers' states into his canon but was rather stubborn about letting in new ones. The RT, now minus Wohlforth, and led by James Robertson, was at least in touch enough with reality to reject Wohlforth's atrocious theory. Its position was, however, marked by a more subtle form of the same virus in the form of the insistence upon a qualitative, categorical differentiation of workers states from deformed or degenerated workers' states. (Even the term "workers' state" is not neutral to them since it implies only a "healthy" workers' state.) Thus, Cuba in 1961, with no ossified bureaucracy in

sight, with the power in the hands of armed workers and peasants and the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, with the policy of open and total support for revolutions not only in Latin America but around the third world (exemplified by the sending of 300 soldiers to the Congo, including many leaders of the Cuban workers state, led by Che Guevara), was at birth a deformed workers state. Thus, Che Guevara, whose whole life was a struggle in practice against Stalinism, is sneeringly dismissed as a supporter of the "ultraleft" variant of Stalinism in Latin America,<sup>16</sup> and the Fair Play for Cuba Committees are dismissed as Castro fan groups.

The Robertsonites' abstract recognition of the class character of the Cuban state was subordinated in practice to their bloc with the Healy dogmatists and the Spartacist League was stamped from birth with the mark of abstentionism and vacillation in the struggle to defend the workers states. The RT broke apart in 1963 as a result of the machinations of Gerry Healy, who preferred a small group of docile flunkies to a possibly independent tendency in general agreement with him. The Wohlforth-Phillips wing of the RT, dubbing itself the "Reorganized Minority Tendency," turned over to the SWP a series of internal communiques written by Mage, Robertson, Ireland, and others which were used by the SWP to expel them. Wohlforth lasted less than a year more, as his followers got themselves expelled by a deliberate violation of SWP rules.

Although the RT protested its expulsion from the SWP in the most vigorous terms, the publication of the first issue of Spartacist in February, 1964, marked the beginning of the Spartacist League as an independent entity. It is in this context that we can examine the development and practice of the Spartacist League.

## PART II: THE SPARTACIST LEAGUE IN OPERATION

It is impossible in a somewhat confined context to deal with every aspect of Spartacist practice since 1964, the year of its formal inauguration. Thus we cannot do justice to such fascinating subjects as SL's relations with the Progressive Labor Party, a bizarre formation which thinks that all of the 14 existing workers' states are capitalist because they are no longer sufficiently faithful to Stalin. SL dubbed PL theory "Trotskyism with a prefrontal lobotomy" and, armed with this catchy phrase, generally tailed the PLP for two years, seeing its major function as explaining PLP's actions in more coherent terms than PLP itself could manage. While the Spartacist League has gone into paroxysms over the "Pabloite" theories of Comrade Sterne that the Vietnamese Communist Party cannot be considered a Stalinist party, it saw nothing wrong at all in arguing that the PL thugs who attacked the SWP and YSA were not Stalinist. After all, demanded the SL, how could PLP be considered Stalinist when (according to them) it attacked the Student Mobilization Committee from the left?<sup>17</sup> (Third Period Stalinism apparently never existed for the Spartacists.)

Our major focus here will be upon four important aspects of SL practice: (1) Spartacist involvement (or lack thereof) in the struggle against the imperialist war in Vietnam; (2) Spartacist trade union practice; (3) attacks by the Spartacist League on the sections of the Fourth International (especially the former Ligue Communiste in France and the International Marxist Group in Great Britain); and, (4) Spartacist attempts to "reconstruct" the Fourth International.

### THE FIGHT AGAINST THE VIETNAM WAR.

The crucial revolutionary struggle in this period has been that of the workers and peasants of Indochina and especially Vietnam. The decades-long fight of the Vietnamese masses to expel the imperialist powers from their soil has been the axis for involvement of millions of persons in the unfolding process of the world revolution in a manner similar to (though on a much larger scale) the Algerian and Cuban Revolutions.

Revolutionary Marxists in the United States in particular (as the principal imperialist power involved in the war) had two major goals: (1) to mobilize the masses in as broad and powerful a movement as possible to objectively aid the Vietnamese and other revolutionary forces in their fight against American aggression, and (2) to educate the masses of people to the nature of and reasons for the American war of aggression, including the

need to politicize an anti-imperialist wing of the movement and to recruit the most advanced layers to the task of building a revolutionary party in the U.S. The American SWP achieved the first task. Under the principled slogan of "Immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Indochina," millions of Americans were mobilized into active opposition to the war. The long struggle by the SWP against alternative slogans (such as "Negotiate Now!") was entirely correct. Criticism, however, has been leveled at the SWP by many revolutionaries for failing to understand the second task. The SWP, they argue, should have organized "Victory to the NLF!" contingents in marches and demonstrations and utilized the opportunity to speak from public platforms to educate the people about the war and expose the fake "antiwar" liberals. There has also been criticism over the almost sole use of such tactics as legal, mass marches rather than attempts to intervene directly in factories or in ghetto communities, where the war could be linked up directly to racism and anti-working class measures carried out by the government.

Spartacist criticism, however, stems from an entirely different direction. Under the cover of militant, even "revolutionary" verbiage, the SL, in essence, abstained from the mass movement entirely.

At the outset, it did not appear that this would be the case. At a meeting of the Fifth Avenue Peace Parade Committee on September 29, 1965, the SL walked out after the committee adopted "Stop the war in Vietnam now!" as a slogan. They argued -- correctly -- that "the slogan is deliberately ambiguous in order to avoid facing the duty to advance the only demand that has any meaning: Unconditional Withdrawal of all U.S. Troops from Vietnam!" (emphasis added) The SL went on to state that "the best defense of the Vietnamese Revolution in this country is to build a militant antiwar movement strong enough to compel the United States to get out of Vietnam," and called for a "democratic, non-exclusionist policy" in the antiwar movement.<sup>19</sup>

#### "Popular Frontism" and the Antiwar Movement

The SL quickly moved, however, to the position that the coalitions opposing the war were "popular fronts." This criticism was applied specifically to the National Peace Action Coalition (NPAC) and the Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Indochina (SMC), of which the first was more or less under SWP hegemony from its inception in 1970 and the latter from 1968. (The CP-led People's Coalition for Peace and Justice, which could justifiably be labeled as essentially class-collaborationist, was almost ignored as the SL focused its

fire upon the "renegade" SWP.) In May, 1967, the SL stated that the SMC's focus upon the single issue of immediate withdrawal "strikingly parallels the 'people's front' of all democratic forces developed by Stalinism in 1935."<sup>20</sup> This sort of attack was clearly insufficient for the SL's purposes, however, so the focus moved from the slogans of SMC and NPAC to the SMC and NPAC themselves. Speaking of the Young Socialist Alliance (the SWP youth group), the SL noted that "because of their Trotskyist past, they seek to pass off their coalitions as 'united fronts.' But the precondition for a united front, as Trotsky made clear, is a break -- in form and content -- with the bourgeois parties, not a bloc with a section of them."<sup>21</sup> While many revolutionaries were attempting to use speakers' platforms at antiwar mobilizations to denounce the bourgeois liberals, the most famous SL stance in this regard was that the "democratic, non-exclusionist" antiwar movement not allow these liberal bourgeois to be there in the first place. In the ringing phrases of the SL demand:

NO LIBERAL BOURGEOIS SPEAKERS AT ANTIWAR RALLIES! Under the banner of "nonexclusionism" SMC welcomes the class enemy into the anti-war movement. The major activity of SMC's "mass actions" has been to provide both the forums and captive audience for liberals to do their canvassing. The only real independence for the movement is irreconcilable opposition to the class enemy.<sup>22</sup>

This demand demonstrates the nature of a sect almost by itself. A revolutionary proceeds from the objective reality of the given situation and notes that (unfortunately) the vast majority of all strata in the United States (including the working class) still orient toward bourgeois politicians. To state that "there will be no bourgeois speakers at antiwar rallies" is the position of a sect in this regard and means only that there will be no bourgeois speakers at their antiwar rallies. The bourgeois speakers will be elsewhere, however, with their own rallies (as well as lobbying campaigns and voter registration drives and other tested methods of diverting the struggle into a dead end) and with the masses of people. The effect of the "revolutionary" SL demand is thus to reduce the influence of the left to participation in sparsely attended (if that) rallies where they can speak to one another. The correct course -- to utilize the same platforms and rallies as the liberal fakers to expose them -- was rejected by the SL in what can only be termed the most sterile form of "purism."

#### Two Sets of Standards

In common with the IC tradition which it inherited, however, the SL has shown recently that it has a different set of standards for itself. At a demonstration in support of the British miners, the SL obtained (and proudly used)

the endorsement of Paul O'Dwyer, President of the New York City Council. The Class Struggle League (CSL) and Socialist Forum (SF), carrying out SL doctrine better than the SL, promptly withdrew from the demonstration on the grounds that the participation of a leader of the Democratic Party made the whole affair a "popular front." The SL responded to this attack with a forced chuckle, pointing to it in their paper as "comic relief." The tone became more outraged when they responded to the charge of Harry Turner of the CSL that "all action blocs between the proletariat and bourgeois political forces... are absolutely impermissible under any and all circumstances" and that "the inclusion of any bourgeois element would mean capitulation to the class enemy." Since the SL itself repeated ad nauseum in the antiwar movement that a united front precludes alliance with any section of the bourgeoisie in any circumstances, their reply to Turner takes on a certain interest. The SL now states that it is permissible for Leninists to "accept bourgeois support for a limited action in support of unambiguously working-class demands..." Going farther, they note that Leninists "may bloc with bourgeois forces to defend democratic liberties -- provided that the revolutionaries retain full freedom to criticize other members of the united front and do not submerge their own politics in a lowest-common-denominator propaganda bloc." The NPAC and SMC are still viewed as "pop fronts," but no longer simply because they contained "a section of the bourgeoisie;" the new rationale is that NPAC's status as a coalition between the SWP and the liberal bourgeoisie represented by Vance Hartke abrogated "any pretense of a class position for NLF victory in Vietnam and for antiwar strike action by U.S. workers."<sup>23</sup> But, in fact, the Spartacist League itself recognizes "Out Now!" as a principle demand. The truth is that no bourgeois forces ever consistently organized for unconditional withdrawal, through NPAC or any other channel. As for the perspective of strike action, NPAC was conceived as preparatory activity for realistically proposing such initiatives to the labor movement and could have played this role to a much greater extent given a strong push in that direction from within NPAC. We are forced to conclude, from the SL's reasoning, that NPAC was not a "pop front" because it involved a bloc with bourgeois forces -- the old SL and current CSL position -- nor really even because of a lack of freedom to criticize other members of the coalition (which a number of tendencies exercised quite vociferously within NPAC) -- but because the SWP (one member of the united front), says the SL, chose not to exercise its rights in this area. This raises the question of

whether the SMC or NPAC would have been "pop fronts" had the SL entered them and fought for "Victory to the NLF!" and for strike action.

Another question must be dealt with as well: if we accept for purposes of argument the SL definition of the entire organized struggle against the war (including NPAC, SMC, and PCPJ) as "popular frontism," this in no way relieved the Spartacist League of its own responsibility for fighting against the war. On the contrary, it made the necessity of such a struggle all the more vital. While scattered and sporadic activity on the part of the SL against the war did exist, it was far less than that of most of the other left tendencies it disdains. It should be noted that the Progressive Labor Party also (until it made one of its periodic flip-flops) also viewed SMC as NPAC as class-collaborationist blocs. It therefore organized antiwar actions of its own around such slogans as "U.S. Out of Vietnam, Cops Out of the Ghetto," from which "liberal bourgeois speakers" were rigorously excluded. Where was the Spartacist League when these actions were being built? Probably busy "smashing NPAC" and attacking the "ex-Trotskyist SWP."

In reality, the Spartacist League must be charged with criminal abstentionism in regard to the struggle against the war. To hard, systematic work against the war, the SL in effect counterposed a litany of "revolutionary" truisms. "The imperialist war must be turned into a civil class war for the proletarian dictatorship," they intoned, adding that "real peace could only be won through the struggle for proletarian state power in the U.S. as well as in Vietnam." This is, of course, true; it was also totally abstract in the current context and utterly worthless as an immediate plan for aiding the Indochinese Revolution. The SL line was reminiscent of nothing so much as the analysis by the American Socialist Labor Party, an ossified relic of the 1800's, which argued that wars will continue as long as capitalism exists, so that the only real way to fight imperialist wars is to join the SLP. Rather than exuding "revolutionary" statements which are of absolutely no benefit to the liberation fighters in Indochina, it was necessary to find ways to build concrete support for the revolution now while simultaneously working to build an American (or Canadian or Australian, as the case may be) revolutionary party, which would be the only long-term guarantor of an end to imperialist war. This policy was supported by such formations internationally as the Front Solidarite Indochine (FSI) in France, aided by the comrades of the ex-Ligue Communiste, and the Vietnam Solidarity Committee (VSC) in Britain, supported by our comrades in the IMG. It was not, unfortunately, the policy of the Spartacist League.

### Concrete Effects of the Antiwar Movement

In evaluating the SL's position, we must seriously weigh the concrete effect of the American antiwar movement on the course of the war. The Pentagon Papers have revealed that one of the major factors in forcing the U.S. imperialists to withdraw the troops was the disaffection of the GI's in Vietnam. The NLF's efforts at propaganda at GI's -- especially Blacks -- and the desperate situation in which the withdrawal of American troops has left Thieu point to the decisive importance of that process of disintegration. Every prior imperialist venture has enjoyed a near-consensus at home and therefore a crusading spirit in the armed forces. Without the articles and demonstrations back home and in the media accounts, the letters from families indicating a complete split on the war issue, GI's could never have discussed combat orders and passively (or, in some cases, actively) resisted them. The effect of mass worldwide demonstrations against the war of aggression -- including demonstrations of millions in the imperialist heartland itself -- upon the morale of the liberation forces must not be overlooked either. NPAC was one of the major factors in organizing the mobilizations. What was the Spartacists' position? Instead of participating in and helping to build these mobilizations, Spartacists shouted "Smash NPAC!"

In fact, while the SL often spoke of the need to solidarize actively with the revolutionary forces in Indochina, their inherent Stalinophobia made it impossible for them to do even that. Instead of unconditional support for the liberation struggle in Indochina -- led by the NLF -- the SL posed "conditional support," a formula originally advanced by Max Schachtman in the SWP in regard to the USSR. While the SL was not totally divorced from reality, and had to admit that "there is no other agency for social revolution in Vietnam" than the Vietnamese Communist Party<sup>24</sup>, the SL refused to call for "Victory to the NLF!" using instead the Schachtmanite formula of "Military Victory to the NLF!" as though the latter did not entail the former. The SL has no qualms about calling for "Labor to Power" in Great Britain, but has difficulty making a similarly straightforward call about Vietnam. From 1964 on, the Spartacists warned in their publications (sometimes in virtually every issue) that the VCP was just waiting for the chance to sell the revolution down the river. In the middle of the heroic Tet Offensive of 1968, for example -- an offensive planned, organized, and carried out by the VCP -- the SL had these inspiring words of solidarity for

the struggle: "It is vitally necessary to keep in mind that Ho Chi Minh and his co-thinkers have already sold out the Vietnamese revolution twice before. They stand ready, able, and about to do the same thing again in 1968."<sup>25</sup> (Here again, some distinction must be made between early and later Spartacist practice. In 1965, for example, the SL sent the following cablegram to the DRV at the time of massive air attacks by the United States: "Spartacist in fullest solidarity with defense of your country against attack by United States imperialism. Heroic struggle of the Vietnamese working people furthers the American Revolution."<sup>26</sup> One can imagine the reaction of the SL today to a similar cable from the PMG, IMG, FCR, or other member group of the Fourth International: a lengthy attack arguing that "The identification of the working people of Vietnam with the treacherous, Stalinist clique which controls the VCP is typical of the Fablist liquidation into the petty bourgeois milieu..., etc, etc, etc.")

It is not by any means the duty of revolutionaries to give lavish praise to the VCP on every occasion. The fact is that the VCP has made numerous errors, both in theory and practice -- errors which develop at least partially from the isolation of a bureaucracy in the DRV from the masses of workers and peasants in Vietnam. The ceaseless chain of dire warnings (usually wrong) of a new "sell-out" by the VCP leadership, however, do not aid either in building support for the Vietnamese Revolution nor in clarifying the nature of the VCP. Rather, they serve to expose the SL as an isolated sect bound and determined to find "treachery" and "capitulation" in every statement, come what may. It is an SL method we will meet again.

### TRADE UNION WORK

Two examples will suffice to give the flavor of the Spartacist League's trade union method: the relationship of the SL to the Miller and Morrissey opposition forces within the United Mine Workers (UMW) and the National Maritime Union (NMU). The SL has summarized its role in these union struggles as follows: "Unlike most of the U.S. left, the SL refused to give critical support to Miller or Morrissey in recent elections because neither made the slightest attempt to break with class collaboration." It went on to outline the following approach to 'critical support' of opposition candidates in the unions: it should be extended only "when the office-seekers claim to be for major elements of a class struggle program and it is necessary to expose their real opportunism to the workers."<sup>27</sup>

In the UMW, the Tony Boyle machine had established a reputation for corruption scarcely matched in the annals of American trade unionism. When a member of the UMW bureaucracy, "Jock" Yablonski, attempted to capitalize on rank-and-file discontent with the machine and run for President, Boyle found this to be so inconvenient that the Yablonski family was wiped out by a group of hired gunmen. In response, the Miners for Democracy (MFD) caucus headed by Arnold Miller, emerged to oppose the Boyle machine and oust it from the mines.

MFD represented a mixed force; while it was a representation of rank-and-file hatred for the Boyle gang of thugs and focused on such issues as mine safety, Black Lung disease, increased militancy, an organizing drive, and moving the UMW headquarters into the fields, it attempted to gain power through use of the bourgeois court system to order a new election under government supervision. The election was ordered and the Miller slate, made up by and large of men who had only recently been active miners themselves, won a sweeping victory. The problem for revolutionaries was how to side with the workers in their completely justified fight for better conditions while aiding them to break with class-collaborationist conceptions, to help create conditions in which the ability of revolutionaries to function openly will be enhanced and their propaganda listened to.

For the SL, the problem was quite simple; Miller was a class-collaborationist, so they opposed him. MFD was class-collaborationist, so they opposed it. The problem was simply one of educating the miners that Miller was a class traitor. They then looked upon the rest of the left in the United States and sneered at them for finding the problem so complex.

The SL misses the boat so completely, however, that it is necessary to bring to the fore a number of basic concepts. Even the SL, we would assume, does not hold that the UMW rank-and-file supported Miller because he was a class-collaborationist or because he chose the bourgeois courts to fight Boyle. Rather, they supported him because he seemed to represent a hope for better working conditions and a turn toward their concerns and hopes. The issue of class-collaboration either seemed less important or even negligible to most militant workers in this context (if it was consciously articulated at all).

Very well, says the Spartacist League; we must show them that Miller does not represent a clear alternative in this direction, that he is not an expression of their class interests. Two problems emerge from this: first, it is entirely possible that under Miller conditions could improve. Given existing mine conditions, this is not impossible; they could scarcely worsen. Second: the American workers will not automatically agree to criticisms because they come from an ostensibly Bolshevik organization. Indeed, given existing American conditions, the reverse is probably more likely. American workers will listen to left tendencies to the extent that they see them fighting for those things which are important to the workers themselves -- in this case, the issues raised by the MFD, a rank-and-file formation, and not a pure creation of the Labor Department. Only if revolutionaries share the experiences and struggles of the masses can they hope to reach the masses in any matter of importance. Without such participation in and support of these struggles, the criticisms of the SL or any other tendency (however correct in the abstract) will be viewed at best as irrelevant and at worst as divisive.

#### The NMU "Militant Solidarity Caucus"

In the NMU we have a different situation. Morrissey represented far less rank-and-file concerns and support, while the Spartacist League had an opposition of sorts to the Morrissey forces: the Militant Solidarity Caucus (MSC) and its Presidential candidate, a seaman named Gene Herson. We thus have a concrete example of the SL strategy of class struggle caucuses which "represent the political program of the vanguard party, as it applies to that particular union and industry."<sup>28</sup>

Let us postulate a member of the NMU who is disgusted with the Curran machine (a not too difficult idea) and feels, as does the SL, that the Morrissey campaign offered "nothing to the NMU beyond democratic union reforms and superficial economic demands."<sup>29</sup> Attracted to the idea of a militant program, he

turns to the MSC. What does he find? He discovers much that might attract him, such as the demand "For Membership Control of the Unions -- End Bureaucratic Privileges."<sup>30</sup> Remember, however, that the MSC is a caucus with the "full program of the vanguard party as it applies to that particular union and industry," however, so our union militant will suddenly discover that, to support the MSC, he must also support not only a "workers' government," but also nationalization of the Panama Canal by Panamanian workers, under their control (with a proviso that this be coupled with proletarian internationalism so that the workers do not become tools of the Panamanian bourgeoisie) and even "nationalization of shipping without compensation under seamen's control."<sup>31</sup> The SL might feel fully justified in asserting proudly that "MSC candidate Herson ... is running for office on the basis of the full program of the MSC, which alone is adequate to conduct a militant struggle for seaman's needs," but our seaman militant would probably feel fully justified in returning to the "democratic union reforms and superficial economic demands" of James Morrissey. The fact that this sectarian comic opera edition of a militant trade union caucus polled 358 votes is but an indication of the opportunity missed by even the very small forces of the SL in the union to build a broadly-based and active militant workers' caucus in the NMU.

Once more, the "revolutionary" stance of the SL amounts, in practice, to an abstention from the real struggles of the masses and a retreat into a dogmatic dream-world; the SL caucuses are reminiscent of nothing so much as Daniel DeLeon's "socialist trade unions" of the 1890's, which rejected "pork barrel" issues for a "full program;" the workers laughed appreciatively at DeLeon's attacks on Comper, then turned back to the AFL and the "pork barrel." The gap between objective reality -- primarily the consciousness of the workers -- and the DeLeon program was too great. The Spartacist "full program" caucuses today are several vast steps removed from the needs and hopes of the American workers -- as they perceive them -- and therefore represent a purist sectarian abstraction. Their only use is a lure to students interested in joining an organization that is active in the working class.

#### Other Union Work

In AFSCME locals, SL supporters have completely isolated themselves by insisting that any rank-and-filer who wished to join SL-initiated caucuses had to agree with the entire transitional program together with the slogan of "military victory to the NLF." This pristine essence of pure distilled

Marxism imposed upon radicalizing militant young trade unionists effectively confined the composition of SL-led caucuses to members and supporters of the SL. Young Vietnam veterans who, although opposed to the war in Vietnam, had not yet reached the level of consciousness requisite for supporting the slogan of "Victory to the NLF" were systematically precluded from participating in SL-led AFSCME left caucuses.

A similar SL purist-sectarianism occurred in the San Francisco Bay Area locals of the Communications Workers of America (CWA) where SL members insisted on shouting their pure "Marxist" slogans to the rafters and were promptly either fired, subjected to repression, or completely isolated from rank-and-file militants.

In order to do effective communist trade union work, revolutionaries must know how to go about such work, where to conduct it, and at what time and tempo. Subtlety, nuance, a feel for objective reality, all are essential components of effective communist trade union activity. The SL, on the contrary, insists that mindless and frequent full exposition of the transitional program is sufficient. In this, they ignore a basic principle of Marxist practice. As Engels pointed out in 1886, "... above all, give the movement time to consolidate; do not make the inevitable confusion of the first start worse confounded by forcing down people's throats things which, <sup>32</sup> at present, they cannot properly understand, but which they will soon learn." It is no wonder, then, that the Spartacist League has been totally ineffective in its trade union work, that it remains isolated in the few places where it has union members, and finally that it has once again turned to the campuses in a subjective and empirical quest for recruits.

## HOW THE SPARTACIST LEAGUE VIEWS THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL

It would be something of an understatement to note that the SL analysis of the Fourth International has been less than glowing. To the Spartacist League, the Fourth International does not, in fact, exist, having terminated its existence when the International Committee seceded in 1953. The fact that the bulk of the IC fused with the International Secretariat at the Reunification Congress in 1963, forming the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (hence the SL term "Usec") is dismissed on the grounds that the program adopted at this World Congress was "revisionist." To the SL, the "Fourth International" is more of an idealized dream than a living reality. If the organization founded by Trotsky departed (in the SL's view) from Trotskyism in 1953, then in the eyes of the SL it ceased being the Fourth International.

To the Spartacist League, the FI is thus an imposter; the SL's attitude to the International may be compared to that of a staunch monarchist faced with a pretender to the throne. It is the duty of the SL to do everything possible to smash the "usurping" Fourth International to pave the way for an eventual "real" Fourth International, a worldwide Spartacist League.

Attacks upon sections of the Fourth International in the SL press fall into two general categories: (1) genuine disagreements over strategy and tactics for revolutionaries, and (2) what must be regarded as deliberate slanders and distortions. We will look at each of these types of attacks in turn.

### A) Genuine Disagreements

The recent polemics of the SL's newspaper, Workers Vanguard, against the sections of the Fourth International have focused upon the concept of the new mass vanguard and initiatives in action, which the SL either rejects outright or tries to reduce to its own narrow approach. The SL counterposes a general propagandistic strategy. The SL view is that until a revolutionary organization wins the organizing cadre of the working class and a mass base (such as that of the early Communist Parties) it must restrict itself to propaganda activity and take no action which would jeopardize or destroy its cadre. The Fourth International's strategy, on the other hand, takes into account the nature of the period in which revolutionaries function today. It sees the current rise of the world revolution taking place amidst a crisis of the traditional leaderships' (Stalinist, Social-Democrats, petty-bourgeois nationalists) ability to attract revolutionary fighters. The radicalization which is unfolding in this context takes a particular form which is different

from that associated with the Russian Revolution, or that of the post-World War II years. It is a situation which is neither that of a direct regroupment of vanguard militants inside the revolutionary organization (as occurred in the early Comintern), nor a complete isolation of the revolutionary organization, as was the case with the Fourth International when the postwar struggles were channeled directly into the reformist parties. This process of radicalization has produced a new mass vanguard whose characteristics impose new applications of the united front tactic (initiatives in action), and the possibility of directly establishing the International in a layer of workers, who, although they may be confused, have a general revolutionary consciousness and often take actions outside the control of the traditional leaderships. The Spartacist League, however, is incapable of understanding this phenomenon and merely repeats general formulas.

#### The June 21st Action in France

A good example of the differences lies in the differing assessments made of the action taken by the former Ligue Communiste in France against the fascist Ordre Nouveau (New Order) group in Paris on June 21, 1973. Some background information is necessary first.

In France, as in various other European countries (Britain, Austria, and especially Italy), fascist movements have begun to experience a renewal in recent years. Ordre Nouveau (ON) is the most important of these groups in France. Under the de facto protection of Pompidou's Interior Minister, Marcellin, the ON had (like most contemporary European fascist groupings) focused its venom upon immigrant workers. In France, this meant primarily the large Algerian community, which became the target for a series of brutal assaults and killings. Ordre Nouveau also attempted to extend its influence into the working class as well, through the so-called French Confederation of Workers (Confederation Francaise des Travailleurs; CFT), a phony union created by company agents. The ON and CFT organized meetings to recruit new members for a campaign of physical assaults on revolutionaries.

The Trotskyist attitude toward formations such as the ON is quite clear: fascists have no right to exist, to organize, to hold meetings or rallies. In 1938-39 the SWP played a vanguard role in the U.S. in the fight against such fascist nuclei as Father Coughlin's Christian Front, the German-American Bund, and the Ku Klux Klan.

The former Ligue Communiste in France responded to the growth of Ordre

Nouveau with a call for a united front of workers' organizations to confront the fascists, coupled with intensive propaganda work in the Algerian community. Not surprisingly, the reformist forces--the French CP, the CP-controlled General Confederation of Labor (CGT), the French SP and the French Confederation of Democratic Workers (CFDT)--refused to take part in any decisive action or to participate in a mobilization against the fascists, confining themselves to a parade for democratic liberties on June 20. Thirteen organizations, however, did endorse the call to prevent a fascist meeting scheduled for June 21, and more than 3,000 demonstrators engaged in a confrontation with Ordre Nouveau. The major force within the demonstration was the Ligue Communiste.

To the Spartacist League, the demonstration was a debacle. They stated:

It is obvious...that the Ligue Communiste organized the demonstration with full expectation of a military confrontation with the police....The presence of massive police force made the relation of forces unfavorable to the left. It would appear that the Ligue Communiste recklessly entered into an adventurist confrontation by attempting to take on the armed power of the state under circumstances which could lead only to the defeat of the left.<sup>35</sup>

The SL argues that the Ligue's "adventurist" attack upon the police (who mobilized to defend the fascists) stemmed from the Ligue's "enormous illusions about its early prospects in France." The result: "The Ligue, having undertaken an adventurist confrontation with the French police in connection with protesting a fascist rally, promptly found itself dissolved."<sup>34</sup>

The SL maintains that the former Ligue Communiste could have launched a sustained campaign to get the PCF (the French CP) and the CGT to bring tens of thousands of workers into the street and that, in light of such a campaign, that if the PCF and CGT had refused, the workers would have streamed out by themselves.

Fortunately for the French Trotskyists (and the International), the scathing SL portrait of the Ligue Communiste as an overconfident gang of ultralefts, deluded by prospects of early breakthroughs and tricked into an adventurist action which resulted in their own suppression is entirely false. To make such a case, the Spartacists have to ignore willfully the post-June 21st events in France.

The SL argues, for example, that the Ligue was outlawed. This was true, although it was scarcely a new experience for French Trotskyists. (As a result of their vanguard role in the May-June upsurge of 1968, the former Parti

Communiste Internationaliste and the Jeunesse Communiste Revolutionnaire were both banned by the DeGaulle regime. French Trotskyists responded at that time by forming the Ligue Communiste.) After June 21, French Trotskyists continued to be active, under the editorial board of Rouge. In May, 1974, the French Trotskyist movement reorganized itself as the Front Communiste Revolutionnaire (FRC), while continuing to fight to overturn the banning of the Ligue. That the banning was inconvenient was undeniable; to hint, however, that members of the former Ligue have to skulk about in the sewers of Paris is absurd.

Most importantly, the French Trotskyist movement has not only not been crushed, it has grown in both size and influence. After the announcement of the ban, sales of Rouge jumped from 15,000 to 30,000 copies per week -- and remained there. During the recent Presidential campaign of Alain Krivine, a special campaign Daily Rouge was established, which sold an average of 15,000 copies, primarily through sales at news-stands; the daily newspaper was so successful that Rouge is planned to become a daily newspaper on a permanent basis this Fall. Trotskyist work in all sectors of life, including the trade unions, has continued to grow and develop. The Ligue Communiste gained such support from its leadership on June 21st that even the CP was forced (for the first time) to endorse its defense.

The fact must also be stressed that the massive intervention of the PCF and CGT which the SL viewed as the alternative to the Ligue's action actually came about because of June 21st. Workers in the PCF, PSF, CGT, and CFTD, seeing the struggle of the French far left (led by the Ligue) against the fascists, demanded that their own organizations join the struggle. The proof of the efficacy of the LC's initiative is that, since June 21, the PCF has been forced systematically to announce demonstrations to ban not only native fascist forces but also a prospective speaking engagement by a representative of the Chilean junta -- in most cases, the PCF has announced such actions after the French Trotskyists have called for them. The government has been forced to respond by banning the fascist meetings.

It should be noted here that the Spartacist criticism of the June 21st action does not stem from any pacifist disavowal of force and violence, as is the case with much of the criticism leveled against the Ligue internationally. A whole series of statements by the SL (including the call for the United Farm Workers to use armed pickets to protect them from thug attacks) have shown that

they have not succumbed to pacifism or liberalism. Rather, the problem is that the SL has a purely propagandistic approach which does not include any understanding of how in the present situation even relatively small revolutionary forces, once they have passed a critical threshold, can take the initiative in such a manner that they can help in calling into being a much broader struggle.

#### Spain and Britain

An example which the SL might not find very congenial is nonetheless of help here. In Spain, the Liga Comunista Revolucionario/ Euzkadi Ta Azkatasuna (LCR/ETA-6) is a sympathizing section of the Fourth International. In the course of an illegal strike at an automotive plant in the Basque town of Pamplona, the revolutionary left recognized the need to extend support to this struggle through a general strike in the town. Militants went to the Workers' Commissions, the illegal union organizations dominated by the Spanish CP, only to find their call for a general strike blocked by the Stalinists. Following Spartacist logic, some groups noted that they were only very small organizations and confined their response to propaganda exposing the reactionary role of the CP. The LCR-ETA-6, although similarly thwarted by the CP and only quantitatively larger than most of the others, reacted differently. It took the initiative in the struggle, forming alliances with other left groupings and aiding in the creation of ad hoc committees of workers which were able to by-pass the Stalinist roadblock in the Workers' Commissions and which actually launched such a general strike. The actions of the former Ligue Communiste in France and the LCR/ETA-6 in Spain are exemplary models of how relatively small revolutionary formations can play a major role in mass struggles and take the first steps toward establishing a mass base necessary for a successful socialist revolution.

In the case of the recent miners' strike in Britain, the SL analysis showed its limited understanding of the dynamics of mass struggle -- revealing the coupled abstentionism and opportunism which lie underneath its schematic "orthodox" cover.

#### Councils of Action in Britain

The Spartacists made two sets of attacks upon the International Marxist Group (IMG), British section of the Fourth International. The first of these, dealing with alleged IMG "popular frontism" falls into the category of open falsification and will be examined later; the second focuses upon the slogan of calling for Councils of Action.

While both the Spartacist League and the IMG recognized the need for

a general strike in Great Britain to aid the miners; the IMG added that, if the Trade Union Congress (TUC) blocked such a strike (as it did), British workers should be prepared to form Councils of Action (modeled upon those of the 1926 General Strike in Britain) to launch the strike.

The SL snorted that "If the IMG were a mass party or if the British working class had no historically evolved organizational affiliations, setting up councils of action to launch a general strike would be correct. Since neither condition is met in reality, the tactic is fantastical (sic)."<sup>35</sup> Thus, the IMG (as a small party) has the duty to go to the TUC and fight for a general strike. So far, so good; the IMG did that. What, however, does the SL call for when (not if, when) the reformist bureaucrats block such efforts? The SL would respond that it is then necessary to propagandize for such a strike, to expose the bureaucrats. The IMG also did this; but, viewed as an end in itself, this is essentially (despite rhetoric or even intentions) a passive formula of accommodation, a refusal to even conceive of attempting to carry the fight beyond what the SL so piously calls the "historically evolved organizational affiliations" of the British working-class. (It is also interesting that a group which sees nothing incorrect in demanding that seamen support nationalization of all shipping without compensation --under workers' control, of course -- as a precondition for support of a trade union caucus balks at calling for councils of action. The difference, as we shall see, lies in the fact that the first is intended as a propaganda demand, while the latter requires action.)

To the Spartacist League, growth of a revolutionary tendency is primarily a process of education and exhortation. Even such terms as "struggle" (as in "struggle against the reformists") are interpreted in a propaganda context. The SL is totally incapable of conceiving of growth as a dynamic process of active intervention into the class struggle. Initial interventions are, of course, limited by the number of cadre and the weakness of links to the masses. It is through these first, modest initiatives, however, that growth will occur, making future interventions more vigorous and powerful.

#### DISTORTIONS

One might think that the differences in approach between the SL and the Fourth International are broad enough that discussions (and even polemics) could be confined to them. The Spartacist League, however, has resorted to an incredible series of distortions about actions and views of the International.

One tactic used by the SL on every conceivable occasion is that of the meaningless parallel. The SL's comparison of the SMC's slogan of "Out Now!" with the Stalinist theories of the Popular Front was one such example. Even better is the immortal sentence: "Like the original revisionist Bernstein who foresaw a peaceful transition to socialism, the Ligue (Communiste) presents an organic transition from a student-oriented and student-based group to a proletarian organization."<sup>36</sup> In or out of context, this sentence reduces itself to gibberish. Its sole purpose is to establish a link (through the word "like") which the author nowhere takes the trouble to establish, on the basis of example, or even formal logic.

#### Slander of the IMG

More widespread is the use of the isolated quote. The SL often gives the impression of reading Trotskyist publications solely to find a sentence here or there which can be used to bludgeon the Fourth International. The best (or worst) case came in regard to the IMG. A study of the Red Weekly makes it clear that the strategy of the IMG had been, for more than a year, the building of a mass general strike to bring to power a Labour government which would, however, be faced with a mobilized working class organized into councils of action, ie, potential organs of dual power. One can agree or disagree with this strategy, praise it or polemicize against it. The SL chose instead to wrench out of context one sentence from the August 31, 1973 Red Weekly: "We propose the formation in every area of a united body of all socialists, trade union and political organizations open to all who are prepared to struggle against the Tory government and its policies." Anyone familiar with the IMG, who had read the Red Weekly for any length of time, would recognize this sentence as being in the context of a workers' struggle for a general strike to oust Heath and push for a workers' government. Even taken out of context, it is at worst ambiguous; the honest approach would have required an examination of the entire article and other statements of the IMG to determine the actual thrust of the remark. The SL took a different approach. Initial embroideries were (for the SL) fairly mild. Thus, the December, 1973 Workers' Vanguard contained the charge that the IMG "moved precipitously from condemning the British Labour Party as a capitalist twin of the Tories to calling for the unity of all political elements against the Tories -- and this moreover in the context of an upsurge of support for the decrepit bourgeois Liberal Party! Beneath the brittle

ultraleft shell of the IMG is revealed the thinly-disguised hoary reformist scheme of a Liberal-Labour coalition."<sup>37</sup> This passage contains two deliberate falsehoods. The reference to the Labour Party as the "twin" of the Tories is a distortion of a position taken by Robin Blackburn in the former IMG fortnightly paper, the Red Mole, entitled "Let It Bleed." The Red Mole had opened its columns for a discussion of the nature of the Labour Party and Blackburn (who was not at that time a member of the IMG) contributed the thesis which the SL distorts. His position was refuted by Pat Jordan, IMG National Secretary, in a later column. The position was never the "line" of the IMG adopted at any IMG Conference. The second falsehood is a first variation on the "popular frontism" line. Because the infamous sentence came during a period of Liberal Party growth, it became, de facto, a call for a return to the Liberal-Labour days of the early 1900's. This charge was apparently not sensational enough for the SL, however, for it was escalated. In March, 1974, the SL charged that "despite its relatively left line," the IMG was suspect because it had "campaigning" for a "classical popular front." Having read somewhere that other bourgeois parties exist in Britain besides the Liberals, the Spartacists demonstrated their new-found knowledge by enumerating them, stating that this "classical popular front" would have included "the Liberals and the no less bourgeois Scottish and Welsh Nationalists." Yet another article in the same issue repeated this latest charge of a nonexistent "campaign" almost verbatim, then added -- unbelievably -- that the SL would not give critical support to the IMG's election campaign until the IMG "publicly repudiated" its call for this "classical popular front."<sup>39</sup> As this "campaign" existed only in the minds of the Spartacist League, the comrades of the IMG must have been somewhat perplexed.

If the SL is bent upon dredging up every possible bit of slander from their one sentence quote, however, why stop there? After all, the racist demagogue Enoch Powell also campaigned against the Heath government, as did the fascist National Front and (for that matter) members of the British druid cult and the Flat Earth Society. Why not accuse the IMG of intending their inclusion as well?

#### "Liquidationism"

Most common weapon in the SL arsenal is the use of dogmatic a priori assumptions. The SL reasons that: (a) Pabloism is liquidationist. (b) Group X is Pabloist, and that therefore (c) Group X is in the process of liquidation. All that remains is to pin down who (or what) is being liquidated.

(This, of course, is not as easy as it once was. Confronted with an International which has more than doubled in membership since 1969, an International with more than 50 different sections and sympathizing sections, the SL can hardly repeat the charges of physical liquidation from the 1950's. From their need to find an out has come the stock SL charge of "programmatic liquidation," a charge which has the additional advantage of meaning whatever the SL chooses to have it mean on any given occasion.)

Given the method of the SL, there is not a single revolutionary party in history which could not be proven to be hopelessly muddled. Imagine a prototype of the SL in September, 1917, viewing the Bolshevik Party. This proto-SL would have pointed smugly to such events as Lenin's initial opposition to the soviets in 1905, the "anarchistic" and "guerillaist" armed struggle from 1905-1907, confusion over the role of Duma elections, tremendous vacillations in the party over the nature of the February Revolution and the Bolshevik attitude toward the Provisional Government, and so on. It is always easy to be "pure" when one remains apart from mass struggle; the smug attacks upon the SL from Socialist Forum and the (4-member) Revolutionary Workers Group stem from the even greater isolation of these sectlets from the real world. It is precisely when small revolutionary parties attempt to participate in and influence mass struggles that mistakes are made and will continue to be made. What is vital is that these mistakes be learning experiences to enrich the theory and practice of the revolutionary party.

#### Slander of French Trotskyists

All of this sweeps past the Spartacist League, in its determination to find treachery and error everywhere except within itself. Much was made, for example, of the analysis made by the former Ligue Communiste in France that the Union of the Left (an alliance between the CP and SP, to which a minute splinter from the Radical Party attached itself) was not a popular front, but rather an example of the global reformist strategy of Stalinist and Social-Democratic Parties. A rational analysis of the Ligue's position would have necessitated recognition of the intense propaganda by the LC against the Union of the Left for class collaborationism and bankrupt theory of a "peaceful road to socialism." It would have recognized the importance of advancing and explaining a line of extra-parliamentary struggle in a period of intense class struggle such as France was experiencing. It might also have necessitated a concrete study of whether the Union of the Left is a popular front -- especially when the Fabre Left Radicals have subordinated

themselves into the SP and the Union is an alliance of workers' parties -- and when no section of the bourgeoisie showed itself willing to support the Union of the Left. (In the Presidential elections, Mitterand was supported by every major workers' organization and centrist or reformist party on the first ballot: the CP, SP, Unified Socialist Party, General Confederation of Labor, French Confederation of Democratic Workers, the teachers' union, etc.) Such a serious analysis by the SL could have aided in the development of Marxist theory and practice. The SL, however, armed with ready dogmas, had no time for such frivolities. It was after the blood of the French "Pabloites." In a statement which should have shamed even the Spartacists, they proclaimed: "The LC's denial of the popular front character of the bloc removes all political obstacles to its own participation in the popular front."<sup>40</sup> It is difficult to believe that even the SL takes this very seriously. History records dozens of rotten, reformist class-collaborationist regimes which were in no way "popular fronts" -- and in every case revolutionaries remained steadfastly opposed to them. (A prime example was the Ebert-Scheidemann-Noske regime in Germany after November, 1918. It was certainly not a "popular front," as it contained only workers' parties. Did this mean that there were no political obstacles preventing German revolutionary Marxists from joining it? Luxemburg and Liebknecht didn't think so; they died, in fact, trying to overthrow it.) The SL knows this as well as anyone, just as they know that in the parliamentary elections (when the Union of the Left first emerged), the Ligue refused to call for a first-ballot vote to the centrist PSU precisely because they were ambiguous on the question of joining the Union. In their fervor to score factional points, however, the Spartacists are capable of any charge, however, absurd, which will discredit the "Pabloites." (This hatred so blinded the SL that, in the recent Presidential elections in France, they refused to call for critical support for Alain Krivine -- hardly a crushing blow, it should be added -- but rather supported Arlette Laguiller of the economist Lutte Ouvriere, who campaigned under such revolutionary slogans as "Arlette's the One" and "Vote for Arlette." The SL has since admitted that it might have gone a little overboard in this respect.)

#### Periphery to the Center

The SL has similarly distorted the Ligue Communiste's strategy of development from the "periphery to the center." In 1963 (when it was founded), the Ligue found itself in a not uncommon situation: it was a

predominantly student-based formation, clearly on the periphery of the French class struggle, with the task of coping with a trade union structure in basic industry rigidly controlled by the Stalinists. The Ligue chose consciously to chart a path of industrialization for their organization. From a base in the marginal areas of the class (where it had some support) the Ligue would use tactics, prestige and experience gained in these areas to plan and develop a deepening implantation in the industrial proletariat.

The SL, of course, has only scorn for this idea, stating bluntly that "the Ligue's 'theory' simply means forswearing efforts at implantation in the working class..."<sup>41</sup> Once again, however, SL dogma can be shown quite simply to be in error. The LC, far from "forswearing" efforts at industrial concentration, began to carry out the theory of development from the periphery to the center. The initial Ligue breakthrough came in the Teachers' Union (where its tendency won 8% of the votes) and among the health and post office workers' unions. Through active implantation, propaganda work, defense work around the Lip strike, the fight against the Debre Laws, and so on, the French Trotskyists scored recent gains not only at Lip (where a section of the most active and militant workers were won to the former Ligue), but also among the Renault auto workers. At the same time, intensive work against the army (including work among draftees) has been conducted. The beginning breakthrough in the working class was evident at the June, 1973 workers' conference convened by the Ligue at Rouen, which numbered more than 900 union activists. Their orientation of advancing lines of struggle leading toward dual power has already made substantial progress; resolutions calling for strike committees and for workers' control got 20% of the votes at the national CFTD congress. The Rouge contingent at the September 29, 1973 Besançon demonstration of 70,000 for the Lip strike was characterized by slogans of solidarity, as well as calls for workers' self-organization and self-defense. 15,000 marched under the Rouge banner, including a vast majority of workers-- many of them in trade union contingents. Perhaps the SL will claim that these workers had accidentally come to Besançon and lost their way into the Rouge contingent, for reality must be made to fit the pre-conceived notion of petty-bourgeois Pabloite ultraleftism.

### THE SL AND INTERNATIONALISM

The Spartacist League has always stressed in its publications the necessity of a democratic-centralist international. In "The Genesis of Pabloism," for example, the SL stated unambiguously that "Prolonged national isolation within one country must ultimately disorient, deform and destroy any revolutionary grouping, no matter how steadfast. Only a principled and disciplined international collaboration can provide a counterbalance toward insularity and social chauvinism generated by the bourgeoisie and its ideological agents within the working-class movement."<sup>42</sup> In their letter to the French OCI published in January, 1973, the SL repeated an earlier statement that "The SL/US urgently requires disciplined subordination to an international leadership not subject to the deforming pressures of our particular national situation."<sup>43</sup> There is nothing particularly breath-taking in these remarks. They are a correct restatement of the Leninist viewpoint; the SL might have added (but didn't) that it becomes more difficult to avoid succumbing to these deforming pressures the longer a revolutionary (or subjectively revolutionary) party remains on its own. Besides general pressures from the bourgeois and petty bourgeois layers, there is a strong tendency to raise one's own idiosyncracies to the level of "principles," making it increasingly difficult to unite on a principled basis with other revolutionaries around the world.

The SL's initial work for a "rebirth" of the Fourth International were not encouraging: they turned their attention to Gerry Healy's rump International Committee which had not participated in the 1963 reunification of the Fourth International, a grouping which the SL considered to be the "political heir to Trotskyism."

#### Healy's "International Committee"

The choice of the rump IC as a focus for attention indicates either opportunism or open desperation (or both) on the part of the Spartacists. It might be recalled that the SL now asserts that at its peak (the years between 1954 and 1963) the International Committee was "never a real international body" and was always "partly fictitious and partly a formalization of blocs of convenience by essentially national organizations." The post-1963 IC was little more than a fraud; it had only two real constituent groupings, the SLL of Gerry Healy in Britain and Pierre Lambert's OCI in France, each with its coterie of satellite sections. Healy took charge of the English-speaking countries, building mini (very mini) SLL's in them while Lambert took charge of the non-English speaking formations. When

the Guillermo Lora (Masas) split from the Bolivian POR drifted toward this fake IC, it never officially affiliated because, in a real sense, there was nothing there to join. The IC has held precisely one international conference (in 1966). Unfortunately for the Spartacist League, one of the major purposes of this conference was to attack the SL. (So as not to be deprived of a share of the fun, the Lambertistes had their old rivals, the Voix Ouvriere grouping, invited as well so that they could be excoriated, too.) Having accomplished this high aim, the rump IC slid into oblivion. The bizarre behavior of Lora's POR during the pre-Banzer coup period in Bolivia in 1970 provided the impetus for the formal collapse of the SLL-OCI paper bloc. The IC became limited to the SLL and the US Workers League (with microscopic groups in Canada and Australia), while the OCI set up an Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International, more or less consisting of the OCI.

To obtain the American franchise in this paper consortium (the IC), recognition from Gerry Healy was required. This must have been difficult for James Robertson and the other leaders of the SL to swallow (as it had been Healy who had maneuvered the split in the old RT in favor of his personal flunky, Tim Wohlforth) -- and since it necessitated some sort of merger with Wohlforth and his friends. Bracing themselves, however, the SL leaders opened negotiations with the Wohlforthites (then calling themselves the American Committee for the Fourth International). The negotiations are detailed in the fascinating pamphlet Conversations with Wohlforth, published by the SL.

The negotiations began on a cheerful note of bonhomie, as the leaders of both tendencies seemed to agree on everything. As the SL insisted on discussing out in detail every sordid episode in the history of Healy's intervention into the RT (and the ACFI pointed proudly to every flip-flop in its line as proof of its continual "maturation" process), the tone degenerated to the point that the dialogue was reduced to little more than swapping dirty linen. An interesting aspect of the discussion was the pointed effort of the SL delegates to suck up to Gerry Healy. (The Spartacists, after all, were by far the larger of the two groupings in the US; all that was needed was Healy's approval for the merger.) Robertson took every opportunity to contrast the SLL with the ACFI. Noting disagreement with the Socialist Labour League, Robertson nonetheless stressed that if the ACFI weren't linked to "stable political formations" like the SLL, it would have been "blown" away long before.<sup>44</sup> While the Spartacist League today (as

we have seen) points out on every possible occasion that the SLL engaged in the same sort of deep entry as the "Pabloites," during the negotiations with the ACFI Robertson tacitly defended Healy's actions in the British Labour Party (again to contrast Healy with Wohlforth, a task somewhat related to contrasting Edger Bergen with Charlie McCarthy).<sup>45</sup> Accusing the ACFI of opportunism (with good reason), Robertson stated that "The political expression [of this opportunism] has been suppressed by your ties with the British. But the way they function toward the CP and BLP is very different from the way you function toward the SWP and PL."<sup>46</sup> Of the liquidation of the Healy group into the Labour Party, of the failure to publish even an internal tendency organ inside of the BLP, of the Healyite strong-arm regime-- not a word. The SL was bargaining for the American franchise of the IC and the comments were obviously aimed not at Wohlforth (who could scarcely be expected to admit that he was an opportunist), but at Healy -- the man who determined and/or approved each of the actions of the ACFI attacked by Robertson and the other Spartacists. Robertson clearly saw himself as the American Healy (as opposed to Wohlforth, who at the time was having difficulty even being the American Wohlforth). The day of the SL seemed finally to have dawned when the IC called upon the two American groupings to merge and send a single delegation to the first (and, as it proved, only) meeting of the Healy-Lambert combine. The SL walked right into the trap; it was expelled for not agreeing that Robertson was a petty-bourgeois infected with American chauvinism (for missing a meeting because he was exhausted). The Voix Ouvriere group was kicked out as well to show that Lambert could be as hard and "Bolshevik" as Healy.

#### The SL On Its Own

The Spartacist leadership could not quite grasp what had happened for some time, although Healy's maneuvers within the SWP-RT should have given them sufficient warning. The SL then launched a pathetic campaign to have Healy removed from the IC! A paper bloc of all but nonexistent formations (all of them satellites of one of the two dominant parties), which existed only to provide an international cover for Healy and Lambert, was to depose one of its two co-rulers. One might as well have called upon the Catholic Church to oust the Pope.

An interesting question is what would have occurred if the rump IC had not kicked out the SL and Voix Ouvriere. If the SL considers the Fourth

International today to be an "opportunist rotten federated bloc" what possible term could have described the political zoo of which the SL would have been a constituent member? On the question of the nature of Cuba alone, four different positions would have existed (the SL's deformed workers' state stance, the Healy-Wohlforth state capitalist position, the OCI "phantom bourgeoisie" mish-mash, and the all-purpose neo-Schachtmanism of the Voix Ouvriere). The eventual addition of Lora would have given this body an appearance more like a kaleidoscope than a principled international faction. And if the Fourth International today is "federal" in structure, what in the world was this rump IC, with its implicit provision that Healy and Lambert had to agree for action to be taken. To even argue that a principled Leninist organization could have come from such an atrocity is a bad joke.

Such an International Committee did not come about, of course. Healy would not have been Healy had he permitted any such opposition to surface in his own backyard. And after a vain attempt to get Healy's creatures to rebel against their creator, the SL found itself alone.

To its credit, the Spartacist League did not attempt to cover for its lack of international contact with periodic "international conferences" in which American groups such as the International Socialists, Socialist Forum and (formerly) NCLC meet with disparate European formations such as the British IS, Lotte Ouvriere (successor to Voix Ouvriere), the Irish People's Democracy, and the Italian Lotta Continua, confirm that they agree on practically nothing, and then go home. Lacking even such periodic coffee klatsches, however, the SL had to search out international contacts virtually one at a time. After an early infatuation with the bizarre followers of Juan Posadas (in which Spartacist printed frequent letters from the Posadistas and described Cuban followers of Posadas as "Trotskyists" -- a term they would never apply, of course to supporters of the "Pabloite" Fourth International), the SL attacked them sharply over their inept intervention into Yon Sosa's MR-13 guerilla front in Guatemala and Posadas disappeared from its pages. (A similar infatuation with Voix Ouvriere in France lasted until after the May-June, 1968 uprising in France; when a minority appeared within the SL which agreed with VO's positions and organizational norms, however, the Spartacists booted them out and broke with VO.)

#### Sporadic Ties

Relations with other organizations around the world have been sporadic since that period and have centered around various small splinters from the

Fourth International, notably the small Chartist group in England, the Revolutionary Samasamaja Party in Sri Lanka (Ceylon), and the Internationale Kommunisten Deutschlands (IKD) in West Germany. It is interesting that none of these formations split from the Fourth International on the basis of any clear-cut principled opposition. The RSP in Sri Lanka (headed by Edmund Samarakoddy) in particular split from the Ceylonese section over personal squabbles with Bala Tampoe, the head of the section. The Ninth World Congress of the FI (meeting in 1969) condemned this split as unprincipled and refused to recognize the Samarakoddy splitters as the official section in that country. In Germany, the Fourth International took every conceivable measure to prevent the IKD from splitting from the official section (the Gruppe Internatinnale Marxisten -- GIM), even offering to allow the IKD the status of a public faction. The IKD refused to recognize this enormous concession as sufficient and trundled off to create its own mini-international. After drifting about for some time, groups such as the Chartists, the RSP, and the IKD all floated past the Spartacist League. (In most of these cases, relations between the group and the SL quickly soured; these formations usually splintered as well, allowing the SL to take up relations with splinters of splinters.) Today, the English Chartists have maintained no existence outside of their deep entry into the Labour Party. The RSP today remains in a state of total stagnation, confining its activity primarily to writing articles for the professional anti-Pabloites of the world attacking Bala Tampoe, while the IKD has suffered a series of splits and political vacillations leading back toward a proposed entry into Willi Brandt's SPD.

#### The SL and the OCI

As ties to these groups (which were, at any rate, extremely loose and have not exactly moved at a sprinter's pace toward a new international) showed little promise, the SL has attempted an approach to the former flip side of the (now defunct) rump International Committee: the Lambertistes of the French OCI. The SL, following the 1966 debacle at the IC Conference, continued to differentiate between the SLL and OCI (although continuing to attack the latter). The most recent overture of the SL to the OCI came in the form of an "Open Letter to the OCRFI and the OCI," in the Winter, 1973-74 Spartacist. In this letter the SL proposed discussions leading to a possible affiliation with the Lambertiste Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International. In this connection, we must note again that the SL argues that the original IC was little more than a paper cover for its members and the post-1967 IC a

"rotten bloc," again largely fictitious. It now approaches the OCRFI (a third step removed from the Fourth International, a splinter from a splinter from a schism), a personal emanation of Pierre Lambert based on his half of the former IC which, if it is not a "rotten bloc," is not so only because it is no bloc at all, lacking an important requisite for such a bloc: constituent parts. Indeed, the OCRFI has (if possible) narrowed its base still farther, expelling some of its microscopic "sections." The OCI recently broke, for example, with its Hungarian exile organization, the League of Revolutionary Socialists of Hungary (LRSH), denouncing them as Pabloites, Zionists, and agents of both the CIA and GPU (.). (As for the Bolivian POR-Masas, headed by Lora, the OCI maintains only an ambiguous tie with this group which subordinated the resistance to Banzer's coup to General Torres' willingness to arm the masses). Choosing to give Lambert's charade of "internationalism" some credence, however, the SL expressed interest and asked for clarification of various theoretical differences with the OCI (notably on the nature of a united front) and some practical and organizational questions (including the non-Leninist relationship between the OCI and its de facto youth arm, the AJS, and a mild criticism of the OCI's unpleasant tactic of beating up tendencies with which it disagrees). (In regard to this last point, it should be noted that the SL cites a relatively minor incident involving the OCI and a single member of the IKD, rather than the abundant list of atrocities committed by OCI/AJS against the Ligue Communiste and formations which the Ligue supports. In one such incident, in November, 1972, hundreds of Lambertistes assaulted a contingent of the Front Solidarité Indochine at a Vietnam Solidarity demonstration, shouting "Pabloite assassins!" Perhaps raising such incidents was vetoed because of a possible negative reaction by the OCI.)

At any rate, to even raise any expectations in the minds of militants that the OCI has the slightest intention to help build a "democratic-centralist" international is a farce. While in the leadership of the French section, Lambert, Just, and the other leaders of the OCI made a habit of defying decisions with which they disagreed. The OCI has participated since 1953 in a series of (at best) unprincipled and federalist blocs. It watched the SL expelled from the 1966 conference without even hinting at a protest (perhaps because it was too busy doing the same thing to VO). Most importantly, the SL knows all of this as well as anyone. The letters to the OCI have to be interpreted as being primarily for domestic consumption, to demon-

strate that the SL is continuously at work in its quest to form a new -- if increasingly chimerical -- international. (The Spartacists are hampered here by the OCI, whose opportunism constantly works at cross-purposes to the SL's sectarianism. While the SL made a furious denunciation of the French Trotskyists of the Front Communiste Revolutionnaire for calling for a second round ballot for Mitterand -- a call which was cited as final, damning evidence of "Pabloite" treachery -- they were forced to admit that the anti-Pabloite OCI was calling for a first round vote for Mitterand.)

The only concrete "gains" made by the SL in its search (aside from the formation of a Spartacist League West in Australia and New Zealand and the periodic forays by the Buffalo SL across the border into Canada to do battle with Pabloite revisionism) was a recent conference held in Europe and attended by comrades "from or in" (a curious formulation) seven countries. This conference unanimously adopted a joint declaration from the SL and the tiny Austrian Bolshevik-Leninists (ÖBL), the Spartacists' latest international find. The SL and the ÖBL are -- significantly -- the only groups mentioned specifically in the report. The paucity of information given about the size and composition of the conference and the groups represented, coupled with the carefully shaded statement on attendance, amply demonstrates the narrow and limited range of participants.<sup>47</sup>

The Spartacist League has now been an independent national organization without solid international ties for longer than the original IC was in existence. As the SL itself has stated so clearly, national deformation occurs regardless of the subjective revolutionary intent of the group. The SL's around-the-world quest for the Holy Grail of a new international is at best an impressive demonstration of intent, but it does not obscure the objective factor of the total lack of disciplined international ties. What few contacts they have made have universally been either of a fleeting nature (as the other formations collapse, degenerate, or simply drift past the SL) or what must be regarded as formalistic and empty approaches to largely fictitious (and often unprincipled) international blocs.

### PART III: THE NATURE OF A SECT

In his Qu'est-ce que l'a.i.s.? (What Is the AJS?), Comrade Henri Weber of the former Ligue Communiste analyzed the factors which have led in this period to the development of ostensibly Trotskyist sects.

First, a dogmatic tendency, rather than re-evaluating its positions in light of experience, "accentuates them, systematizes them despite experience, even at the cost of doing violence to the facts. At a given threshold in this process, the systematization leads to the elaboration of a genuine mythical Universe through which the tendency cavorts, a Universe which effects even its capacity to perceive reality."

Second, having reached such a stage, the tendency "no longer hesitates to deform crassly the empirical data," for the purpose of "seeking in social reality the confirmation of its 'analyses' and particular theses."

Finally, the tendency, as a consequence, intervenes in the political field not guided "by the objective requirements of the evolution of the class struggle, but by its own delusions." The degeneration is complete; "the theoretical acquisitions of revolutionary Marxism, the most precious instruments of the vanguard, are no longer mastered as an instrument of an analysis of reality and as a guide to action, but sterilized, reduced to the status of an ideology. The tendency dies out as a revolutionary Marxist tendency and degenerates into a political sect."<sup>48</sup>

Marx and Engels, in their essay Fictitious Splits in the International (written in 1872) link the formation of such political sects to the initial phases of the awakening of the proletariat; they state:

The first phase of the proletariat's struggle against the bourgeoisie is marked by sectarian movements. That is logical at a time when the proletariat has not yet developed sufficiently to act as a class... These sects are abstentionist by their very nature, i.e., alien to all real action, politics, strikes, coalitions, or, in a word, to any united movements. The mass of the proletariat remains indifferent or even hostile to their propaganda.<sup>49</sup>

It is no coincidence that the epitome of the tradition of sections of the IC which was to result in the Spartacist League had its origins in the United States, the country with the least politically developed proletariat among the advanced industrial states. Nor is it a coincidence that such a trend emerged during the McCarthy Era, one of the most savagely repressive periods in the modern history of the US. Reduced to purely propagandistic

activities by the repression (and lucky to be able to carry out even these), stripped of its proletarian base (along with most of its members in general), buffeted by the mass hysteria which the Cold War and Korean Conflict engendered, the SWP retreated for a time, tending to take refuge in its Marxism as a protective screen. The IC's Stalinophobia, its loose (federal) structure, and the dogmatism and schematic "orthodoxy" exhibited by some of its sections were reflections in part of the situation in which American Trotskyists found themselves.

Nor was it a coincidence that the struggle to overcome these shortcomings and to break out from the isolation of the Cold War years, to re-establish links to the masses and to the international revolutionary struggle, created a sectarian (if contradictory) tendency such as the Revolutionary Tendency within the SWP. Accepting the "anti-Pabloite" rationale of the 1953 split as gospel, the RT turned away not only from errors and weakness of the SWP, but from its strengths as well; the beginning of the dogmatization and systematization process outlined by Weber was set in motion.

The RT, as noted, was a schizophrenic phenomenon. Its criticisms included a melange of orthodox (and occasionally insightful) applications of Marxist-Leninist theory together with carry-overs from IC sectarianism. Early issues of Spartacist show traces of an effort to break out of the bounds of sectarianism. The SL, however, in its rationalized exile from the Fourth International, was unable to successfully overcome its past or its isolation, which was itself a reflection of the backwardness and isolation of the American working class. Step by step we can trace the growth of the mythic Universe described by Weber, culminating in the SL's abstentionist policies in regard to such spheres of activity as work against the imperialist venture in Indochina. The Spartacist League had become a sect in the Marxist sense of the term.

#### Sectarian Abstention

As a sect, the SL views the day-to-day struggles of the working class and the American left with lofty scorn. To read Spartacist or Workers' Vanguard is to be reminded of yet another quote from Marx, from his letter to Johann von Schweitzer in 1863: "You yourself have experienced in your person the contrast between the movement of a sect and the movement of a class. The sect seeks its raison d'etre and point d'honneur -- not in what it has in common with the class movement, but in the particular shibboleth which distinguishes one from the other."<sup>50</sup> Weber makes much the same point in the following

terms:

What defines a sect, what makes it a group of a particular type, qualitatively different from even a miniscule revolutionary Marxist group is its method of political determination: the real driving force of sectarian activity resides in the will to maintain the group and its particular 'configuration,' the unconscious aspiration to perpetuate and reproduce the fundamental particularisms that give the group its originality and pose it as a politically distinct group. The logic of the sect is the fetishism of its differences.<sup>5</sup>

The pages of the SL press are filled with articles in which a worker militant (and even more politically conscious elements) could not have the slightest interest -- esoteric articles filled with attacks upon other left groups (about which he or she knows nothing and is less interested) and rebuttals against similar attacks from other groups directed at the SL. Its press is literate, often witty -- but also isolated from real mass struggles, sterile, and, in a word, sectarian. Writing about the French CP newspaper l'Humanité in 1921, Trotsky stated that "I have no doubt that out of 100 workers whom you might approach at the factory gates and to whom you might read ... l'Humanité, 99 would understand nothing and learn nothing, while the hundredth might perhaps understand something but he, too, could learn something."<sup>52</sup> Raise the proportion to one per thousand and you have some slight idea of the abyss which exists between the SL press and even the most conscious American workers.

#### The Hub of the Universe

As a sect, the SL views itself as the hub of the political universe. In a highly revealing quote, the Spartacists stated in an article on the Fourth International that "The Spartacist League, as the standard-bearer of orthodox Trotskyism, has played a prominent if often unacknowledged role in these discussions," adding that when sections of the FI attack what they consider to be revisions of Marxist theory and practice, "it is from the arsenal of Spartacist politics that they draw, albeit in a partial way."<sup>53</sup> To the SL, to quote Marx, Engels, Lenin, or Trotsky is to draw from the SL's own, private arsenal. The "partial use" charge stems from the fact that revolutionary Marxists prefer to use only Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky and not the often unusual interpretations which Robertson et al append to them. That discussions within the Fourth International might go on for rather extended periods of time without any of the participants entertaining even a passing thought of the Spartacist League, "the standard-bearer of orthodox Trotskyism," is utterly beyond them.

Comrade Weber points out that the very sectarianism of groups such as the SL can serve to provide them with a certain longevity; as he states, "Unlike centrist groups born from rightwing splits, Trotskyist sects do not vanish into nature by themselves. Their logic is not self-dissolution but self-proclamation. They fetch from the rich heritage of revolutionary Marxism enough resources to survive."<sup>54</sup> They can continue their existence only as parasites, as vampires on the movement. As the Political Committee of the Communist League of Australia (sympathizing section of the Fourth International) has pointed out, the SL is "an eclectic hodge-podge which gains momentum on selected crumbs fallen from the table of the Fourth International. It has no independent existence."<sup>55</sup> A group which somehow managed to shrink during the mass upsurges of the late 1960's has no independent base of its own, while SL practice in trade union and other struggles is not calculated to attract radicalizing layers among the masses as a whole. The SL exists only as a leech, drawing away militants who have grown tired and disillusioned with the actual unfolding of the class struggle and who can take refuge in the SL's ultra-"revolutionary" abstentionism.

#### The Need for Correct Practice

For, as a sect, the SL is incapable of correct practice -- the sole justification for a revolutionary formation. In "Left-Wing" Communism, an Infantile Disorder, Lenin points out that for extended periods of time the proletariat is weaker than the bourgeoisie. He stresses that the bourgeoisie can be defeated only "by exerting the utmost effort, and by the most thorough, careful, attentive, skillful and obligatory use of any, even the smallest, rift between the enemies, any conflicts of interest among the bourgeoisie... and also by taking advantage of any, even the smallest opportunity of winning a mass ally, even though this ally is temporary, unstable, unreliable, and conditional." He adds that "Those who do not understand this reveal a failure to understand even the smallest grain of Marxism," and that the proof of any ostensibly Marxist grouping is "in practice."<sup>56</sup> The Spartacist League has demonstrated time and again a sectarian abstention from the real, day-to-day struggles of the working class. It is, after all, not difficult to find reasons not to actively participate in the often crude and error-prone struggles of the class war as it unfolds. The very real flaws in these mass movements and conflicts can always serve as a justification for abstaining (or, better, abstaining from the struggle itself, while actively handing out statements on the vital importance of the struggle in question and the hopeless treachery of

the leadership). It is much more difficult to intervene correctly along an axis of intervention which aids the proletariat and develops the Leninist party to the fullest extent possible. It is here that mistakes will be made, for as long as a formation confines itself to propaganda work external to the struggle it is difficult to make any mistakes of any magnitude.

And yet it is the often agonizing progress of the Fourth International which will in the long run provide the potential to make a world revolution, not the frenzied scorn of the Spartacist League. Speaking of the former "orthodox standard-bearers" of the Second International, Lenin wrote, "They fully appreciate the need for flexible tactics; they themselves learned Marxist dialectics and taught it to others (and much of what they have done in this field will always remain a valuable contribution to literature); however, in the application of this dialectic they committed such an error, or proved so undialectical in practice, so incapable of taking into account the rapid change of forms and the rapid acquisition of new content by the old forms, that their fate is not much more enviable than that of Hyndman, Guesde, and Plekhanov."<sup>57</sup> It is difficult to conceive of a more fitting description of the fate of the Spartacist League --and its eventual place in history.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Henri Weber, Qu'est-ce que l'a.j.s.? (Paris, 1971), p. 83.
2. Pierre Frank, The Fourth International, Chapter 6 (Cont.), Intercontinental Press, May 1, 1972.
3. "Genesis of Pabloism," Spartacist, Fall, 1972, p. 7.
4. "Guevarism vs. Social Democracy in the USec," Workers Vanguard, June 22, 1973, p.4.
5. "Genesis of Pabloism," p.4.
6. Ibid, p.11.
7. "Letter to the OCRFI and the OCI," Spartacist, Winter 1973-74, p.30.
8. "Genesis of Pabloism," p.10.
9. Quoted in ibid, p.5.
10. "Cannon vs. Pablo," WV, September 14, 1973, p. 9; quoted from James P. Cannon, Speeches to the Party (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973), p.181.
11. "World Trotskyism Rearms," Spartacist, April-May, 1971, p.6.
12. Or, in the words of the SL: "Despite being a part of the new anti-Pabloist bloc, the Healy group continued its arch-Pabloist Labour Party opportunism," "Genesis of Pabloism," p.11. As we shall see, the SL did not always hold this view of the Healyite work in the British Labour Party.
13. "Witch-Hunt in the SWP," Spartacist, February-March, 1964, p.3.
14. Ibid, p.3.
15. Ibid, p.3.
16. See "Posadas in the MR-13," Spartacist, January-February 1967, p.7.
17. See, as an example, "The Wohlforth League: Counterfeit Trotskyists," Spartacist, August-September 1970, p.9.
18. In the interests of semantic accuracy, we must note that the SL wants the FI to be "reborn" while the French OCI prefers to "reconstruct" it. We leave the "theoretical" differences to the SL; see "Letter to the OCRFI and the OCI," p.30.
19. "New York Peace Parade," Spartacist, November-December, 1965, pp. 2-3.
20. "Anti-War Sellout," Spartacist, May-June 1967, p.1. Never explained is how this "striking parallel" is either striking or a parallel.
21. "America Faces Crisis," Spartacist, August-September, 1970, p.2.
22. Revolutionary Marxist Caucus Newsletter, April, 1971, p.1. The RMC was an SL-led opposition within the PLP-controlled wing of SDS. The RMC split from PL-SDS in 1971 to form the Revolutionary Communist Youth (RCY), the current SL youth group.
23. "Solidarity Actions Support British Miners," WV, 15 March, 1974, p.4.
24. Spartacist Supplement, May, 1963, p.4.
25. Ibid.

26. In fairness to the SL, the telegram was on the same page as a hysterical letter to the Healyite Newsletter attacking Healy for not being sufficiently virulent in his attacks upon the VCP.
27. "SL Debates Trade Union Tactics, Pabloism with RMG at Toronto Forum," WV, 1 March 1974, p. 13.
28. Ibid.
29. "Storm in the NMU," Spartacist, April-May, 1970, p. 15.
30. "Class Struggle Opposition in the NMU," WV, April 1973, p. 12.
31. Ibid., p. 11.
32. Letter of Engels to Florence Kelley-Wischnewetzky in New York, Marx and Engels: Selected Correspondance (Moscow, 1955), p. 399.
33. "Repeal the Ban on the French Ligue Communiste," WV, 20 July 1973, p. 2.
34. "Renegades from Trotskyism Battle in the USec," p. 12.
35. "Why We Call for a General Strike in Britain Now," WV, 1 March 1974.
36. "OCI Seeks Class Unity: Weakens Program," WV, September 1972, p. 13.
37. "Renegades from Trotskyism Battle in the USec," p. 11.
38. "Why We Call for a General Strike in Britain Now," p. 4.
39. "Tory Election Campaign," WV, March 1973, p. 10.
40. "New Pop Frontism in France," WV, March 1973, p. 14.
41. "OCI Seeks Class Unity," p. 13.
42. "Genesis of Pabloism," p. 12.
43. From Workers Vanguard, January 1973; quoted in the letter to the OCFPI and the OCI, p. 31.
44. Conversations with Wohlforth (New York, no date), 8th Session, p. 5.
45. Ibid., p. 14.
46. Ibid.
47. "Trotskyists Hold International Conference," WV, 1 March 1974, p. 15.
48. Weber, pp. 9-10.
49. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Fictitious Splits in the International," in Karl Marx on the First International, ed. by Saul K. Padover (New York, 1973), p. 209.
50. Karl Marx, "Draft of Letter to Johann Baptiste von Schweitzer," in ibid., pp. 450-451.
51. Weber, p. 10.
52. Leon Trotsky, "On L'Humanite, the Central Organ of the French Party," The First Five Years of the Communist International (Volume I), (New York, 1972), p. 166.
53. "Split Momentum Mounts in USec," WV, 14 September 1973, p. 8.
54. Weber, p. 10.

55. "Statement by the Political Committee of the Communist League (of Australia) on the Status of Keith Olerhead of the Melbourne Branch," March 25, 1973.
56. V. I. Lenin, "Left-wing" Communism, an Infantile Disorder (Moscow, 1969), p. 69.
57. Ibid., p. 108.

# Mandelites Falsify History to Attack SL

"... they have consistently maintained principled positions on such issues as feminism and nationalism; they have established a generally commendable record of support for other left tendencies under attack from the bourgeois state and have refrained from the use of violence against other left groupings (itself not a minor achievement in light of the record of most other left formations in the U.S.). In a period in which other ostensibly Trotskyist tendencies have been characterized by bizarre deviations and hysterical excesses ... the Spartacist League has presented a sober, solid, down-to-earth tone that is refreshing."

An excerpt from a Spartacist League pamphlet? No, the above quotation comes from an "Education for Socialists" bulletin (June 1974) nominally published by the Canadian Revolutionary Marxist Group (RMG) in the interests of its American co-thinkers, the Internationalist Tendency (IT), formerly of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). Entitled "Spartacist League: Anatomy of a Sect," the very existence of the pamphlet gives the lie to its characterization of the SL as an isolated sect lacking any real influence.

The 50-page document, which obviously cannot be answered in any detail here, is divided up into several major sections. The first deals with the pre-history of the SL—i.e., the anti-revisionist wing of the Trotskyist movement which emerged in opposition to Michel Pablo and his "new world reality" in the early 1950's. This is indeed a good place to start, since in that struggle, which destroyed the Fourth International as a revolutionary organization, the SL critically solidarizes with the "International Committee" wing, then led by the SWP, while the IT/RMG is in solidarity with the continuators of the opposing wing, the "International Secretariat" of Pablo (later to become the "United Secretariat," or USec, in 1963).

Yet the reader of the pamphlet will be hard pressed to find a clear statement of the issues of the 1951-53 fight. What will be found instead is a series of criticisms of the anti-revisionists (in large part lifted straight from the SL's own clear-eyed assessment of the weaknesses of the fight against Pabloism) combined with an offhand dismissal of what was in

fact the essence of Pabloism. Thus:

"Pablo's major error was a theory of economic catastrophism in which the capitalist states would be forced into launching a global war against the workers' states. This economic catastrophism gave birth in practice to *entryism sui generis* which, in retrospect, can be seen to have led [in] certain instances to organizational opportunism. This—coupled with hyper-bureaucratism in the organizational sense—was the real error of Pablo, rather than any project of liquidationism on the part of Pablo personally or the leadership of the FI in general."

And the pamphlet notes that:

"Pablo's arguments in 'Where Are We Going?' (written in January 1951) that 'the Communist Parties retain the possibility in certain circumstances of roughly outlining a revolutionary orientation' was ceaselessly cited [by anti-Pabloists] as the final, damning quotation."

Pabloism was (and remains) precisely the theory that non-Trotskyist mass formations, including the Stalinist parties, could be forced by pressure from below to pursue revolutionary policies. The application of this "theory" was deep entrism, which was characterized by the anti-revisionists at the time (and not just "in retrospect," as the pamphlet grudgingly grants) as the *political liquidation* of the leading role of independent proletarian Trotskyist parties in the revolutionary process. "Pabloism," far from being an empty epithet having its roots in demonology, means precisely the United Secretariat's continuing search for substitutes for the Trotskyist vanguard. It reduces the role of revolutionists to cheerleaders for other formations, from Ben Bella in Algeria

to Piaget, left-Catholic leader of last year's Lip strike, in France.

The next section of the pamphlet deals with the origins of the SL as the Revolutionary Tendency of the SWP, concentrating on the question of Cuba. Nowhere does the pamphlet make an explicit defense of the position which the RT opposed: that Cuba was a healthy workers state "lacking only the forms of workers democracy" and that Castro was "an unconscious Marxist." It simply characterizes as "Shachtmanite" the Spartacist view that deformed workers states are "qualitatively inferior to healthy workers states." The purpose of the section is to raise the bogeyman of "Shachtmanism," which is vitally necessary for the Pabloists who seek to cover their own political accommodation to the Stalinist bureaucracies by labeling the Trotskyist position—i.e., defense of these states against imperialist and domestic counterrevolution combined with the struggle for *political revolution* against the ruling clique—as "third camp."

This brings us logically to the next section, which deals with the antiwar work of the Spartacist League. This is perhaps the most dishonest part of the whole magnum opus, as required by the need to portray the SL as sectarian, abstentionist and "Stalinophobic." The IT/RMG rushes to the defense of the SWP's liberal-pacifist policies, separating antiwar action into two independent components and arguing that the SWP succeeded in its intention "to mobilize the masses in as broad and powerful a movement as possible to objectively aid the Vietnamese and other revolutionary forces in their fight against American aggression" even though it did not "educate the masses of people to the nature of and reasons for the American war of aggression, including the need to politicize an anti-imperialist wing of the movement and to recruit the most advanced layers to the task of building a revolutionary party in the U.S."

In fact, no such separation can be made. The program under which the SWP (and the Communist Party) "mobilized the masses" to "objectively aid the Vietnamese" guaranteed that the antiwar movement would remain in the

pocket of the antiwar liberals, who recognized a continuation of the losing war in Indochina was not in the best interests of U.S. imperialism.

The SWP's policy from the outset was to seek an alliance with the defeatist wing of the bourgeoisie, and toward that end to unashamedly block the development of class consciousness among antiwar militants. The SL's policy of opposing the class-collaborationist approach to the bourgeoisie (at which the pamphlet sneers) was the concrete axis around which an anti-imperialist wing (for which the pamphlet wistfully yearns) could have emerged.

Linking the struggle against imperialist war to the class struggle in the U.S., the SL sought to turn a wing of the antiwar movement toward the working class—the only social force capable of taking decisive action against the war—with a propagandistic struggle for *political strikes*. This aspect of our intervention is deliberately ignored by the pamphlet's author—and indeed it could not be otherwise. For how could one square the characterization of the SL's antiwar work as "criminal abstentionism" with the fact that only the SL had a perspective for turning empty middle-class protest marches into a real mass movement based on the power of the working class itself?

Nor can the pamphlet square the SL's initiation of and participation in anti-imperialist contingents and our calls for NLF victory with the portrait of a Stalinophobic sect. For the IT/RMG, as for Stalinist apologists in general, the only way to "defend" the deformed workers states is to alibi the treacherous bureaucracy. Therefore, since the SL did not cease to expose the past betrayals of the NLF and to warn of future ones, the SL cannot possibly have called for NLF victory. So the pamphlet must alter reality to suit its schema, including ignoring the SL's slogan "All Indochina Must Go Communist" and inventing the outright lie that the SL called for "conditional support" rather than unconditional military victory to the NLF.

This section also resuscitates an old prejudice inherited from the SWP: that the SL "tailed" Progressive Labor. No "evidence" is adduced for this slander, except for two sentences which slyly give the impression that the SL covered up for PL's Stalinist gangsterism against the SWP:

"it [the SL] saw nothing wrong at all in arguing that the PL thugs who attacked the SWP and YSA were not Stalinist. After all, demanded the SL, how could PLP be considered Stalinist when (according to them) it attacked the Student Mobilization Committee from the left?"

Let us simply note that the SL's alleged "tailing" of PL consisted of

entering the PL-led wing of SDS with an openly Trotskyist program and forming an oppositional caucus with its own newspaper which, among other things, sharply denounced PL's Stalinist gangsterism against opponents within the left movement. For example, a front-page article in the September 1970 *RMC Newsletter* (headlined, interestingly enough, "Stalinism in Boston") denounced PL for physical attacks on the SWP/YSA/SMC and proposed a resolution condemning them. Again, the IT/RMG is unable to understand the Trotskyist policies of the SL. Recognizing that PL was indeed to the left of the SWP in that period, the SL pursued an orientation to PL, which was in no way synonymous with "tailing" PL but was in fact based on principled *programmatic counterposition*.

The section on trade-union work castigates the SL for refusing to support the Mine Workers' Miller and the NMU's Morrissey. (We wonder how this sits with the IT now that Miller has pulled off a sellout rivaling anything Tony Boyle ever did.) It presents the usual opportunist caricature of programmatically based trade-union work as "shouting their pure 'Marxist' slogans to the rafters." What this conveniently overlooks are the many campaigns led by SL trade-union supporters for such things as union democracy; rights for young, minority-group and immigrant workers; concrete acts of solidarity with embattled workers like the Farm Workers; boycott of war materials to Chile.

The key to the pamphlet's analysis of SL union work is:

"The Spartacist 'full program' caucuses today are several vast steps removed from the needs and hopes of the American workers—as they perceive them—and therefore represent a purist sectarian abstraction."

The sentence is extremely revealing: its crux is the phrase "as they perceive them." For the author has managed to reduce to gibberish—or perhaps to "sectarian abstraction"—all of Lenin's and Trotsky's insistence that the work of revolutionists must begin from the objective needs of the class and not from its present backward consciousness. The IT/RMG has now redefined the "needs" of the class as their needs "as they perceive them"! Once the existing backwardness of the working class is taken as the measure of what revolutionaries should raise, unmitigated opportunism is the only possible result.

The pamphlet then proceeds to a discussion of SL criticisms of other USec sections and to an attack on the SL's international work. A section on our struggles within and against Gerry Healy's "International Committee"

concludes with some speculations on "what would have occurred if" the Spartacist group had been accepted into the IC:

"If the SL considers the Fourth International today to be an 'opportunist rotten federated bloc' what possible term could have described the political zoo of which the SL would have been a constituent member?"

The whole history of SL-IC struggles is there for the pamphlet's author to see: the 1962 split in which we refused to avow that the SWP was still a revolutionary party, while agreeing to the tactic of remaining in the SWP (does the dispute ring a bell, comrades of the IT?); the fusion negotiations in which the SL insisted on clarity with regard to past and present differences; the refusal to capitulate in 1966. The typically Pabloist objectification of "what if" ignores the simple fact that the Spartacist tendency did not become part of the IC precisely because we refused to paper over our political differences or to become part of a unilateral "discipline" which permitted a federated relation between other IC affiliates.

The pamphlet then proceeds to a discussion of subsequent SL international work. This section is notable for its unseriousness. Thus the SL's principled defense of the Cuban Posadists against repression is passed off as "an early infatuation with Posadas," while Edmund Samarakody's charges against the USec's Bala Tampoe in Ceylon (which were so serious that the USec's "Ninth World Congress" decided to suppress the reports of its own Commission) are characterized as "personal squabbles."

The pamphlet concludes with some verbiage about sects, buttressed with quotes from Marxist classics. In the midst of this appears the passage:

"The pages of the SL press are filled with articles in which a worker militant (and even more politically conscious elements) could not have the slightest interest—esoteric articles filled with attacks upon other left groups (about which he or she knows nothing and is less interested) and rebuttals against similar attacks from other groups directed at the SL."

As our conclusion, then, let us explain to the many workers who regularly read *WV*: yes, it is true that the IT is a very small group about which you know little and possibly care less. But the IT is not as insignificant as its small numbers and lack of roots in the mass movements would indicate.

The IT is the reservoir of left oppositionists which has emerged from the SWP in the recent period. The struggles of the Marxists against such centrists are important not only because crucial questions of revolutionary ori-

entation are fought out on this small battlefield, but also because of the present and potential dangers of the intervention of centrists into social struggle.

Over the past months the question of defense against racists in Boston, for example, has found the SWP reformists on one side calling for the U.S. imperialist army to "protect" blacks and the SL on the other fighting for union/black militias to defend working people. The IT's impulse is to ally itself with the reformists against the Marxists over this issue where the lines are posed most clearly. The exposure of the IT and the winning of subjectively revolutionary militants to the authentic program of Trotskyism is an issue of importance to the building of the vanguard party and should therefore be of interest to working-class militants, regardless of how understandably little interest they have in the IT. ■

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