

Carter Strongarms UMWA Bargaining Council

Miners: Stay Out and Win!

FEBRUARY 21 In the wake of massive demonstrations in the coal fields against Arnold Miller's giveaway contract and faced with the threat of a shutdown of Midwest industry due to fuel shortages, the Carter administration has taken direct command of negotiations in the eleven-week-old coal strike. As the United Mine Workers (UMWA) president proved incapable of ramming the grotesque sellout down miners' throats, federal officials have threatened everything from invoking the Taft-Hartley Act to a government seizure of the mines.

After calling union and management negotiators onto the White House carpet, Carter is employing both the Labor Department and the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service (FMCS). In parallel negotiations the federal agencies are seeking to wear down the UMWA Bargaining Council and force acceptance of an agreement embodying the essential demands of the coal operators.

On Monday the FMCS came up with a separate agreement at Pittsburg and Midway, a major producer with Western strip mine holdings, which is not part of the industry Bituminous Coal Operators' Association (BCOA). Following approval of this pact by the union Bargaining Council the press began hailing it as a pattern-setting breakthrough in the deadlocked talks. But although it was reportedly negotiated through the efforts of "militants" from the Council, the P&M settlement still concedes a company "right to fire" wildcat "instigators," thus negating any local right to strike. Mine worker militants must vote down this "modified" version of the Miller contract. Watch out for the sellout it portends for the BCOA bargaining.

By threats of force, legal penalties and direct manipulation of the UMWA's decision-making processes, the U.S. government is acting as if it owned the union. Having installed Arnold Miller in the presidency through Labor Department-ordered and -supervised elections, it now figures it can write the contract as well and then rig its acceptance. U.S. Labor Secretary Ray Marshall has sequestered the Bargaining Council, issued various "deadlines" for a settlement and announced peremptorily, "whatever agreement we get here won't be 'tentative'" (*New York Times*, 17 February). Miners must stand fast against this intimidation and manipulation. With coal shortages mounting quickly, victory is in sight. If Carter threatens force they must respond with their traditional answer: "You can't mine coal with bayonets."

Anti-Miller Rallies in Appalachian Coal Fields

In a series of mass rallies held in the coal fields this past week miners demonstrated their determination to defy government strikebreaking measures. At a meeting of over 400 in Uniontown, Pennsylvania on Saturday the assembled strikers voted unanimously not to work under Taft-Hartley.



District 17 miners and wives demonstrating on the steps of the West Virginia capitol in Charleston last week.

Webb/Magnum

State of Siege in Indiana Coal Fields.....4

Similar sentiments were voiced by speakers at a rally of District 31 UMWA members in Fairmont, West Virginia on February 16.

Most pronounced at the miners' rallies was the universal contempt for UMWA "leader" Arnold Miller. The overwhelmingly popular demand that Miller resign was an expression of the deeply felt, and quite correct, conviction among coal strikers that the main obstacle to victory is the lack of an effective, militant leadership. At a rally against the Miller contract on the steps of the state capitol in Charleston, West Virginia on February 15, Bill Bryant, head of the Miners for Recall, announced that he had 13,000 signatures demanding that Miller step down.

At the Fairmont rally the next day the story was the same. The local *Times-West Virginian* (17 February) reported: "While Arnold Miller and his UMW negotiators resumed contract talks with coal operators in the plush confines of the White House, 3,000 of his union members rallied at the Marion County Armory here yesterday.

"And Miller's ears must have been burning. "The United Mine Workers president and the contract he presented to the membership last week took a pounding. "There were choruses of boos when the

contract was mentioned and some rousing cheers when a speaker called for the resignation of Miller....

"If anyone present was pleased with the contract Miller had asked the membership to approve last week, he remained silent."

Meanwhile in Rosetraven Township near Pittsburgh some 2,000 western Pennsylvania miners attending a rally demanded Miller's resignation and his ouster from the negotiating team. And in Bluefield, West Virginia (UMWA District 29) the more than 500 miners attending a rally Sunday were so eager to sign the Miller recall petition that the backs of available petitions had to be used.

Significantly these mass rallies have been organized spontaneously, by rank-and-file miners and local union officials. The role of the district leaders, who dominate the union's Bargaining Council, was virtually nil. District 5 officials denied any knowledge of the rally outside Pittsburgh and at the Bluefield demonstration no district officials were sighted.

Threats and Cutbacks

It is the demonstrated determination of the miners to resist government

strikebreaking measures that has been the main deterrent to Washington imposing a Taft-Hartley injunction. On February 16 Carter closeted himself with a dozen governors, mainly from east central U.S., where the impact of the looming coal shortages will be greatest and howls from capitalist politicians have been the loudest. While the government has announced an "energy-sharing" plan to transport coal stocks and transfer electrical power to hard-hit areas, this has essentially proven a failure. Energy Secretary James Schlesinger stated that the

continued on page 4

**THE SLP
VERSUS
LENINISM
PART
2
PAGE 6**

Trotskyist Faction Plans Fusion Discussions with iSt

Big Walkout at WSL Conference

LONDON—The struggle to cohere an authentic Trotskyist organisation in Britain scored a victory last weekend when 24 supporters of the Trotskyist Faction (TF) of the Workers Socialist League (WSL) resigned at the annual WSL Conference on February 18-19 and declared their commitment to explore a perspective of fusion with the international Spartacist tendency. In their principled factional struggle, these WSLers pointed the way forward to Trotskyist clarity from the programmatic amorphousness and dead-end trade-union parochialism of Alan Thornett's WSL. The departure of the TF—which included two National Committee members, several local and regional organisers and *Socialist Press* journalists—may have decisively sterilised the WSL, effectively reducing it to its Cowley car fraction bailiwick and Oxford support group, about 30 people

in London and a handful of members scattered through Yorkshire.

The left critics who became the early core of the TF were initially disturbed over the liquidationism epitomised by the WSL's trade-union front, the Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement. They soon generalised their unease into a principled critique of WSL left-Labourism on the central question of voting for the Labour Party while it is in coalition with the bourgeois Liberals.

The left oppositionists' break from WSL nativist parliamentary cretinism and from the WSL's unseriousness about its own history were evident in the TF's major programmatic statement, "In Defence of a Revolutionary Programme" (16 January 1978). Beginning with an analysis of the WSL's progenitor, the SLL/WRP of Gerry Healy, the document solidarised with the correct but partial fight against Pabloist revisionism led by the early International Committee and analysed the Healyite disorientation over Stalinism (tailism of Ho Chi Minh and the Maoist Red Guards, analysis of Castro's Cuba as "capitalist"), grotesque capitulation to Arab nationalism and gyrating opportunism on the Labour Party. The document traced the evolution of the WSL and its congenital liquidation of the Trotskyist Transitional Programme in its "mass work." It exposed the WSL's confusionism on such crucial questions as the class nature of the state and the WSL leadership's flight from the responsibility to elaborate a clear political programme.

The document counterposed to the WSL's confusionism a clear Leninist position on the national question and—particularly important for a British organisation—on Ireland. The TF's supplemental documents, "No Capitulation to Nationalism: For a Proletarian Perspective in Ireland" and "Enough of Opportunism, Adventurism, and Bundism—For a Trotskyist Perspective in Turkey," as well as its recruitment of three of the four members of the WSL's Irish Commission and of members of the WSL's Turkish Group in London, testify to the TF's break from the WSL's characteristic parochialism.

Rejecting the anti-Leninist notion of "the world Trotskyist movement"—that rubric by which all shades of centrism and reformism uneasily coexist in lowest-common-denominator "unity" blocs—the TF committed itself to the construction of a revolutionary international based on firm programmatic cohesiveness and has begun discussions with the London Spartacist Group looking toward an early fusion with the international Spartacist tendency.

The months of pre-conference discussion and factional struggle confirmed in the eyes of an increasing number of WSL members that the WSL was hardened in its right-centrist accommodation to social democracy and in its philistine, guilt-ridden workerism—and that the leadership was determined to renounce altogether any inquiry in the direction of programmatic clarity. Rarely has there been a more incompetent and pathetic response by a centrist leadership to the crystallisation of a left-wing opposition. The best the WSL leadership could muster was a document entitled "Strategy and Tactics—A Reply to Our Petty-Bourgeois Critics," which centred on ineffectual (and inaccurate) class-baiting to obscure the political issues. Thornett's standard response to political challenge was to sing hosannas to the much abused "honest worker" and one document hailed the "daily grind" at the Cowley car plant as a revolutionary militant's highest duty.

The British left has already shown signs of trepidation as the news of the split of the TF spreads. And well it might. The convergence of the TF with the international Spartacist tendency provides a significant prospect of accretion of new forces to challenge the "Trotskyist" pretensions of centrists and reformists in England and internationally. Future issues of *Workers Vanguard* will carry articles detailing the programmatic positions of the Trotskyist Faction and further accounts of its struggle inside the WSL.

Toward a Trotskyist party in Britain!
Toward the rebirth of the Fourth International!

STATEMENT OF THE TROTSKYIST FACTION

The debate at this conference has exposed in the clearest light the majority's hostility to the highest task of Marxists today: the construction of an international cadre hardened in the fight for a communist programme.

The counterposition of the Bolshevik position of the Trotskyist Faction to the hardened right centrism of the central leadership has brought forth another shameless defence of the majority's Pabloite attachment to the Labour Party, their capitulationist attitude to nationalism, and in particular Irish nationalism, their all-pervading economism and minimalism and their parochialism.

It is apparent that the fight for the re-creation of the Fourth International can only take place in implacable opposition to this parody of Trotskyism. Recognising the fundamental divergence between our faction and all other tendencies within the Workers' Socialist League that has been confirmed this weekend we resign from the WSL.

We intend to immediately open discussions with the international Spartacist tendency, with the aim of moving toward a fused organisation. Forward to the British section of the reformed Fourth International!

Signers:

1. Eunice Aktar, WSL 1978, Liverpool Branch.
2. Richard Brookes, I.S. 1973-75, WSL 1975-78, Oxford General Branch.
3. Carolyn Dixon, WSL 1977-78, Birmingham Branch.
4. E., WSL 1976-78, London Area Committee, Turkish Group, Hackney Branch.
5. F., WSL 1976-78, Turkish Group, Hackney Branch.
6. Alastair Green, I.S. 1973-74; Left Opposition (ex-I.S.); RCG 1975; founder member WSL, 1975-78, West Midlands Area Committee, Birmingham Branch chairman, convenor student fraction, editorial board *Socialist Press*.
7. Clive Hills, WRP 1973-76, editorial board *Keep Left* (paper of the Young Socialists, youth group of the WRP); WSL 1976-78, Oxford Student/Trent Branch.
8. Alan Holford, I.S. 1971-73 (expelled); Revolutionary Opposition (ex-I.S.) 1972-74; founder member RCG 1974-75, Political Committee; founder member WSL 1975-78, National Committee, West Midlands Area chairman, Birmingham Branch secretary, convenor of Women's Commission.
9. Dewi Jones, WSL 1976-78, Liverpool Branch.
10. Mark Kinker, WSL 1977-78.
11. Leena, Maoist organisations (Asia) 1972-74; WSL 1977-78.
12. Paul Lannigan, SLL 1968-72, Derry Branch, Northern Ireland, Irish National Committee (1968-70), full-time organiser Liverpool SLL/YS (1970-72); WSL 1977-78, Irish Commission, West London Branch.
13. Cath McMillan, WSL 1977-78, Coventry Branch.
14. Joe Quigley, Communist Party of Great Britain, 1969-70; I.S. 1970-74 (expelled); Left Faction, Left Opposition (both of I.S.); RCG 1975; founder member WSL 1975-78, National Committee, North West Area secretary, Manchester Branch secretary, Irish Commission.
15. Jim Saunders, I.S. 1974-76; WSL 1976-78, London Area Committee, West London Branch secretary, Irish Commission, editorial board *Socialist Press*, Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement, organising committee.
16. Mike Shortland, Young Communist League 1970-73; IMG 1975-76; WSL 1977-78, London Area Committee.
17. Robert Styles, WSL 1976-78.
18. Caroline Walton, WSL 1977-78, Central London Branch.
19. Jo Woodward, I.S. 1972-74 (expelled); Left Opposition (ex-I.S.); WSL 1976-78, Coventry Branch.
20. Tim Woodward, I.S. 1972-74 (expelled); Left Opposition (ex-I.S.); WSL 1976-78, West Midlands Area Committee, Coventry Branch chairman, convenor NALGO union fraction.
21. John Zucker, WSL 1976-78, Birmingham Branch.

Another comrade, not a member of the Trotskyist Faction, resigned together with the faction and submitted the appended statement:

Although not a member of the Trotskyist Faction, and with some reservations, I supported their main perspectives document, and I stand by that. The discussion and voting at this conference have confirmed for me that the WSL is not to be budged from what I regard as its fundamentally wrong positions, and I therefore also resign.

Signed:

P., WRP 1974-75, expelled as part of the Thornett opposition; WSL 1975-78, editorial board *Socialist Press*, London Area Committee.

WSL: Workers Socialist League
WRP: Workers Revolutionary Party,
formerly the SLL: Socialist Labour League

YS: Young Socialists, youth group of the WRP
RCG: Revolutionary Communist Group
I.S.: International Socialists,
now the SWP: Socialist Workers Party

Workers Vanguard

MARXIST WORKING CLASS WEEKLY OF THE SPARTACIST LEAGUE

One year subscription (48 issues) \$5—
Introductory offer (16 issues) \$2 International rates 48 issues—\$20 airmail/\$5 sea mail, 16 introductory issues—\$5 airmail. Make checks payable/mail to Spartacist Publishing Co., Box 1377 GPO, New York, NY 10001.

— includes SPARTACIST —

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

Trigger-Happy Guardsmen Go After Mine Strikers

State of Siege in Indiana Coal Fields



John Blair/Liaison

Indiana state troopers guard scab coal haulers.

MORGANTOWN, West Virginia, February 21—The coal fields of southwestern Indiana are presently under a military state of siege. One week ago Governor Otis Bowen deployed 350 National Guardsmen and 50 riot-trained state cops to the mining counties along the Ohio River, with orders to "protect" shipments of coal headed for Indiana's energy-starved power utilities. The government's uniformed strikebreakers—equipped with dogs, M-16 automatic rifles and a fleet of government and privately owned helicopters—are "protecting" the scab coal and terrorizing the strikers with a vengeance befitting civil war conditions.

Masquerading as guardians of the public welfare, the armed forces stand exposed as the bosses' ultimate weapon in the class war. Illusions in the "neutrality" of the government are being shaken even among staunchly patriotic white workers. That Bowen unleashed his troops in this explosive situation is a measure of the bourgeoisie's increasing frustration at the solidarity and effectiveness of the coal miners' 78-day-old strike. And as they shoot up southern Indiana highways the Guard risks antagonizing the entire local population.

Not since the 1964-68 ghetto explosions have the capitalist armed forces appeared so openly as an army of occupation. Now in the heartland of white middle America the state is forced to transfer troops away from their home areas for fear of a mutiny, just as in any Latin American dictatorship. The *New York Times* (15 February) dryly reported that the Guardsmen "will come from all parts of the state *except the southwest*, where the coal mines are situated" (our emphasis). A United Mine Workers (UMWA) militant from Indiana's District 11 explained the reason to *WV*: "These guys [the Guardsmen] down here in southern Indiana, there were 200 of them, and 80 some are coal miners. They started going AWOL and they said they wouldn't do anything to anybody under any circumstances, and they would not serve any duty."

There are only about 3,500 UMWA members, including retirees, in all of District 11. This small number, coupled with the certainty that union president

Arnold Miller will not mobilize the ranks of miners from other states in District 11's defense, emboldened the governor to dictate anti-strike measures that the chief executives in neighboring coal-mining states hesitate to take.

At a White House governors' meeting on February 16, Pennsylvania's Milton Shapp correctly noted that "It is very difficult to mine coal with the Taft-Hartley law." But as president Carter considers whether to order a Federal seizure of the mines, issue a back-to-work order or impose binding arbitration, the troops in Indiana are a dire warning to all UMWA strikers: when government "persuasion" and bureaucratic treachery fail, the state will use force in an attempt to break the strike.

Right now, a striker told *WV* in a telephone interview, "There's more damn coal going through this state than you can produce out there in West Virginia." Much of the coal goes out in trucks, and for every one there are two guards aboard, state police in front and behind and a helicopter overhead. The trooper told one striker that the cops have "shoot on sight" orders if miners interfere. One local miner is dead already: John Hull of Potoka was murdered by a scab on February 3. No indictment has been issued.

Strikers reported that simply driving down Highway 57 is enough to draw the fire of Guardsmen parked along the road. "You can have a major confrontation any time you take five people to any one of these mines. They've got guards and killer dogs," one militant stated. The strikers suffer endless threats and harassments over their phones, which they feel certain are tapped, and their homes are frequently buzzed by helicopter pilots.

In addition to the uniformed gun thugs, the working scabs are "armed to the gills." The scabs, of course, are not molested by the police. Paul Teegarden, the owner of the Bowersock mine where Hull was killed, recently appeared at the courthouse in Petersburg along with two of his goons. Each of the thugs carried M-16 automatics, and all three packed .45-calibre pistols. In contrast, any miner caught with a weapon is arrested or has it confiscated on the

spot. Last week a striker's chainsaw was seized by the cops as a lethal weapon. The scabs, most of them from out of state, have no such worries. As one miner put it, "Just as quick as they [the scabs] shoot somebody, they ship him out."

The repression of the Indiana miners did not begin with the National Guard deployment. On January 7, 194 pickets were arrested at the B&M coal dock in Rockport. B&M is also owned by Teegarden. While the miners were jailed, state troopers smashed headlights and windshields and otherwise damaged the strikers' cars. The miners' drivers licenses were confiscated and used later to fill in identities and descriptions on the hundreds of blank indictments waiting for distribution to militants who crossed the district. Yet criminals like Teegarden—whose thugs engage in threats, beatings and rape and last Saturday even used arson to clear an elderly couple from a piece of property which the coal operator wanted—are portrayed in the bourgeois media as *victims* of the coal miners' wrath!

A District 11 militant told *WV* that the outgunned and frequently outnumbered strikers are often unable to picket: "Most places aren't even allowed to have pickets, but I wouldn't want us to get out there with [just] one or two. . . . Just as soon as everybody turned their back, they'll kill you and swear that you'd had been on their property and probably drag you on there."

Despite the repression, resistance has continued. A few scab coal trucks have been burned, and many coal trucks have been disabled on the highway. The Guardsmen have attached a magnetic device designed to pick up nails on the

more support is needed from outlying districts to counter the National Guard's strikebreaking. An Indiana miner brought this message to 3,000 West Virginia and Pennsylvania miners at a mass meeting in Fairmont, West Virginia last week. "I'm here to say we may need your help if we're going to stop the movement of this coal through Indiana. Can we call on you if we need you?" The crowd roared yes.

It is precisely the support of other UMWA districts which is needed to aid the beleaguered miners of Indiana. Mass roving pickets must be organized by elected strike committees from each UMWA district, both to close the working mines and stop shipments of coal and to protect the pickets themselves from lethal gun thugs and cop assaults. No assistance, however, has come from the International in Washington or from the district office in Terre Haute. "We've not had any district representation to amount to anything whatsoever," one miner said.

Nor have Miller's presidential rivals in last June's election come forward with a program for a strike victory. In fact, both district and International bureaucrats have failed to back the roving pickets—one of the keys to the success of the strike so far—and they're not about to advocate such militant tactics as appeals to unionized workers in allied industries to boycott scab coal.

This bitterly fought strike can be won if a militant leadership representing the ranks can push aside the defeatist, pro-company Miller bureaucracy. UMWA militants must demand the election of strike committees which can mobilize the membership to resist both government strikebreaking and bureaucratic



UPI

Indiana National Guard troops protecting scab coal trucks near Evansville last week.

front of a jeep, but as one miner noted, "I ain't seen a magnet yet that'll pick up aluminum nails."

Governor Bowen's show of force has not broken the miners' spirit. Two thousand attended John Hull's funeral, and as many as 500 turn out for the daily area-wide meetings for strikers. Today a memorial meeting for brother Hull was called in Winslow despite rumors of an anti-union provocation by scabs. *WV* learned from an Indiana miner that scabs planned to "decorate" a truck with anti-UMWA banners and park it in front of the gym where the service is scheduled, hoping that enraged union members would attack it and be subject to arrest.

The Indiana miners are aware that

sellout. For an emergency UMWA convention to elect a militant bargaining committee. Break the state of siege in Indiana! Stop scab coal with massive pickets! Victory to the miners strike! ■

Trotskyist League Forum QUEBEC: NATIONALISM AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE

Wednesday, February 22 at 12:30 p.m.
Simon Fraser University
Pub Seminar Room
Saturday, February 25 at 7:30 p.m.
Britannia Center, Music Room
Commercial at Napier
Donation \$1.00 (Saturday only)

VANCOUVER

For more information call (604) 291-8993

Miners...

(continued from page 1)

Midwest was receiving only 6,000-8,000 megawatts a day of electrical power from eastern states, while the state of Ohio alone uses 18,000 megawatts daily.

Cutbacks of available electrical power, notably to large industrial customers, have escalated during the week. This has meant widespread layoffs, which are now threatening even the giant auto and steel plants. Power and coal shortages have forced U.S. Steel's Clairton coke works to lay off 610 workers. Ford and Chrysler have threatened to close their Indianapolis plants within ten days, Chrysler has predicted a shutdown of its assembly operations by early March, while GM is concerned that closedown of Ohio parts plants threatens its operations throughout the country.

Taft-Hartley Won't Dig Coal

The clear purpose of Carter's meeting was to sound out sentiment for invoking Taft-Hartley. But the governors were reportedly almost universally opposed to this measure. The same day, Labor Secretary Marshall declared that there would be a two-day deadline on the reconvened bargaining. However, when this time period lapsed without a settlement, Marshall and Carter quickly retreated from ordering either court injunctions or asking Congress for authority to seize the mines.

The reluctance of Carter to employ Taft-Hartley and other more direct strikebreaking measures is quite understandable. It is not because they oppose such compulsion in general. Far from it! Carter and the capitalist politicians are afraid that it won't work and defiance by the mine strikers may boomerang, revealing to other workers that the government's arsenal of anti-labor laws could be turned into a dead letter by militant defiance. As for dispatching the National Guard or U.S. Army, the authorities fear that this could lead to bloody civil war in the coal fields. And the day the troops march in could be the spark that rouses U.S. labor in defense of its class brothers under the gun.

Under no conditions can the miners allow themselves to be hoodwinked into believing that Carter is on their side, or even neutral. It is not accidental that Marshall and other federal officials spoke favorably of every rotten proposal the BCOA has proposed. Carter's concern is the profitability of the coal industry and the steel, oil and power monopolies that control it. Any contract that meets even the most immediate needs of coal miners is fundamentally as unacceptable to Carter as it is to the BCOA. The underpinning of Carter's "energy plan" is the availability of relatively cheap domestic coal to substitute for oil and natural gas, and a guarantee that production will not be interrupted by strikes.

Federal Tampering With UMWA Bargaining Council

The latest White House maneuvers only bear out the role of the Carter administration as defenders of the coal operators' interests. The decision to expand the union's negotiating team to

include three "anti-Miller militants" from the International Executive Board (IEB)—Jack Perry, president of District 17 (western West Virginia); Ken Dawes, president of District 12 (Illinois); and Tom Gaston, president of District 23 (western Kentucky)—was widely acclaimed as providing a bargaining team more responsive to the interests of the membership. But who made the decision to include them? Certainly not the UMWA membership. They have not been consulted once during this strike, neither concerning the composition of the bargaining teams nor as to the contract demands that the negotiators have put before the BCOA.

In fact it was the Carter government itself that forced Miller to expand the negotiating team and keep the Bargaining Council on call in Washington. And in whose interest has the government acted? This is no secret. As the *New York Times* (16 February) noted: "Paradoxically, they were added to the bargaining team at the request of the coal operators, who sought to avoid another experience of negotiating a contract that was approved by the Miller group, then turned down by the bargaining council."

In other words, the government and BCOA are confident that they can wear down the Council's resistance through using selected "anti-Miller" bureaucrats to endorse a "modified" contract which protects the most important interests of the coal operators. This move was required because Miller—the previous favorite of the Labor Department—is now so discredited among UMWA miners that his approval of a settlement means nothing at all.

Watch Out for the Sellout!

The government/BCOA strategem has worked so far. Perry, Dawes, etc. have knuckled under. The first contract that the "new" negotiating team presented to the Bargaining Council on February 18 aroused such a storm of protest that it was voted down *unanimously*, 37-to-0, with the entire negotiating team, including Miller, being forced to reverse itself! The main change in this offer, which the BCOA termed its "final offer," was that it lifted the proposed financial penalties against wildcat strikers. But it preserved the right of coal operators to summarily fire "strike instigators" and discipline miners who respected picket lines, thereby gutting the right to strike.

Yet only two days later the Bargaining Council approved the P&M settlement by a margin of 26 to 13. Pittsburg and Midway does not speak on behalf of the BCOA, but the Carter administration made it plain today that it is pushing for a settlement modeled after this "pattern." The bosses' press is playing up the rumor that this settlement, whose terms were reportedly "hammered out" in secret caucuses behind Miller's back, are being bitterly opposed by a section of the BCOA. Similarly the media made much of the BCOA's initial refusal to attend the White House bargaining sessions. Their purpose is to lull the miners into seeing Carter as their "friend in Washington."

Nothing could be further from the truth. The P&M contract is a defeat for the miners. While it eliminates a few of the companies' takeaway demands such as the introduction of incentive norms, Sunday work and a probationary period for new employees, on the central issues it does not differ fundamentally from the pact rejected unanimously by the Bargaining Council. On the key issue of the right to strike, the "pattern" agreement does not mention an employer's "right to fire" miners who respect picket lines; but it does allow them to fire the picketers under the guise of being "instigators."

Further, this settlement does not alter the medical coverage initially offered by the coal operators association. This proposal, under which the health fund is to be abandoned for a commercial carrier insurance plan, makes miners

liable to hundreds of dollars of "deductible" medical expenses yearly and almost surely means the discontinuance of the miners' health clinics. Supposedly the issue of medical coverage will be subject to further negotiations with the BCOA; however, the Bargaining Council's refusal to demand maintenance and full funding of the health plans as a precondition to accepting any settlement with Pittsburg and Midway makes it virtually certain they will not press this key issue with the BCOA.

Furthermore, miners are justly worried that UMWA officials will permit P&M to resume production before an overall coal settlement is reached. Pittsburg and Midway operates four mines in the West and last December Miller permitted the company to sign a separate agreement and scab on the national strike. As one militant told *WV*: "If P&M wants to work... all I can tell them is they'll just have to wait. By God, we'll not have any more goddamn union coal run while we're on strike."

Enter George Meany

After 78 days of the most important U.S. labor struggle in years, AFL-CIO head George Meany finally made his first important public statement yesterday on the miners strike. Did Meany promise solidarity with the UMWA in its bitter battle against the coal operators and the capitalist government? Not a chance. The reactionary labor bureaucrat intoned: "Taft-Hartley is part of the law of the land. We don't like it. But if the President feels it's his only alternative, then we won't criticize him" (*New York Times*, 21 February). In Meany's statement he underscored that resumption of coal production was crucial. This concern is touching indeed. It is exactly the same justification the reactionary capitalist politicians give when they urge Carter to invoke Taft-Hartley.

Every year Meany and the AFL-CIO bureaucrats ritualistically pass paper resolutions in opposition to Taft-Hartley. They "oppose" this "slave-labor" law at all times... except when it is posed as an immediate burning issue before the working class. Were Meany & Co. to rally the ranks of the AFL-CIO solidly behind the UMWA and make it clear that strikebreaking efforts by the government would be met with solidarity strikes and refusal to handle scab coal, it would quickly demonstrate the impotence of Taft-Hartley and other anti-labor legislation. But a serious struggle against Taft-Hartley is alien to these bureaucrats, who prefer to hide behind such laws as an excuse for their own inaction and refusal to fight the bosses.

In his statement Meany also claimed, "If I was President, I would seize the mines and lay down conditions that the miners can accept."

Federal seizure of the mines is one of the alternatives being bandied about as an alternative by the Carter administration if it is unable to ram the P&M settlement down the throats of the miners. This scheme was first employed by Franklin Roosevelt in 1943, in an attempt to break the UMWA strike against the wartime wage freeze. Up until then, there had never been a successful strike against the government. Only a few years earlier Roosevelt had taunted WPA (Works Progress Administration) employees as he broke their strike, "You can't strike against the government."

When Roosevelt seized the mines on 1 May 1943, he did not "lay down conditions that the miners can accept," as Meany promises Carter might do. He offered the miners not one penny more. He simply ordered them back to work, hoping they wouldn't have the courage to strike against the government. Roosevelt was wrong. As a result of their successful strike, the UMWA was the only union to win a pay increase (and portal-to-portal pay) during the war after wages were frozen in 1942.

In 1946, UMWA contract negotiations were deadlocked. The

operators absolutely refused to consider the union's demand for the establishment of a pension fund. Truman seized the mines. At the same time, he did not "lay down conditions they could accept." He termed their key demand "illegal." But the miners stuck to their guns. They struck and forced the government to agree to pay a royalty on coal tonnage; this was the origin of the UMWA Welfare and Retirement Fund.

If the miners surrender and go back to work under Taft-Hartley or a federal seizure, they will win nothing. It was precisely by refusing to do so that the union won substantial victories in the 1940's, with wage gains as well as health and pension benefits that were superior to those of any other section of the working class. The miners won because they did not rely on the phony promises of labor bureaucrats that Democratic Party politicians—the Roosevelts and Trumans—would "give" them what they needed. They won by fighting and striking, in the face of government strikebreaking attempts.

Today, George Meany condones the use of Taft-Hartley injunctions against the UMWA. In 1943, in the context of similar attempts by the government to break the UMWA strike, AFL and CIO bureaucrats denounced the miners strike. CIO head Phil Murray attacked John L. Lewis for "waging a political vendetta against the President," while other bureaucrats accused Lewis of being an agent of Hitler.

What The Miners Must Do

Over and over, the miners have demonstrated their resolve, courage and resourcefulness during this strike. With no help from the International they have succeeded in shutting off most coal shipments. Carter's reluctance to employ Taft-Hartley is fundamentally a testimony to the strength and solidarity of the miners. It is the lack of effective leadership that poses a mortal danger to the strike. It is not only Miller, but the IEB, the district officials and the Bargaining Council that are responsible for this.

Not once have these misleaders done anything to implement the mass roving pickets that have shut off scab coal. Not once have they demanded the UMWA appeal to steel workers, rail workers and transport workers to hot-cargo scab coal—actions that would deal a crushing blow to the coal operators. Were a serious campaign undertaken to enlist the solidarity of other unions, it would not be easy for Meany & Co. to continue their refusal to aid the miners and their toleration of government strikebreaking threats.

Last week, in the wake of Miller's thorough discrediting before the UMWA ranks, we wrote: "It would be a mistake for miners to rely on the Bargaining Council as an effective guarantee against a contract sellout." Now the Bargaining Council is recommending the rotten P&M settlement to the miners! The continual succession of lousy deals backed by the union negotiators, and now the Bargaining Council, threatens the solidarity of the strike and will ultimately lead at least a section of the union to the conclusion that it is no longer worth continuing the fight.

It is urgent that the conduct of the strike be taken out of the hands of Miller and the bureaucrats of the Bargaining Council. Strike committees must be elected in every district and a special bargaining convention must be elected now! The elected delegates to such a convention must formulate clear, powerful strike demands: for the unlimited right to strike, full funding of the health benefit fund, a big wage boost, full cost-of-living protection, equal pensions for all at the highest levels, extend the contract and bring the unorganized miners into the union. Only such a democratically elected leadership can genuinely defend the interests of the UMWA rank and file. ■

WORKERS VANGUARD

Marxist Working-Class Weekly of the Spartacist League of the U.S.

Published weekly, except bi-weekly in August and December, by the Spartacist Publishing Co., 260 West Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10013. Telephone: 966-6841 (Editorial), 925-5665 (Business). Address all correspondence to: Box 1377, G.P.O., New York, N.Y. 10001. Domestic subscriptions: \$5.00 per year. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y.

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

No. 194 24 February 1978

RSL Plays with Lumpen Rage

CHICAGO, January 29—The Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL), thrashing wildly in the quicksand of impending political oblivion, debated the Spartacist League here today on the subject of "Revolutionary Leadership and the Oppression of Gay People." The debate, attended by over 125 people, demonstrated the degeneration of the stillborn RSL sect from "born again" Shachtmanism to cynical tailism of lumpen rage.

The occasion recalled another debate between the two organizations held in August 1973, also in Chicago. There, SL National Chairman James Robertson confronted then RSL head Sy Landy shortly after the RSL's emergence as a left split from the social-democratic International Socialists. Blandly unperturbed by the SL's predictions that the RSL could be nothing but a parasitic anti-Spartacist League, distinguished from the far larger SL mainly by its Shachtmanite line of anti-materialist "third camp" moralism on the Russian question, Landy dismissed his political forerunners as irrelevant and blithely postulated a rosy future for an RSL which would be more "Trotskyist" than Trotsky himself. Now, three and a half years and several splits later, the RSL has virtually abandoned its "theoretical" pretenses and fled from its optimistic promises of "Trotskyist" trade-union work into the hysterical and provocative lumpen-"rebellion" rhetoric which now constitutes the totality of its "revolutionary strategy" of writing off the industrial proletariat.

Perhaps the RSL's last gasp was its desperate attempt last year to block the political convergence of the SL and the Red Flag Union (RFU), a New Left/Maoist grouping of "gay activists" whose study of the Trotskyist position on the Russian question enabled the RFU majority to reject the RSL's Shachtmanite "third campism" and to fuse with the SL on the basis of wide-ranging programmatic agreement. Demonstrating that the RSL's only "principle" is anti-Spartacism, the RSL slandered the SL as "anti-gay" and put itself forward as the defender of homosexuals' rights. This "democratic" posturing is rendered ludicrous by the RSL's opposition to the defense of elementary democratic rights against ominous reactionary and racist mobilizations around busing and the Equal Rights Amendment—simple democratic measures which the RSL opposes.

It was poetic justice, then, that the SL's debater was Gene Shofner, a leader of the former Red Flag Union. Shofner's presentation demonstrated that the SL has always upheld full democratic rights for homosexuals, emphasizing the connection between homosexuals' and women's oppression based on the bourgeois nuclear family:

"This has been a part of our program going back to the Russian Revolution when the Russian party wiped away, through the Bolshevik Revolution, all anti-gay laws. So it raises the question of the struggle for democratic rights. The SL seeks to be the most consistent defender of democratic rights. We want to be the 'tribune of the people' and we have always stood for the democratic rights of homosexuals. And we also defend wherever possible the democratic struggles of homosexuals. So it is not by chance we defended Gaylord and Gish to get their teaching jobs back; and it is not by chance that we marched against Anita Bryant.

"But the RSL, on the other hand, like all centrists, were consistent in their inconsistency.... They will march with signs that say 'Smash the Nazis, Smash the Klan, and Smash Anita while we can.' But when it comes to the other two

sisters of hate and bigotry in this country, Phyllis Schafly and Louise Day Hicks, it's quite clear on what side of the class line the RSL stands. They attack the democratic rights of blacks by not supporting busing, and they attack the democratic rights of women by not supporting the ERA."

RSL debater Wayne Pierce, trying to smear the SL as anti-homosexual, recalled the Red Flag Union comrades' statement upon fusing with the SL, "We are no longer gay activists, now we are communists." Pierce demagogically proclaimed, "We in the Revolutionary Socialist League, every one of us, whether gay or straight, are gay activists." He then raised the spectre of the SL's "closet rule" (designed to prevent political questions from being obscured by "life style" biases), charging the SL with capitulating to backward consciousness by "never" acknowledging that it has gay members. Shofner, who toured the country in fusion forums billed as "From Gay Liberation to Trotskyism," had to laugh. Then he scored the RSL's boundless hypocrisy:

"This is what Wayne had to say [to the RFU before its fusion with the SL] about the closet question: 'We bring our worker contacts and so on around the League and they find out not only do we have a position on gays, but there are gays there. They don't know everyone that's gay. Not everyone's open at work. I'm not open at work.... You have the same position....

"And so you are all gay activists in the Revolutionary Socialist League?... Well Trotsky was a Jew and Trotsky was in the Communist Party, but Trotsky was not a 'Jewish activist.' He was a revolutionary Communist....

"We seek to be known primarily by our program and... we will do what we have to do to speak to the workers. The Bolsheviks did work among the women in the East [of the Soviet Union] after the revolution. And they didn't go in and merely say 'tear off the veil!'... Bolshevik women put on the veil. We will put on the veil if we have to, to speak to the workers, to win them to our program."

From Shachtmanism to Lumpen Rage

The RSL which debated the SL last month was a bizarre parody of the grouping which debated us in August 1973. Then, the Sy Landy/Ron Taber group gave itself airs of "orthodox Trotskyism" (of course, never mind the Russian question) and prated about "trade-union caucuses." Now even this spurious "Trotskyism" has all but disappeared from view, to be replaced by a frenzied "fight back" rhetoric reminiscent of the old New Left. But whereas the New Left's glorification of spontaneity represented mainly political childishness, for the RSL it constitutes a rejection of the Leninist concept of a conscious proletarian vanguard. For the RSL the "vanguard" now consists of the most desperate victims of capitalist oppression, whose "revolutionary" potential resides in their powerlessness and their rage.

Wayne Pierce provided the "theoretical" justification:

"Our politics and our program, our organization, are directed first and foremost to the most oppressed sectors of the working class because these are potentially the most revolutionary. Their experience in this society gives them the best understanding of the rotten nature of this capitalist system and the need to overthrow it.... The orientation of the SL is to the better-off workers, to the aristocracy of labor and to the petty-bourgeois intellectual. It is for this reason that they pose the gay struggle as being secondary... as being of no strategic importance."

But it is not from some moralistic

continued on page 11

Denver Leftists Resign from CRSP

In WV No. 180 (4 November 1977) we reported on the efforts of assorted American supporters of the former International Majority Tendency (IMT) of the fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat (USec) to "regroup" an organization to compete with the reformist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) for the USec "franchise." We characterized the prospects of the "regrouped" group, the Committee for a Revolutionary Socialist Party (CRSP), as inauspicious in the extreme—not merely because of its amorphous centrist politics (and the IMT maneuverers' fratricidal attitude toward their U.S. co-thinkers) but also because of its evident inability to attract forces beyond a few small clots which had departed the SWP since the mid-1960's. We also noted that a small grouping in Denver, the Progressive Workers Organizing Committee (PWOC) loosely derived from Sam Marcy's Workers World Party, had been expected to come into the new formation but seemed to be holding itself aloof.

Last month we received from Denver the documents of the three PWOC members whom the CRSP had been courting. In addition to noting serious political differences with CRSP, the documents cited CRSP's attempts to imply it had gathered in the PWOC under its centrist umbrella as an additional reason compelling their break with the stillborn "regroupment." We reprint below a brief excerpt from one of the Denver documents along with a bit of background material from the CRSP press.

"A bold new revolutionary tendency committed to the revitalization of U.S. Trotskyism has just emerged on the regroupment front.

"A conference of veteran Trotskyist leaders and youthful revolutionary socialists... culminated in the formation of the Committee for a Revolutionary Socialist Party (CRSP)...

"...the conference participants included representatives of the LA-based Socialist Union, the Progressive Workers Organizing Committee of Denver, the FSP, members of the former Interna-

tionalist Tendency of the SWP and independent radicals...."

—Freedom Socialist, Summer 1977

* * * * *

"Editor's Note: The article on "New National Tendency Launched" in the Summer 1977 issue of the Freedom Socialist may have conveyed the impression that the Progressive Workers Organizing Committee of Denver is a component of the Committee for a Revolutionary Socialist Party. Some PWOC members have joined CRSP, but not the organization itself."

—Freedom Socialist, Fall 1977

* * * * *

Excerpted from Statement to Comrades in CRSP

[undated]

...In this letter, I speak for myself and a few other comrades in Denver, including S.W., the other comrade from Denver who attended the LA Regroupment Conference. The Denver Progressive Workers Organizing Committee was never a part of CRSP, contrary to the impression given in the Freedom Socialist newsrag of the Freedom Socialist Party and by proxy of the CRSP formation.

Being isolated in Denver, some members of the Progressive Workers Organizing Committee were looking for a national grouping to link up to. Having members whose roots came from the Socialist Workers Party and for a while being close to the tail-ending, opportunistic politics of the Workers World Party, we saw Trotskyism, in our own confused way, as the only legitimate historical Marxist tendency. We were not familiar with the political history of the people involved in the convening of the conference scheduled for LA in 1976, and so we attend[ed] looking to build a Trotskyist party in opposition to the reformist SWP. We knew that the organizers of the conference were sympathetic to the politics of the IMT [International Majority Tendency, recently dissolved faction of the "United Secretariat of the Fourth International"] and that general agreement with the lines of the IMT [was] necessary for attendance. At that time, we felt the IMT was the revolutionary wing of the Fourth International and believed the rumor circulating that the IMT would disenfranchise the reformist SWP, if a sizeable Trotskyist organization was built in opposition to it in the U.S. left....

We characterize the CRSP formation as a rotten, opportunistic bloc with no objective reason for existing... their use of the name PWOC as a paper regroupment ploy flows from their unprincipled opportunistic character.... In short, there was no serious programmatic basis for the forming of the CRSP, except the common recognition of the political degeneration of the SWP.

I hereby resign from CRSP because of my belief that it lacks any potential of becoming a serious revolutionary party. ...We encourage all comrades to examine the Spartacist League as the nucleus of the vanguard party. We also request that this letter be published in the Freedom Socialist and that a reply be given.

Comradely,
L.S.
Denver, Colorado

SPARTACIST LEAGUE LOCAL DIRECTORY

ANN ARBOR.....(313) 663-9012
c/o SYL, Room 4316
Michigan Union, U. of Michigan
Ann Arbor, MI 48109

BERKELEY/
OAKLAND.....(415) 835-1535
Box 23372
Oakland, CA 94623

BOSTON.....(617) 492-3928
Box 188
M.I.T. Station
Cambridge, MA 02139

CHICAGO.....(312) 427-0003
Box 6441, Main P.O.
Chicago, IL 60680

CLEVELAND.....(216) 566-7806
Box 6765
Cleveland, OH 44101

DETROIT.....(313) 868-9095
Box 663A, General P.O.
Detroit, MI 48232

HOUSTON
Box 26474
Houston, TX 77207

LOS ANGELES.....(213) 662-1564
Box 26282, Edendale Station
Los Angeles, CA 90026

NEW YORK.....(212) 925-2426
Box 1377, G.P.O.
New York, NY 10001

SAN DIEGO
P.O. Box 2034
Chula Vista, CA 92012

SAN FRANCISCO.....(415) 863-6963
Box 5712
San Francisco, CA 94101

TROTSKYIST LEAGUE OF CANADA

TORONTO.....(416) 366-4107
Box 7198, Station A
Toronto, Ontario

VANCOUVER.....(604) 291-8993
Box 26, Station A
Vancouver, B.C.



Demonstrating workers in St. Petersburg in 1917 carry Bolshevik slogans, "Down With War! Down with Capitalist Ministers!"

The SLP and the Russian Question

During the past two years the long-ossified, sectarian social-democratic Socialist Labor Party (SLP) has put on a trendy new look in an attempt to compete with more active currents on the left. As part of this face-lifting it is now attempting to present De Leonism as a serious revolutionary Marxist alternative to Leninism and Trotskyism. In the first part of this series ("Was De Leon a De Leonist?" WV No. 192, 10 February) we dealt with the latter-day SLP's exploitation of the great American Marxist Daniel De Leon, who died in 1914, in the service of anti-Leninism. This article considers the SLP's several positions on the Russian Revolution and the class nature of the Soviet state. The concluding part will focus on the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The new SLP leadership of Nathan and Stan Karp has undertaken a significant revision of the party's position on the "Russian question." Until 1939 the SLP held that whatever Lenin and later Stalin did was good for Russia, but not good enough for the U.S. Only when Stalin shocked petty-bourgeois "progressive" opinion by signing a pact with Nazi Germany did long-time SLP leader Arnold Petersen conclude that the Soviet leadership had betrayed socialism. With the Russo-Finnish border war the SLP denounced the USSR as an "imperialist despotism."

While maintaining the position that the USSR is a "bureaucratic state despotism," the new SLP regime has

backdated the "betrayal" of the Bolshevik Revolution from 1939 to 1921. In particular, it now champions the Workers Opposition as the best representatives of proletarian socialism and the group most closely in accord with the SLP's own program.

This revision of the traditional SLP position is not a disinterested re-evaluation of an important historic question. Rather it is the direct result of the pressure upon the SLP by the fake-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP). Petersen's support to Stalin, including explicit endorsement of murdering the old Bolshevik cadre, is naturally a great embarrassment for the present-day SLP. Thus a recent *Weekly People* series on the "Russian question" has criticized the old SLP line and even noted that Trotsky had Stalin's number long before Petersen broke with the Kremlin autocrat.

But the Karps go on to condemn Lenin and Trotsky as progenitors of Stalinism, particularly for instituting one-party rule in 1921 and smashing the Workers Opposition. This new position on the Russian Revolution is actually more consistent with the SLP's social-democratic, semi-syndicalist outlook than was Petersen's pro-Stalinist fellow-traveler posture. In both cases, however, the rudimentary SLP "analysis" of this decisive question is fundamentally antimaterialist, resting on an evaluation of the intentions of the leaders and the political superstructure rather than on the fundamental economic changes wrought by the October Revolution and their subsequent fate.

Confusionist Analysis of Soviet Russia

Petersen produced a brief analysis of the Bolshevik Revolution shortly after it occurred which laid out many of the main elements of what would be the SLP's rudimentary position on Soviet Russia for six decades. However, the SLP later moved away from the article's pessimistic attitude toward the Bolshevik seizure of power. Petersen's initial reaction to the news of the taking of the Winter Palace was not unlike the plaintive cries of social democrats from Plekhanov to Kautsky: "They should not have seized power!"

Petersen began by defining the aim of a genuinely socialist revolution as the immediate leap into socialism, then pointed out the obvious fact that Russia was too backward economically to establish socialism. He was fatalistic

about the Bolsheviks' chances of success:

"So long as the Bolsheviks was in opposition it was doing excellent work. Now that it is in power it faces failure. The day of its victory was the day of its defeat."

—*Weekly People*,
24 November 1917

Petersen did, however, recognize that a genuine socialist party had come to power. Surprisingly he does not deal with the Bolsheviks' program nor with the soviets. For the SLP, the revolution was progressive and should be supported because of the socialist intentions of its leaders rather than the institutions which would emerge from it.

According to the present editors of the *Weekly People*, Petersen's article was criticized internally at the time for its pessimistic outlook and implicit position that the Bolsheviks should not have taken power. The then SLP leader defended himself against the charge of fatalism, asserting that he merely meant that the Bolsheviks could not retain power and certainly not establish socialism without a revolution in the advanced capitalist countries.

One could not, of course, expect an American socialist to produce a full-blown analysis of the Bolshevik Revolution on the day after it occurred. However, the SLP produced no independent analysis of the Russian Revolution for almost two years. In the meantime the *Weekly People* articles on Russia were almost all reprints from official Soviet sources or of pro-Bolshevik writers, like Arthur Ransome. In December 1918 the SLP reprinted the newly adopted constitution of the All-Russian Soviet Republic without commentary. This generalized support for Soviet Russia was heightened by reports that Lenin thought highly of De Leon and regarded the concept of socialist industrial unionism as anticipating the soviet system.

That the SLP had no program or policies of its own concerning what socialists should do in Russia is clearly stated in an open letter to Lenin, "A Few Earnest Words to Our Comrades in Russia" (*Weekly People*, 12 April 1919):

"Let us hasten to assure you that we are not going to deal with matters Russian which concern Russia only, we have no desire to run your Revolution and we have no advice to offer. We know only too well that your problems have to be met in your own way by the means you have at hand."

The purpose of this address was to make a case for the SLP against its American rivals, the Socialist Party left wing,

Louis Fraina's Socialist Propaganda League and the IWW.

The SLP reacted to the Bolshevik Revolution with a combination of uncritical support to Lenin's regime combined with a know-nothing attitude toward the nature and problems of Soviet Russia. The SLP's understanding of the Russian Revolution was limited to three propositions: 1) the capitalists had been overthrown; 2) the government was in the hands of com-



Arnold Petersen

Weekly People

mited socialists; and 3) Russia was too backward economically to establish socialism. Although the SLP prided itself on the rigor of its Marxist views, its analysis of Soviet Russia lacked any positive scientific characterization of the revolutionary regime and the social order it had established.

The SLP was organically incapable of analyzing the society emanating from the October Revolution because it denied that the dictatorship of the proletariat was the general form of society transitional from capitalism to socialism. The SLP in effect denied the existence of any objective criteria defining a workers state. The "dictatorship of the Russian proletariat" was viewed as an ad hoc measure arising from the particular situation in that country.

The event which forced the SLP to say something substantive about the class nature of the Soviet regime

THE SLP VS. LENINISM PART 2



occurred in the U.S., not in Russia. In the spring of 1919 the Hillquit regime of the Socialist Party expelled a significant portion of the pro-Bolshevik left wing. The expelled groups then issued a call to found an American Communist party whose central aim would be the dictatorship of the proletariat. This forced the SLP's hand. Petersen responded by declaring that the dictatorship of the proletariat was legitimate only for backward countries with a peasant majority, like Russia. In advanced capitalist countries, above all the U.S., the overthrow of capitalism would lead immediately to a socialist industrial union government, i.e., to socialism:

"In Russia the problem facing the Socialists was the destruction of a feudal absolutism, and the overthrow of a merely rudimentary capitalist class. Russia is not sufficiently developed industrially to make genuine Socialism possible as yet....

"In the U.S., however, we have a full-fledged, highly developed capitalist system...with all the material conditions ready for the immediate transformation to the Socialist Industrial Republic, without any need or real possibility of achieving the so-called dictatorship of the proletariat."

— *Weekly People*, 30 August 1919

This position fundamentally separated the SLP from the international Communist movement.

In succeeding years the SLP ran articles with diverse positions on the nature of the Soviet regime. A 17 April 1920 *Weekly People* article on "The Soviets and Socialism" claimed that "the crude and inefficient dictatorship of the proletariat" had been thrown aside and there now existed a "Workers' Republic in the form of Soviets" which are "temporary structures necessary during the erection of the Socialist Industrial Republic of Russia...." The confusionism of this article is mind-boggling. In broad terms, the SLP regarded Soviet Russia as a society *sui generis* (of its own unique kind), which was progressing toward socialism mainly because the Bolsheviks were committed socialists and particularly because Lenin thought highly of De Leon.

For Petersen's SLP, the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and state ownership of the means of production were not of particular importance in characterizing post-revolutionary Russia. Soviet democracy was not even especially important. A 1923 pamphlet by *Weekly People* editor Olive Johnson stated:

"The Dictatorship [of the Soviet government] ceases to inspire horror when it is clearly understood that it is an agent of progress and the only agent of progress existing and possible in Russia today. A revolution, as long as it is logically on the path of progress, does not have to apologize for its tactics."

— *Revolution: "Dictatorship" and "Suppression" Incidental to Social Progress*

This is not wrong per se. But the SLP never provided objective social, economic or political criteria to indicate whether the Soviet regime was in fact still "on the path of progress."

It is true that because of the civil war and resulting economic collapse the Bolsheviks were forced to depart sharply from the norms of the dictatorship of the proletariat presented in Lenin's 1917 work, *The State and Revolution*. But the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky were committed to achieving a centralized collectivized economy and a government based on soviet democracy. The SLP, in contrast, simply denied that there were economic and political norms for the transitional society. Hence its consistent refusal to distinguish between Lenin's Russia and the degeneration of the revolution under Stalinist bureaucratic rule.

From "Friends of Russia" to Enemies of "Soviet Imperialism"

By the mid-1920's the SLP attitude toward the Soviet Union was essentially

similar to that of the liberal and more orthodox social-democratic "friends of Russia." The Soviet regime was conducting a "progressive social experiment" in Russia, which however had no relevance for economically advanced, bourgeois-democratic countries. Moreover the SLP was hostile to the Communist International, condemning it as "anarchist." Significantly, the supposedly orthodox Marxist SLP did not reject Stalin's doctrine of "socialism in one country." Quite the contrary, the SLP stood for establishing socialism in the U.S. as soon as it was elected. The SLP's concept of socialism did not involve the all-round economic and cultural development of society but a mere change in the form of governmental administration.

The SLP's support to Stalin was not



Lenin, August 1918.

simply an unthinking continuation of past policy. It also reflected the megalomaniac Petersen's identification with a "strong-man" "socialist" regime. Petersen himself was literally a would-be Stalin who (happily) lacked state power. In a 1939 pamphlet, *Soviet Russia: Promise or Menace?* he defended the Stalin purges by identifying them with the SLP's treatment of its own dissident members:

"The SLP is not unduly impressed with the fact, deplorable as that is, of some of the most prominent men in Russia having turned traitors. In our Party we have had similar experiences, yet the SLP has had no qualms in dealing properly and effectively with traitors and disruptors.... And in our ability to maintain discipline, and dispense SLP justice, with complete Party, i.e., rank and file, democracy and publicity we have found proof of our strength, our 'indestructibility.' And so too Soviet Russia.

"That men go wrong in great causes is a fact too well known to require proof. The Russians who have paid with their lives for their errors (whether these resulted from serious disagreement with principles or from baser errors) serve as a warning that revolutions are not to be trifled with, even though the revolutionists in command are themselves far from being spotless or correct in all details."

Petersen obviously resented and was envious of Stalin's command of state power which allowed him to dictate to foreign socialists. In a letter (16 March

1932) to the Soviet academic L.G. Raisky, Petersen boasted that when the SLP came to power in the U.S., Stalin and everyone else would be taking orders from him:

"Leninism, if it means anything, means Marxism applied to Russia, that is, to a country economically backward. De Leonism means Marxism applied to the United States, that is, to a country the most economically advanced to date. It is from the United States that revolutionary directions, and eventually instructions, will proceed. Eventually you in Russia will do what we, the De Leon-Marxists in the U.S., tell you to do."

—reproduced in L.G. Raisky, *The Struggle Against Opportunism in the American Labor Movement: An Appraisal of Daniel De Leon* (1959)

Petersen's ridiculous megalomania argues for dismissing the SLP after the

have its doubts about where the USSR was going.

These doubts are expressed in Petersen's 1939 pamphlet, where he argues that unless the Soviet Union changes course it will become an "Industrial Feudalism" (a meaningless term) like Nazi Germany:

"...the definite conclusion would seem to be inescapable that in the face of increasing [economic] productivity Soviet Russia is definitely moving toward an intensified State bureaucracy which even the fondest admirers of Soviet Russia will find it difficult to distinguish from a trend toward Industrial Feudalism, producing a condition which... might easily [!] be transformed into fascism."

— *Soviet Russia: Promise or Menace?*

And how did the Soviet leadership allow things to go so far? Because, according to Petersen, Stalin, a sincere but simple socialist, is ignorant of De Leonism. He must go to school with the SLP or Russia is doomed:

"Yet, again it should be noted, there is no proof that the Stalin regime consciously is aiming at fascism, but rather that the logic of events is driving Russia toward that point which undoubtedly will be reached, if not checked. And it certainly will not be checked so long as the Russian leaders remain ignorant of the true nature of the form that the Socialist government must take, and the necessity of aiding the process toward it, by taking a leaf out of America's book and by learning the lesson taught by America's great Marxist, De Leon."

It was not, however, Stalin's ideological vagaries which finally caused the SLP to turn against him. Like most liberal and social-democratic "admirers of Soviet Russia" the SLP broke over the Stalin-Hitler pact. This fact indicated the essentially social-democratic nature of the SLP despite its peculiar doctrines. Despite its sectarianism, Petersen's SLP was not insensitive to American public opinion. The SLP's attitude of "for Soviet Russia, but against international communism" was quite in keeping with "progressive" American opinion in the 1920's and '30's. But with the 1939 military diplomatic accord between Stalin's Russia and Hitler's Germany "progressive" opinion turned sharply against the USSR. It was not coincidental that the SLP did so at the same time.

Predictably the SLP deepened its break with Stalin's Russia over the border war with Finland in 1939-40, when it denounced the USSR as "imperialist." Needless to say, the SLP made no attempt to give the term "imperialist" a class-economic content. Like petty-bourgeois democrats, the SLP defined "imperialism" as a big nation bullying a little one:

"In true imperialist fashion Stalinist Russia assaulted a small peaceful nation, for reasons prompted by imperialist necessities, and, after a cruel slaughter of thousands of proletarians, imposed a 'peace' upon Finland in the best imperialist traditions."

— *Socialist Labor Party, Stalinist International Anarchism* (1940)

There is no concern here that "small, peaceful" Finland is a capitalist state in semi-alliance with capitalist-imperialist Britain.

When Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union in late 1940 the SLP issued a pamphlet, *The World War and Soviet Russia*, whose main theme was that Stalin was getting what he deserved. The SLP lacked the political clarity and courage to openly call for the defeat of the Soviet Union. It simply stated that Hitler's invasion of the USSR did not change the imperialist character of the war, implying a defeatist position. The SLP went from support of Stalin's regime to anti-Soviet defeatism in World War II without any kind of class analysis of the USSR. In fact, Petersen's SLP never produced such an analysis.

Arnold Petersen's major statement on the Soviet Union was his 1956

continued on page 8

The SLP and the Russian Question ...

(continued from page 7)

pamphlet, *Marxism Versus Soviet Despotism*, still distributed by the "new look" SLP. To begin with, it is a thoroughly dishonest document, covering over the SLP's past support to Stalin's reactionary terror. The author states that the SLP denounced Stalin's crimes many years earlier. What he did not say is that he had endorsed Stalin's greatest crimes against the Russian Revolution and the Soviet people—the execution of an entire generation of Bolshevik revolutionaries, the murder of millions of workers and peasants, the terrorization of the labor force and savage cut in living standards, the oppression of the Ukrainians and other national minorities.

Writing in the late 1930's Petersen came on like Vyshinsky prosecuting the Old Bolsheviks in the Moscow show



UPI

Vyshinsky, Stalin's prosecutor in Moscow Trials. SLP backed purges.

trials. At the height of the Cold War and McCarthyism, Petersen now sounded like a milksop liberal: "Socialism and socialists condemn brutality and mass murders, whatever the end." As for its theoretical "merits," Petersen's 1956 pamphlet has none. He offers no scientific analysis of the Soviet economic system or form of political rule, simply saying that it has nothing to do with socialism and is an "imperialist" power as bad as, if not worse than, the U.S.:

"The Russian dictators are locked with Western capitalism in a desperate struggle for supremacy, but it is a struggle, not between Socialism and capitalism, but between two rivalries.... From the Marxist viewpoint it is of little moment who wins, for both camps are retreating toward industrial feudalism."

For the present SLP leadership, which has to compete with groups claiming the Trotskyist tradition, the record of the Petersen era on the "Russian question" is a disaster, quite apart from its support to the Moscow trials. Its phrase, "bureaucratic state despotism," is an empty label, a theoretical nullity. That the SLP only broke with Stalin when the latter broke with the "democratic" imperialist powers in 1939 must be regarded by all serious revolutionaries as opportunism for the simple reason that it was. While the Trotskyist movement has seriously debated the crucial question of the class nature of Stalinist Russia for decades, the Petersen SLP had little more to offer than name calling.

In Defense of Post-Civil War Leninism

In defending itself against Trotskyism, the Karp-led SLP has in effect repudiated the party's past support to Stalin's Russia, but also to the post-Civil War Lenin-Trotsky regime. It has also attempted to develop a general

theory of Stalinist-ruled societies in opposition to both the Trotskyist concept of bureaucratically degenerated and deformed workers states and to the social-democratic and Maoist state capitalist positions. In their new view the SLP has backdated the degeneration of the Soviet state to the end of the Civil War.

In 1921 Lenin's regime adopted a series of measures which caused a fundamental rift between it and diverse political tendencies which supported the Bolshevik side in the Civil War. These measures involved the de facto suspension of soviet democracy and the illegalization of the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries; concessions to domestic and international capitalism embodied in the New Economic Policy (NEP); the suppression of the Kronstadt mutiny; and the increased statification of economic administration associated with the defeat and condemnation of the Workers Opposition in the Communist Party.

The suppression of the Mensheviks destroyed much of the sympathy for the Soviet government among left social democrats internationally. Some left communists, such as A. Bogdanov, regarded the NEP as tantamount to the restoration of capitalism. Kronstadt became the great *cause célèbre* for anarchists like Emma Goldman who had hitherto supported the Bolshevik Revolution. And the rejection of the Workers Opposition program in favor of state administration of industry drew a hard line between Leninism and revolutionary syndicalism. (Alexandra Kollontai's pamphlet, *The Workers Opposition*, was first published in the U.S. by the IWW.)

It is consistent with the SLP's essentially social-democratic methodology that it has chosen to date the critical turn toward Stalinist bureaucratism with the institution of one-party rule in 1921. It is also in line with the SLP's semi-syndicalist notions that it solidarizes with the Workers Opposition. In particular, the Karp is interested in indicting Trotsky as a bureaucratic bad man just like Stalin. Here is the SLP's present version of the Russian Revolution "betrayed" by Lenin and Trotsky:

"... the usurpation of proletarian power by the party-state apparatus was defended by the Bolshevik party long before Stalin was in command.

"The struggle over how the soviet economy was to be integrated and managed was the most fundamental arena in which the different conceptions of proletarian power were fought out. Progressively the Bolsheviks opted for an imposed state management by bureaucratized planning ministries... in place of the workers' own organizations. They supported one-man management from above, rather than delegated authority responsible to the producers themselves. Even after the civil war had been won, Trotsky proposed the 'militarization of labor' in the service of the state and the transformation of the trade unions into state agencies to spur productivity.

"In doing this, the Bolsheviks made a fundamental, programmatic attack on proletarian power....

Trotsky and the Workers' Opposition

"This process was defended and consolidated by all the Bolshevik leaders, including Trotsky. The extent to which it paved the way for Stalinism can be unmistakably seen in Trotsky's famous answer to the Workers' Opposition in 1921. In response to the Opposition's contention that the way to halt the growing bureaucratic degeneration of the revolution was to put management of the economy in the hands of the trade unions, to end practices like top-down appointments, and to restore workers' democracy in general, Trotsky declared:

"The Workers Opposition has come out with dangerous slogans. They have made a fetish of democratic principles. They have placed the workers' right to elect representatives above the party, as it were, as if the party were not entitled to assert its dictatorship even if that dictatorship temporarily clashed with the passing moods of the workers' democracy.... The party is obliged to

maintain its dictatorship, regardless of the temporary wavering in the spontaneous moods of the masses, regardless of the temporary vacillations even in the working class...."

"It is completely superficial to dismiss this and countless similar incidents with references to the 'hardships of the time.' These attacks on the very premise of workers' management reflect the fundamental flaws of Bolshevism."

—*Weekly People*,
3 December 1977

In typical SLP fashion these passages are utterly, hopelessly confusionist. In particular, they confuse workers democracy with decentralized administration of the economy. Yet the norm for a dictatorship of the proletariat advancing along the road to socialism would be the *centralized* administration of industry by a government elected by representative organs of all workers. In 1921 the Bolshevik government departed from this *political* norm—a necessary and correct step, in our view, given the chaos in the country and the virtual destruction of the revolutionary proletariat of 1917, dispersed and ground up by the Civil War and attendant catastrophic economic decline—and ruled without the democratic sanction of the majority of the workers.

The Workers Opposition fully supported the Communist Party establishing a monopoly of political power and organizations at this juncture, for it was obvious to all—even to a number of anarchist-leaning figures such as Victor Serge—that the Bolsheviks were the only organized obstacle to counterrevolution. The leaders of the Workers Opposition did *not* call for the restoration of multi-party soviet democracy as existed in 1917-18. To their credit they took prominent places in the suppression of the Kronstadt mutiny, whose main slogan was "All power to the soviets but not the parties." Where the Workers Opposition differed with the Leninists was over centralized administration of industry. It proposed that industry be administered by an autonomous "association of producers" based on the trade unions coexisting with the

demoralized. The economic effects of six years of war devastated Russian urban society. The population of the cities emigrated en masse to the countryside in the hope of a more secure food supply. Between October 1917 and August 1920 the population of Moscow decreased by one-half and that of Petrograd by two-thirds! The remaining workers were forced to lead a semi-lumpenized existence. Many, if not most, workers had to engage in petty trading to survive. In 1921 the working class which made the October Revolution in a sense no longer existed.

In addition to the qualitative social disintegration of its proletarian base, the Communist government made a serious policy error which caused considerable friction between it and the remaining urban workers. It decided to continue "War Communism" after the main White armies were defeated in the spring of 1920. With the immediate threat of a White victory (and thus of a return of the landowners) removed, the peasants resisted the Soviet authorities' requisitioning of foodstuffs. With the supply of food to the cities falling and rations cut back, many workers went out to the countryside to trade directly with the peasants. The Soviet government, unwisely trying to suppress all private trade, often arrested such workers or confiscated their food. Thus the perpetuation of "War Communism" into 1921 produced a strong reaction among the urban as well as rural populations.

In the winter of 1920-21 the Bolsheviks lost the support of the majority of urban workers for the first time since the October Revolution. Many, if not most, workers blamed the Communists for their unprecedented material hardships. The factories were rife with discontent. In February 1921 a strike wave broke out in Petrograd. The Soviet government quelled this through a combination of concessions (allowing workers to trade directly with peasants) and repression (arresting Menshevik agitators).



Penguin

Lenin and Trotsky, center, at the Second Congress of the Third International in 1920.

basic governmental-state apparatus. The Workers Opposition program thus represented a semi-syndicalist deviation from the *economic* norm of a workers state. Only when the state has disappeared under socialism will an association of producers be the organ for "the administration of things."

For Marxian socialists the fundamental question concerning 1921 must be: were the Leninists justified in suspending soviet democracy or should the vanguard party have allowed itself to be voted out of power? Compared to this theoretically and historically decisive question, the issues raised by the Workers Opposition were distinctly secondary.

By 1921 a large proportion of the class-conscious workers who had made the October Revolution were either killed in the Civil War, absorbed into the governing apparatus or had become

Had free, multi-party soviet elections been held in 1921 it is likely that a majority would have voted for the Mensheviks, Social Revolutionaries or even parties further to the right. And an anti-Communist soviet government in 1921 would have been but a brief transition to bloody capitalist counterrevolution. A large part of the Menshevik cadre and a majority of the Social Revolutionaries had fought *against* the Bolsheviks in the Civil War, in tacit or open alliance with the Whites. In 1921 independent, Menshevik-ruled Georgia was collaborating with British imperialism.

As for the Kronstadters, what the real consequences of a victory for the mutineers would have been was revealed by the behavior of their leaders after the island fortress fell. In joining up with the White forces of General Wrangel in Helsinki, they put forward a six-point



Stalin and Ribbentrop exchange congratulations after signing Stalin/Hitler Pact.

program which retained their slogan, "all power to the Soviets but not the parties." However, according to liberal-anarchist historian Paul Avrich:

"the slogan was to be retained only as a 'convenient political maneuver' until the Communists had been overthrown. Once victory was in hand, the slogan would be shelved and a temporary military dictatorship installed to prevent anarchy from engulfing the country."

—Kronstadt 1921 (1970)

Trotsky's statement, which the *Weekly People* quoted in order to condemn it, is absolutely correct. The historic interests of the socialist cause stand higher than the exercise of workers democracy in any given circumstance. The proletarian vanguard is justified in suspending soviet constitutionalism if its electoral defeat would be tantamount to counterrevolution. But this emergency measure—defended by Lenin, Trotsky and the *Workers Opposition*—is a far cry from Stalin's suppression of all opposition both outside and inside the Communist Party as a vital element of bureaucratic rule.

The present SLP leadership avoids discussing the consequences of full soviet democracy in Russia in 1921, thus proving they are irresponsible phrasemongers. Do the editors of the *Weekly People* believe that any soviet majority will defend the interests of the proletariat? History has proved differently (Germany 1918). Or do they believe that the Bolsheviks should have allowed themselves to be voted out of power even if this led to capitalist counterrevolution? Or perhaps they believe that either capitalist restoration or "bureaucratic state despotism" was inevitable in any case, and that socialists had nothing to choose between them? The real answer is that the SLP—today as in the past—*doesn't care* about the fate of the Russian Revolution. From Petersen in 1917 to the Karps today, the SLP's theorizing about Soviet Russia has been governed solely by its relations with other American left groups.

The argument that Stalinism was but the logical extension of the single party-state apparatus established in 1921 is completely anti-materialist. The Communist Party of Lenin and Trotsky was the genuine vanguard of the Russian proletariat, which had just led the first successful socialist revolution in history. Stalin's "Communist Party" of the

1930's was an apparatus of corrupt and terrorized bureaucrats who had come to power through overthrowing and suppressing the Bolshevik revolutionaries of 1917. It is true that Stalin exploited the actions of Lenin's regime in 1921 as "precedents" to justify his own bureaucratic counterrevolutionary rule. But this is utterly irrelevant.

In the degeneration of every revolutionary movement opportunists will always cite "precedents" which were correct in their day. Thus in 1870 Marx supported Bismark's Germany as progressive in its war with Napoleon III's France. As late as the 1890's Engels advocated that the social democrats defend Germany in a war with tsarist Russia. In World War I the chauvinist leaders of the German social democracy cited these Marxist "precedents" to justify their collaboration with German imperialism. To argue that Lenin and Trotsky were forerunners of Stalin is equivalent to arguing that Marx and Engels were forerunners of the counterrevolutionary butchers Ebert and Noske.

New-Style SLP Against Trotsky on the "Russian Question"

The new SLP leadership's attack on the Trotskyist concept of bureaucratically degenerated/deformed workers states rests on two basic arguments. One is the standard social-democratic opposition to the dictatorship of the proletariat, reinforced by an adaptation to the anti-Communist prejudices of American workers. The second is a more serious argument centering on Trotsky's prediction about the future of Stalin's Russia in the holocaust of World War II. The SLP's basic argument is that any social order without democracy has nothing to do with a transition to socialism. The Karps' position could have been written by any social democrat from Karl Kautsky in 1918 to Michael Harrington today:

"...in order to produce evidence of a workers state, it is not enough to prove the absence of capitalist property or even the disappearance of some of its effects.... Without workers democracy there can be no workers state."

—*Weekly People*,
10 December 1977

We will not belabor the point that in the past the SLP denied the very legitimacy of a workers state (i.e., the

dictatorship of the proletariat) as a transition to socialism; nor that under the Petersen regime it excused the worst Stalinist excesses in suppressing proletarian democracy through bloody purges. We will only point out that had the SLP leadership read and assimilated Kautsky's *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat* when it first came out in 1918, they could have avoided wandering almost 60 years in the theoretical wilderness before rediscovering the standard social-democratic position on the "Russian question."

The position that the replacement of the capitalist economic system by expropriation of the bourgeoisie and instituting collective state ownership of the means of production is not a qualitative step toward socialism, and that "without workers democracy there can be no workers state," is an abandonment of historical materialism in favor of democratic idealism. The struggle for socialism is thus seen as simply an aspect of the struggle for democracy in general. This inverts the Marxist dialectic, with the political superstructure determining the economic base.

A state apparatus based on proletarian democracy is a necessary means of administering collectivized property so as to create the material and cultural conditions for socialism. We do not regard workers democracy as merely preferable to bureaucratic bonapartism; the narrow, nationalistic Stalinist bureaucracies *must* be overthrown by workers political revolution and replaced by democratic soviet rule in order to open the road to socialism, which is a *world* system. At the same time, for materialists the class nature of the USSR is determined by its economic base.

The SLP's rejection of Trotskyism is in good part motivated by the hostility of American workers to Soviet Russia, by their sentiment that Stalinism is more oppressive than capitalist democracy:

"...to call a society in which the working class has fewer democratic rights than in the capitalist democracies, where it is blocked even from forming independent trade unions, where it lives under police censorship and repression, where it is in fact a state crime just to advocate (let alone organize for) revolutionary socialism—to call such a society a 'workers state' smacks of sophistry. In some ways it is not fundamentally different from calling it socialism."

—*Ibid.*

In other words, to call the USSR any kind of workers state is to besmirch the good name of socialism before the American people. It is certainly true that the popular identification of socialism, a workers state and the dictatorship of the proletariat with Stalinist Russia is a serious obstacle to winning American workers to a revolutionary Marxist program. But the economic system upon which the Soviet bureaucracy rests remains historically progressive, and as such we defend it against imperialism. Popular hostility to the USSR affects how we propagandize and agitate around the "Russian question"; it does not influence our program.

Some members of the SLP are now sympathetic to Trotskyism, and more are likely to become so. Therefore the Karp regime cannot limit itself to decades-old vulgar social-democratic arguments but must seek to demonstrate that Trotskyism is invalid in its own terms. Thus the *Weekly People* makes much of the fact that Trotsky did not regard Stalin's Russia as a stable social formation and at one point argued that the parasitic bureaucracy would be overthrown either by the proletariat or imperialism in the wake of World War II. The Karps argue that the fact that neither of these prognoses has occurred to date is definitive proof that the Trotskyist theory is wrong:

"What has occurred is the more or less stable, steady growth of the Soviet

continued on page 10

Debate Challenge

29 December 1977

Arnold Babel

New York Branch SLP Organizer

Dear Comrade:

We were pleased to see, in your recent series of articles on the "Russian question," the Spartacist League (SL) referred to as the most "consistent" defenders of Trotsky's views. This is no accident. We have fought for that position, in the main directing our attacks against the orthodox pretensions of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), since our expulsion from that organization fifteen years ago. In the context of your recent turn away from a self-induced isolation and toward a more interventionist perspective in day-to-day struggles, a review of your previous (and current) positions, as well as those of your opponents on the left, is quite apt.

It is an open secret that a section of your membership has become interested in the political positions of the SWP. The facade of "mass" activism maintained by the SWP may seem to these members an antidote to the decades of isolation that are the heritage of the SLP. The SWP is, however, thoroughly reformist. Its persistent reliance on the bourgeois state and bourgeois democracy is demonstrated by its call on the bosses' cops and army to "defend" black people from racist assault, by its eagerness to insure fascists their "right" to spread their racist venom, and by its immersion in Carter's anti-Soviet "human rights" crusade. Since the days of the antiwar movement the SWP has doggedly used its "single issue" one-step-at-a-time "strategy" as a buttress against Marxist interventions in those struggles where it has played an active role.

We regard the differences between the SLP and the SL as essentially those between an ossified version of classic social democracy and Leninism which guided the October Revolution. From your De Leonist viewpoint you may see the SWP and ourselves as politically similar. Our view, however, is that the SWP is revisionist of the genuine revolutionary tradition of Lenin and Trotsky. Your willingness to debate these issues in your press indicates to us that we should seek a format in which the differences between De Leonism and Trotskyism could be explored in greater depth. The question of state power, i.e., the dictatorship of the proletariat (of which the "Russian question" is a specific example), is, on the level of theory, the issue which, both historically and today, most sharply differentiates our tendencies. Thus it is perhaps the best place to begin. We would not object and, indeed, would be quite pleased if the SWP participated in such discussions in order to defend their politics in front of those members of your organization to whom they appeal. Your organization is, of course, the one on which the initiative for such debate vis à vis the SWP appropriately falls. We hope you will seriously consider this proposal and are ready to meet with you as necessary to discuss this matter further. Please inform us of your decision.

Comradely,

Ed Clarkson

New York Spartacist League

The SLP and the Russian Question...

(continued from page 9)

economy under bureaucratic rule without a fundamental change in the nature of the state or the property forms: Today the U.S.S.R. is neither backward nor isolated, yet the bureaucracy's rule is as secure as it ever was. Neither the Stalinist bloodletting, the second World War, the trauma of 'de-Stalinization' nor any number of other social shocks has produced a serious challenge to bureaucratic domination or a restoration of capitalism....

"Equally significant, the Soviet social formation has emerged in over a dozen other nations. Revolutionary developments and processes quite unlike those discussed by Trotsky in analyzing Stalinist Russia have produced similar societies."

—*Ibid.*

Trotsky's belief that World War II would be the terminal crisis of the world capitalist system, the definitive test of the Marxist program, turned out to be

wrong. Given the extreme weakness of the revolutionary vanguard (the Fourth International), both Western capitalism and Stalinist Russia survived the war and immediate post-war revolutionary wave with their social structures basically intact. Paradoxically, it is the empirically evident continuity of both the Western capitalist and Soviet Stalinist societies from the 1930's to the present that gives Trotsky's 1938 *Transitional Program* its continuing validity.

That a theoretical analysis and its programmatic conclusions retain their correctness despite an erroneous time scale is certainly nothing new in the history of Marxism. Far from it. The *Communist Manifesto*, written in late 1847, stated that Germany "is on the eve of a bourgeois revolution" which "will be but a prelude to an immediately following proletarian revolution." Does the failure of this prognosis invalidate the essential theoretical outlook embodied in the *Communist Manifesto*? Almost every anti-Marxist writer points to the absence of a successful proletarian revolution in the advanced capitalist

countries, predicted by the *Manifesto* 130 years ago, as definitive proof that socialism is a utopian illusion. But for Marxists, the *Communist Manifesto* retains its validity as a general theoretical exposition of the contradictions of capitalist development and their resolution through proletarian socialism, despite the fact that Marx's belief that capitalism could be overthrown in 1848 proved false.

Trotsky's position that the Soviet Union is a degenerated workers state is not a dogma impervious to any and all historical developments. But this theory cannot be invalidated by the mechanical passage of time, by the survival of Stalinist bureaucracy for x or y decades. The Trotskyist theory of bureaucratically degenerated/deformed workers states, like Marxist theory in general, must be tested by the way in which the contradictions it speaks to are ultimately resolved.

Thus in his 1940 article, "The USSR in War," Trotsky lays out the historical developments which would indicate that the Soviet Union was indeed a new form of exploitative class society. If a proletarian revolution comes to power in an advanced capitalist country and then undergoes a bureaucratic degeneration similar to that in Soviet Russia, Trotsky concludes: "we would be compelled to acknowledge that the reason for the bureaucratic relapse is rooted not in the backwardness of the country and not in the imperialist environment but in the congenital incapacity of the proletariat to become a ruling class." And with that one would have to throw Marxism out the window.

A New Class Society for Backward Countries Only?

The new SLP leadership's own position on the "Russian question" is a peculiar amalgam of Shachtmanite "bureaucratic collectivism," classic social democracy/Menshevism and "Third Worldist" Stalinism. It most closely approximates "bureaucratic collectivism" in maintaining that societies like Soviet Russia, China, Cuba, etc. are neither capitalist nor in any sense transitional to socialism. However, the SLP's view of the world-historic significance of "Soviet-type societies" is quite different from that of Shachtmanism.

In its developed form Shachtmanite "bureaucratic collectivism" was projected as a reactionary system capable of replacing capitalism on a world-historic scale. Thus Shachtmanism posited the distinctly un-Marxist notion of two classes, the proletariat and bureaucracy-to-be, vying for power on the basis of the selfsame property form, collectivized state ownership. In contrast, the Karp's SLP limits "bureaucratic state despotism" to backward countries, where this social system is seen to play the progressive role which capitalism once played in West Europe and North America:

"...the Soviet-type societies have emerged precisely where capitalism has been unable to develop on its own terms. The social and historical tasks which in the past fell to capitalism have been accomplished in these countries by a different form of social organization. These tasks include the overthrow of feudalism, the transformation of agricultural society, the process of primitive accumulation and industrialization and—perhaps most important—the creation of a proletariat. They mark the new social formation as one which is historically analogous to the capitalist stage and which occupies roughly the same historical position between feudalism and socialism."
—*Weekly People*, 7 January 1978

Furthermore the SLP denies the possibility of proletarian revolutions and workers states in backward countries like China, a classic social-democratic position:

"In the non-proletarianized countries, the anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist revolutions fall either under the control of various class alliances (in which the proletariat has had a subordinate role)

or under the direction of the new ruling class in the process of formation."

—*Ibid.*

Thus the SLP is either defeatist or, in its own terms, class-collaborationist toward revolutionary struggles in backward countries. What advice does the SLP have to give to proletarian socialists in the Chinese revolution of 1925-27, in the Saigon insurrection of 1945, in the



Daniel De Leon

Bolivian revolution of 1953? For the America-centric social democrats of the SLP this question is academic, but for Trotskyists—genuine proletarian revolutionary internationalists—this is a vital and critical question.

In reaction against Stalin/Bukharin's false, class-collaborationist policy in the Chinese revolution of 1925-27—in which they insisted that the first stage must be bourgeois rule through Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang—a significant core of Chinese Communist Party cadre came over to Trotskyism. The Chinese Trotskyists were an important component of the Fourth Internationalist movement until they were killed off by the joint efforts of Chiang and Mao. The SLP's message to these revolutionary Marxist fighters in one of the world's most important countries would be to emigrate to the U.S. or to join Mao's peasant army, supposedly the embryo of a new but progressive exploitative class state. To judge by the lyrically laudatory obituary for Mao issued by the SLP's National Executive Committee (*Weekly People*, 9 October 1976), Maoist "bureaucratic state despotism" was the best thing that could have happened to China.

The obvious, fatal flaw in the SLP's theory of Stalinism is that it abstracts from the question of socialist revolution in the imperialist centers. Even if we were to grant the SLP's contention (which we adamantly do not) that proletarian revolutions cannot succeed in countries like China and Vietnam, the Stalinist system would be removed from the realm of historic possibility by proletarian revolutions in the advanced capitalist countries. Had the proletariat come to power in Germany in 1923, the bureaucratic degeneration of the Soviet Union simply would not have occurred. Thus the SLP presents us with a new form of class society which a) might never have come into being at all; and b) might be swept away at any time by proletarian revolutions in the imperialist centers. Or does the SLP maintain the ultra-Menshevik position that China would still have to go through an epoch of "bureaucratic state despotism" even if a socialist revolution occurred, for example, in Japan?

Thus it is only by denying the possibility of proletarian revolution in the imperialist centers that one can foresee a new form of bureaucratic collectivist society first emerging in backward countries. This is the perspective of reformist, not Marxist revolutionaries.

[TO BE CONTINUED]

WORKERS VANGUARD

From a Former SLPer:

10 February 1978

Dear Comrades,

As a former member of the Socialist Labor Party (SLP) who still maintains an interest in that organization and other parties and tendencies of the left (including the Spartacist League), I was quite excited and interested to read *Workers Vanguard* No. 192, 10 February 1978. Indeed, I am impelled to offer some minor comment, particularly concerning the piece "SLP Goes Trendy."

First, let me state that despite some minor personal reservations (e.g., the vague feeling that the assessment of the SLP somehow exaggerated the SLP's "trendiness" and failed to impart the SLP's revolutionary vision, however utopian that may appear to be), the points raised do indeed tell much of the story of the SLP truthfully. For instance, concerning the SWP's "interest" in the SLP, and vice-versa, I can verify the veracity of many of these statements from personal experience. Thus, the SLP's Section New York candidate for mayor this past fall, a prominent member, has been heard canvassing for the *Militant*, paper of the reformist SWP. Indeed, just after Nathan Karp, National Secretary of the SLP, delivered a Thanksgiving speech repudiating, *inter alia*, reformism, vanguardism and Leninism, this SLP member was soliciting subscriptions for the aforementioned weekly paper! I know because I was approached. (I declined the "invitation.") While it is to the credit of the SLP that Article I, Section 44 of its constitution clearly proscribes such activity, it is doubly saddening that no charges ever resulted from such incidents, nor are contemplated. (This is in sharp contrast to the days when members were brought up on charges—for *ludicrous* reasons.)

If the SWP is fishing (or raiding) in the SLP, it should be noted that the SLP is not alone. Indeed, the SWP initiated overtures to the (recently) defunct, small Socialist Forum (SF). It did so with great gall, asserting there was much common ground. The comrades of SF, I am told, politely (and not-so politely) corrected them on this.

Meanwhile, if the SLP is erroneously following "average radical" or "progressive" policies and views, it seems interesting to point out a

personal impression; namely, that the SLP's *Weekly People* is also "borrowing" stands even from the Spartacist League! (Notably, these are the ones that *Workers Vanguard* complimented, confirming this suspicion.) Most salient among these are the positions on 'no defense of Nazis' free speech' and, possibly, coverage of the mine workers strikes and/or the British fire-fighters strike (i.e., the lessons). I am sure the irony of this will not escape the Spartacist League, if this is true: The only current stands on the SLP which would be in significant agreement with the SL, might be ones lifted by the SLP from the pages of *Workers Vanguard* or *Young Spartacus*!

While I resigned at the same time as the nearly two dozen members of New York's "Petersenite cult" which left last summer, I was a relatively new member leaving for somewhat opposite reasons. And though, for whatever reasons, I made the correct decision then, it is still saddening to have to acknowledge this account of the SLP as reported in *Workers Vanguard*.

Fraternally, Michael W. Ecker

WV replies: Broadly confirming our analysis of the recent evolution of the SLP, the writer notes the curious behavior of the SLP candidate for mayor of New York, James Brinning, who has been hawking the SWP's *Militant*. It is not just the SWP's newspaper which he has been pushing publicly, but also its politics. In our article, "SWP Invites De Leonists to Build Party of the Whole Swamp" (*WV* No. 192, 10 February), we erroneously stated that the SLP had supported Ed Sadlowski's liberal reformist campaign for president of the Steelworkers, which was the position taken by Brinning in a speech last October.

We had assumed that the SLP mayoral candidate was presenting the position of the Socialist Labor Party. Evidently we underestimated the opportunism of Brinning, who presented the *SWP* position, and the degeneration of the SLP, who let him get away with it. Actually the SLP's *Weekly People* (5 February 1977) denounced the SWP's endorsement of Sadlowski for "opportunism and...readiness to tail anyone opposing the present reactionary union leadership."

Nazi Slashes Woman...

(continued from page 12)

militant proposal from members of Local 140. All McCullough could suggest was the setting up of still another do-nothing committee—a "labor committee"—which Boatman obliged him with on the spot. Meanwhile, the gutless social democrats of the SWP, whose supporters in Local 140 had refused to sign the petition on the grounds that it was "provocative," maintained an embarrassed silence throughout the meeting.

The only decision of any consequence that Boatman allowed to be made was a further appeal to the state for protection against the Nazis. In response to the slashing of Jan Friedman the committee passed a resolution which included the supportable demand for the arrest and prosecution of the Nazi scum who carried out the attack. But the statement to the media which Boatman & Co. subsequently cooked up, while mentioning the need for self-defense against the Nazis, placed its main emphasis on the call for police protection:

"We also demand full-time police protection for residents of the area in which the Nazi storm troop headquarters is operating. We demand police protection for all persons participating

in meetings, picket lines, leaflet distributions and other anti-Nazi actions."

The role of the cops has been clearly demonstrated as they line up billy-club-to-billy-club to protect the Nazi headquarters in Detroit. From Boston to Chicago to Houston to Detroit, the racist cops have time and again turned a blind eye to the outrages committed by the Nazis and the Klan, while in many instances actively participating with them while "off duty." Those who call on the state for aid against the fascists are leading the masses to betrayal.

The vicious razor attack on Jan Friedman must not go unanswered. These fascist criminals should not be able to walk the streets. Such cretinous degenerates are no joke. While the demented Hitler lovers are a tiny clot today, they have their crosshairs fixed not just on leftists or Jews but on blacks, labor and anyone else who stands in the way of their genocidal fantasies. Today these perverted cowards cut up young women with razors and pay community kids 50 cents to distribute their race-hate literature; tomorrow they will be a ready-made scab-herding, union-busting army for the bosses and shock troops for militarist plotters—if they are not stopped in their tracks.

The Nazis will not be put out of action by endless small left-wing demonstrations, and certainly not by appeals to the city government or legalistic appeals to the judicial system. Big business, their cops and courts will protect these fascist terrorists as the last line of defense of capitalist rule. Instead what is needed is the mass mobilization of 5,000, 10,000 members—blacks, Arabs, Jews, whites through their unions and backed up by community and left groups to close down the vile "white power" "bookstore." Detroit labor must use its tremendous strength to cleanse this union town of the fascist vermin and teach these sworn enemies of democratic rights a lesson they will not forget. ■

RSL...

(continued from page 5)

barometer of oppression that the party must judge from where the main revolutionary forces will come, but rather from an understanding of the central dynamics of the class struggle. We do not belittle the cruel and debilitating oppression of homosexuals when we insist that the homosexual question does not hold the same strategic weight as, for example, the black question in this viciously racist society. Shofner exposed the petty-bourgeois moralism behind the RSL's statement that "For us the working class is the key force for revolution precisely because it is oppressed" and explained:

"If we are looking to the group to change society because it is the most oppressed it is not the working class. Let's go to the peasants of Ethiopia.... Because there you get oppression we don't see in this country.... Marxism stands behind the proletariat because it is the only class that has the social power to overthrow capitalism and to destroy it and create socialism."

Pierce revealed the RSL's Fanonist line when he said: "The Spartacist League sees oppression not as fuel for the revolution but the struggles of the oppressed are seen as an obstacle to the revolution." From this position flows the RSL's anti-democratic "leftist" line on reform struggles: gains by the oppressed would dampen their "revolutionary" anger. Thus the RSL must oppose the SL's advocacy of "revolutionary integration" as part of a liberal plot to "make all blacks act in accordance with middle-class values" ("SL Front for Bourgeoisie," *Torch*, December 1974). Thus the SL's orientation to the industrial proletariat and the trade unions becomes an orientation to "the aristocracy of labor." Thus the ERA must be opposed lest it make women less angry.

A letter from the RSL to a Red Flag Union member in late 1976 made this outlook clear:

"[The SL's] position on the Black struggle in the U.S. is for 'integration.' The struggle for liberation is reduced to 'integration.' The actual content of this is for Blacks to seek middle-class or labor-aristocratic status in U.S. society. This is further shown by the argument they present for it—integration will halt the 'lumpenization' of Blacks, i.e., make them more middle-class. (More white.) ... Fundamentally, the Spartacists view the hatred of the Black masses for U.S. society as 'lumpenization'—as disturbing and threatening—whereas we see it as a profoundly revolutionary factor."

This idiotic "the worse, the better" analysis has been a constant feature of the RSL since its inception, as it sought to carve out a niche to the "left" of the SL. But the group's glorification of lumpen violence as a rejection of "middle-class values" has reached grotesque proportions. For the RSL, every violent explosion of rage by the oppressed is "political"—and "revolutionary."

In the debate, Pierce put forward the looting that occurred during the summer 1977 New York City blackout as a full-scale anti-capitalist rebellion:

"The people who were doing the looting were potential revolutionaries because they were pissed off at the system and they were fighting in the only way they knew how.... The looting was directed against the capitalist system whether they saw it that way or not."

Here the RSL tries to turn a manifestly apolitical explosion in the devastated slums into a social protest movement

with revolutionary implications. The SL, while calling for "free the 4,000" (arrested for looting), recognized looting as a self-defeating and ultimately anti-social act, directed not against capitalism but against the immediate, felt misery of ghetto life.

Mindless enthusing over random violence among the most oppressed strata has increasingly become the keystone of RSL politics. The RSL's recent frenzy over a black lesbian accused of beating up her landlord, on the grounds she "took matters into her own hands," recalls the Livernois Five case in Detroit. The RSL's idea of how to "defend" these black youth—picked up in a racist round-up and facing frame-up murder charges—was to justify the killing of a white bystander in a ghetto explosion as a byproduct of black people's indignation against capitalist society.

Perhaps the most grotesque example of the RSL's infatuation with violence by the oppressed was an article in a recent *Torch* which lauded women killing their brutal husbands as a political act. The article, headlined "Battered Women Fight Back," applauded incidents like this one:

"Francine Hughes also fought back. Her former husband punched her regularly for 13 years and threw her out of the house in her nightclothes. He threatened to follow her everywhere if she left him. Finally, Francine Hughes took her four children and left. To make sure he couldn't follow her, she burned down her house with him in it."

—*Torch*, 15 November-15 December 1977

Scarcely an issue of the *Torch* goes by without an article like "Make the Prisons Schools of Revolution" or at least a letter or two from a prisoner. An isolated sect utterly irrelevant to the working class and its struggles, the RSL sees the most powerless as the main revolutionary force in society. In his presentation, Pierce even quoted from a poem, "In weakness there is strength." An SL supporter replied that "In weakness, comrades, there is only weakness."

The disoriented RSL is correct about one thing: it has nothing to offer the working class. As one steelworker angrily told the Chicago audience:

"You guys masquerade yourselves as real defenders of democratic rights. Let me tell you what the federal government gave the coal miners. It gave them Arnold Miller and you guys backed him every step of the way. So we're going to shove Arnold Miller down your throat till he comes out of your ears. Arnold Miller is yours. That's your trade-union politics. That's your 'brothers'."

The unifying themes of RSL politics are moralism and despair. Morally repelled by the Stalinist deformation of the USSR, the RSL labels it "capitalist" and washes its hands of the problem. Outraged by the sanctimonious "law and order" of the racist system, they hail any and all violence by oppressed people. Their answer to sexual oppression is to vacuously shout "Down with Bourgeois Morality." In the fight against the lumpenization which dooms black youth to poverty and powerlessness, they discern only an attempt to become "middle-class." Despairing of the struggle for communist consciousness, they champion militant sectoralism (like "gay pride") and spontaneous rage. Denying the material basis of oppression, they can find no link between segregation and racism. Their attribution of anti-capitalist consciousness to the victims of oppression "whether they know it or not" shows only cynical contempt for the revolutionary potential of the working people.

As Marx said, liberation is an historical, not a mental, act. The emancipation of the oppressed will be accomplished by a conscious, organized proletariat, rallying to its banner the most dedicated and conscious from all sections of the oppressed, led by the vanguard party of professional revolutionists. Forging the cadres of this party is the task to which the Spartacist League is committed. ■

TEMPEST IN A CRACKED POT

In the throes of a paranoid fantasy worthy of the crackpot Führer of the U.S. Labor Party, Lyndon LaRouche (a.k.a. Lyn Marcus), the sectarian opportunist Workers League has proclaimed that the recent blizzard was actually a "cover for military maneuvers" ("State of Siege in Boston," *Bulletin*, 14 February 1978)!

The article, reverberating with *Sturm und Drang* and Healyite crisis mongering, interprets the removal of snow from Boston streets by the National Guard as a military takeover and "a virtual state of siege for millions of residents."

While the National Guardsmen, who are serving as armed thugs of the capitalist state against striking miners in southern Indiana, were undoubtedly guilty of abuses, clearing roads, arresting looters and even riding around in "jeeps, trucks and bulldozers as tall as a house" do not add up to a military coup—even if they shovel the snow in uniform.

In the hysterical view of the Workers League, the street-cleaning operation was:

"a dress rehearsal for military rule aimed at disciplining the working class. Its main fear is not a snow storm but the power of the organized working class expressed in the miners strike."

The state does indeed fear the power of the organized working class and it will respond to threats to its authority with military force—*real* military force, not tractors and dump trucks! It is genuinely pathetic that the Workers League cannot tell the difference between a military maneuver and a clean-up operation.

Incidentally, the National Guard was also used to clean snow from the streets of New York. At one point, 15 military vehicles were massed in front of the national headquarters of the Spartacist League. What does the Workers League make of that?

Spartacist League Class Series

Building the Revolutionary Party

Alternate Wednesdays beginning February 15, 7:30 p.m.
California State Los Angeles Student Center
LOS ANGELES

SPARTACIST LEAGUE FORUM

Women and Revolution

Speakers:
Martha Phillips
Spartacist League Central Committee
Ruth Ryan
Committee for a Militant UAW

SATURDAY, MARCH 4 7:30 PM
BUCHANAN YMCA
GEARY & BUCHANAN
SAN FRANCISCO

Donation \$1.00
For more information, call (415) 863-6963

SL/SYL PUBLIC OFFICES

Marxist Literature

BAY AREA
Friday and Saturday 3:00-6:00 p.m.
1634 Telegraph, 3rd floor
(near 17th Street)
Oakland, California
Phone 835-1535

CHICAGO
Tuesday 4:30-8:00
Saturday 2:00-5:30 p.m.
523 South Plymouth Court, 3rd floor
Chicago, Illinois
Phone 427-0003

NEW YORK
Monday-Friday 6:30-9:00 p.m.
Saturday 1:00-4:00 p.m.
260 West Broadway, Room 522
New York, New York
Phone 925-5665

Spartacus Youth League Pamphlet

THE STALIN SCHOOL OF FALSIFICATION REVISITED A Reply to the Guardian

Price: 75¢

Order from pay to:
Spartacus Youth Publishing Co.
Box 825, Canal Street Station
New York, N.Y. 10013

WORKERS VANGUARD



Women wounded by Nazi thug's razor attack being aided at UAW meeting. WV Photo



Militants demanded Nazi (left) be thrown out of Local 600-initiated anti-fascist meeting. WV Photo

Unions Must Crush Detroit Fascists!

Razor-Wielding Nazi Slashes Woman at UAW Meeting

DETROIT, February 20—On Sunday the Detroit Nazis revealed their true terroristic faces, seriously wounding a young woman under the noses of the Local 600 UAW-initiated Labor-Community Council Against the Nazis. At a steering committee of the Council yesterday a Nazi attacked Jan Friedman, a supporter of the Workers Defense Committee, slashing her leg with a straight razor.

In the two months since the fascist scum opened their headquarters in southwest Detroit they have moved beyond spewing out their racist filth to intimidation and now to drawing blood. The Nazi threat cannot be taken lightly. It must be combatted by organized mass action to run the razor-wielding fascists out of Wayne County!

Instead, while UAW bureaucrats engaged in idle bluster about driving the Nazis out of town, these scum brought their provocations right to the doorsteps of the labor movement. For the second time in as many weeks the fascists have brazenly shown up at these anti-Nazi meetings. Four Nazis walked into Sunday's meeting at Sammy's Pizza Hall. A trade unionist identified them and called for immediate action against the Nazis. A number of those present advanced on the greatly outnumbered fascists. However, at this point Paul Boatín, the Local 600 tops' handpicked chairman for the Council, intervened with his bureaucratic cronies and the restaurant manager and broke up the confrontation. The Nazis were permitted to leave unscathed, enabling them to continue their terroristic work at the next opportunity.

This opportunity immediately presented itself. As the Nazis departed, one

of them set upon a Workers Defense Committee supporter distributing literature. When Friedman courageously attempted to come to the defense of the WDCer, she was slashed viciously with a razor, producing a ten-inch gash in her leg and profuse bleeding. SL supporters and others came running to aid the injured woman as the cowardly Nazi ran off.

A supporter of the SL, a trained nurse, had the woman moved inside and treated the wound to stop the bleeding. The comrade underlined the seriousness of the attack: "It was clear that she had two fairly deep lacerations, between a quarter- and a half-inch deep where the razor had slashed her leg.... If she had been cut on the inner side it could have cut the femoral artery and she could have bled to death within minutes." Friedman was later treated at a hospital and released.

That a handful of fascists could successfully commit such an atrocity at a meeting of an "anti-Nazi" committee which includes leaders of unions and organizations with a combined membership of over 150,000 is testimony to the utter spinelessness of the labor bureaucracy. Only two weeks earlier UAW Local 600 president Mike Rinaldi had defended the right of two Nazis to remain at the first meeting of the committee, claiming they could be present "as long as they don't disrupt." This disgusting pacifism, combined with the bureaucrats' whimpering pleas to the capitalist state for help, has only emboldened the Nazi vermin.

Moreover, the razor attack on Jan Friedman graphically demonstrates precisely what the Nazis will do with the "democratic rights" which the liberals

and civil libertarians are so eager to guarantee them. In mocking tribute to the defense of their "rights" by liberals, the fascists have even taken to swaggering around with buttons bearing a swastika and the slogan "free speech." Let the Mike Rinaldis and their reformist echoes on the left, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP)—whose Detroit organizer Mack Warren publicly defended the right of the Nazis to attend and speak at meetings of the National Student Coalition Against Racism (NSCAR) as recently as January 30—now appear before auto workers and minorities and try to justify their willingness to extend "free speech" to fascists!

At the Labor-Community Council meeting itself Boatín & Co. offered little more than they had at the initiating meeting February 6, when they attempted to cover up their bankrupt strategy of appealing to Mayor Young and the city and state legislatures with vague talk about the need for "mass demonstrations." This meeting, however, was attended by only about 100 persons, about half the turnout at the preceding one. A number of militants, clearly disgusted by the inaction of the Council, stayed away. Noticeably absent, also, were a clique of UAW hacks who had turned out for the speechifying and backslapping at the first meeting.

Boatín and his fellow bureaucrats announced to the amazed assembly that a total of 15 committees had been set up complete with 15 handpicked chairmen, as well as five additional vice chairmen! This blatant device was designed to enable the bureaucrats to safely pigeonhole any conceivable resolution they did not approve of.

The only serious challenge to the Council's inaction was a motion raised by rank-and-file militants from UAW Local 140 at Chrysler's Dodge Truck plant. The proposal, which had been endorsed by 550 UAW members in a petition circulated in the local, read as follows:

"That the steering committee immediately call on the Detroit labor movement and all minority organizations—Jewish, black and Arab alike—as well as other sympathetic groups and individuals—to build a mass picket line and rally in front of the Nazi headquarters around the slogan 'Smash the Nazi Threat!'"

The resolution received considerable support. It was spoken to favorably by a member of Local 600 and a number of other militants, including a member of the Spartacist League, a member of the Workers Defense Committee (a tiny group led by the Revolutionary Socialist League) and Pat Korth of the Hubbard-Richards Community Council. Boatín bluntly refused to allow a vote on the motion, however, declaring it tabled to the "activities committee," which met later and predictably took no action on the proposal. Boatín was aided in this bureaucratic squelching by John Sollenberger, an executive board member and official delegate to the Council from Local 140, who had previously signed the petition calling for immediate action!

The reformists of the left at the meeting proved no better. Dave McCullough, vice president of UAW Local 869 and a frequent contributor to *Workers' Power*, published by the International Socialists (I.S.), did not endorse the

continued on page 11