

The SWP in the NPAC Conference:P O P F R O N T S E A L E D I N B L O O D !

The forcible and brutal expulsion of the Spartacist League and Progressive Labor-SDS from the Friday night session of the NPAC conference --carried out principally by the Socialist Workers Party--writes a new chapter into the SWP's history of betrayal. Escalating the struggle against political opponents on its left to physical violence, the SWP has now attempted to seal its anti-war bloc with bourgeois politicians in the traditional Stalinist manner--the bloodletting of the left wing.

Vance Hartke: Class Enemy

The events leading up to the physical exclusion of left-wing opposition from last night's session centered around the "keynote speakers," particularly U.S. Senator Vance Hartke. *The Spartacist League opposes the presence at anti-war actions of conscious representatives of our class enemy, the capitalist class.* We have political differences of the most serious sort with people like the SWP (which has been instrumental since 1965 in keeping the anti-war movement in the pockets of pro-imperialist liberals like McCarthy, McGovern, Lindsay and Hartke) or with class traitors like union bureaucrats Victor Reuther and David Livingston (who use their "progressive" anti-war image to stifle militancy in their own unions and prevent real working-class action, for example political strikes, against the war). But our opposition to Hartke is on a qualitatively different plane. SWPers, CPers, union "leaders," etc. must be fought because they sell out the movements of which they are a part. But Hartke represents the class enemy pure and simple. *He has no more place in the anti-war movement than Nixon, for both are conscious agents of the same class: the capitalist class which aims to smash the Vietnamese social revolution and all revolutions which threaten world capitalism.* They differ only as to tactics.

Accordingly, the Spartacist League attempted to present a motion to the conference: that ruling-class politicians like Hartke be summarily excluded from the conference, and that the conference dispense with the "keynote speeches" and instead begin floor discussion from the conference participants.

But the conference--tightly controlled by the SWP--refused to debate the agenda. The chairman would not permit our motion to be debated or voted. Vocal opposition broke out when Hartke began his speech, with chanting from Spartacist and PL-SDS supporters of slogans like "Class Enemy Off the Platform." Chanting also broke out when Victor Reuther began his presentation. Spartacist supporters shouted "Labor Strikes Against the War," then sat down.

The Halstead Provocation

The fight began when Fred Halstead, long-time SWP public spokesman and former SWP presidential candidate, came barrelling down the aisle and attacked an SDSer. At that point SWP-NPAC guards immediately came down off the platform and began to drag people out of the hall. When Spartacist supporters moved to defend those being excluded, we were also attacked. A PL-SDSer was reportedly thrown through a plate glass door; one of our comrades had his nose broken. When it became clear

that the PL-SDS contingent was being forcibly evicted as a body, we walked out in opposition to the exclusion of any tendency from the conference. On our way out we were repeatedly attacked by SWP-NPAC guards, ostensibly to clear us out, but actually--since we were leaving already--just because they wanted to get their punches in. The group known as the Workers League joined in the eviction squad. Despite having denounced "anyone who brings one body in front of the platform" at April 24th, the WL sat silently during the anti-Hartke protests. Finally, after Halstead's provocation gave carte blanche to attack leftwingers, the WL actively and physically aided in helping throw the militants out! The International Socialists, who have apparently decided to "relate constructively" to NPAC, remained neutral over the attack and exclusion.

The SWP will no doubt seek to "justify" these expulsions with claims of protecting the conference against "disruption." This is false. All the left did was make noise; there was no attempt to physically prevent those on the platform from speaking. An analogy suggests itself: when the SWP's British co-thinker Tariq Ali was asked how his organization would respond to a projected address by George Wallace in London, Ali replied they would "kill him"; he later modified this to stating, perfectly correctly, that they would shout him down. What does the SWP say to this? Should its British comrades have sat quietly with clasped hands while Wallace spread his racist poison? Or would the SWP dare to argue that Hartke, unlike Wallace, stands on our side of the class line?

Hoodlum Violence vs. the Struggle for Consciousness

The question of violence within the socialist movement has a history. Stalinists and other betrayers have often used violence to silence their left-wing critics and prevent the political confrontation which would have exposed them. *For this reason the Spartacist League has always opposed violence within the movement and has defended all tendencies against government repression and hooligan attacks.* Unlike groups such as the Workers League, which has sometimes opposed these attacks and sometimes defended them (depending on whom they wanted to get "close" to), we have always fought for this principle. Thus we defended members of the SWP-SMC when they were attacked by PL-SDSers in Boston in May 1970. We defended the SWP's rights even though we stood politically closer to PL on the issue in question: the need to break the anti-war movement from class collaboration. We are proud of this and have repeatedly raised this incident inside SDS, calling on SDS to repudiate the use of physical rather than political confrontation within the movement. Similarly, we came to this NPAC conference to fight the SWP's politics but prepared to defend them had any group attempted to, for example, seize the platform.

Instead, it was the SWP which launched a gangster attack aimed at suppressing political opposition. This was not a surprise to us, although it has been a while coming because the SWP has until now used only "respectable" violence against the left-wing. The SWP has, of course, collaborated in the anti-war movement with that most violent of all groups, the U.S. ruling class, and at anti-war demonstrations it has acted as cops within the movement, seeking to prevent any left-wing break-aways from the official, "legal," liberal-sponsored marches.

But now the SWP has opted for more overt violence within the movement. This is logical; faced with the yawning abyss that now exists between its past revolutionary Trotskyist history and its current re-

formism, its methods for suppressing that contradiction must grow more extreme. Violence within the working-class movement helps the SWP, for it destroys the political consciousness it fears and establishes false organizational loyalties--loyalties based not on common programmatic agreement but on common guilt. As the SWP seeks to get ever closer to the liberal bourgeoisie, it becomes increasingly important to exclude communists, since the bourgeoisie, understandably, does not like communists. This was the political logic behind the Panthers' physical attacks on and exclusion of the Spartacist League and PL at the "United Front Against Fascism" conference, which was the Panthers' first major attempt to form an alliance with the liberal bourgeoisie. And this is the logic behind the SWP's behavior last night in forcibly expelling the communists and would-be communists from the conference session.

Many of those who attended last night's session will have come away appalled at the conduct of the SWP, but for the wrong reasons. Let us make this clear: we are not appealing to you in the name of "non-violence," for we believe not in the "law and order" pacifism which shields a murderous social system, but in class struggle and socialist revolution. Our concern is not with free speech in the abstract but with free speech within the socialist movement--for the purpose of openly and clearly exposing and defeating the sellout politics of groups like the SWP. For that purpose we will defend the rights of any tendency within the movement against hoodlum suppression. For that purpose we will continue to struggle politically.

The NPAC conference must repudiate collaboration with the class enemy, and it must repudiate gangsterism within the movement. These issues cannot be separated. Only in this way can a real struggle against the imperialist Vietnam war go forward.

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