

Australasian

Spartacist



Supplement

7 June 1975

A REPLY TO HEALYITE SLANDERS

The countless charges recently laid by international Healyism that its opponents in the workers movement are decisively influenced by the political police of the bourgeois state usher in a new stage in the degeneration of a tendency which has long deserved to be characterised as one of political bandits. The Healyite "International Committee of the Fourth International" (IC) has spread similar slanders in the past, but we now see the consistent and systematic (rather than merely occasional) use of the vilest kind of smear tactics -- the labelling of political opponents as agents of the police. This development in Healyism has reached Australia with the current visit here of Gerry Healy himself.

The editorial of the current issue of *Workers News* (5 June 1975), organ of the Socialist Labour League (SLL), the Australian section of the IC, headed "The danger of provocation", concerns the Spartacist League:

"This is a stern warning. The Spartacist tendency will use handouts from whatever quarter to satisfy their factional hysteria."

This claim is "proved" thus:

"... more than 3000 documents showing the penetration of the Pabloite Socialist Workers Party by the FBI in the United States, has revealed the role played by the Spartacist League in the COINTELPRO operation which the late Edgar Hoover launched against the SWP from 1961."

Even if it had been fooled by the FBI, this would not necessarily prove that the Spartacist League was politically bankrupt, any more than the fact that a Czarist secret police agent was on its Central Committee proves the Bolshevik Party was bankrupt. It is in fact possible for an honest and healthy revolutionary party, despite its scrupulous care, to be duped by the State. But the SLL fails to supply its readers with details of the "role" the Spartacists are supposed to have played, whether this was conscious, criminally negligent, or merely blamelessly unwitting. The New York office of the Spartacist Tendency, however, yesterday completed an examination of the relevant documents, and has given us the following information by telephone:

The Facts about Spartacist and the FBI

(1) The SLL's quotation in *Workers News* from an FBI memorandum (to which they attribute the date 14 October 1966) is accurate (although the actual date of the memorandum was 9 April 1965). The quotation, the meaning of which is not altogether clear, from the memorandum reads:

"Prior to the November 1964 general election, the Newark office [of the FBI] was authorised to prepare and send throw aways to selected individuals and to the SWP weekly newspaper 'The Militant', indicating that an independent committee had been formed to elect Lawrence Paul Stewart, Negro SWP candidate for United States Senator from New Jersey.

"These throwaways charged that the SWP had not helped the Negroes and the throwaways were especially designed to set forth arguments known to have been put forward by Stewart. (deleted passage) [It should be noted as a passage was deleted by the FBI, what goes before is not necessarily connected with what follows] -- 'Material prepared by the New York office [i.e., presumably, not the material mentioned above which was prepared in Newark] has appeared in 'Spartacist' the publication of the Revolutionary tendency expelled from the SWP.

"It is further known that James Robertson, a former SWP functionary expelled by the SWP, is now the leader of the Revolutionary tendency, believes material mailed to him by the New York office is valid and has accepted this material at its face value and has used it in its efforts to undermine the SWP."

(2) The questionable accuracy of the FBI's comments (relied upon by the Healyites in their attacks on the Spartacist tendency) can be judged by their error in describing James Robertson as "a former SWP functionary".

(3) As far as can be ascertained the Spartacist League was in fact fooled by these FBI dirty tricks *on only one occasion*. It appears that a four-line extract from a longer letter, published in *Spartacist* number 2 (July-August 1964) under the heading "Letters Received: Some responses to Our First Issue" originated in the FBI. *This is a complete copy of what we published from the FBI:*

"New York, N.Y.

"I saw 'Spartacist' and it opened my eyes. I'm too much committed to get out and join you, but believe me there are more than a few of us inside supporters. You may be interested to learn... [There followed information internal to the "United Secretariat of the Fourth International" which we did *not* publish]

"Comradely,
"The Insider"

(4) The Spartacist tendency, also in 1964, was sent other material in the COINTELPRO program intended to discredit SWPers involved in the defence of some anti-racist activists in Monroe, North Carolina. (The representatives of Healyism in the United States received exactly the same material.) Our *only* "use" of this material was to forward photostat copies to the SWP, with the annotation:

"We seem to have landed on somebody's 'hate the SWP' list. You people running the Party have given us good reason to despise you for your expulsions, but we don't go for libel, either, so we thought we should warn you of it."

It would appear that the only success that the FBI has had in the matter is to give the Healyites material with which to manufacture a vile and baseless libel against the Spartacist League. Unproved accusations that sections of the workers movement serve the bourgeois police aid only the bourgeoisie. It is a function of the political police to artificially encourage dissension in the workers movement and vigilance must be exercised to ensure they are not able to cut across the necessary struggle for revolutionary politics. The SLL could stage nothing better to warm the hearts of the FBI, ASIO and other centres of political reaction, than this irresponsible and despicable cop-mongering. It can be well documented that a most valued technique of the cops is to create a climate of mutual suspicion in the left, to create the belief that "there's an agent behind every mail box".

The Case of Bala Tampoe -- a question of integrity

Perhaps the aspect of the Healyite smear campaign most damaging to them is that, despite their accusations that the Spartacist League is sufficiently unscrupulous about its sources as to be a conduit for the material of provocateurs, *they find it possible to use Spartacist material against their other opponents.*

In *Spartacist* number 21 (published in the northern "Fall" of 1972 by the Spartacist League of the United States) we printed some documents revealing serious violations of communist morality on the part of Bala Tampoe, leader of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (Revolutionary), Ceylon section of the "United Secretariat of the Fourth International" (reprinted in Australia by the Communist League and the Socialist Workers League). What we published were records of the "Ninth World Congress" of the United Secretariat, specifically the report of its commission on Ceylon, the minority report of the Indian delegate who was a member of that commission, and an extract from the minutes of the congress. We received the reports from Edmund Samarakkody, leader of the Revolutionary Samasamaja Party (now the Revolutionary Workers Party), which had broken away from the LSSP(R) and was developing a relationship of close fraternity with the Spartacist tendency. As comrade Samarakkody said "At the end of the deliberations on the Ceylon question the Praesidium collected the copies of the report ... I however had with me my copies ... made by me from the originals." Thus although we knew these damning documents were authentic, we could not *prove* it, and were forced to rely on the authority of comrade Samarakkody's reputation for integrity and our own. Immediately after we published these documents the Healyites used them to attack the United Secretariat, eventually admitting their source. Apparently the Healyites are not above using material which is guaranteed only by the integrity of the source from

which it emanates, the SL, whose integrity they now slander claiming it is willing to "use handouts from whatever quarter to satisfy their factional hysteria"!

Healy's model of proletarian morality is matched in this matter by his rival imposter-claimants to the mantle of the Fourth International, the "United Secretariat". They simply denied the whole thing. In their definitive treatment of the question, "Ceylon and the Healy School of Falsification" by Jaya Vithana, published in *Intercontinental Press* 19 March 1973, they claim that neither the Ceylon Commission of their "World Congress", nor the reports of that commission ever existed! "In fact the USFI appointed no such commission. Nor is there such a report or reports." Milady doth protest too much. All original copies of the reports may have been destroyed, but the minutes of the Congress were widely circulated in the US Socialist Workers Party (SWP) *International Information Bulletin* No 9 July 1969 "(Published as a fraternal courtesy to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International)". This widely available document, the authenticity of which is beyond question, reports the setting up of the Ceylon Commission, noted a report from it and a discussion, and repeated a five-part motion emanating from it and summarising the conclusions of the majority report. Thus, as we have said before "Vithana stands condemned as a liar by the official minutes of his own organisation!"

The Healyite "case" against Joseph Hansen - A question of smear

The outrageous and unfounded slanders of Healyism against the Spartacist tendency follow directly upon the publication by the British Healyites of "Security and the Fourth International", which is republished as a pamphlet in Australia by the Socialist Labour League. The purpose of this document is to imply that all the enemies of Healyism more or less directly serve the political police of the bourgeoisie. Central to the pamphlet is Joseph Hansen ("theoretician" of the SWP). By patching together fragments of the history of perils and tragedies suffered in the past by Trotskyism as a result of the activities of the political police, together with deliberately vague suggestions regarding Hansen's role at the time of Trotsky's assassination by the GPU, and a distorted account of the "revelations" of an ASIO hireling (subsequently established to be mentally unstable) who spent some time in the Melbourne Branch of the SWL, the Healyites have produced a document which systematically insinuates that Hansen is a police agent. These brave cowards of the International Committee are far too "principled" to make their charges explicit, but instead infuse their pamphlet with innuendo, and conclude it with the sentence "The International Committee is recommending to the Sixth World Congress [ie, being held by the IC] that a special fund be started to provide resources for a thoroughgoing investigation into security in the Fourth International and the role of individuals such as Hansen."

Now, Hansen must be exposed before the workers movement and condemned for his renegacy from revolutionary politics. He is certainly no paragon of proletarian morality and, indeed shares responsibility as the editor of *Intercontinental Press* for the publication of Jaya Vithana's lies in the Bala Tampoe case. However, no evidence whatever has been presented to support the disgraceful charges of complicity with the bourgeois cops which have been implied against him by the Healyites. Indeed, they serve only to denigrate the importance of a political struggle against Hansen, which it seems is the last thing Healy wants or is able to do. The charges are a cop-out. But they are not charges against Hansen alone, for Healyism has developed the doctrine that all its political opponents are "politically suspect", that is, suspected of being decisively influenced by the bourgeois police and therefore presumably, outside the workers movement.

Under the sub-head "Politically suspect" on page 23 of "Security and the Fourth International" we find:

"Hansen's explicit defence of that international fraternity of Mensheviks -- Tate, Robertson, Thornett, Wohlforth and Pablo -- and his ingrained and remarkable indifference to police surveillance, combined with his deep hatred for the leadership of the Workers Revolutionary Party, confirms the extremely reactionary and politicaly [sic] suspect nature of the Socialist Workers Party leadership. Hansen's slanderous attacks on the International Committee in general and Comrade Healy in particular are an expression of the morbid cynicism and class hatred of the reactionary American middle class and the imperialist bourgeoisie against the conscious efforts of the most advanced sections of the international working class to build revolutionary parties to smash capitalist rule and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat.

"The essence of this fight today is to defend the democratic centralist structure of the party from its detractors and, in this way, *resist the infiltration of police agents and provocateurs* and prepare the party and the working class for its historic tasks. *This struggle is inseparably interwoven* with the political exposure of the slanderous lies, half-truths and deceit of Hansen, not to mention his obscene sneers at the justified and essential security precautions of the movement." (emphasis added)

"Politically suspect"?! The Spartacist League declares that there is *nothing* suspect about the SWP's politics whatever. It's all out in the open -- they're a pack of craven and shameless reformists! The only meaning of the phrase "politically suspect" is to imply that the SWP is an organisation of cops, an accusation which combines a certain stupidity with a contempt for the intelligence of the workers movement and ruthless malice towards its need for principled political struggle.

Democracy in the workers movement

The development of the doctrine of the "politically suspect" nature of all opponents is a response to the difficulties faced by the shrinking IC, the rupture with Thornett and his supporters in Britain and Tim Wohlforth, former leader of the American representatives of the IC. In these circumstances, as could be expected at some time in any event, the mythology of a fake "dialectic", a crankish leadership cult, appeals to the authority of a fraudulent "Fourth International", petty slanders, exclusion of opponent groupings from their public meetings, and use of violence against rival tendencies in the workers movement have become inadequate as a means of protecting their membership from learning the truth about their politics.

Since January 1973 the Spartacist League has been banned from public meetings of the SLL. We have frequently and vigorously protested against this violation of workers democracy and cynical attempt to avoid exposing their membership to our political views.

The current *Workers News* editorial, "The danger of provocation", deals in part with the situation on the evening of 2 June outside the Teachers Federation Building in Sydney where Gerry Healy was to speak: "At the public [sic] meeting held by the Socialist Labour League in Sydney last Monday members and supporters of the Spartacist League staged a picket and attempted to provoke incidents at the entrance to the hall." With characteristic dishonesty the SLL omits to mention that the Spartacist League picket was a direct and proper response to our *exclusion from the so-called public meeting* (despite the fact that the Spartacist League had bought the required tickets from the Third World Bookshop), a serious violation of the principle of open political struggle between tendencies in the workers movement. The SLL also omits any details of the supposed attempts to "provoke incidents", because there were none. With blatant hypocrisy the SLL goes on to say "The attempts at disruption outside the meeting [How exactly could we disrupt from outside the meeting anyway?] could have one consequence only; to attract the attention of the police and expose the meeting to the danger of their intervention." The Healyites must learn to accept responsibility for their own actions. Our picket was a result of their violation of workers democracy. If they felt it endangered them, they had at their disposal a foolproof method of bringing it to an end: make their "public" meetings truly open to the working class public! In fact, for all their hysteria, the unfavourable attention of the police is, of course, not likely to be directed towards the presumably respectable sponsors of a "public" meeting, but towards the protestors outside. The police did *not* try, on Monday night, to pretend that members of the SLL were blocking the pavement, but members of the Spartacist League. The police did *not* rip placards of the SLL off their poles, but placards of the Spartacist League. (The disgraceful cynicism of the SLL in this matter can be seen from the fact that the SLL has itself picketed in exactly the same place -- outside a Congress of the Australian Council of Trade Unions on 23 September 1974.)

Violence in the workers movement

The SLL has also habitually used threats of violence against the Spartacist League, which cannot be taken lightly in view of the fact that similar threats have actually been carried out by Healyites in the past. The function of such threats is two-fold: to attempt to scare the Spartacist League away, and to create a climate in which, when it suits the Healyites a line of blood can be drawn between their membership and the Spartacist League, in order to further inoculate their membership against Spartacist politics.

We now have occasion to release a letter previously sent to the SLL.

"23 September 1974

"The Political Committee,
Socialist Labour League,
Sydney.

"Comrades:

"As noted in *Australasian Spartacist* no 6 we have denounced your organisation's use of threats of physical violence as a crude attempt at political intimidation. We repeat that such methods of avoiding political clarification are a rejection of workers' democracy supposedly upheld by you as followers of Trotsky.

"The SLL's fear of political exposure from political debate within the workers movement has led you to exclude the Spartacist League and other working class tendencies from your *public* meetings and to physical intimidation of SL members who try to engage SLLers in political discussion in public. To date these threats have not amounted to much. However, we are concerned at the viciousness of the two recent incidents of physical threats made by leading members of your organisation.

"The first incident, witnessed by several SL members, occurred on 26 August when Jim Mulgrew, your National Secretary, approached an SL member selling *Australasian Spartacist* outside the SLL public forum on Historical Materialism, accusing him of "accosting my wife" the previous Friday. Comrade Mulgrew then proceeded to inform our comrade that "I will cripple you for life if a similar incident occurs again". Mulgrew was apparently referring to the fact that an SL comrade had approached SLL member Val Murphy at the Central Railway Station the previous Friday and asked her to discuss some of the differences between the two organisations but when she refused the matter ended there.

"~~The second incident took place at the Mandel meeting of 12 September, where Terry Cook approached an SL member, asked if he knew of Ernie Tate, and said:~~

"There were members in our party who think that Tate shouldn't have just got his head bashed in but his intestines ripped out. There are people in our party who think you are worse than Tate and if we gave the word you people wouldn't know what hit you. What happened to Tate would be nothing compared to what you would get You had better be careful, real careful."

"After having denied for years any responsibility of the British SLL (now Workers Revolutionary Party) for the gangster attack on Ernie Tate, Terry Cook has not only admitted *approval* of gangsterism within the workers movement but has also implied at minimum responsibility for the Tate beating.

"In the tradition of the Bolsheviks the Spartacist League supports the principle of workers' democracy, for the open contest of differing political tendencies within the working class. We remind you in particular that the Trotskyist movement which you claim to stand for has, since its inception, had to uphold this principle against the violence and slander of reformists and Stalinists. Standing in that tradition, we will not be intimidated by your Stalinist tactics.

"We demand that you put a stop to this hooligan intimidation. In the event of further threats the working class will be informed internationally as to the mode of your "political" struggle.

"Finally, Terry Cook repeated your slander that SLers are "anti-communist provocateurs". In *Australasian Spartacist* no 8, May 1974, we challenged the SLL to "PRODUCE YOUR 'EVIDENCE' OR PUBLICALLY AND UNEQUIVOCALLY RETRACT YOUR STATEMENT!" To date you have not replied, and your complete silence in response is an admission of slander in the worst tradition of Stalinist calumny .

"Toward the rebirth of the Fourth International,

"Aaire Hannah,
for the Spartacist League."

[Carbon copies were sent to representatives of the Spartacist tendency internationally, and the IC internationally.]

We received no reply to this letter whatever, its veracity evidently believed unchallengeable. Since that letter, at least up until the time of Gerry Healy's arrival in Australia a week ago, members of the SLL have been more careful. However, when the SLL had a literature table in front of the Sydney University library on 3 June, the day after the meeting at the Teachers Federation Building, Joel S, a member of the Spartacist League tried to engage Adrian F, a senior member of the SLL, in political debate. Adrian F said "If you don't settle down and get away, we'll job you."

A resurgence of such threats and indeed the carrying out of such threats would be entirely in accord with the IC's development of an argument that any political difference with the Healyites necessarily emanates from outside the workers movement.

"Not only must we reject but also mercilessly destroy the use of repression, slander, and physical methods in the struggle of the different groups and factions inside the workers' movement. These invidious methods have nothing in common with the arsenal of Communist education. Brought into the workers' movement during the last ten years by the Stalinist bureaucracy, they have poisoned the atmosphere of the proletarian vanguard, particularly among the youth, and isolated the organizations from the broad working masses." (Leon Trotsky, "Blind Obedience, Revolutionary Discipline, and the Youth", 10 April 1933, *Writings* [1932-33])

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Conversations with Wohlforth

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