



ACTU Congress side-tracks vital class issues

The uranium diversion

The ACTU bureaucracy celebrated its fiftieth anniversary by thumbing its nose at virtually every problem confronting the Australian working class. Meeting in the midst of post-Depression record unemployment and in the wake of a government move to deny public employees the right to strike, the one question which overwhelmingly preoccupied the delegates to the biennial congress held in Sydney the week of 12-16 September was whether it was moral to mine uranium.

From the ACTU president, Bob Hawke, to his archetypal "left-wing" rival, John Halfpenny, "Communist" (CPA) leader of the Victorian Branch of the Amalgamated Metal Workers and Shipwrights Union (AMWSU), debating a strategy for defence of the workers' livelihoods and organisations was just not on. One hour of insipid debate on the

Commonwealth Employees Act left behind a do-nothing plan for a vague national campaign only after the act is used. And a spurt of quickly forgotten rhetoric about a "campaign" for a shorter workweek was easily drowned out by the strident chorus of demands that Fraser more effectively protect Australian industry against "Yank multi-nationals" and Asian workers. Yet among the delegates who were most pious in their concern over the prospect of nuclear war during the uranium debate were some of the most enthusiastic advocates of the protectionist drive which is laying the basis for it.

The high-minded "concern" of Hawke and his supporters was tempered by their desire to avoid a confrontation with the government; hence their proposal for a referendum to be held after twelve months of "fair and equal national debate". The "left" bureaucrats (led by the AMWSU, Australian Railways Union [ARU] and Building Workers Industrial Union), whose verbal intransigence roughly equalled their consistent cowardice in practice, called for a total, two-year moratorium. With criminal complacency, Edgar Williams of the Australian Workers Union demanded only that his members be allowed to continue mining Mary Kathleen regardless of safety and other genuine concerns. After five hours of emotional debate and pervasive "moral anguish", the delegates voted by 493-371 to reject the moratorium in favour of Hawke's resolution.

Such was the calibre of the debate and such is the character of the "leaders" of the Australian working class that no one took offense when Hawke defended his call to "take the issue to the people" with approving quotes from pro-conscription ALP renegade Billy Hughes and colonialist butcher Winston Churchill. ARU leader Ralph Taylor in turn concluded his speech motivating the moratorium amendment by quoting John F Kennedy, architect of the 1962 "Cuban missile crisis", on the dangers of nuclear war. Hawke expressed his "wish [that] the bloody stuff had never been discovered". "Let's cover it up!", replied Halfpenny, whose union had only two years earlier (as one speaker noted) been negotiating for its members to handle Mary Kathleen uranium.

The "lefts" and "communists" lauded the parliamentary ALP for its Perth decision on the moratorium. The ALP president responded that it was "not the politicians in Canberra" but the unions who would be in the frontline of any battle with Fraser over uranium. When it was in office the ALP had also supported uranium mining, Hawke supporters pointed out. In fact the so-called "loans affair" which helped precipitate the fall of Whitlam, as Simon Crean from the Storemen and Packers observed, involved an attempt by the then ALP government to get financial backing for the development of uranium processing plants. (Though he now tours the country decrying uranium mining and the commercial killing of whales, three years ago Jim Cairns was journeying to Teheran as deputy prime minister to happily negotiate contracts for the sale of uranium to that notorious butcher, the Shah of Iran.) With cynical but unusual honesty, Crean summed up the dilemma of the "left" unions (who, he might have added, have not lifted a finger to stop scabs from working the banned



Lobby outside ACTU Congress: social democrats join in clamour over uranium, ignore attacks on working class.

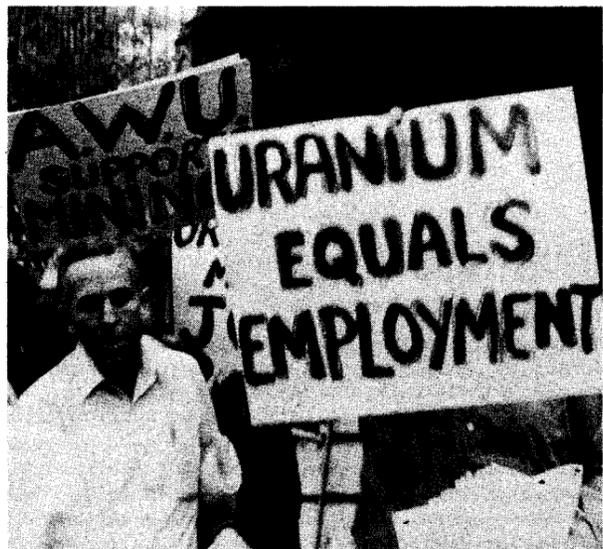
Newport site): "Why place a ban on it when you know that you won't back it up when it comes to a crunch?"

The avaricious mining companies and nuclear-energy conglomerates place a low premium indeed on human life and safety in their rush for profits. But the bankruptcy of both the ACTU bureaucracy and the anti-uranium movement was demonstrated by the fact that through all the breast-beating over nuclear war and the danger posed to future generations, not one concrete action was proposed to protect the health and safety of the workers at Mary Kathleen and elsewhere who are, after all, right now handling the "bloody stuff". Communists demand the strongest union action over specific safety issues, including bans on particular sites deemed hazardous by rank-and-file-elected union safety committees -- not just in the nuclear industry, but in all industry.

There is no reason to oppose a referendum on uranium per se, insignificant though it would be, and we would defend the democratic right to have one against resistance from Fraser. However Hawke's proposal was a policy statement which expressed social-democratic faith in electorally determining "the will of the people", and therefore had to be opposed. Instead the ACTU must demand that all classified information concerning mining and reactor safety be made public and that legitimate Aboriginal land rights be safeguarded. But while we would defend even a total union ban on uranium mining against bourgeois attack, such an anti-technology act must be opposed as an attack on the material foundations of the future world proletarian dictatorship, which alone can eradicate scarcity and human misery.

Only two years ago the anti-uranium movement was confined to the outer limits of bourgeois politics, among the self-styled "Friends of the Earth" whose ecological worldview mimics what Marx derisively called "rural idiocy". But as the ACTU Congress debate illustrated, the uranium controversy has moved to centre stage in the Australian political scene ever since Fraser signalled his determination to give the go-ahead to mining earlier this year. The recent "Hiroshima Day" demonstrations attracted 50,000 anti-uranium protestors across the country. However, despite a broad if diffuse base of support, including sections of the working class, like the wharfies, who are influenced by the

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Top: AWU bureaucracy's enthusiastic support for uranium mining at any cost ignores members' safety. Bottom: cops clash with anti-uranium protestors at UNSW.

Part 2

Reply to Pearlman/SWP:

Alibis of a social democrat

SEE PAGE 4

Down with Qld ban on marches!

On 4 September Queensland state premier, Joh Bjelke-Petersen, proclaimed a ban on all political marches (hypocritically excluding only such "notable" bourgeois events as ANZAC Day). Though proposed anti-uranium demonstrations were given as the particular pretext for this ruthless assault on democratic rights, the target is clearly the entire left and labour movement. Yet the trade-union bureaucracy has done nothing to mobilise the massive response which could repel this attack. Several relatively small marches in Brisbane have of course been unsuccessful in breaking



Asp photo

through the ban. The most recent, on 22 September, resulted in 32 arrests as the 800 demonstrators were brutally assaulted by an almost equal number of Bjelke-Petersen's cops. In a telegram of solidarity to the march, the Spartacist League (SL) stated:

"These attacks on the labour movement, including prosecution of Ted Zaphir, have been encouraged by ACTU leadership's refusal to mobilise general strike against IRB as well as recent Commonwealth Employees Act. Any police attempt to interfere with today's march demands immediate, decisive action by Queensland trade-union movement."

The following day in Sydney, nearly 100 people, including supporters of the Spartacist League, Communist League (CL), Communist Party, Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and International Socialists (though the latter three sent at most a couple of people each), demonstrated in solidarity with the Brisbane marchers. The CL's projected "fusion" partner, the SWP, had only one paper seller there. (In fact, two days later, at a Women's Liberation general meeting, the SWP refused to even support an SL motion defending the Brisbane marchers and condemning the ban.) Yet, incredibly enough, for all the promiscuous phrasemongering about "fascism" and "Hitler" no one but the SL contingent raised the elementary slogans: "Drop the charges against Brisbane marchers!", "For trade-union mobilisation to reverse Bjelke's ban on demos!" In fact of the above-mentioned groups, none but the SL even addressed the rally!

Addressing the evident refusal of the labour bureaucracy to mobilise the ranks against these attacks, and of the assembled fake lefts to raise this call, the SL speaker pointed to the necessity for a revolutionary leadership in the trade unions which could lead the workers in struggle against the capitalist offensive.

SYA can't seem to back a winner AUS turmoil continues

Three months ago, the bitter infighting between rival bureaucratic power blocs in the Australian Union of Students (AUS) culminated in a successful move to sack the Maoist editor of *National U*, Jefferson Lee, and an unsuccessful Maoist-backed counter-move to "spill" the entire "democratic left"-dominated AUS executive. In contrast to the Maoist Students for Australian Independence, to the motley collection of anarchists and fake Leninists (principally the Communist Party and the Socialist Youth Alliance [SYA]) which supports the "democratic left", and to the right-wing spoilers, Spartacist Clubs at LaTrobe and Sydney Universities supported neither of these clique manoeuvres. Instead they called for a fully empowered AUS national council meeting for September, with all delegates to be newly elected, in order that the turmoil in AUS be democratically debated by the student membership.

No one was more fervent in condemning this principled stand than the SYA. At Sydney University SYAers provided the SRC bureaucrats with the lawyer's argument that our comrades' proposal was "unconstitutional" in order to aid in suppressing it. They denounced us for having "abstained on defence of AUS" ([Sydney University] *Socialist Youth Alliance Club Newsletter*, 25 July). AUS was "one of the most democratic, progressive and militant unions in the country" (*Direct Action*, 4 August). "Any left-wing group which attacks AUS [ie the current leadership]" or even "fails to fully back" it, they charged, was guilty of "objectively aiding the reactionary assault on student unionism" (*Direct Action*, 7 July; emphasis in original). They generously offered "10 good reasons to retain AUS officers" (*Direct Action*, 28 July), including: a special council could not be held until October, it would be costly, it would weaken AUS, it would disrupt the anti-cutbacks campaign etc etc.

No sooner had voting on the spill motion closed, than the AUS executive announced a change. A specially convened September council, which had been out of the question as a means of combating right-wing/government attacks and bureaucratic gang war, was now called *without new elections* to discuss the financial collapse of the \$25.5 million-per-year AUS travel company. This was all more than a trifle embarrassing for the SYA but, then again, the course of true opportunism never did run smooth.

A bit of breathing space was in order. The SYA recalled its consistent opposition to the travel service. SYA "activists" hurried off "An open letter to AUS executive" (*Direct Action*, 18 August) whining that "it is not possible for the union's staunchest supporters and most loyal members to defend it effectively from criticism". The SYA pleaded with its "democratic" and "progressive" allies to "reveal all known facts" and avoid "confidential dealing". It even had a few criticisms of its own of the "platinuous", "totally inadequate" executive statement on the collapse.

As the harried AUS officers fielded more than a hundred probing questions from delegates to the September council, the SYA not only "abstained" from their "defence", but actually "aided" the Maoists' "reactionary assault". The shoddy, unprincipled character of the bureaucratic power struggle was illustrated by the vote on the travel service. On the petty squabbles, like funding disputes, dividing the cliques the Maoist-aligned wing was defeated by consistently narrow margins. But with their own fragile sinecures threatened by the collapse of the popular travel service, the petty careerists united in approving overwhelmingly, against the opposition of both the Maoists and the SYA, the proposal to sustain the travel service -- with a \$50,000 loan from AUS and under the direct control of its airlines creditors for at least four years.

If a career devoted to apologising for the social-democratic tops in AUS can be a bit trying at times, at least the SYA could console itself with the reward of an AUS-financed "mass campaign" against government education cutbacks. For the opportunity of a "mass movement" out of which to recruit and train future social democrats, the SYA and its parent Socialist Workers Party have been the best builders of one reformist betrayal after another. But now even that is gone: *Direct Action* (1 September) sadly reported that a 21 August meeting of the executive was "openly hostile" to the SYA's proposal for another "national mass mobilisation". This was the campaign whose existence depended on "retaining the AUS officers".

If the SYA opportunists currently find themselves estranged from their chosen patrons in the AUS hierarchy, it is not for lack of unprincipled

servility. The SYA has now dropped its call for national mobilisations in favour of building the executive's proposal for regional and local actions. And following both this slap in the face and the travel collapse, it still went ahead with a previously planned "Left and Labor students conference" to build its clique, a fraud and a farce which served only to confirm our consistent view that the SYA was no less bureaucratic than its Maoist opposition. Admission to the conference could only be gained by signing a loyalty oath -- a "form of accreditation" condemning the Maoist faction exclusively for "sectarian attacks". When Spartacist League supporters called for the conference to be opened to all students and members of the workers movement, it was the SYA who leapt forward to put a motion denying voting and speaking rights to those who would not sign the factionally motivated loyalty oath.

With the AUS tops preoccupied with resuscitating the SYA-opposed travel service, the conference did not go very well for the SYA. The hoped-for "landmark in the development of AUS" (*Direct Action*, 25 August) drew barely the number that had endorsed the conference call. Following a walkout at one point by Labor Club supporters, executive member David Patch unsuccessfully moved that the conference vote only on those motions which were unanimously acceptable! Even its organisers could report afterwards only that the conference was "at least heading in the overall right direction" -- despite "contradictions" (*Direct Action*, 15 September).

Opportunism sometimes "pays off" for its practitioners in the short term. But not only has the SYA been left empty-handed; its politically corrupt promotion of one of the two manoeuvring cliques in AUS has facilitated the scrapping of even an inadequate campaign (the SYA opposed our call for a labour/student mobilisation and for open admissions) against the Fraser government's education cutbacks. Nor, as the recent disaffiliation by New South Wales Institute of Technology demonstrates, has the right-wing threat abated. Throughout the year Spartacist supporters have consistently and correctly warned that support to either wing in the clique war served only to weaken AUS. More importantly, as against the fake Trotskyists of the SYA, we have sought to win students away from the small-change haggling of student-centred politics to the politics of the class struggle and the fight for a Trotskyist vanguard party. Given the SYA's unstinting efforts to endear itself with the small-time politicians of AUS, one can only wonder what they would be willing to do on behalf of the ACTU bureaucracy. ■

Uranium . . .

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traditional pacifism of the Stalinists and social democrats, the burgeoning anti-uranium movement remains essentially a middle-class protest phenomenon which has no intrinsic connection with the class struggle.

The utopian environmentalism and social pacifism which ideologically characterises this movement is compatible with the Fabian outlook of the social democracy. But that in itself does not explain the ALP and ACTU's new-found concern over nuclear energy. Parliamentary opposition to uranium exploitation comes cheap (particularly when it is sufficiently guarded to be reversible after an election victory) and offers the ALP a possible vehicle for recouping its electoral fortunes among that disaffected middle-class layer Don Chipp's anti-uranium Australian Democratic Party is also appealing to. Now that it is no longer directly responsible for administering the bourgeois state and maintaining the capitalist coffers, the ALP seeks to renew its credentials as the party of reformist protest. Opposition to uranium likewise provides the "left" union tops with an aura of social concern intended to deflect middle-class anti-union sentiment and divert rank-and-file attention from their gross treachery.

Fraser and the Liberals, on the other hand, have seized on the escalating anti-uranium protests in the hope of providing a "law and order" focus for a possible pre-Christmas election. In Queensland Bjelke-Petersen used them as the pretext for imposing his ban on political marches. In Victoria the Liberal government has provocatively talked of "shooting if necessary" after a protest in which Melbourne mounted cops trampled demonstrators underfoot. But brutal repression is not unique to the Liberal governments: Sydney police repeatedly assaulted

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CL — centrist attorneys for "Third Camp" pacifism SWP "defends" USSR with disarmament call

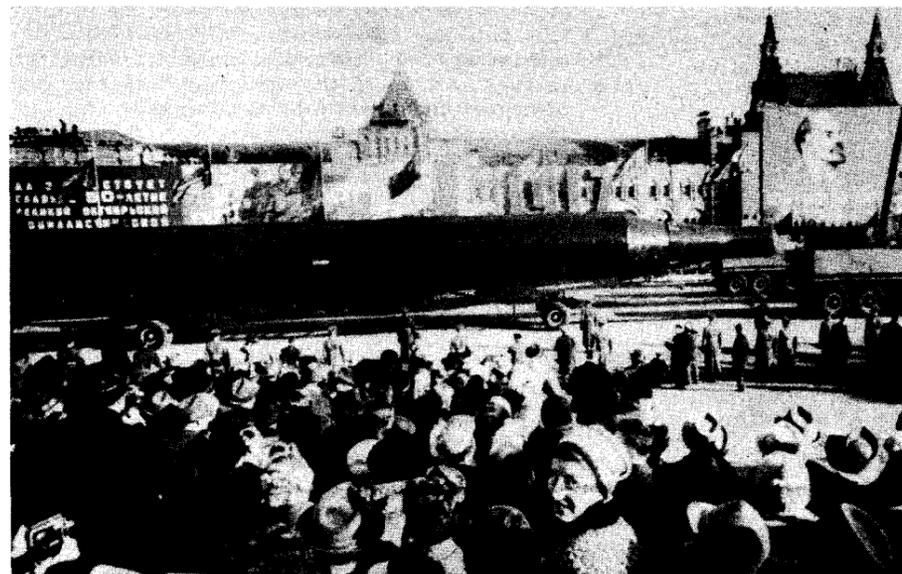


Joseph Hansen.

Hansen/Militant

The once-Trotskyist US Socialist Workers Party (SWP), through a public exchange between a veteran member, Morris Starsky, and its leading publicist, Joseph Hansen, recently made crystal clear its abandonment of the Trotskyist position on pacifistic disarmament schemes and military defence of the Soviet Union. The Hansen-Starsky exchange (first published in the 24 June issue of the US SWP's *Militant*) was in turn reprinted in full, without comment, in the Australian SWP's *Socialist Worker* (August-September 1977). The US SWP understands full well that explicit repudiation of these fundamental Trotskyist principles in favour of "Third Camp" anti-Sovietism is a prerequisite for satisfying its aspirations to become the kept opposition party of American social reformism. For the local SWP, reprinting the Hansen piece probably reflected more its orientation to the pacifistic anti-uranium movement than direct and immediate pressure to embrace anti-Sovietism here.

Starsky's letter referred to a previous Hansen article on the SALT disarmament talks which included the following statement of the classic



Soviet missiles on parade in Red Square: useless if outstripped by US in arms race.

"Third Campist" position that the US and the Soviet Union are co-equal warlike enemies of mankind: "Clearly it would be a fatal policy to rely on either Washington or Moscow to halt the arms race and dismantle nuclear stockpiles". Recalling Trotskyist orthodoxy, Starsky queries:

"Is writer Hansen's position with respect to nuclear disarmament 'a plague on both your houses'?..."

"A workers state, even a degenerated or deformed workers state, has the abstract right to defend itself militarily from imperialist attack.

"The Soviet Union has indeed the concrete need to arm itself fully within the limits of its resources in defense of its existence." (emphasis in original)

Following a perfunctory disclaimer that "The world Trotskyist movement has never wavered in its defense of the Soviet Union", Hansen goes on to develop an argument for an *explicitly* pacifist-defeatist conclusion:

"But the fact is that each side possesses a stockpile much larger than needed to wipe out all human beings once...."

"Yet in a madness that has no equal in human history the nuclear arms race continues.

"Military defense' has obviously become meaningless in terms of saving a country from the most terrible catastrophe imaginable -- its extinction.

"To me it appears quite clear that the Kremlin, by participating in this mindless race, is dealing terrible blows against the defense of the Soviet Union."

The class nature of conflicting states is thus rendered irrelevant in the nuclear era -- any state with weapons capable of destroying mankind is a bad state. Having "transformed" military defence into its opposite, Hansen proposes an alternative "political" defence, chastising Brezhnev for "failing to seize the initiative on disarmament".

A month after Hansen's piece appeared in *Socialist Worker*, the centrist Communist League (CL) was forced to take note of it, without mentioning either Hansen or his main conclusions, in an editorial entitled "Capitalism, nuclear war

and the workers states" (*Militant*, 30 August). The delicate task facing the CL, which has stood, if uncertainly, to the left of the SWP, was to mollify any of its members who might balk at swallowing Hansen's flat repudiation of Soviet defencism while at the same time preventing any concern with fundamental Trotskyist principles from interfering with its projected "fusion" with the reformist SWP. The *Militant* editorial offers an archetypal example of centrist procedure: blurring the line between reform and revolution so as to make Hansen's social-democratic conclusions theoretically acceptable without itself having to explicitly condone them.

Thus the CL rejects the "pacifist perspective" (implied by Hansen) of "disarmament of both sides -- the imperialist powers and the workers states" and *explicitly* defends (which Hansen does not) "the right of Russia and China to arm themselves with nuclear weapons". Having said this, it nonetheless serves up some "sense" in which its members can feel comfortable with Hansen's nuclear disarmament rubbish, under the pretext of exposing the imperialists:

"This does not mean that genuinely democratic workers states would need to zealously preserve their full nuclear capacity. On the contrary an aggressive stance could be taken against imperialism demanding progressive nuclear disarmament through the type of open diplomacy which typified the early Bolshevik regime...."

"Revolutionaries are for nuclear disarmament in this sense but recognise fully that neither the capitalist class nor the bureaucracy are either capable of or desirous of terminating and reversing the nuclear arms race. That will only be

achieved by socialist and by political revolution".

Following this assurance by the CL leadership to any doubting members that even the Bolsheviks, after all, preached disarmament, the SWP did its bit to smooth troubled waters. An article by Mary Rabbone in the SWP's *Direct Action* (29 September) ignores Hansen's explicit statement on "meaningless" military defence while rehashing his entire argument. Rabbone concludes a lengthy, and abstractly correct, statement on imperialist war aims and the need to defend the Soviet Union with the recognition that, "In this situation it would be suicidal for the workers states to give up their own nuclear weapons". "But", she says in the very next sentence, "this does not mean that they have to engage in an unending arms race" (emphasis in original). But this is precisely what it does mean. To attack the Soviet Union for "engaging" in the nuclear arms race renders all talk about military defence disgusting hypocrisy.

The logic of Hansen's position, which Rabbone echoes, is that since the early 1960s when both the US and USSR acquired stockpiles theoretically capable of destroying humanity, all military expenditure and planning has been senseless. This is a stupid, pacifistic technological argument. It is possible to win a nuclear war. Stockpiled nuclear weapons *in themselves* have no military effectiveness; they must be delivered to enemy targets. And delivery systems are *constantly* being countered through new military technology. The type of plane which A-bombed Hiroshima in 1945 could not get within a thousand miles of a targeted city today. It is in the area of delivery systems (ICBMs, MIRVs, Polaris submarines, Trident submarines, Cruise missiles) that American imperialism seeks the technological breakthroughs which would give it strategic nuclear superiority over the USSR. What gives the *illusion* of pointlessness and stasis to the arms race is that the USSR has countered each US advance so that a rough strategic *parity* has been maintained since the early 1960s.

The likelihood of any substantial disarmament by US imperialism is so small as to disappear into the realm of fantasy. The CL's glib attitude toward Soviet strategic military prepared-

ness notwithstanding, any "genuinely democratic workers states" would be foolish in the extreme if they did not "zealously preserve their full nuclear capacity". Contrary to Hansen and his friends it is not the Stalinist bureaucracy's *failure* to advance disarmament schemes which is to be condemned, but rather its all-too-ready *willingness* to do so.

It is certainly not objectionable in principle for a workers state to propose disarmament to the imperialists. The episodic disarmament proposals of the Bolshevik government in 1921-22 were merely one of many diplomatic manoeuvres to gain the embattled workers state desperately needed breathing space, and were never allowed to hinder Soviet military preparedness. For example, while the Soviet delegation was mooting a disarmament proposal to the imperialist powers gathered at the 1922 Genoa conference, it was simultaneously negotiating the Rapallo agreement, which provided for the training of the Red Army by German military officers, with defeated Germany behind the backs of the other imperialists.

More importantly, the Bolshevik government's pursuit of diplomatic peace manoeuvres did not mean that the parties of the Communist International were spouting pacifist illusions about disarmament. For the Stalinist bureaucracies, in contrast, ending the arms race through "disarmament" and "peaceful co-existence" constitutes a class-collaborationist strategy to which the politics of the international class struggle -- including the most vigilant military defence of the deformed workers states -- is subordinated.

In a 1932 "Declaration to the Antiwar Congress at Amsterdam" Trotsky wrote:

"Without the slightest confidence in the capitalist programs for disarmament or arms limitation, the revolutionary proletariat asks one simple question: *In whose hands are the weapons?* Any weapon in the hands of the imperialists is a weapon directed against the working class.... Weapons in the hands of the proletariat and of the oppressed nations are the only means of ridding our planet of oppression and war." (*Writings, 1932*; emphasis in original)

The Soviet proletariat's political control over its state has been usurped by a parasitic caste resting atop the socialist property forms. But the "even-handed" manner in which the fake Trotskyists of the SWP and CL denounce the Stalinist bureaucracies and the imperialists for refusing to "reverse the nuclear arms race" leads directly, despite all protestations to the contrary, to the renunciation of defencism. Unlike capitalist imperialism, the Soviet bureaucracy, based on a planned economy, is not driven by the inner contradictions of the production relations into inevitable wars of conquest; its motives in the nuclear arms race are basically defensive.

Unlike the SWP we do not condemn the Soviet Union for its nuclear policy. On the contrary, we are concerned that it might be inadequate. But Hansen's purpose is not, of course, to design foreign policy for the Stalinist bureaucracy.

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US SWP polemic against Spartacist tendency

Alibis of a social democrat

EDITOR'S NOTE: Last month we reprinted in abridged form the first part of a Workers Vanguard series in reply to an Intercontinental Press polemic by Bob Pearlman (since reprinted as an Education for Socialists pamphlet, "Spartacist: Making of an American Sect") aimed at discrediting the Spartacist League/US (SL/US), and by implication our entire tendency, as "sectarian abstentionist". As the first part stated, Pearlman had been an alternate member of the SL/US Central Committee before resigning -- without any factional struggle. He soon resurfaced in the US Socialist Workers Party (SWP), though his characteristic positions -- eg tailing the Angolan MPLA, adventurist "black

the white working class for the integration struggle, thus potentially defusing the racist anti-busing mobilization centered on poor white neighbourhoods like South Boston.

Despite small forces, the SL achieved some prominence as the only left-wing organization to come to the defense of the besieged black population of Boston. Pearlman tells the story this way:

"A small local demonstration of Boston Blacks on October 12 accidentally catapulted Spartacist into the international press when an Associated Press photo featuring Spartacist banners was published throughout the world,

desegregation work in Boston.

"The first assumption was that a significant popular mobilization against the racists could be built only through the unions. In the SL's view, a mobilization of 'blacks for blacks' without labor-union participation would be 'hopeless'. And second, the freedom of all 'participating groups' in the joint action 'to raise their own particular points of view' was not, in the SL's opinion, to be satisfied through leaflets and banners. In the SL's view of the united front, this meant the 'freedom' of tiny socialist organizations with no mass influence (like the Spartacist League) to insist on having a speaker at every rally, as a matter of principle, in order to criticize other participating organizations from the podium.

"... Meanwhile, however, under the sponsorship of Black Democratic State Senator-elect William Owens, Youth Against War and Fascism (YAWF) had quietly put together some 300 endorsements calling for a December 14 [1974] 'National March and Rally Against Racism' (later titled the 'Freedom March for Human Dignity'). For many of us in the Boston SL, this development seemed to be a crystallization of much that we had been working for. "... But when the Boston Local executive committee phoned Robertson after attending the initial meeting of the Emergency Committee and advocated endorsement of the December 14 demonstration and participation in the committee, Robertson blasted, 'Betrayal!' and hung up."

Since the December 14 demonstration and the events surrounding it occupy a large place in Pearlman's polemic, it is important to set the record straight.

In the first place, the notion that the SL defines a "united front" in terms of our right to have "a speaker at every rally" is even more ludicrous than it is a slander -- and it is both. Especially when fundamental differences in class thrust separate the forces participating in a common action, it becomes doubly unprincipled for revolutionists to lend their name to an action unless they have the possibility of making their criticisms clear. There can be no united front, for example, where a bourgeois politician censors the propaganda distributed at a demonstration. Yet at the mid-November planning meeting for the march which Pearlman refers to, this is exactly what happened. A member of Owens' staff laid down the law for the assembled fake-leftists (including virtually the entire Boston SWP branch). In return for personally sponsoring the march, Owens reserved a personal veto over all key decisions -- the route of the march, tactical control, the speakers list, official propaganda, etc.

Furthermore, Comrade Pearlman's own motion at the Boston SL local meeting of 24 November 1974 makes it clear that the SL leadership's position was not insistence on "a speaker at every rally", but rather a demand for "written guarantees pertaining to veto power over propaganda and for an anti-federal troop speaker on the platform".

The SWP, meanwhile, conceded to YAWF the privileged access to Owens and accepted the

Reply to Pearlman, PART 2

The slander of SL abstention on Boston busing

self-defence" in Boston etc -- more closely approximate those of the SWP's factional rival in the United Secretariat. This part is abridged from Workers Vanguard no. 170 (26 August 1977). Next month's ASP will carry the third part of this series.

Though attempting a more or less global critique of the Spartacist League program, Pearlman's real grievance is self-evidently the SL's refusal to implement his posturing left-reformist approach to the Boston school busing crisis of 1974-75. During this period, Pearlman urged that the SL should throw its small, largely white student Boston branch into physical confrontations with the enraged anti-busing racists. Simultaneously, he sought to soft-pedal the SL's revolutionary criticism of the reformist/Democratic Party bloc which had left the black masses defenseless before the vicious reactionary onslaught. The saga of Pearlman's opposition to the SL leadership over this issue, melodramatically titled "Why They Ran From the Black Struggle in Boston", comprises half of Pearlman's two-part article....

Unlike the SWP, for whom the Spartacists were always an irrelevant "sect", Pearlman implicitly posits a more or less healthy period for our organization, roughly corresponding to that of his membership. Thus he betrays an amusing subjectivity. (We would note only that though Trotsky had more to do with the Comintern than Pearlman did with the SL, he tied the CPs' definitive degeneration to the German betrayal, not to his own departure!) For Pearlman, Boston was the center of the universe, and the SL's inability to intervene to change the balance of class forces in Boston was the definitive test of SL "abstention". He writes:

"The Spartacist League reacted to the first shocks of antibusing violence in a seemingly healthy manner. It issued, on September 22, 1974, an open 'Letter to Boston Trade Unions, Black and Socialist Organizations' titled 'Act Now! Defend Black School Children!' The letter was 'a proposal for a broad mobilization, initiated by the unions, black and socialist organisations, to build a mass popular demonstration around the common slogan, "Stop the Racist Attacks Against Black School Children." The Spartacist League, a labor-socialist organization, pledges to devote all available resources and energy to aid in the building of such a demonstration'. This pledge was to be put to a severe test in practice two months later. "Spartacist also understood that no socialist organization had the authority to initiate such a demonstration...."

The unanticipated violence of the anti-busing reaction in Boston created an initial political vacuum in which the SL was the *only* group advocating a broad mobilization against the racist attacks. Needless to say, the SWP made no response to this call to action; its policy was passive propagandism in favor of federal troops -- a liberal line counterposed to the fight for the independent mobilization of the workers and oppressed....

From the outset the SL warned against the suicidal illusion that the imperialist army or the racist cops would "protect" the black masses. Programmatically, the SL fought for the slogan "Extend Busing to the Suburbs", a demand which would support a modest democratic gain (inner-city busing) while focusing attention on the discrimination against both black and white working people represented by the segregation and class privilege embodied in the lily-white middle-class suburban school systems. This demand laid the basis for winning support from

including in the major European CP dailies. So the media reward those who know how to make signs and banners...."

The reality was not so "accidental" and explodes the Pearlman myth of SL "abstention". Our militant banner, "For a Labor/Black Mobilization to Defend Black Children and Columbia Point", was picked up by the media because the SL had the *only* organized leftist contingent at the demonstration.

Moreover, besides devoting our entire local resources (backed up by national leaders and black comrades from other locals) to agitating for a mass, united-front demonstration to stop the racist attacks, we offered active solidarity with the embattled black tenants in Columbia Point, a large housing project bordering South Boston which was harassed by white vigilantes and subsequently occupied by several hundred cops. Pearlman's article lauds this effort at community self-defense but makes no mention of any attempt by the SWP to intersect it.

This is because the SWP couldn't have cared less about black self-defense. While the SL was publicizing the siege at Columbia Point, the SWP was seeking a deal with black Democratic Party politicians and community leaders whose only response to the crisis was to call on Gerald Ford to dispatch the US Army to Boston. Reflecting the timidity of local black leaders and their hat-in-hand appeals for federal troops, the SWP fought to derail any serious militancy in the anti-racist struggle. Thus, at several mass meetings called by black and Latin student groups at the Boston branch of the University of Massachusetts in October, SWP national leaders counterposed a campus teach-in to building a demonstration against the reactionary anti-busing campaign.

The united front and the December 14 demonstration

While claiming that the SL "remarkably" was quick to pick up the busing issue, Pearlman alleges that:

"Hidden, however, in this orientation were two fundamental assumptions that were to lead to the SL's criminal abstention from the busing struggle and the early liquidation of its pro-



SL/US had only organised left contingent at Boston rally to support school integration, 12 October 1974.

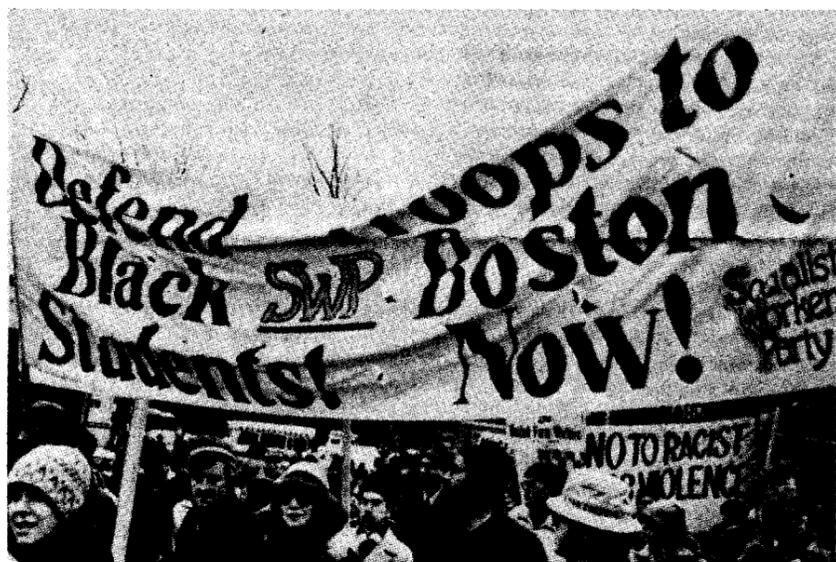
bureaucratic fiat of this Democratic Party demagogue in return for an auxiliary student committee, the germ of the later National Student Committee Against Racism (NSCAR), to give it some organizational leverage. However, the subordination of the December 14 demonstration to an ambitious bourgeois politician looking for a "militant" reputation and backed up by a fake-leftist outfit with proclivities to adventurism (YAWF) very nearly led to a disaster.

In the middle of the march, when the police changed the parade route, Owens and YAWF engaged in a dangerous macho display. From the top of a car Owens shouted: "We'll go down Boylston Street at any cost". With several thousand sandwiched into a two-block area, penned in by the police in front, a solid row of shops on one side and a steep dropoff onto a turnpike on the other, the front line of YAWF marshals attempted to break through the police lines. They were brutally beaten back, with a number of arrests and bloodied heads. Not just the SL, but also the SWP, on hearing of plans for the confrontation, held back its forces and marched separately. But it was the SWP's own capitulationist policies, leaving total control of the event in the hands of Owens, that set the stage for this potential bloodbath.

Boston as the center of the universe

The next phase of Pearlman's internal struggle, as presented in his article, was a discussion of organizational priorities by the SL leadership. He writes:

"In March 1975, a meeting of the Political Bureau [PB] was held, including Central Committee members and organizers from outside the New York national center, who were convened to decide organizational priorities for the coming period. I gave the report on Boston and advocated an upgrading of our intervention into the busing struggle. This viewpoint turned out to be a minority of one among the national leadership of the party.... Robertson said that Boston had no labor movement; the situation for Blacks was therefore hopeless...."



USSWP called on Boston black community to rely on the bourgeois army for protection against racist attacks. Bourgeois state can be class neutral, says Pearlman.

"The SL could not conceive of the Black community along with allies, with little or no union support to begin with, organizing to defend itself and carry out desegregation. Robertson's conclusion was that the task of the SL was to organize 'the Red Army in Detroit' and come back and 'smash the Boston racists.' This slogan became the watchword of this Political Bureau meeting, which formalized the liquidation of the SL's Black work in Boston. 'No more Black comrades to Boston'...."

Here Pearlman's Boston-centered approach to the party and to black work comes sharply into focus. As is often the case, the argument over priorities was expressed in decisions on concrete allocations of forces. The meeting's decisions included the projection of a weekly press that coming fall; the choice of local priorities -- which centered on the reinforcement of major industrial Midwest cities where the SL had a trade-union implantation in basic industries -- precluded the reinforcement of Boston. Pearlman has obviously garbled a good deal ("the Red Army in Detroit?") but he is correct that the meeting reaffirmed the perspective for Boston as a small local involved mainly in student-centered work.

Nevertheless, Pearlman's article in effect admits that the prospects for actually realizing labor/black defense on a mass scale were not hopeful: "Boston's economy is built around light manufacturing, finance, commerce, and universities. No major union with a significant Black membership that could rally prodesegregation forces exists. Only the small Meat Cutters union publicly supported desegregation. The Fire Fighters and Teamsters, bastions of white workers under the sway of racist forces, passed anti-busing motions ... the Massachusetts state AFL-

CIO passed an antibusing motion at its fall 1975 convention".

Truly the SWP is shameless. If the SL is "abstentionist" because it insisted that prospects for a small communist organization to affect Boston's poisoned racial situation were not hopeful, it must follow that the SWP, with its substantially larger forces (to say nothing of its presumably better line, in Pearlman's view) must have had a field day. Alas for Pearlman, he can make no such claim. The leadership which the SWP hailed and tailed led the so-called "mass pro-busing movement" straight into the arms of the Democrats and the cops. Two and a half years have passed since 14 December 1974 and the situation is worse than ever. The South Boston Marshals are stronger and black school children are still assaulted. The "mass movement" evaporated. The SWP's last hoped-for "mass action", scheduled for 24 April 1976, had to be canceled. The late, unlamented NSCAR began to consciously downplay Boston busing in favor of the South Africa issue, and in 1976 moved its national headquarters from Boston to New York.

Who abstained in the unions?

For us, though certainly not for cynics like Pearlman, perhaps the most serious charge made in the article is the imputation that the SL pursued different policies in public and internally. He asserts that the SL leadership characterized the Boston struggle as "hopeless" privately, while in public:

"the SL struggled, in print, for a 'Labor/Black Defense'. It attended NSCAR conferences and screamed about the betrayals of the SWP...."

This perverse distortion proceeds from Pearlman's parochial impatience, indignant that we did not posture that we could substitute ourselves for the broad mobilization of the organized labor movement and black organizations to defend busing. A historical example may help to illuminate Pearlman's fallacy. Trotsky called for the Communist and Socialist Parties to insurrect against Hitler's rise to power; in fact, the CP's default was the acid test which prompted Trotsky to revise his characterization of the Comintern. He castigated the mass workers parties for their betrayal, but did not call upon small organizations of revolutionaries to insurrect....

Pearlman's claim to the mantle of pro-busing advocate within the SL is also given the lie by the record of his trade-union work. Under the direction of the SL Trade Union Commission [TUC], Pearlman was active as an individual oppositionist in the teachers' union. The PB meeting which allegedly abandoned Boston blacks by refusing to reinforce the Boston local also authorized Pearlman to run for office in his union. Pearlman's impulse, however, was to downplay the busing question, focusing instead on a scheme for "one-to-one" quota hiring of minority teachers which, in the words of a TUC motion of 8 May 1975, "could be critically supported in the event of a vote in which all other choices beyond support or opposition had been eliminated (ie, a referendum on racism), and otherwise should be opposed with explanations and programmatic alternatives". The TUC was forced to admonish Pearlman that:

"Our position on busing and labor/black defense, and the need to link it to a systematic struggle against racism leading to class struggle behind the full sweep of our anti-capitalist program, must be the main theme of the Boston campaign. In particular, a sharp attack must be launched against the union bureaucracy for their open capitulation to racism."

As often happens to those who are sensitive only to the conveniences of the moment, Pearlman's opportunism refutes his claim that only he, and not the SL leadership, cared about the fight to defend school busing in Boston.

The dismal failure of the Boston liberal and black milieu to pose any perspective of real action in defense of busing independent of the Democratic Party, combined with the labor bureaucracy's craven capitulation to virulent white racism, left Boston blacks defenseless before the



Boston, 17 May 1975 - militant seamen from US National Maritime Union raise call for labour/black defence of school busing, black schoolchildren.

anti-busing onslaught. The so-called "mass movement" was simply coopted by the Democrats and its sole operative demand was the plea for "protection" by federal troops. The reformist SWP shared in the responsibility for this disastrous situation. In justifying the SWP's main line for Boston, the call for troops, Pearlman makes explicit these reformists' view of the capitalist state as effectively class-neutral:

"'Super-Marxists' often recall only Engels and Lenin's dictum that the state, in the last result, is 'special bodies of armed men' and that therefore the police and army are the 'arms of the ruling class.' They forget that under bourgeois democracy the state also 'mediates' and maneuvers between classes and does not massacre Blacks and workers in every circumstance. They also forget there are tactical differences between sections of the bourgeoisie that revolutionists must exploit."

On every major question the SL and SWP meet as enemies on the political battlefield, as Bolshevik against social democrat. This hostility is above all characterized by a counterposed program with regard to the bourgeois state, although the ex-Trotskyist SWP is usually not so explicit about its revisionism as in this passage. For Leninists, the state is an instrument of oppressive class rule, "a product and a manifestation of the irreconcilability of class antagonisms" (*State and Revolution*). But for the social democrat it is an institution that stands above the class struggle and mediates it: thus the reformists' program is to pressure the state to side with the workers and oppressed. The petty-bourgeois ideologists, says Lenin, "'correct' Marx in such a way as to make it appear that the state is an organ for the reconciliation of classes". It is significant that in order to attack the SL's opposition to the call for federal troops to Boston Pearlman is compelled to "correct" the ABCs of Leninism. He certainly proves, if nothing else, that he is no "Super-Marxist".

Pearlman thinks that supposed "socialists" should parrot the working people's suicidal illusions in the capitalist state; when "concrete experiences" demonstrate the cops' real role, then the "vanguard" can follow the masses in repudiating the attempted bloc with the imperialist army! This is "leadership", SWP style.

Though Pearlman's deepgoing estrangement from the SL program while in our organization led him into opposition over numerous questions, from tenant organizing to Ireland, he never approached the consistent reformism exemplified by the SWP and its "federal troops" betrayal. At the Black Commission held during an SL Central Committee plenum on 15 August 1975, Pearlman took exception to the Black Commission motion, which stated:

"We support the self-defense of blacks when
Continued on page six

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Pearlman . . .

Continued from page five

confronted with racist attacks upon [their] community. The effective suppression of racist terrorist organizations within their own communal base requires an integrated military force based upon the labor movement. To imply under the slogan of black self-defense the possibility of black military intervention into white racist areas is adventurist and a provocation to race riots in Boston today."

This motion was the basis for *WV's* statement, which Pearlman quotes, that "only the social power of the trade unions and the presence of significant numbers of whites among the defenders provide a means for unlocking the intensifying racial polarization confronting Boston's black people".

Pearlman's counter-motion, calling for "defensive activity by [black self-defense] organizations on or by buses going to predominantly white areas and in front of schools in such areas", was an exercise in tactically adventurist voluntarism. In fact, there was an organization in Boston at that time which was courageously carrying out substitutionist attempts along the lines suggested by Pearlman, but it was *not* the SWP. It would not suit Pearlman's present purposes to solidarize in hindsight with the anti-racist confrontationism of Progressive Labor [PL], but Pearlman's uncritical reference to the showdown at Carson Beach [a "Black community picnic", in Pearlman's words, to desegregate a South Boston beach, which turned into a melee between rampaging racists and leftist confrontationists] (in which PL was heavily involved), like his earlier approving comments about YAWF and its provocative tactics on December 14, betray his real sympathies at that time....

Pearlman's strutting and fretting cannot conceal the SWP's amusing dilemma: it does not really have a line on the black question! When the militant black nationalist mood held undisputed sway among black youth, the SWP proclaimed it unequivocally "progressive" and rushed to help break the 1968 NYC teachers' strike in the name of "community control" of the schools. Consistency would demand opposition to school integration and thus to busing, and indeed black nationalists, like Baraka's Congress of Afrikan Peoples, oppose busing as an attack on the all-black schools which they see as their potential bailiwicks for patronage.

But the SWP styles itself the champion of busing. Indeed, the decomposition of the black movement assisted by the failure of the SWP to fight to break black militants away from separatist utopianism and toward a class perspective left the SWP with little to tail except the pro-busing liberalism embodied in the stodgy pro-Democratic Party black "movement" exemplified by the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People]. So the SWP must straddle the fence between "community control" and busing.

Thus an article on Boston in the 27 September 1974 *Militant* hid behind the call for voluntary busing:

"The SWP candidates have spoken out in defense of the right of Black students to attend any school they choose and to use busing as a tool to win better education.

"The socialist candidates have also spoken out in defense of the right of the Black community to maintain all-Black schools where it is felt that this is the road to quality education."

The article skirts the issue which drew the lines in Boston in blood: court-ordered busing. Its

line is, in blackface, but a short step from the racist vigilantes' battlecry: "No forced busing!" Meanwhile, the campaign statement of Willie Mae Reid (*Militant*, 15 November 1974) *dropped* any mention of "community control" or other sops to the black nationalists, simply trumpeting the call for "desegregation" in the schools and throughout society.

Pearlman wisely confines himself to proving ad nauseum that the SWP is against the SL program of revolutionary integrationism, without bothering to explain what his party is really *for*. But he runs up against the problem again when he tries to explain why the SWP supports racially separate political units (sometimes) in the US ("community control") while opposing them in South Africa (apartheid and bantustans). Why does Pearlman believe that a separate black government with its own police would be good in Harlem or Roxbury but is bad in the Transkei? "Self-determination" for America's ghettos could only produce the same conditions as in South Africa's bantustans (compounds for episodically surplus labor run by black puppets). The SWP social democrats have nothing to offer American blacks except NAACP liberalism and/or the reactionary utopian perspective of "community control" of their impoverished inner-city slums.

In embracing "consistent democracy" as the highest (read: only) principle for "socialists", the SWP rejects the elementary Marxist tenet that "right can never be higher than the economic structure of society and the cultural development conditioned thereby". In contrast, the SL fights to link the struggle for democratic rights for blacks to the material leverage of black and white workers expressed through the trade unions. It is only those, like Pearlman, who despair of the revolutionary potential of the organized workers movement mobilized around a class-struggle program, who dismiss the battle to break the unions from the racist, pro-capitalist status quo as abstract or "abstentionist".

Uranium . . .

Continued from page two

demonstrators, and even television cameramen, and made some forty arrests during several nights of protest against the loading of yellowcake at the White Bay container terminal. We demand this wanton state repression be stopped and the charges against the arrested demonstrators be dropped immediately!

But unlike every fake-Marxist organisation in Australia, we refuse to clamber aboard the anti-uranium bandwagon. Marxists do not subscribe to the reactionary view that setting the clock back will make the world a happier place. Meanwhile the pro-Moscow Socialist Party has buried its erstwhile support for the exploitation of uranium for "peaceful purposes" under the verbiage of Stalinist pacifism and has virtually blended in with the ecology-faddist CPA and, more germanely, the ACTU/ALP "lefts". But the most recent converts to this middle-class protest movement are those notorious opponents of "middle-class protest", the political bandits of the Socialist Labour League (SLL).

A recent "Discussion document submitted by the Central Committee of the SLL" (*Workers News*, 18 August) attacks the equally fake-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) for seeing "the anti-uranium movement as another single-issue protest bandwagon". True enough. The SLL also correctly denounces the "revisionist-Luddite", "anti-working class, anti-Marxist position ... succinctly expressed in the revisionists' rallying call to 'keep uranium in the ground'", which the SWP justifies by claiming that "uranium is a deadly threat to human life". How does the SLL then justify its "opposition to uranium mining"? With its own brand of anti-Marxist pacifism: "for imperialism the mining of uranium is a question of major importance because it is linked to its preparations for war...."

By this logic the SLL should demand a total ban on the mining of iron ore and the production of petrochemicals -- not insignificant components of the imperialists' war machine. Moreover, as the SWP astutely observes in a reply entitled "Sectarials discover the uranium movement" (*Direct Action*, 8 September):

"The SLL Central Committee appears unaware of one fairly important fact: The imperialists *already* have quite a large arsenal of nuclear weapons -- enough, by most calculations, to kill the entire population of the earth two or three times."

The SWP is no more averse to pacifism than the SLL; it is simply more sensible. And it takes little sense to understand that a halt to uranium mining in Australia has nothing to do with preventing imperialist war. The imperialist powers cannot be disarmed and war averted by anything short of the international proletarian revolution. But unlike the SWP, communists also recognise that every resource and technology, not just uranium, is potentially deadly in this ir-

rational system. If the bourgeoisie cannot be entrusted to safely dispose of nuclear waste products -- and manifestly it cannot -- neither can it be entrusted to solve any of the other technological problems inherent in advanced industrial society. For the working class the question is not whether to mine uranium, but how to advance to a civilisation which will use it in the interests of humanity

The uranium controversy is peripheral to the class struggle. But class confrontations can occur over peripheral issues. Though the bureaucracy's unwillingness to even mobilise an effective defence of the organisations upon which it rests is a strong indication that it will not engage the Fraser government over uranium, should it develop communists would not stand apart from such a confrontation. It would pose the immediate necessity of defending the union movement, reversing the government's anti-union offensive and smashing the penal powers and all other anti-union legislation. Beyond that the workers' just hatred of the profit-hungry mining tycoons could be channelled into a demand for their nationalisation without compensation. But whether or not a confrontation develops, the principal task for communists remains exposing and replacing the labour bureaucracy which derails the workers class struggle against capitalism. ■

USSR . . .

Continued from page three

Rather it is part and parcel of the US SWP's unstinting efforts to ingratiate itself with liberal anti-communist petty-bourgeois layers. While the Spartacist League/US was, in 1965, demanding that the "Soviet nuclear shield must cover China, North Vietnam", the US SWP was undergoing its definitive degeneration into reformism with, among other things, its unqualified embracing of the liberal slogan of "Stop the War in Vietnam Now" (see [US] *Spartacist* no 5, November-December 1965). Since then the US SWP, and its international satellites, have carried the logic of their social-democratic appetites through to a consistent reformist practice: uncritically tailing pro-imperialist Soviet dissidents, promoting illusions in the "neutrality" of the bourgeois state, renouncing revolutionary violence *in principle*, and, now, repudiating in practice defence of the gains of the October Revolution.

The CL's contempt for principles and the SWP's real line on Soviet defencism was demonstrated by the recent "joint Trotskyist campaign" in Sydney-area municipal elections, which denounced the "totalitarian bureaucracies" of the Soviet Union and China without a word about military defence. The soon-to-be-realised logic of the CL's willingness to reconcile itself with Hansen's unabashed reformism is that, as part of the SWP, it too will find itself in the open embrace of counterrevolutionary liberalism. ■

OTR . . .

Continued from page eight

in Europe or into neighboring countries, they sought to deepen their understanding of the Chilean fiasco and broaden their international understanding in discussions first with the USec and then the OCRFI. However, they soon discovered that the Trotskyist credentials of these self-proclaimed "Fourth Internationals" were false. The USec, which posthumously declared that the UP was explicitly *not* a popular front, and now had *two* Chilean sympathizing groups, refused to allow discussion of the Allende regime at its Tenth World Congress, since both international factions saw no reason to expose the bankruptcy of their local supporters. While the OCRFI had called the UP a popular front, on the other hand, its Chilean groups (it also had two!) either did not make this characterization or accused the Allende government, rather than the workers parties in it, of "reformism" and betraying. Meanwhile, in France the OCI was calling for a vote to the presidential candidate of the popular-front Union of the Left.

The OTR first came into contact with the international Spartacist tendency at a September 11 protest meeting on the first anniversary of the coup. They read *Cuadernos Marxistas* no 3 (a collection of articles from *Spartacist* and *WV [Workers Vanguard]* on "Chile: Lessons of the Popular Front", which was published for the express purpose of seeking out Chilean exile groups attempting to draw a balance sheet on the UP), and one week later declared their fundamental agreement with the iSt analysis and programmatic conclusions. But as internationalists, both parties agreed on the need for discussion of all fundamental questions facing revolutionary Marxists. In addition to rejecting the USec and OCRFI, agreement was quickly reached that the Bolivian POR of Guillermo Lora had acted as cen-

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trists in both 1952 and 1971, bearing a fundamental responsibility for derailing a revolution; and that Argentina's veteran pseudo-Trotskyist chameleon Nahuel Moreno (who has gone from Peronism to Guevarism to social democracy) had definitively become reformist, committed to the maintenance of bourgeois rule.

Several questions became the subject of continuing discussion between the iSt and the OTR, including Cuba, guerrillaism and social democracy in particular. On the first question, after studying *Cuadernos Marxistas* no 2 on "Cuba and Marxist Theory" (*Marxist Bulletin* no 8 in English), the OTR comrades reached agreement with the Spartacist analysis of this key application of Trotskyism on the Russian question, as reflected in Part IV of the "Declaration of Fraternal Relations Between the international Spartacist tendency and the Organización Trotskista Revolucionaria of Chile" [*Australasian Spartacist* no 33, July 1976].

The OTR's position that the social-democratic parties were qualitatively more bourgeois than the Stalinists proved more difficult to resolve. The national/continental isolation of the Chilean ostensible Trotskyist movement -- which was the responsibility of the fake "Internationals", who did little or nothing to integrate or politically educate their various "sections" -- played an important role. It is a fact that in Latin America all of the parties associated with the Second International are in fact *bourgeois* parties (Chilean Radicals, Venezuelan Accion Democratica, Peruvian APRA, Puerto Rican PPD, etc), with mildly populist traits and generally strongly pro-American foreign policy. However, after becoming familiar with the social-democratic and labor parties of western Europe and in discussions on the tactical implications of characterizing social democracy as "bourgeois, with a working-class base", the OTR agreed upon the description of the mass social-democratic parties of the advanced capitalist countries as reformist, ie "bourgeois workers parties", to use Lenin's words.

From Guevarism to Trotskyism

The most important and difficult area of disagreement was the question of guerrillaism, for here there were at first sharp differences, and it was a question directly related to the OTR's origins. One of the first accusations raised against the leadership of the Chilean USec section by the tendency which later became the OTR was that of failing to implement the guerrillaist policies of the Ninth World Congress resolution on armed struggle. Like many Pabloists, they thought that Guevara himself had broken or would break, albeit empirically, from Stalinism. Although the OTR rejected Guevarist focoism and Tupamaro-style urban guerrilla warfare, it nevertheless insisted on the necessity of "irregular war" carried out by the working class -- in other words, the application of guerrillaism to the particular milieu in which the OTR was working. The question was not abstract, for the OTR counted in its ranks leaders of miners for whom "irregular" skirmishes with the police and army were a periodic occurrence, as well as former Miristas and Tupamaros.

In contrast, *Spartacist* had written as early as 1967 that "Guerrillaism today is a petty-bourgeois reaction to the absence and delay of proletarian revolution".

Beginning from these two sharply divergent positions, several lengthy discussions were held over a period of months, in the course of which the OTR came to reject its previous position. Talk of irregular warfare carried out by the working class as a strategic perspective was an adaptation to the "trade-unionist" conceptions of a semi-proletarian layer; the key sectors of the industrial working class cannot abandon the factories and large mines and take to the hills without losing their base of social power and ultimately risking the loss of their proletarian class character, degenerating into banditry and/or blending into the peasantry (this actually happened to the Communist workers and party cadre in China who fled from the coastal cities to initiate rural guerrilla warfare in 1927-31). Thus Lenin's support for partisan tactics in 1906-07 came in the context of what he believed to be a temporary defeat of the 1905 Revolution; he never considered guerrilla warfare as anything more than a defensive measure -- a form of strategic retreat -- or an adjunct to regular military warfare, and certainly not a strategy for socialist revolution.

Moreover, the Bolsheviks always sought to organize military struggle through the mass organizations of the working class (soviets, factory committees), in which the party played or sought to play a leading role, in contrast to the Guevarist conception of waging guerrilla struggle through a "professional" party/army -- eg, the Argentine ERP (People's Revolutionary Army, an arm of the Guevarist PRT).

Guerrillaist conceptions had a real social importance in the Chilean "far left", above all via the MIR but also among pseudo-Trotskyist groups which tailed after them. The MIR, for example,

did not call on the trade unions or later the *cordones industriales* (district coordinating bodies of factory committees) to arm the workers; instead it created artificial "comandos comunales", in practice subordinated to the MIR, which were supposed to train selected workers in the use of arms.

Consequently, when the September 11 coup came, the industrial proletariat was left without weapons. Many gathered in their factories to await arms long promised by the Communist and Socialist union bureaucrats, which never arrived. And despite a few acts of bravado by MIR leaders,



Castro with Allende.

which simply drew heavier attacks against some of the more combative sectors of the working class, their basic attitude was to treat the military takeover as an inevitable step paving the way to guerrilla war. The OTR, like all the guerrillaist tendencies, saw no possibility of resisting the Pinochet coup; but unlike those who seek to reconstruct the decimated MIR, or the USec majority which is mainly concerned to cover its own tracks of total support to Guevarist guerrillaism, the OTR has drawn the lessons of the terrible defeat represented by September 11 and proclaimed the bankruptcy of guerrillaism in all its varieties.

Leninism on the organization question

In Chile the OTR lacked Leninist organizational norms: the definition of membership was fluid, it never had a party press, etc. This organizational practice was naturally maintained in exile, where the pressures toward a "circle spirit" among a small band of survivors are enormous. Nevertheless, as the OTR evolved toward the Spartacist tendency this, equally naturally, led to internal struggles and splits. These are, however, difficult to resolve without assimilating and applying the Leninist norms of democratic centralism. It was problems centering around the organization question that for some months held up the fusion perspective that had been voted in May 1976 and which dominated the activity of the OTR in the last year. As Cde Ivan of the OTR put it in a presentation to a meeting of the International Executive Committee (IEC) of the iSt at the 1977 European summer camp:

"The OTR was an organization in exile and dispersed over various continents. Basically there were two questions which impeded fusion last year. One was the organizational weakness of the OTR, which as a result led us to a federative concept of the party. But behind this was an important political point, and that is that the OTR hoped to unite its central cadre in Europe. We had difficulties in bringing about a joint development of all our cadre, and the European nucleus did not have a Leninist methodology to overcome this problem."

The difficulties centered on the struggle to win over an important member of the leadership who had only recently arrived from Latin America. Finding himself cut off from a base and confined to the limitations of a small Trotskyist propaganda nucleus, this comrade began elaborating plans behind the backs of the leadership; acts of organizational indiscipline soon led to an open political break, as he failed to defend the OTR program publicly, breaking explicit instructions. As the OTR reporter noted in his presentation to the IEC:

"... in the final analysis Cde Blas presented a perspective which was counterposed to Trotskyism and to Lenin's concept of the party, basing himself on the argument that we can't break our ties with the masses.... Thus in practice he was incapable of defending the entirety of the communist program.... "A few days ago this process came to an end,

and in a task carried out in full consultation with the comrades from the International we formalized Blas' split from the Trotskyist program.... For the OTR, the most important thing in this process was that the break with our past methodology opened the path to genuine Leninism."

An Iskra perspective

The OTR now faces tremendous opportunities and responsibilities. The Chilean bonapartist junta, lacking a significant social base of support and having been unable to atomize the proletariat and wipe out its leadership, will not last even as long as the Brazilian military dictatorship. In the meantime, those leftists who survived the bloodbath have been concentrated in large numbers in exile centers in Europe and Latin America. Here there is an extraordinary opportunity to reach tens of thousands of committed militants and to challenge the left to seriously draw a balance sheet of the Allende regime. This is by no means limited to Chilean militants, for the Chilean experience has global importance and is *decisive* for the formation of revolutionary nuclei in the key countries of Latin America.

Among those who reject the popular front, Stalinism, social democracy and guerrillaism a dialogue could be initiated. Through polemical combat the superiority of the Trotskyist analysis and program can be demonstrated, and the core of an authentic Leninist propaganda group forged and politically prepared for the tasks which will face it when the bloody Pinochet dictatorship falls and the crucial battle to break the working class from the reformists begins in earnest.

Key to this perspective is the question of the press. In the coming period the principal voice for the OTR will be the Spanish edition of *Spartacist*, to be published three times a year, whose editorial board now includes members of the OTR. This is intended to be an *Iskra*-type publication, including polemics and analyses directed primarily at the Latin American exile milieu and to leftists in the Iberian peninsula. In addition the OTR will work toward the initiation of its own press, beginning in a modest format and with irregular frequency. Along with the struggle to build a solid, programmatically united and politically homogeneous organization in exile will naturally come the difficult task of attempting to get this press into the hands of the militants of the Chilean working class wherever they are.

In all this, as a member of a democratic-centralist international tendency, the OTR will count on the full political support and all possible material assistance of the iSt. But there is no denying that the demands are enormous and our total resources qualitatively inadequate. However, the OTR has an important political capital which cannot be minimized: unlike the pseudo-Trotskyists, it represents a coherent and powerful political line which was, tragically, proven correct by the demise of the deadly popular front. Chile 1970-73 has had an impact on the political development of the current revolutionary generation similar to that of the Spanish Civil War in the late 1930s. The Trotskyists who warned that the popular front was leading to a bloody massacre should recall their warnings to educate those who did not heed them at the time but desire to avoid a repeat of the holocaust. Yet Mandel's USec and the OCI's "Organizing Committee" *hide* their Chilean groups rather than highlighting them -- and for good reason: *they did not issue such warnings but instead apologized for the popular front.*

We are still weak as a political force, but the strength and promise of the OTR/iSt fusion -- what enabled these militants to cross the tremendous gulf from Pabloism, workerism, Guevarism to Trotskyism -- comes from the fact that it is built on fundamental Marxist principles:

"To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's program on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour for action arrives -- these are the rules of the Fourth International." ■

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**Class opposition to popular fronts —
key to revolutionary regroupment**

Chilean OTR fuses with Spartacist tendency!

The 1977 European summer camp of the international Spartacist tendency (iSt) witnessed a fusion which is unique in the history of the iSt and of considerable interest and significance to would-be revolutionists throughout the world. The Organizacion Trotskista Revolucionaria (OTR) of Chile united with the iSt, and is now the Chilean sympathizing section of our common tendency. While the proportions on both sides are modest, this fusion represents a ringing affirmation and confirmation of Trotsky's 1935 remark that: "In reality, the Popular Front is the main question of Proletarian class strategy for this epoch". The OTR and iSt met on the common terrain of militant class opposition to bourgeois popular frontism, and it was by generalizing this position of proletarian independence to all major international questions that a joining of our forces became possible and necessary.

For the iSt this fusion marks a significant extension of our tendency, as it is the first Latin American section. It thus represents the addition of an important body of revolutionary experience to a movement previously limited to sections in North America, Europe and Australasia. For the OTR it signifies the overcoming of national isolation and the culmination of its break with Pabloism begun some years before. While holding firm to their opposition to popular frontism, the Chilean comrades have proven capable of uncompromisingly reevaluating their past views in the light of international experience, the indispensable precondition for assimilating authentic Leninism. For anyone familiar with the continental parochialism and rampant revisionism of Latin American "Trotskyism", this is a tremendous achievement.

But the central significance of the OTR/iSt fusion is to underline the Trotskyist analysis of the popular front, the tying of the working masses to "progressive" capitalists -- or even "phantom" capitalists (provincial lawyers and the like) when the real bourgeoisie in its entirety has staked its existence on the triumph of naked reaction -- with the purpose of preventing a proletarian uprising against all wings of the bourgeois class enemy. A tragically prophetic article in [US] *Spartacist* in the fall of 1970 warned that the Allende coalition, the Unidad Popular (UP), was a popular front such as in France, Spain and Chile during the 1930s, and must be resolutely opposed by proletarian revolutionists. At a time when millions of Chileans and leftists throughout the world were hailing the "companionero presidente" and talking of a second Cuba, we wrote: "Any 'critical support' to the Allende coalition is class treason, paving the way for a bloody defeat for the Chilean work-

ing people when domestic reaction, abetted by international imperialism, is ready".

In reality, this seemingly prescient statement was neither especially original nor did it require a crystal ball. We were simply repeating the lesson of Spain, acting as any Leninist party should, as the memory of the working class. It would seem to be the ABC of Trotskyism, yet every other international tendency which claims that heritage managed to obscure or directly deny the popular-front character of the Allende regime.

Within Chile, the groups to the left of the Communist and Socialist parties were disoriented by the 1970 UP election victory. The most notorious case was that of the Castroite MIR (Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria -- Movement of the Revolutionary Left) which flip-flopped from guerrillaist opposition to participation in elections on principle ("fusil, no elecciones!") to "critically" supporting Allende. Even those who made a claim to represent Trotskyism conciliated the UP, terming the new government "reformist". But there was a small group within the Chilean "Trotskyist" orbit, principally made up of trade unionists, which was driven by its unbending defense of the workers' interests to the understanding that the UP was a popular front that must be directly opposed. It was this nucleus which later became the Organizacion Trotskista Revolucionaria, and which in 1974 summed up the lessons of the Unidad Popular as follows:

"To say that the character of the UP was reformist means being an accomplice to the betrayals committed.... Thus the UP must be included in the list of the old popular fronts, the model designed to betray the working class." ("Una derrota politica y la necesidad de un balance")

In short, the fusion of the international Spartacist tendency and the Chilean OTR represents the joining of the current which from afar uniquely predicted and warned against the tragic course of the Allende government, with those who directly confronted with the popularity of the UP (and experiencing its deadly consequences) refused to compromise or abandon their defense of their class. As the popular front is indeed the central issue facing Leninists in our times, and Chile is the recent burning example of the consequences of popular frontism, the unification of our organizations should be studied by all serious Marxists.

Unlike the other fusions entered into by the international Spartacist tendency, this was a case of the coming together of two tendencies that already had the same decisive programmatic postulates rather than of some centrist current breaking loose and being won over to the positions of the iSt. The proletarian revolutionary opposition of the Chilean OTR to the deadly Allende popular front was already decisive. But the OTR, operating in a much more local political/cultural milieu than the iSt, needed to undertake a great deal of testing of the international waters to verify that the treacherous activities of the local representatives of Ernest Mandel's "United Secretariat" (USec) and the "Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International" (OCRFI) of the French OCI and the Bolivian POR were representative. The fusion was not easy to arrive at; rather, it was one in which key prerequisites already existed, yet it was difficult in consummation as the two parties, testing each other out in many ways and repetitively, came from very different particular terrains.

To understand the fusion process it is necessary first to see the OTR as it was in Chile prior to the coup. The group, which had formed within



"In reality, the Popular Front is the main question of proletarian class strategy for this epoch. It also offers the best criterion for the difference between Bolshevism and Menshevism." (Leon Trotsky)

the USec sympathizing organization, the TRO (Revolutionary October Tendency), began essentially as a "workerist" opposition to the popular front. It also objected, although in an empirical fashion, to the TRO's longstanding policy of "deep entrism" in the Socialist Party (PS), and subsequently withdrew its supporters from the PS. The final break came over an unprincipled fusion of the TRO with the group of L Vitale to form the PSR (Revolutionary Socialist Party, the "official" -- for a while -- USec sympathizing section). For submitting a document against the fusion the future OTR tendency was expelled from the new organization (and its document suppressed).

With members who had been leaders of the National Copper Workers Federation and the support of other miners' leaders, the tendency which became the OTR consistently opposed the Allende government's criminal policy of the "battle for production" -- a cynical slogan for speed-up -- because the self-proclaimed "people's government" did not change the fact that Chile remained a capitalist country. When Allende launched bombastic campaigns for "worker participation" -- a scheme to induce the proletariat to acquiesce in its own exploitation -- leaders of the OTR in the nationalized copper mining sector counterposed the slogan of workers control, whose aim was to destroy, not reform, the bourgeois state. In contrast, the MIR and the left wing of the PS, including especially sectors with a certain "Trotskyoid" aura as well as Castro himself, supported the UP's "participation" projects. (Michel Pablo himself made a special trip to Chile to laud this hoax, and dedicated a book about it to his friend, Socialist economics minister Pedro Vuskovic.)

After the bloody Pinochet coup, when the comrades of the OTR were forced to flee into exile

Continued on page six

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