

SPARTACIST



NUMBER 36-37

ENGLISH EDITION

WINTER 1985-86

ONE DOLLAR/75 PENCE

HEALYISM IMPLODES

— With —

**Documents and Interviews
on the
WRP's Buried History**

**The Far Left: 1900-1920
British Communism Aborted**

— See Page 64 —

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"Dear Gerry... You've Got It Coming"

SPARTACIST LEAGUE/U.S.

BOX 1377 GPO, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10116 212/732-7861

17 November 1985

News Line
Flat 8
155 A Clapham High Street
London SW4 7SS

279 Alexander Palace Road
London N22 4BJ

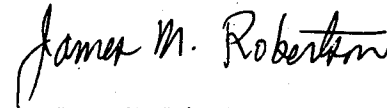
Dear Gerry:

We fought for many years. I find no pleasure in your present pass. I don't know what you've done with girls, but I do know what you've done with politics and you've got it coming.

I think it went wrong back in the RCP. You were ungovernable and ill-advised.

About the American party Cannon came to believe that the greatest thing that C.E. Ruthenberg might have done was to uphold the work of Louis Fraina, not become the "general" secretary. British communism was stillborn from its inception.

I am sorry for you, if you didn't help kill those 21 Iraqi Communists. And if you didn't, I wish you well.



James M. Robertson

cc: Mike Banda
c/o News Line
21 B
Old Town
Clapham
London SW4 0JT

English Edition

SPARTACIST

(Fourth Internationalist)

An Organ of Revolutionary Marxism

Organ of the International Executive Committee of the international Spartacist tendency

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PRODUCTION MANAGER: Noah Wilner

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SPARTACIST PUBLISHING CO.
Box 1377, GPO, New York, NY 10116, USA Telephone: (212) 732-7862

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

Number 36-37



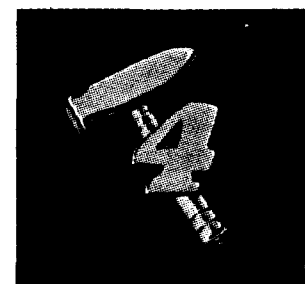
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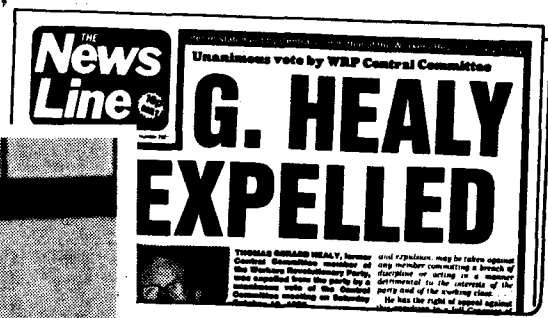
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HEALYISM IMPLODES



Bulletin

WRP split: a falling-out among political bandits. Photo shows Gerry Healy (left) and his long-time hatchet man Mike Banda.

Banda/Slaughter News Line (above) expels Healy. Healy/Redgrave News Line (above left) expels Banda/Slaughter.

NOVEMBER 23—The British Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) of Gerry Healy and Michael Banda, which professes to be the largest and most leftist group in Britain calling itself Trotskyist, is in profound upheaval. The apparent bulk of the group, headed by general secretary Banda and leading theoretician Cliff Slaughter, has severed itself from Healy, the WRP's historic leader. Healy claims 250 supporters, out of a total of perhaps 1,000 WRP members or a bit more, including film star Vanessa Redgrave. The two wings have expelled one another, both claiming the WRP name and both producing papers with the same name, *News Line*. To appreciate just what a traumatic event this is for WRPers (not least for the Banda/Slaughter side, which at first glance might seem in a strong position, with an apparent majority as well as physical possession of the headquarters and printshop), it must be added that Gerry Healy has long occupied in the WRP a position roughly equivalent to that enjoyed by J. V. Stalin in the Russian Communist Party.

In the pages of the British gutter press, the apparent ouster of Healy by his long-time chief lieutenant is portrayed as a rip-roaring sex scandal. Given the deep-seated puritanism of the WRP, the sex angle undoubtedly deepens the members' shock at the charges, revelations and admissions that have been made in the pages of the WRPs' own newspapers. But at bottom, there are two reasons why most members of the WRP must feel that reality has come totally unhinged: (1) charges of hideous physical violence against members and of concrete, bloody crimes against the international working class have been leveled, and are in the main admitted; (2) the whole of the WRP leadership and membership participated in the cult of Gerry Healy, while Banda admits to having been Healy's closest collaborator for 35 years. The slimy capitalist reptile press may headline "Red in the Bed" but for the thousand or so members of the WRP, the old story of the emperor who

had no clothes is more to the point. And Banda's got a problem: when Khrushchev at the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956 launched his attack on the crimes of Stalin, the question legitimately would be posed, "Hey Khrushchev, where were you?" But Khrushchev had a mechanism for controlling the whole process; it's called a Stalinist bureaucracy, backed by state power. Banda does not have state power.

The Banda/Slaughter *News Line* (30 October) says the WRP Central Committee expelled Healy on October 19, charges having been brought against Healy on October 12 by a CC vote of 25 to 11. The charges against Healy were (*Banda News Line*, 13 November): "sexual abuse of female party members, physical violence against party members and of making unfounded accusations of involvement with the CIA against an international leader of the Trotskyist movement" (i.e., David North of the American Workers League). Banda's paper presents the following chronology: a letter (see page 4) by Aileen Jennings, Healy's long-time secretary and mistress, was sent to the Political Committee last July. Jennings charged Healy with violating "security" over a 19-year period by having had sexual relations with some 26 women listed by name. "The letter was suppressed by the political committee... But other victims of Healy's behaviour came forward to tell their own appalling stories of his brutality."

In September, still according to the Banda/Slaughter wing, Healy signed an agreement with Banda and Sheila Torrance, then the WRP assistant general secretary, to "retire on the grounds of 'ill-health and age'." But Torrance switched sides and the decision was overturned, Torrance making the motion to expel one of the women who had testified against Healy. "This produced an explosion inside the party. General secretary Banda and other members of the full-time staff walked out of party headquarters in protest. They were followed by workers at four of the

A letter to the Political Committee

Dear Comrades,

During the course of action on the Manchester Area certain practices have come to light as to the running of Youth Training by a homosexual and the dangers this holds for the Party in relation to police provocation. I believe the Political Committee was correct in stating that a cover-up of such practices endangered the Party from a serious provocation.

Having realised this, I must therefore say to the Committee that I can no longer go on covering up a position at both the office and in the flats which also opens the Party to police provocation; namely that whilst for 19 years I have been the close personal companion of Comrade Healy I have also covered up a problem which the Political Committee must now deal with because I cannot.

This is that the flats in particular are used in a completely opportunist way for sexual liaisons with female members employed by the Party on News Line, female members of the International Committee and others (26 individuals were then named).

On any security basis, one of these or more has to be the basis of either blackmail by the police or an actual leak in security to a policewoman. I am asking the Political Committee to take steps to resolve the position for the Party in the present political situation.

In 1964, after a Control Commission of Investigation Comrade Healy gave an undertaking he would cease these practices. This has not happened and I cannot sit on this volcano any longer.

Yours fraternally,
Aileen Jennings
July 1, 1985

WRP

Workers Revolutionary Party

British Section of the International Committee of the Fourth International

21b Old Town,

Clapham, London SW90J7

Telephone: 01-832 7029

General Secretary: M. Banda

8th July 1985

To comrade Mike Banda - General Secretary

To comrade Sheila Torrance - Assistant General Secretary

Dear Comrades,

In accordance with our agreement dated 5/7/85, I unreservedly undertake to cease immediately my personal conduct with the youth.

Yours fraternally,

G. Healy.

Famous Aileen Jennings letter printed in Banda's News Line, 30 October 1985 (left), accused Healy of "violating security" with 26 female members. Under pressure, Healy signed statement (above), addressed to Banda and Torrance, forswearing "personel [sic] conduct with the youth," while protesting it would cramp his lifestyle.

Paperback Centres, the College of Marxist Education in Derbyshire and the Runcorn works where News Line is printed." Banda mobilized forces outside of London, took back the print works and "prevented the pro-Healy group from producing News Line." A Central Committee minority, including Torrance, actress Vanessa Redgrave, Alex Mitchell and some nine others went into opposition

on Healy's behalf, boycotting the CC meeting which voted his expulsion.

Banda describes the WRP in these terms:

"...byzantine debauchery and bureaucratic violence, intrigue and usurpation of members' rights which Healy symbolised.

"It is admittedly not easy to make this conclusion after 35 years of close political collaboration....

"For reasons which cannot be fully explained here, the truth was concealed from me as general secretary over a long period."

Ex-Healyites' Revenge

Healy, who now calls himself "founder-leader" of the WRP, claims his present difficulties "cannot be separated from the brutal incarceration of Nelson Mandela, the Israeli Zionist bid to eliminate Yassir Arafat and the Tory state's relentless attacks on Arthur Scargill" (Healy/Redgrave News Line, 6 November). It may console Healy to believe that he is the chosen victim of these powerful evil forces, but we doubt that the lights are burning late in Pretoria or even 10 Downing Street over his fate. Exuberant in seeking to drive an oaken stake through his black heart are, however, thousands of ex-Healyites, some of whom now occupy positions of authority, influence and responsibility, or at least can get the ear of a Fleet Street reporter or two. These people burn with a hatred appropriate for founder-leaders like Healy, Sun Myung Moon or Lynn Marcus.

The new International Secretary of the Banda group is David North, whose American group (concentrated



Keep Left

Aileen Jennings, shown here as editor on front page of December 1965 Keep Left, official paper of Healyite Young Socialists.

around Detroit) is rated by the Healy wing in print as having 74 members. Indeed the capacity to lie about membership figures is sharply reduced, and Banda blithely sneers at the WRP's former claims as if he'd never been a party to them: "It would seem to any member that there is a profound and inexplicable difference between the 250 members of [Healy's] so-called majority and the oft-stated claim of a membership of 10,000 made by Healy and Torrance. What indeed happened to the other 9,750?" (Banda News Line, 30 October).

Banda has the WRP physical apparatus—the headquarters, the printing plant, the little country estate where they educate people in their travesty of dialectics. The founder-leader has himself and the Redgraves, Vanessa and brother Corin, as well as Alex Mitchell, who "was one of the few individuals who had read even less of Marx's 'Capital' than the former Labour Prime Minister Sir Harold Wilson" (Banda News Line, 7 November). Healy also has some film equipment retrieved by Redgrave via a court order. We were not surprised to see Banda deploring the use of the capitalist courts against the left which has been a Healy/Banda practice for two decades; Banda's paper (9 November) remarked: "Another triumph for the Healyite school of judicial Marxism."

A speech made by Slaughter on October 18 (Banda News Line, 16 November) said that WRP members "were physically and sexually beaten and abused, brutally and systematically, for years and years." In the same speech, Slaughter boasted:

"At last week's Central Committee, C Redgrave was 'caught with his hand in the till.' He was found to have removed the deeds to the College of Marxist Education out of the lawyer's office where it was kept, two days earlier.

"The deeds name him as Trustee of the property on behalf of the Workers Revolutionary Party. Under pressure, he told us he had put them in the bank under his personal account. We decided he should stay on the premises, on guard, until the morning, when he could be escorted to

pick up the document.

"Some hours later he remembered the deeds were in fact not in the bank but in his home, and a nocturnal exchange, of C Redgrave for the deeds, was arranged immediately."

The bourgeois press is enjoying the WRP sex scandal. Writing in *The Spectator* (9 November), Jim Higgins noted:

"For some 50 years Healy has graced, or rather disgraced, the British Trotskyist movement. In that time, by a combination of low cunning, skulduggery, and verbal and physical abuse, he has created almost as many ex-Trotskyists as Joe Stalin. It would not have surprised me... if he had been expelled for grievous bodily harm, but that it should be for grievous bodily charm is extraordinary....

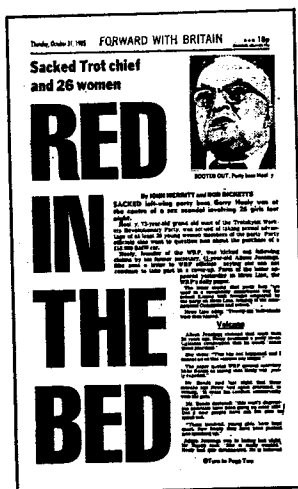
"Now he has been exposed, angry parents of young females lobby the central committee for redress and even his chosen successor, Michael Banda, has turned on him, leaving him bereft of support from all but the wilder reaches of the actors' trade union."

For all the talk about sex, it is nevertheless not possible to determine if what was involved was brutal rape or consensual activity with young women or something in between. British centrist Sean Matgamna, in an article in the 7 November issue of his *Socialist Organiser* (reprinted in full in our own U.S. publication, *Workers Vanguard* No. 391, 15 November), observed: "But nevertheless it is also true that a considerable part of the ballyhoo against Healy's sexual antics is both frame-up and an appeal to backwardness. Insofar as anything was voluntary in the WRP, many of the 'harem 26' must have acted voluntarily."

The Tory rags, in their fascination with the glossy Redgrave connection, insinuate that it was Vanessa's job to service the old man with guilt-ridden starlets. This is not a likely scenario. If Healy did prey on young girls, they are more likely to be the young daughters of party members, a captive milieu where Healy's transcendental programmatic charm would have more effect, and where outraged relatives would tend toward keeping it quiet. However in

Healy's News Line (bottom) in carefully timed bombshell set up miners union leader Scargill for witchhunting barrage in Tory press (top).





British gutter press drools over the Healy affair.

any case, one can be reasonably sure that alleged sex crimes beginning 19 years ago have little to do with the implosion of the WRP.

Coup

The Aileen Jennings letter, in the blackmailing tradition long practiced in the WRP, was the evident smoke screen for a coup by Healy's long-time lieutenants, Banda the bully and Slaughter the kept intellectual. Slaughter has reportedly stood for countless years of Healyite abuse for being an effete petty-bourgeois. And we know that for many years Healy has been stringing Banda along with promises that the old man was going to retire, any day now, and Banda would take over.

Sean Matgamna coined a Machiavelli-like maxim to describe what happened to Healy: "He who rules by fear and terror should not live to get old and feeble." And to that we would add that infallible leaders sometimes have trouble when things go badly for their organizations. Over the miners' strike for example—the WRP gloried in being an open instrument for the Tory press in redbaiting and isolating miners union head Arthur Scargill on the very eve of the strike—we've heard that the WRP eventually had to privately apologize to Scargill.

Healy's aberrations, his penchant for shamelessly dirty deals with truly sinister "Third World" capitalist regimes, his "dialectics" doubletalk, his cynical "security" mania, his organizational abuses, and maybe sexual abuses as well, were becoming an embarrassment and there was an accumulation of restlessness in the WRP at the top. David North put out some feelers to Banda and Slaughter, beginning with criticisms over Healy's sacrosanct "dialectics" in 1982, and a very cautious private correspondence ensued which has now been published in North's American paper, the *Bulletin*. Efforts were made at points to raise some criticisms in conferences, but the bloc partners tended to cop out on one another, leaving the whining North in a rather exposed position:

"Healy and the Political Committee of the Workers Revolutionary Party refused to discuss these criticisms.... The Workers League was compelled to withdraw the criticisms, without an answer being given, under threat that there would be an immediate breaking off of fraternal relations."

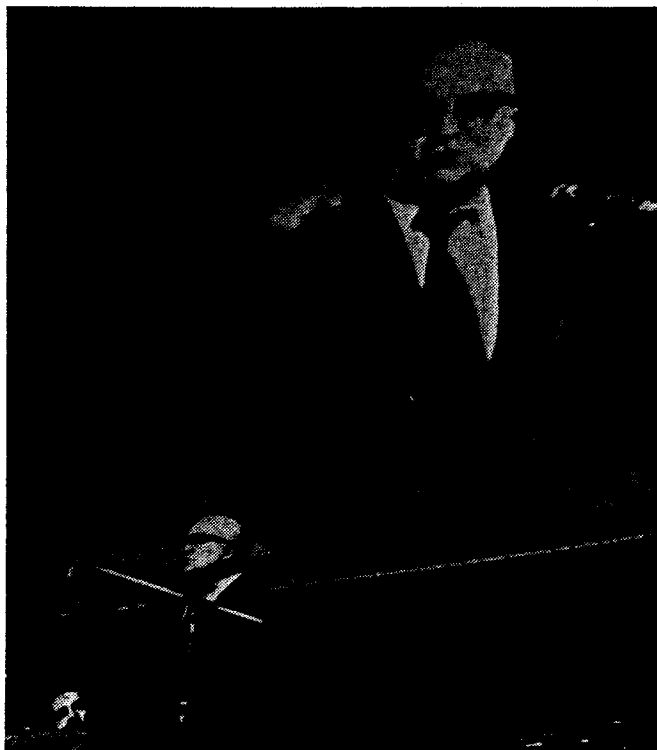
—*Bulletin*, 15 November

But the WRP's main principle of unity—that all power flows from Gerry Healy—had become brittle. Then came the Aileen Jennings letter—very probably simply a contrived thing from the outset—and it was held over Healy's head. The Political Committee was still covering up for Healy, while simultaneously trying to unload him with a promise to keep his picture on the wall. In the infamous July statement, Healy agreed to "unreservedly undertake to cease immediately my personal [sic] conduct with the youth." Banda's *News Line* (6 November) claims that Healy objected to the term "youth": "It should say: 'Under 25'. As it is it'll ruin my lifestyle." Torrance then snapped, "Just get on and sign it."

Healy was barred from party headquarters. But he apparently decided to fight back, and convinced a chunk of the CC that they'd better rally behind him. But not a majority. And then it all blew sky high.

Bigotry and Brutality

Healy mouthpiece Mitchell said that Healy "built the WRP almost singlehanded." The Bandaite retorted that the members "want to know what Healy was doing with his other hand while he was engaged in this single-handed endeavour" (*News Line*, 1 November). We have no idea what went on in Healy's flat. We do know that Healy is a thief and swindler, a totally shameless liar, a systematic and brutal bully, a drunkard, a braggart of founder-leader proportions. And he is a canting, puritanical, hypocritical bigot. Our own experiences with Healy were quite unsavory. We witnessed Healy extorting false confessions, glorying in slanders and lies, deliberately driving weak unfortunates into unprincipled positions—all of which drove us into hard and prolonged open opposition to



Workers Press

Life-sized little Healy (foreground) dwarfed by his egomaniacal projection.

Healyism. Our own contact with the Healyites ended nearly 20 years ago, when the opening of a political chasm between us made us very uninterested in the internal machinations of the Healy group, then called the SLL (Socialist Labour League).

The Banda wing's *News Line* (1 November) quotes Alex Mitchell as having said, "I would defend Gerry Healy even if he was found to be Jack the Ripper." It so happens that last October 26, the Spartacist candidate for mayor of New York appeared on a radio program just after we had first gotten word of Healy's expulsion. She remarked that "to expel Gerry Healy on the grounds of bureaucratism is something like expelling Jack the Ripper on grounds of being a male chauvinist." It's not just that we have priority on the comparison—there are some aspects of Gerry Healy's psychological profile that naturally bring the image to mind. Your classic Jack the Ripper goes in for sanctimonious preaching on Sunday mornings against loose ladies and demon rum—after being out all night dismembering prostitutes.

Over the years we have heard a good deal about the puritanical practices of the Healyites: Young Socialist summer camps patrolled by purity squads, for example. The whole bunch of them are manifestly virulent anti-homosexual bigots—witness the A. Jennings letter's hysteria over the idea that a homosexual had somehow slipped through and was carrying out party assignments among the youth. The Healyite organization has been a machine for degrading people. So now Healy is charged with sadistic sexual practices against young girls. Perhaps the burden is on him to show that in one important field of human activity he is not moved by the same spirit which has characterized his conduct in every other known department of human existence.

Now that the lid has come off the WRP, long-time ex-members are also talking up a storm. A clear picture emerges of an organization in which physical intimidation and capricious brutality were a system. Telling Healy you were quitting the organization, we are told, was the most

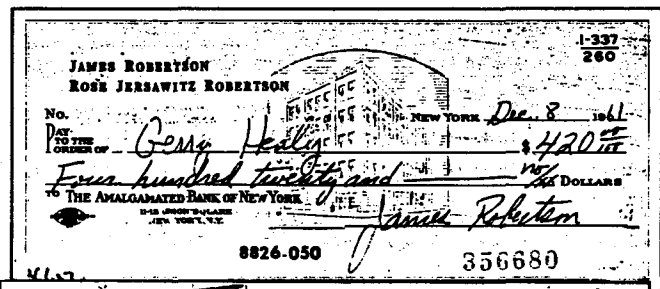
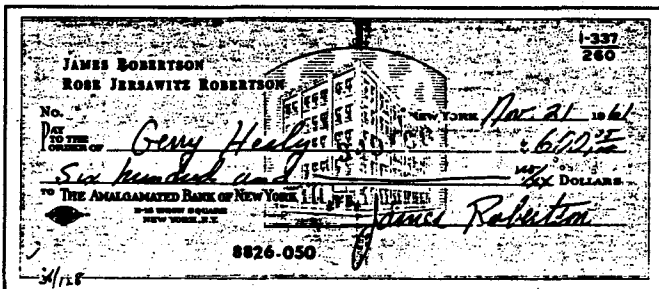
suspenseful experience of your life: you could be beaten to a pulp and thrown down a long flight of stairs—or Gerry might pour you a drink, pat you on the back and wish you well.

Some years ago a former Healy goon told us of having participated in the quasi-kidnapping of an SLLer who wanted to resign. From a summer camp hundreds of miles away, a couple of Healyites drove to the defector's home. He was not there, his wife explained, but out shopping. So they picked him up on the High Street, groceries and all, drove him to the camp, harangued him all night long until the man broke and said he would rejoin. And then they let him loose, without any money to get home.

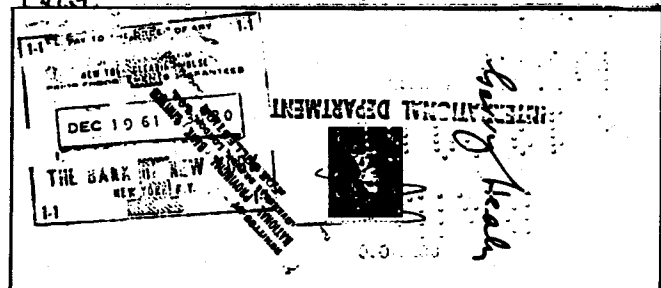
A former prominent Healyite, who says he was himself beaten at least three times, tells us that in the summer of 1966—after the London Conference in April, where Healy's expectations were frustrated by the steadfast principled conduct of the Spartacist delegation—Healy went into a particularly psychopathic, alcoholic, violent mood, and several people were beaten at the '66 summer camp.

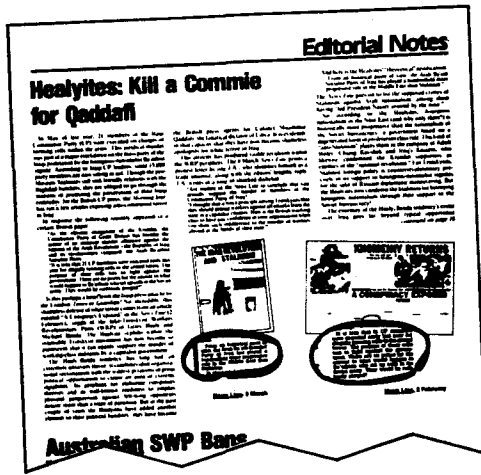
We first encountered documentable Healyite violence with the brutal beating of a political opponent, Ernie Tate, in late 1966 on Healy/Banda's orders. Tate protested publicly and the SLL replied by going to the capitalist courts to suppress the scandal. We responded by making the most vociferous protests we could and demanding, "Oust Healy!"

Our own experience also demonstrates that Healy has always been fixated on money. In 1961 Healy took over a thousand dollars from political supporters of the IC in the U.S. (see illustration). We collected this money for him based on the promise that the IC would make a world tour to pursue political opportunities, particularly in Japan. The tour never materialized; later we were told the money was used in England—and we were denounced as American parochialists for having asked. In the way of gratuitous financial chicanery, we recall that at the 1966 London Conference, where women comrades of the SLL slaved



In 1961, Healy solicited money from American supporters on the grounds that there was an urgent opportunity for the International Committee in Japan. The trip was never made. Later we were told the money (canceled checks pictured here) was spent in Britain. The Spartacist tendency was roundly denounced for American parochialism for questioning this.





As agents for Libyan despot and Islamic fanatic Qaddafi, Healyites crossed the class line in blood. Workers Vanguard (27 April 1979) and Spartacist tendency demonstration (right) exposed Healyite support to execution of Iraqi Communists by Ba'athist regime.

Workers Vanguard



away under fairly primitive conditions to provide nice food, Healy turned a neat profit on their labor by extorting grossly inflated prices for the meals, thereby ripping off the foreign delegations. These unprincipled financial games were a harbinger of what the Healy/Banda organization was to become when it turned centrally to the pursuit of Arab capitalist gold.

Apparently the main route of financing for Healy's outfit in recent years was a simple, perfectly legal arrangement. At the Healy printshop, a small number of copies of some Libyan Embassy puff piece were produced at a very high price. Meanwhile *News Line* was printed there at very low cost. So far as we know there is no law against a printshop having two contracts, one very profitable and the other losing large sums. The problem with taking Libyan money, though, is what you have to do to get it. Barrels of oil, buckets of blood.

WRP Alibis Near East Murderers

The WRP—both wings, of course—is a Frankenstein's monster appropriate to its creator. From early on, Healy's programmatic legacy is "anything goes." Certainly the Healyites have grossly and repetitively crossed the class line. Their nominal "Trotskyism" is in sharpest possible contradiction to the actual programmatic content of the WRP's politics. Their service to Thatcher's pals in the right wing of the Trades Union Congress to witchhunt Scargill is a matter of record. The WRP's nominal position of "defense of the Soviet Union" has reached such a level of abstraction as to turn into its opposite: adding to their early infatuation with Maoist China their hailing of Khomeini's Iran, the Afghan mullahs and Polish Solidarność, the Healyites have come to stand concretely for the hostile encirclement of the Soviet Union.

It has been perfectly clear for some time that the Healy/Banda organization has been a captive creature of despotic "Third World" capitalist regimes which have the blood of the workers and peasants on their hands. In the WRP's present tumultuous organizational situation, it has become impossible for those who along with Healy participated in hideous political crimes to avoid acknowledging that fact. Out of Cliff Slaughter's own mouth comes this admission:

"GH [Healy] sought and found relations with bourgeois leaders like Saddam Hussein, Gaddafi, and Nkomo. It is

not only that Marxism was distorted in order to mislead on their class nature. This Party, through Healy, sought financial support from these bourgeois, not just for this or that political purpose, but as a system."

—Banda *News Line*, 20 November

This "system" led the WRP to commit a monstrous crime against the workers of the world. At the height of a flirtation with the Ba'ath regime in Iraq in 1979, the Healyite press hailed the execution of 21 members of the Iraqi Communist Party. With the Ba'ath regime moving to behead the workers movement through physical destruction of cadres of the CP, which has historically had the allegiance of key sections of the working class, the Healyites railed against "counterrevolutionary Stalinism" and applauded the execution. This was a logical application of the WRP adulation for the "progressive," "anti-imperialist" Arab rulers combined with WRP anti-Sovietism. Now, six years later, Slaughter seems to have finally "discovered" that the WRP did some things that a group with that line might do:

"The thinking put forward in justification of these actions by the WRP was 'they were only Stalinists', 'they were only Ba'athists', and so on. The practice behind it was an unprincipled financial and political dependence on the Iraqi bourgeoisie.

"Now we know more. A News Line photographer was sent to the Iraqi Embassy with pictures of opponents of the regime... (At this point the photographic department comrade involved came to the microphone and said, firstly he did not recall the exact date, and secondly the faces of the oppositionists were concealed by placards.

"(Slaughter said he had asked the photographer before the

In Banda News Line (20 November) Slaughter admits that WRP flingered Communist militants for murderous Iraqi Ba'athist regime.

fore the meeting to confirm the report, and he had. Then another comrade who was a photographer on News Line came to the microphone and told how she was sent by A Mitchell, a Political Committee and Editorial Board member, to photograph supporters of the Iraqi Communist Party demonstrating outside the Iraqi Embassy. (When she realised what was going on...

meeting to confirm the report, and he had. Then another comrade who was a photographer on News Line came to the microphone and told how she was sent by A. Mitchell, a Political Committee and Editorial Board member, to photograph supporters of the Iraqi Communist Party demonstrating outside the Iraqi Embassy.

"(When she realized what was going on she left the demonstration and refused this work. Another comrade came forward and told of discussions with Iraqi officials here, on documents as well as photographs, in which money was mentioned. This material is being investigated.)"

—Banda News Line, 20 November

Those responsible for this monstrous crime should be brought to proletarian justice. It is the entire WRP leadership which bears the central responsibility—and it is impossible to believe that the only criminals are those on Healy's side of the current split. So "this material is being investigated"? Who, comrade Slaughter, is investigating the "investigators"?

Cult

There are two kinds of ostensibly socialist organizations in this world. There are those where, if you read the group's paper and find yourself in agreement, and go and join the organization, it turns out to be pretty much what you expected. As examples: the Communist Party, the American SWP (until fairly recently, at least), the Democratic Socialists of America, the Spartacist League.

The Healyite organization is of a different kind. It is a political cult. Formations of this sort can come into existence in the workers movement under conditions of a low level of class struggle, where there is therefore a considerable separation between socialist organizations and the movement of the masses, and little chance of corrective interaction. But these objective conditions are not sufficient in themselves. Also required is a leader with the appetite for cultism. James Cannon, speaking of the cliquist formation around J.R. Johnson (C.L.R. James), observed:

"In order for a cult to exist, it is not enough for a leader to have personal followers—every leader has personal influence more or less—but a cult leader has to be a cultist himself. He has to be a megalomaniac who gets revelations outside the realm of reality. A megalomaniacal cult leader is liable to jump in any direction at any time, and all the cultists automatically follow, as sheep follow the bellwether, even into the slaughter house."

—Cannon, "Factional Struggle and Party Leadership," 3 November 1953

An illustrative example of a cult is the Lynn Marcus (Lyndon LaRouche) organization in the U.S., which is today a virulently reactionary outfit which seeks to function as a think tank for the far-right wing of the bourgeoisie. In the mid-1960s the Marcus group, the Labor Committee, was a leftist group active in the New Left milieu. We ran into them a lot at Columbia University, and when they suggested a debate between our groups on Marxist economics, we agreed readily. We sent our most highly qualified comrade, Joseph Seymour, as our debater; the Marcusites were mortally insulted, because we hadn't sent our "leader." But just because someone is elected head of a party does not mean he is therefore the ultimate fount of all knowledge and authority in every field of human endeavor. In ordinary organizations, there are dozens of comrades who have more knowledge and expertise in

particular fields relevant to the Marxist movement. But not in Marcus' organization. And not in Healy's either.

Over the course of years the Healy operation has sought to create a totally controlled environment devoid of any risk of internal political struggle. The intimidation of potential critics through sporadic displays of gangsterism was only one means. The Healy group worked to keep its people on the run: the endless apolitical youth marches, the sales of the daily paper, the ceaseless exhortations to work harder because the final "crisis of capitalism" was (always) at hand. There was the systematic destruction of cadres: abusing them and then holding them up to scorn as weaklings, breaking down their self-respect by extorting false confessions, using their loyalty to the professed ideals of socialism to make them complicit in crimes against their comrades and the comrades of other groups. The use of these techniques was calculating, as was also the two-pronged effort to deprive the members of the ability to think, by the invocation of "dialectics" and "security."

"Dialectics": those hopelessly idealist lectures of incomprehensible anti-dialectical garbage that nobody could understand—except Healy. We even made a joke out of it: "only Healy knows which opposites to hold fast to." But it was not a joke to the members, who were supposed to come to believe that Healy alone was the repository of Marxism/Leninism, chosen for this purpose from among the mere mortals, like Moses and the Ten Commandments.

"Security"

And on the other side: "security." It has long been the Healyite norm that if you fell from favor, you would be denounced as a CIA agent or the intimate companion of such a creature. That is precisely what happened to Tim Wohlforth, Healy's hapless toady and American servant, ten years ago. Wohlforth's ouster by Healy afforded outsiders like us a glimpse into the inner workings of the Healyite operation (see "Wohlforth Terminated," reprinted in this issue). Of course, it was sometimes possible to evade the full treatment, if Healy had some use for you still. In that case, you would merely be denounced for not

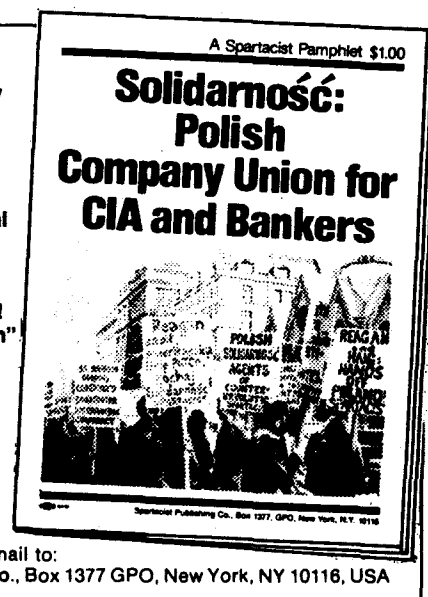
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understanding “dialectics”—if you were American, you were sure to be lectured at great length about empiricism and pragmatism.

The monstrous “security” fetish of the Healyites flowered fully with the multi-year campaign called “Security and the Fourth International.” In an endless series of ludicrous “exposés”—centering on the despicable slander of Joseph Hansen of the revisionist American SWP as an “accomplice” in Stalin’s murder of Trotsky—Healy threw the net wider and wider, until just about everyone was supposed to be implicated as a spy for the capitalist and Stalinist secret police. The methodology is: “Watch out, they’re everywhere—and only your glorious leader can detect them.” “You say you have differences?—which are you, FBI, GPU, or both?” This is a way to keep people subliminally terrified—calculated paranoia. And just as Healy is the world’s greatest dialectician, so is he also the WRP’s James Jesus Angleton.

The Spartacist League campaigned actively against Healy’s “security” campaign of slander against Hansen and the SWP. We even held a couple of demonstrations demanding, “Who Gave Healy His Security Clearance?” Healy’s case against Hansen was nonexistent from the start. When Trotsky was in exile in Mexico, several attempts were made on Stalin’s orders to assassinate him, and he was indeed murdered on 20 August 1940. The FBI undertook a very minimal investigation into the murder of one of Trotsky’s bodyguards, Robert Sheldon Harte, an American citizen, kidnapped and killed in an earlier assassination attempt. The SWP cooperated with the investigation, and Hansen was the SWP’s liaison man. It takes only one piece of evidence to dispose of Healy’s claim that Hansen was an agent of the FBI and Stalinist GPU. Hansen at one point sent a letter to the FBI district director in New York: I’m going out of town for a while, if you have more questions you should write to me at 116 University Place. And 116 University Place was SWP party headquar-



Workers Vanguard

Spartacist tendency protested the Healyite libel of honest revisionist Joseph Hansen as GPU/FBI agent.



ters. What kind of spy asks for his secret instructions to be sent openly to the very people he is supposed to be spying on? The whole hideous structure of Healy’s slander collapses under the weight of that one critical fact.

But perhaps the Healyites are sincere in their “security” fetish, sincerely paranoid? No, they are simply cynical. This is shown by the publication of the A. Jennings letter on the front page of the Banda/Slaughter *News Line*. First they go after Healy for violating “security” with 26 women, because some of them might be informers, then they print the letter—the informer is the party press! On a different scale, the story of Stalin’s Katyn forest “massacre” proves something similar about the Nazis—that they were not deluding themselves about their death camps, their genocide, their *Einsatz* units. The Katyn forest massacre was a Stalinist excess, a mass execution of members of the Polish officer corps; each individual was questioned, and those found guilty were executed. When the Germans uncovered the mass grave, they went screaming to anyone that would have anything to do with the Third Reich—the Swedes, the Swiss Red Cross, forensic experts—and insisted an investigation be carried out by independent scientists and international humanitarians. This response to someone else’s massacre showed the Nazis knew right from wrong; they just didn’t care. And so it is too with Healyite “security.”

“Security” and “dialectics” are a system for control of the WRP membership. On the one side, the “dialectics” only Healy can fathom; on the other side, “security” with Healy having the only security clearance; the membership in the middle. The purpose is to create a strong structure, one in which *anything can happen*, as indeed “anything” did. The Healyite organization is about the most authoritarian structure you can have short of wielding state power as a Stalinist. Other such phenomena are the Moonies, or Jonestown.

What Next?

Neither of the two WRPs should have much grounds for optimism. On the Healy side one would reasonably expect a lot of the prominent people to drift away. The Banda group claims this is already happening and that’s why Healy’s newspaper has stopped publishing the names of its editorial board members.

The Banda/Slaughter outfit is likely to undergo heavy

hemorrhaging of angry and confused members, who are finding it oddly difficult to believe that Banda and the rest of the leadership were innocents. The Banda wing's youth press (*Young Socialist*, 2 November) says "there is now within the WRP a justified mistrust of the leadership." Put more crudely, a lot of the ranks think the whole bunch should be expelled for complicity; it is reported that at the recent Bandaite conference a motion was raised to expel Banda for gangsterism. In the atmosphere of ferment following the split, the Banda/Slaughter gang has been unable to keep the members focused solely on the alleged sexual crimes of Healy, and a wave of revulsion has swept through the ranks over "excesses," particularly the apparent collusion with the Iraqi government in the murder of leftists.

Inevitably, the Bandaite are having big trouble over cutting back to a twice-weekly publication, the members having had inculcated in them since time immemorial the idea that either you have a daily paper or you are less than nothing. Reflecting this fight, the *News Line* of 13 November says that the responsibility for abandoning the daily paper "lies not with our members who have steadfastly and self-sacrificingly fought for the Trotskyist daily"—it's all Healy's fault, of course. More than 20 years ago we pointed to the profoundly abstentionist thrust of Healy/Wohlforth's proclamation that the task of tiny organizations is the immediate "conquest of the masses." The search for shortcuts and gimmicks is counterposed to the necessary tasks of seeking to win authority for the party through propaganda and sustained communist participation in the workers' struggles. For Healy/Banda & Co., the way to become a mass party is to pretend you are one: provide yourself with the external trappings of such a party, like a daily paper, and run about trying to dupe more and more people into believing it. That's on the political side. Empirically, the Healyite experience casts a certain additional light on the effort to sustain a daily paper with hardly any members or influence—such an undertaking eats up a good deal of money. The WRP members who are now appalled to find out some of the services their party performed for oil-rich despots ought to give this some thought: the only "mass base" of the WRP paper turned out to be the exploitation of the workers and peasants of the Near East by their capitalist rulers.

The present split is a clique split, as befits an organization where political discussion has been driven deeply underground by the combination of terror and circuses. But there are politics in a clique fight in any political organization, even in the political cult that Healy built. In the Stalinized American Communist Party (which was not a cult but certainly had its fundamental fibre gutted by the cultist adulation of Stalin), political discussion often took place in a deformed way: "Do you like Browder?" "Well actually, I like Foster." So some nuances at least of political differentiation will come out of the demise of the unitary WRP.

Healy has always been somebody's running dog, but between working for Cannon and working for the Libyan government there is a class gulf. But in Healy's mind there probably wasn't much difference between seeking to ride the coattails of left-Labour politician Aneurin Bevan and becoming a political whore for Colonel Qaddafi. Once you

discard the struggle for the building of Leninist parties to lead the working class in the liberation of mankind, and take off in search of get-rich-quick schemes, you will end up in a despicable place—if not a Healy, perhaps the more ordinary kind of scoundrel voting war credits for his own ruling class.

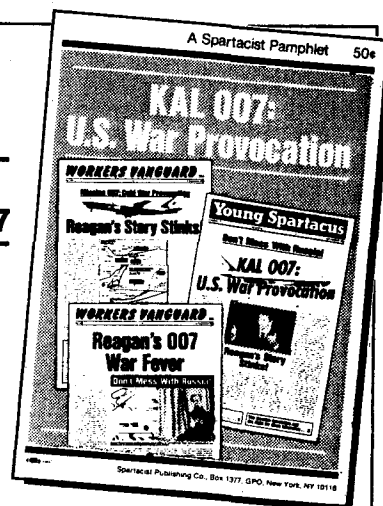
Healy is a political bandit, and the organization he built is an outfit of cynical charlatans at the top. If that were all, we would simply be enjoying the excruciating problems of the WRP leaders, who have it coming. But there is a tragic side to all this: the damage that has been done over the years to thousands of sincere young people who joined the WRP because they hated capitalism and wanted to take part in the fight for socialist revolution. The WRP's posture of "Trotskyism," utterly fraudulent though it is, is not without meaning for many members. And Healy/Banda's organization has frequently done a competent job in exposing the reformist scum and centrist confusionists who people the British left; hence, the WRP is widely seen as the "hard Trotskyists," the alternative to class-collaborationist betrayal. Now the members in the main feel profoundly betrayed, as indeed they have been. We urge them not to turn away in shock and despair from the ideals of socialism, but instead to seek to understand what has happened; we believe that they will find some of the answers in the history and analysis presented in this issue of *Spartacist*.

"Morality" for Marxists is inextricably tied to program. The Spartacists' unwavering adherence to revolutionary Trotskyism—our genuine, concrete defense of the Soviet Union against imperialism and against the treacherous Stalinist bureaucracy, our commitment to building an *international* party of proletarian revolution—this has been our political compass. From that also comes a certain superstructure, a certain morality. We are fortunate to have been the heirs to an unbroken tradition which started with the American party of the Russian Revolution—the Communist Party—and continued through James Cannon's SWP to the Spartacist League, the party which is today acknowledged as the Trotskyist party in the United States. ■

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Spartacist and the Healyites

The Revolutionary Tendency (RT) of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) first came together in 1961 in opposition to the party's deepening revisionism over Cuba. The SWP's line, which would be codified particularly in documents by Joseph Hansen, boiled down to the idea that the overturn of capitalist property relations in Cuba by a petty-bourgeois nationalist revolution under Castro's leadership meant that Trotskyist parties were no longer necessary. Hansen, in classic centrist fashion, hid behind all kinds of saving clauses his central contention that Castro was unconsciously a Marxist revolutionary.

Leading the RT were three comrades who were the founding leadership of the SWP's recently launched youth group, the Young Socialist Alliance: Tim Wohlforth, Jim Robertson and Shane Mage. These comrades had been won over to the SWP out of the competing Shachtman organization, whose final liquidation into "State Department socialism" they had fought. They were won to the program of the SWP, which through the stagnant 1950s had remained formally orthodox—as well as getting organizationally pretty ingrown.

The SWP cadres were themselves about ready to shake loose from their programmatic moorings as political life in this country had begun to heat up, first of all with the civil rights movement, which shattered the illusion of a seamless all-American anti-Communist consensus, and later with the polarizations brought about centrally by the escalation of the losing war against Vietnam. Emerging from the 1950s a weakened and rather depoliticized party still formally possessing a narrowly orthodox program, the SWP in its central core was now on the lookout for something "new."

Thus the founding youth leadership of Wohlforth, Robertson and Mage found themselves increasingly at odds with the party majority, which was already in the grip of a centrist mood. Following a sharp fight over Cuba at the 1961 SWP Convention, it was clear that our comrades would soon be pulled out of leading positions in the youth and had to transform themselves into a minority tendency within the party as a whole if they were to continue the fight against the SWP's degeneration.

The SWP and the IC

The SWP at that time was the main organized force behind the "International Committee of the Fourth International" (IC), the international grouping which had emerged out of a fight against the revisionism associated with Michel Pablo. Pablo had risen to prominence in the Trotskyist movement in Europe after the world war had decimated the founding Trotskyist cadres. Beginning in 1951, he concocted a theory that a new "objective" reality would force the Stalinist parties to play a revolutionary role. Pablo proposed liquidating the Trotskyist nuclei into the Communist Parties in order to accelerate their transformation into revolutionary instruments under the pressure of this "new world reality."

The SWP leadership's association with the struggle

against Pabloism was largely a reaction to the emergence in the SWP of the Cochran-Clarke faction, whose politics, adapted to the U.S. terrain, appeared to be similar to Pablo's. The wing of the SWP leadership headed by James P. Cannon and Murry Weiss was deeply opposed to the political liquidation of the struggle for Trotskyist parties as indispensable instruments for the conquest of power by the proletariat. The conservative SWP apparatus (Farrell Dobbs, Tom Kerry, Joseph Hansen) came to oppose the organizationally liquidationist implications of the Cochran-Clarke line as applied to the United States. The apparatus agreed to support Cannon in exchange for his relinquishing control of the party administration.

In Cannon's concluding speech at the party plenum held in May 1953, he said:

"During the course of the past year, I had serious doubts of the ability of the SWP to survive. At one time—I will frankly admit to you here for the first time—I thought that our twenty-five-year effort, compounded on all the previous experience and work of ourselves and others, had ended in catastrophic failure; and that, once again, a small handful would have to pick up the pieces, and start all over again to build the new cadre of another party on the old foundations."

Cannon chose instead the compromise with Dobbs & Co. The bloc then fought Cochran-Clarke to the finish, while belatedly aligning itself with the anti-Pabloists internationally. The SWP's 1953 "Open Letter to the World Trotskyist Movement" was a fine document but the fight was never carried aggressively into the various national sections to split authentic revolutionary forces away from the Pabloists.

By the early 1960s the SWP's commitment to the anti-Pabloist IC had become empty, while the SWP and European Pabloists had drawn together on the question of Cuba—abandoning the necessity for Trotskyist parties. The break-up of the IC came in 1963 when the SWP and the European Pabloists led by Ernest Mandel reunified to form the "United Secretariat" (USec). The withdrawal of the SWP left the IC pretty much a rump formation, with Gerry Healy, formerly Cannon's man in England, as the leading English-language spokesman for anti-revisionist Trotskyism.

Healy's organization in England, then called the Socialist Labour League (SLL), had grown rapidly. It had regrouped out of the Communist Party, after the Khrushchev revelations and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, some people who wrote impressively in defense of authentic Trotskyism. And it had succeeded in capturing a large chunk of the Labour Party Young Socialists.

1962 Split

It was therefore rather a shock when Healy intervened into the RT in 1962 to bring about an utterly unprincipled rupture within the tendency. Healy claimed to believe that the position of Robertson and others that the SWP had become centrist meant that our comrades had a "split perspective" from the party. So Healy (who was still not

sure it was all over between the IC and the SWP leadership) and Wohlforth, Healy's American tool, presented the RT with an ultimatum that we must sign a statement renouncing our views on the nature of the SWP. Wohlforth's bloc partner at the time, the state capitalist Art Philips, returned from England with the ultimatum, whose flavor is conveyed in this excerpt:

"We do not want to impose [our proposals] on you. If you do not like to accept them, then there is no need to accept them. All those comrades who do accept them will be considered as part of an international tendency...."

—Healy letter, 12 November 1962

The RTers in their majority replied they would accept international discipline in dealing with the SWP, but refused to lyingly recant their views. This was our first experience of Healy's technique of blackmail—false confessions to destroy the reputation and self-respect of comrades and nail them into Healy's corner for future fights.

In New York only a minority of the RT agreed to commit political suicide; on the West Coast, where Robertson had his "base," the vote against accepting Healy's ultimatum was 17-0. The split between the RT majority and the Healy-loyal group under Wohlforth, called the "Reorganized Minority Tendency" (RMT), was a crime, reinforcing the older party cadres in their view that the oppositionists were not young Trotskyists of the Cannon tradition fighting for program but unserious and unassimilable professional factionalists.

It's not clear that Healy ever had much use for Wohlforth, or necessarily thought a viable American group would be built under his leadership. It is clear that Healy wanted no truck with anybody who thought discipline meant having a fight, taking a vote, then doing what Healy wants—if you lose the vote.

The RT and Wohlforth's RMT intervened each in its own fashion at the 1963 party convention. Whereas the

Wohlforthites counterposed their own long, turgid, pompous and cranky document to the SWP majority's long, turgid, unexceptionable but abstract main document, the RT introduced a one-page amendment calling for active intervention into the civil rights movement, including getting into the South, and for recreating SWP trade-union fractions on a modest selective basis.

The RT in 1963 had already recognized as an important difference between ourselves and Healy/Wohlforth the latter's affectation that it was possible for small Trotskyist nuclei to go over to a perspective of "mass work" irrespective of limitations of forces. A draft letter to Wohlforth's RMT dated 18 May 1963 regarding the RMT material for the upcoming convention explains this divergence:

"We see one central defect in your convention material. . . . We do not believe that the way to combat the revisionists' surrender of a strategic perspective of proletarian revolution is by counterposing a demand for the Trotskyists to undertake (everywhere and with forces no matter how small!) immediate agitational struggles of the working masses. This is a call which perhaps corresponds to felt inner-factional needs but which lacks reality. Your posing of our immediate task in every country as 'the conquest of the masses' creates an enormous discrepancy between this declared task and our means. This call is a slide into a *sectarianism* which tends to cut the movement off from opportunities as they are. . . . The general, but not sole or universal, perspective which the present world juncture demands, in our opinion, is one which places major emphasis on propagandistic work toward the crystallization of Trotskyist cadres. Today in most parts of the world our task is to lay down the foundations for revolutionary parties, not to pretend they already exist and declare 'they' should struggle for hegemony over the mass movement."

—*Marxist Bulletin* No. 3, Part II,
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“agitational” paper of an organization devoid of the organized communist cadres and real base necessary to actually lead masses of workers in struggle is not the “collective organizer” of anything, but merely the “mass work” window-dressing for a sterile sect.

RT Expelled

The RT had no illusions that the SWP leadership could be won back to the revolutionary road. But we hoped to remain in the party long enough to win over some experienced forces as the SWP deepened its right-centrist course on the domestic terrain. Healy/Wohlforth foreclosed that possibility when they fingered us for expulsion in 1963. The ultimate proof that we did not have a “split perspective” was that the Dobbs regime of the SWP expelled us for “disloyalty” because they could find no breaches of party discipline on our part. Dobbs authored the infamous 1965 “Organization” resolution to justify after the fact the first-ever expulsion of a minority solely for its political views.

The few years that our tendency got to spend in the SWP were crucial for us. Veterans of the party that Trotsky and Cannon had built—comrades like Cannon and Dobbs, Murry Weiss, Dick Fraser and Art Sharon—taught us some things that make us what we are. Later, Wohlforth (along with Marcus) was to sneer at Cannon as a mere vulgar “window-smasher,” en route to Wohlforth proclaiming himself in effect the first real American Marxist. That has never been an affectation of ours. James Cannon was that communist politician of his generation who uniquely emerged intact as a functioning Leninist from out of the decaying Comintern. In that sense, we certainly aspire to be Cannonites. And later on, when we encountered some of the numerous left splits from the USec in Europe, we appreciated more than ever that it was the American SWP’s unbroken continuity with Lenin’s and Trotsky’s Communist International through the SWP’s founding cadre which permits us to be different from so many European New Leftists who thought they were Trotskyists, having learned “Trotskyism” from books after Stalinism, fascism and war had physically wiped out the cadres.

The recent sequel to the reformist degeneration of the SWP—Barnes has only lately finally driven out and expelled the last of the long-time party veterans, so that he could finally surface with his denunciation of Trotsky and the theory of permanent revolution—is a relevant postscript to the expulsion of the RT. Healy/Wohlforth’s discrediting split of the tendency was surely not the main reason why the party cadres stayed with Dobbs and Barnes (just recently Barnes & Co. gloated over how little trouble they had sliding these veteran layers out of leading positions and influence beginning in the late 1960s). Mainly, the party had come through a grinding period of perceived irrelevance and the cadres were pretty well used up politically; if something turned up that looked like a way out of stagnation they weren’t about to look it over too closely. They couldn’t fully act out their appetites until the emergence of mass discontent against the Vietnam War allowed them to become organizers of a popular-front “movement” under Democratic Party hegemony. In the meantime they didn’t resist becoming cheerleaders for

Castro. Nevertheless, in a very subordinate measure, Healy/Wohlforth have some responsibility for the outcome, which ultimately was Jack Barnes’s contemptuous wastage of these comrades.

When Healy got us untimely ripped out of the SWP he surely expected that we would just die, a few dozen comrades without too much literary capacity and devoid of international ties. Wohlforth, meanwhile—having failed to cement lasting ties with Dobbs by setting us up—engineered his own group’s expulsion. Now the two groups confronted one another in America, both claiming adherence to the same basic political program. We neither withered away nor changed our politics to make the organizational rupture look justified; we persisted in the ways dictated by our program, intervening where we could among radical students, the labor movement, the civil rights movement North and South. Wohlforth’s “conquest



Pathfinder

The founding leader of American Trotskyism, James P. Cannon, upholding Soviet defensism in 1940 faction fight.

of the masses,” meanwhile, consisted entirely of his over-frequent paper.

We continued to press Wohlforth for unity and in 1965 we and Wohlforth’s American Committee for the Fourth International (ACFI) undertook unity negotiations. The minutes of these sessions, published as our *Marxist Bulletin* No. 3, Part IV, “Conversations with Wohlforth,” reflect our criticisms of the ACFI’s grotesquely opportunist practice and of the SLL’s political instabilities—e.g., their crisis-mongering, their stupid “orthodox” line that Cuba was still capitalist (at the same time as they had a perfectly Pabloist, tailist line toward Vietnamese Stalinism). The negotiations showed no tendency to go in the direction of fusion, but in 1965 Healy overrode his American group and proposed to himself meet with delegations from Spartacist and ACFI.

These meetings were held in Montreal in October 1965. The delegation from England consisted of Healy and Aileen Jennings. Healy’s initial draft of a unification proposal provoked a sharp fight by Spartacist over how disputes in the fused American group would be settled—by a body of the IC, meeting in London (Healy’s proposal), or

by a conference of the members of the fused American group (our proposal). Healy's initial draft stated that disagreements would be set aside "for consideration by the American Commission at the International Conference." We fought for an amendment that the American Commission "would report back its recommendations for consideration by the Unification Conference of the two American groups." The final draft was: "Tactical disagreements on work in the U.S. would not be an obstacle to unity provided they did not contravene the above decisions. They would be left up to the majority of delegates at the Unification Conference to decide."

The importance of the right of national sections, within the framework of a unitary international program, to make their own tactical decisions and select their own leaderships is demonstrated by the degeneration of the Communist International under Stalin, reducing national leaderships to incompetent, Kremlin-servile hacks devoid of revolutionary capacity.

London Conference

On the basis of the Montreal agreement, a delegation from Spartacist went off to London for the April 1966 IC Conference. (Wohlforth stayed home and sulked, sending his lieutenant Freddy Mazelis to head the ACFI delegation.) We submitted to the Conference our draft perspectives document, and took part in the general international discussion. Comrade Robertson's presentation on behalf of the Spartacist group is reprinted here as Appendix II.

While the Spartacist group felt we could live in an international which had Healy's position on Cuba because of its acceptable programmatic expression—the reassertion of the need for a Trotskyist party independent of Castro, combined with the defense of Cuba against U.S. imperialism—we considered ourselves obliged to bring to the attention of the Conference our disagreement with the Healyite analysis. Robertson noted: "If the Cuban bourgeoisie is indeed 'weak,' as the I.C. affirms, one can only observe that it must be tired from its long swim to Miami, Florida." We criticized the IC's enormous overestimation of the imminence of the final "crisis of capitalism." And we commented that "Up to now, we have not done very well, in our opinion, in smashing the Pabloites," insisting that "in many countries a period of united fronts and organizational penetration into revisionist groupings remains necessary" to the refounding of the Fourth International.

It soon emerged that the question of reforging the FI was a main axis of division within the IC. Healy's line—in contradiction to his draft document under discussion—was that the FI had been rebuilt and the IC was it. The Hungarian delegate, Michel Varga, acting evidently for the French Lambert group, which then failed to back him up, put forward the view that Pabloism had organizationally destroyed the FI, which remained to be reconstructed on the basis of the IC's program. Our views on this question thus intersected a power fight between the British and French.

The response of Healy/Banda was swift. Following his presentation in the morning, comrade Robertson at the lunch break had informed Healy that he intended to miss the next session in order to get some rest. When the

Spartacist Delegation Final Statement to 1966 London Conference

REPRINTED FROM SPARTACIST
NO. 17-18, AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1970

Comrades: We believe that it is a violation of Leninist practice to demand that a comrade affirm to his comrades what he does not believe. I have in substance said several times that if I had known of the rule I would certainly have abided by it. I wish to assure the comrades that my action was in no way intended to constitute a violation of the procedures governing the conduct of individuals participating in the Conference. However, this has been deemed not good enough. Instead, in the guise of discipline, the Spartacist organization has been subjected to a series of slanderous attacks, despite our basic political agreement on the necessity of the fight against revisionism. This is an attempt to substitute for international democratic centralism for the American section a mechanism not of consciousness and discipline but of fear and obedience. Hence an incident without significance of an unintentional violation of protocol has been uniquely singled out and inflated into an accusation of petty-bourgeois arrogance and American imperial chauvinism. If the comrades go ahead to exclude us from this Conference, we ask only what we have asked before—study of our documents, including our present draft on U.S. work before you now, and our work over the next months and years. We will do the same, and a unification of the proper Trotskyist forces will be achieved, despite this tragic setback.

Conference reconvened, charges were leveled that Robertson's "unexcused" absence was an act of petty-bourgeois, American-chauvinist contempt for the Conference for which he must be made to "apologize." For two days wild and escalating political attacks on us were made by Healy, Banda, Mazelis and others. While repetitively making it perfectly explicit that we had had no intention of violating an (unannounced) Conference rule, our delegation refused to denounce ourselves. After reading out our final statement (see box this page) we were summarily excluded.

An internal circular by Al Nelson was instantly sent out to all Spartacist members from our national office. It read in part:

"After the ridiculous incident... had been so grotesquely inflated, a verbal apology to the IC Conference for our 'petty-bourgeois indiscipline' was demanded of Comrade Robertson and our delegation. We of course refused and in a prepared statement stated that this was a violation of Leninist practice and represented singling out of the Spartacist for special 'treatment,' using fear and intimidation as substitutes for international discipline based on political consciousness, and that to apologize would be to

vote for false charges....

"We must stand firm in the face of this unprincipled attack. Nothing must get in the way of building a revolutionary movement here as part of the re-building of the Fourth International.... Granite Hardness!!"

As a sidelight to this expulsion where false confession was made a matter of "discipline," it must be noted that for the privileged French and English IC sections there was no discipline. The IC, it turns out, was for democratic centralism "in principle" but was in reality governed by the position that "The only method of arriving at decisions that remains possible at present is the principle of unanimity." The IC was thus revealed—to our surprise—to be not an international tendency but a bloc whose two main sections each said and did their own thing while imposing "discipline" on smaller sections within their respective spheres of influence: Europe for the French, the English-speaking countries for Healy.

In *Spartacist* No. 6 (June-July 1966), we reported the facts of the trumped-up expulsion and reprinted comrade Robertson's political presentation made to the Conference. We wrote that "the experience of the Conference, taken together with other evidence from the history of the SLL, demonstrates that the Healy-Banda machine subordinates real political issues of agreement and disagreement to the exigencies of organizational issues and personal prestige politics. That organizational tendency is itself a political issue of the first order." We concluded:

"We draw appropriate political conclusions from the organizational wrecking practices of Healy and Wohlforth. However, we do not close the door to them, much less to all those forces within the I.C. who are their victims.... So long as they remain on their present bankrupt course, we are locked in an implacable struggle to cleanse the revolutionary movement of their poisonous influence.... We shall go forward, let our enemies beware!"

Gangsterism and the Courts: The Tate Scandal

In June 1966 another piece of propaganda appeared on the scene. The SWP, delighted at the explosion of the London Conference, and having gotten their hands on our documents on the split, brought out a pamphlet entitled "Healy 'Reconstructs' the Fourth International (Documents and Comments by Participants in a Fiasco)." Joseph Hansen wrote the preface, a clever piece ("He [Robertson] is in a foreign land... among unusual people given to unusual ways. In fact, of all the organizations he has been in, it can safely be said that he has never seen anything like this."). Apart from a few incidental lies, like that the RT was expelled from the SWP for violations of discipline, the preface is truthful on the events of the Conference, while also making every effort to make us appear naive and pathetic. Thus, according to Hansen, the expulsion of *Spartacist* caught Robertson "by complete surprise (he came to believe his own propaganda about Healy being a model leader)," Robertson was "dazed," etc. But the documents contained in the pamphlet—including an exchange of letters between Healy and *Spartacist* following the Conference—speak eloquently for themselves.

The Healyites, having for nearly three months publicly concealed the flimsy "apology" pretext for our exclusion under a smokescreen of political accusations, finally had to respond to our *Spartacist* article and Hansen's pamphlet.

Cliff Slaughter got the dirty job and in the *Newsletter* of 2 July 1966 he contradicted himself exquisitely:

"Robertson was, of course, not asked to denounce himself as a petty-bourgeois, or anything of the sort. Such is not the politics of Bolshevik organizations....

"His very rejection of this, his insistence on personal prestige *against* this discipline, confirms our characterization of this group as petty-bourgeois, dominated by the ideology of middle-class radical groups in American politics, their ideology subordinated to the US monopolists and American exceptionalism."

An IC Statement on the "Robertson Group" dated 9 April 1966, which was rather detailed on the "apology" fiasco, was finally brought out publicly in *Labour Review* in August.

In *Spartacist* No. 7 (September-October 1966) we denounced as "monstrous" the Healyites' initial response to

Joseph Hansen's pamphlet—containing the documents on trumped-up exclusion of Spartacist delegation from April 1966 London IC Conference—drove Healy/Banda into a frenzy. They had Hansen supporter Ernest Tate brutally beaten, then when he complained sued him in the bourgeois courts.



the Hansen pamphlet: the August 20 *Newsletter* had slandered opponents as "finger men for the State Department" and threatened to itself use the capitalist courts—Hansen's pamphlet, said the SLL Political Committee, "is legally libellous, we shall not hesitate to deal appropriately with the handful of United Secretariat agents who hawk it around the cynical fake-left in England."

We concluded our article:

"... we must state that for the historic short run at least we have been *vindicated* in the course that we steered at the [London] Conference and subsequently, and have emerged with our capacity to pursue revolutionary work unimpaired....

"It is absurd to describe Healy's break with *Spartacist* as being our breaking from the Fourth International.... And if Healy's wrecking sectarianism and bureaucratism have made the work of Trotskyists (including ourselves) internationally more difficult, we will go ahead; the world party of socialist revolution will be reborn, but toward that task Healy has been shown to be not a midwife, but an abortionist."

In November 1966 Healy/Banda drew the blood line over the Hansen pamphlet with a savage goon squad assault on a USec supporter, Ernie Tate, who was selling it outside London's Caxton Hall. Then they justified the

beating, suing Tate for protesting publicly and also pressuring some English left papers who had printed Tate's protest to back down and apologize. (Fifteen years later, Vanessa Redgrave on behalf of the Healyites sued a sharp-tongued centrist, Sean Matgamna, for having said a bunch of hostile things about Healy that everyone knew were true.)

The recourse to violence signals contradiction between professed program and real appetite. It was the Stalinists who brought these "tactics" into the workers movement systematically—they, more than the previously existing kinds of "socialists" who made promises and broke them, had an acute conflict between their professed fidelity to the Bolsheviks and the example of the October Revolution, on the one hand, and their anti-revolutionary practice on the other. Healy/Banda's characteristic methods of violence include the verbal kinds of violence: slandering opponents as "CIA," "FBI," "GPU," etc. to isolate them and set them up for physical attack, and direct use of the state, especially using the particularly loathsome British libel laws to muzzle people and/or go after their assets.

Our response to the beating of Tate was to make the biggest outcry we could. We published Tate's statement—an account of the assault and appeal for workers democracy—and headlined our editorial, "Oust Healy!" This article is reprinted here as Appendix III. In that article we answered the question always posed by IC sycophants: if the SLL has a good program how can it have such a bad "regime" as you say? We wrote:

"How is this contradiction to be explained? *We say that Healy is an aggressive and greedy adventurer whose particular politics have changed frequently.*" [original emphasis]

It was in 1970 that we recalled comrade Lenin's term for a phenomenon like the Healyites: political bandits.

Programmatic Gulf Opens Up

Our call to "oust Healy" presupposed a continuing contradiction in the IC between formally correct program and corrupt "regime." Within a year of the Tate scandal, however, the Healyites had resolved the problem by sharp programmatic departures from Trotskyism: principally, their embrace of the Maoist "Cultural Revolution," which was at bottom nothing but an unusually degrading and violent falling out between sections of the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy; and their line on the 1967 Arab-Israeli "Six Day War" when, in the name of fighting Zionist racism and expansionism, they embraced a totally classless concept of an "Arab Revolution" consisting of the despotic nationalist regimes which have cravenly colluded with imperialism and Zionism to dismember the Palestinian nation.

This programmatic shift into classically Pablist tailism of "Third World" Stalinism and nationalism signified a clear political break by the Healyites from the political terrain of Leninist class politics. Earlier, while making clear our various differences, and refusing resolutely to capitulate to Healyite blackmail efforts in 1962 and 1966, we had remained unreconciled to the disunity of apparently programmatically closely related forces. Healy no doubt hoped to push us into drawing unjustified political lines—ideally, in his terms, we would call for a Fifth International and spin off into space. But we did not make Healy's

wrecking conduct toward us into the center of our political world; we consciously sought to follow the example of Trotsky when he deferred until after 1933 in drawing the theoretical balance sheet of the Stalinization of the Comintern. Only in *Spartacist* No. 10 (May-June 1967), after Healy had come programmatically unstuck from his orthodox posture, did we conclude that "These departures by the Healy group from revolutionary politics signal the transformation of the unclarified civil war between Healy-Banda-Wohlforth and ourselves into a clear-cut political struggle between counterposed tendencies."

In 1967 the Healyites made themselves programmatically external to our own history. The full unfolding of Healyite appetite took a while longer. But the 1967 adaptation to the mythically progressive Arab rulers was the theoretical preparation for the Healyites' grossly crossing the class line when they became open press agents for murderous Arab regimes, associated with the launching of the daily *News Line* by the British WRP in 1975. In 1979 we headlined, "Healyites: Kill a Commie for Qaddafi." The precise development of these corrupt relations with capitalist dictators—from the signing of an accord with Libya's Qaddafi in 1977, through the applauding of Iraq's execution of 21 Communist Party members, to the fulsome support of Iran's theocrat Khomeini (the Iran-Iraq war making the latter two policies incompatible)—was admitted in nauseating detail by the U.S. Workers League's David North in 1984, when the Healy/Banda IC machine had begun organizationally to decompose, soon culminating in its present spectacular implosion. ■

—BOUND VOLUMES OF— NEW INTERNATIONAL

The journal *New International*, initiated in 1934, was the theoretical "organ of revolutionary Marxism" published by the Fourth Internationalists of the United States. The Spartacist tendency considers the *NI* of the years 1934 to 1940 the historical predecessor of our international theoretical organ, *Spartacist*. After 1940 when the faction of Max Shachtman and James Burnham split from the SWP over the Russian question, taking the *New International* with them, the *NI* became politically alien to us.

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Interview with London Conference Participants

On the 1966 Split

On November 16-17, *Spartacist* interviewed four leading members of the Spartacist League/U.S. in the aftermath of the spectacular implosion of the Healy/Banda WRP in England. The subject matter covered in the interview is wide-ranging, but it centered on the expulsion of Spartacist from Healy's and French leader Pierre Lambert's April 1966 London Conference of the International Committee (IC). Three of the comrades interviewed—Jim Robertson, Joseph Seymour and Liz Gordon—were participants in the London Conference as members of the Spartacist delegation. (The fourth Spartacist delegate, Rose Jersawitz, was passing through London on her way to study politics with the *Voix Ouvrière* group in France. Upon returning to the U.S. she launched a faction fight in the SL urging emulation of *VO*, and then quit to do so, founding the *Spark* group based in Detroit.) The other comrade interviewed, Al Nelson, was the party leader in command back in New York when Healy broke with us at the London Conference.

As necessary historical background to the material presented in the interview, a narrative account of our tendency's history and experiences with Healy is provided on pages 12-17.

Conducting the interview on behalf of *Spartacist* was a panel of five comrades. Mark Kellerman (joined 1965) is a former member of the Central Control Commission, a member of the SL Central Committee and a staff writer for *Workers Vanguard*. Reuben Samuels (joined 1968) is a member of the *Workers Vanguard* editorial board and the SL Central Committee. Joel Salant (joined 1968) once edited *Spartacist East* and is currently a member of the SL Central Control Commission. Bonnie Brodie (joined 1974) is the editor of *Young Spartacus*. Helene Brosius (joined 1964) is secretary of the International Secretariat and managing editor of the English-language edition of *Spartacist*.

SPARTACIST: Since the definitive rupture between ourselves and Healy took place nearly two decades ago, we might begin by indicating where the idea came from to interview the participants in that history.

Robertson: The Healy/Banda organization has blown apart, and a lot of dazed people are asking "where did we go wrong?" And the 1966 IC Conference and our expulsion keeps coming up over and over again. Now Wohlforth says, oh of course Ernie Tate was maliciously beaten. Banda says to his miner supporters, yes, maybe it was a mistake to get rid of the Spartacists in '66. And it seems that

François Demassot had told a lot of people that I was beaten up in London, which isn't even true.

And now we are told, by people who were in a position to know, that Healy was wild, drunken and really violent in the summer of 1966, after his expectations were thwarted at the '66 Conference in April.

The article that we wrote last summer also figures strongly. That article was on what the Healyites did to the mine union leadership, playing running dogs for the Labourite right wing and the Tories. Because we heard from miners: "You better watch out for the WRP, Banda is absolutely out of his mind over what you people have written and he has sworn to get you." So we may have helped to crystallize a split in the WRP that was evidently one or two years in the making, and having nothing to do with Healy's alleged sadistic sexual proclivities.

You know, Shachtman once got very, very mad at Cannon who observed that we Trotskyists are the only moral people. And he thought that was a little too angular a formulation, leaving Shachtman in a brothel somewhere. Well, what Cannon meant was that without a correct program you cannot be very moral in the course of wars, revolutions, repression, betrayals, lawsuits. Without a correct program that crystallizes, in writing and in your work, the historic aims of the proletariat, you simply cannot be moral. Even if you are the Reverend A.J. Muste, who wouldn't kill a fly. To the extent that we have something to crow about here, we have to locate it in our programmatic outlook.

It turns out that we have a profound difference with the WRP, over politics. Their nominal defense of the Soviet Union is at such a level of abstraction that any concrete expression for several decades has been against the Soviet Union, on most anything you can name. Including, interestingly, going way back, support for the Cultural Revolution, which was virulently anti-Soviet. And they applauded the execution of Communists in Iraq. Then they had to dump the Ba'athist connection in Iraq in order to back the Ayatollah, because Iran and Iraq were at war. And may I point out that to back the Ayatollah is also to be anti-Russian. And they back Solidarność, which wants a bloody counterrevolution to make Poland safe for NATO. Iran, Poland, China, Afghanistan—back all the enemies of the Soviet Union on the perimeter of the Soviet Union. And this is called "defense of the Soviet Union"!

So we have some stuff to say now, because we were the principled people the whole way. And I would suggest that the main reason is not some morality associated with Americans versus English persons, but that over a long

period of time, through many fights, through one tendency after another, we stood concretely for the defense of the Soviet Union, against imperialism, and against the damn Russian bureaucracy. That has in fact been our political compass, and it also generates a certain cultural superstructure and a certain morality.

Our political culture is associated with an actual Leninist program that seeks to live, instead of a series of sideshows and circuses.

In light of the things that the two WRPs are daily revealing about their stinking common heritage and recent practice, one is tempted to say "thank god we're not Healyites." But this is not an accident. Our practice and tradition come out of the international communist movement, and we have the examples before us of the Cannonites and Shachtmanites. Whose leaders weren't "maximum leaders": they sometimes had fights in their central committees. And they lived modestly and they did not claim to have total knowledge—of "security," dialectics and everything else in the world. Unlike Gerry Healy, J.V. Stalin, Elijah Muhammed, the Reverend Jim Jones, Sun Myung Moon, Lynn Marcus and L. Ron Hubbard.

SPARTACIST: Do you consider the Shachtmanites part of our Trotskyist heritage?

Robertson: There was a lot wrong with the Shachtmanite organization: it was deeply programmatically weak, disoriented and subject to demoralization, which did in fact, in a difficult time, destroy it. But as far as internal administration and party democracy went, it was very good. You could get up in conferences and say rude things about Shachtman, have debates. A pretty lively National Committee, as many internal bulletins as people were capable of writing. And I learned a lot.

The SWP I thought was basically a sound organization but I saw certain practices that seemed kind of bureaucratic. In particular, every week members of the National Committee got a big packet of information from the center, which was confidential unless you happened to be personally close with an NC member. If it was a real issue, it would hit the internal bulletin within a year or so. But there was a kind of vicarious insiderism that I thought was offensive and manipulative.

But by and large the organization seemed to run OK. I mean, you knew what your rights were. And if you stepped over the line, you knew you could get thrown out. But at least you sort of knew what the line was.

My first fight with Wohlforth was on that subject. We had our first faction meeting, and I mentioned in the course of it, "Well, comrades, this is a pretty serious business." This was right around the time of the 1961 plenum where we had it out on Cuba—I think it was immediately following it. Hansen sort of booby-trapped us into turning up as an opposition. The intention was to smash this youth leadership and bring them to heel on Castro. Well, we didn't smash. We came out fairly hard and we called a faction meeting a few days later. We had quite a few people there. And I said, "Well, the way things are going, looking at the party and looking at the situation, I give us about 18 months here." And Wohlforth yelled at me and screamed and yelled and screamed.

After the meeting, I hung around a little bit—it was in his apartment—and I went up to him and said, "Well, Tim,

why did you argue with me about that? You know the nature of the organization we're in, we're on a pretty hard collision course. I think we'll be pretty lucky if we last 18 months, given the logic of the situation." He said, "I know." I said, "So why did you fight me about it?" He said, "Well, there are people like Freddy Mazelis who are very nervous, and I didn't want to scare him."

We lasted about 18 months.

But insofar as I encountered the Healy organization, there was nothing top to bottom that I found appetizing, in accordance with my understanding of a communist organization. And the Healyites did indeed march to a different drummer. We were put off track by their literary side for several years because of Healy's success in winning over significant sections of the trade-union and educational apparatus of the British CP to an ostensibly Trotskyist position. They wrote very powerfully. And it took a little while for Gerry to work through that and use it up, and to create some kind of nasty, shabby, deepening and evolving cult.

SPARTACIST: When did you develop the slogan, "However Healy does it, do the opposite"?

Robertson: It was from watching the Wohlforth operation here, grinding the members to pieces. I'll give you a nice example. We just spent about 18 months preparing and running an election campaign in New York. We got a good party organizer in, a campaign manager and two candidates. And we ran hard for many months, the best cam-



Labor Publications

London Conference of International Committee, April 1966. Photo shows leading figures posed before "III Congress" backdrop. Was Healy intending to proclaim the IC meeting to be the Third Congress of the Fourth International?

paigned we could, pound, pound, pound.

OK, in a Healyite organization, the day after the election, you walk in and you say, "Well, comrades, the crisis intensifies and you've been semi-traitors for the way you've dogged it. Now you've really got to go to work." That's an absolutely normal Healyite technique. Instead of, "Well, comrades, take some vacations now. Go and skin dive, or go to Portugal, or do something. Pay as much of your own way as you can, and perhaps the party treasury can assist you. We have worked you relentlessly, now take a break." That's a very good example of an anti-Healyite technique. And so maybe we'll have some of the same candidates around in a few years.

In a Healyite organization it would be: "Turn over your vacation money and work twice as hard."

What does this reflect? If you're going to try to build a revolutionary workers party, you've got to have cadres. If you're running a perpetual sideshow, you don't want cadres. You need a few supervisors or foremen, and you just run through the human material and milk it. These administrative techniques reflect qualitative differences in purpose.

SPARTACIST: How did the Revolutionary Tendency first get involved with Healy?

Robertson: It all began really in 1961 with the document called "World Prospect for Socialism." At that time there was the old International Committee, which was the SWP and a little group in England and a little group in France and a little group in Switzerland and maybe a few corresponding sympathizers here and there—the Cannon wing fallout from the 1953 split, which was pretty moribund.

And then the Healyites broke away from their deep entrenchment in the Labour Party, in the course of winning over several hundred very able people out of the CP, from the education and industrial departments, mainly in the wake of the Khrushchev revelations and the Hungarian Revolution. And they wrote this document, which was very fine. And there was Healy's magazine *Labour Review*, in which was appearing some of the finest Trotskyist analytical and political material written since the '40s fight, particularly material by Cliff Slaughter but not restricted to him. Peter Fryer's material on dialectics. The American magazine *Fourth International* of the SWP was fairly dull and pedestrian.

The youth leadership of the founding YSA was kind of restless with the SWP. For a while Tim [Wohlforth] got into secret correspondence with Patrick O'Daniel (Sherry Mangan), who was the editor of Pablo's English-language magazine, the *Fourth International*. I was a little nervous about this correspondence.

And then one day Tim was on tour and a letter came, and a majorityite comrade, Al Taplin, opened the letter instead. It was forwarded immediately to Jim Cannon in L.A., who invited Tim over to his house. And Cannon pulled out the party constitution and read him the relevant passage, and then handed Tim the letter. I ran into Tim in San Francisco a few days later. He was still shaking.

We were smuggling in half a dozen copies of the Pabloite *FI* and handing them around surreptitiously. Because Pablo was putting an orthodox front on things, and we were kind of nervous, because we were wondering what the devil we were doing in a very small, largely Anglo-Saxon

wing of the world movement. We hadn't worked anything out—we were poking around, as youth will.

When I first came into the SWP I noticed that if I asked any of the younger comrades, "What party are you a member of?" they would answer, "The SWP." So I said to them: "Read this book." And they would come back after having read the book and I would ask, "What party are you a member of?" and they would answer, "The Fourth International." The book was *The Case of Comrade Tulayev*, by Victor Serge. Thus, in a rather unintentional way, I was building a proto-faction.

So we were disgruntled in a non-focused way with the SWP, it was very much of a national party. We were casting around looking at various socialist currents and tendencies in the world. It would be useful to explain what caused us to shift from looking at the Pabloites sympathetically to looking at the Healy group sympathetically.

The Pabloites put out their English-language *Fourth International* which looked attractive and sufficiently orthodox. We studied the resolutions from their Fourth and Fifth Congresses which looked very straightforward.

Then there was a huge scandal. A Healyite fraction got expelled from a local constituency Labour Party organization and it was alleged that supporters of Pablo had blocked with the right wing to get rid of them. The SWP publicized this as a classic atrocity which was supposed to show how rotten the Pabloites were as opposed to their good friend Gerry Healy. But Wohlforth and I thought: what happened one night in some town several thousand miles away is not susceptible to our critical examination.

Then, when the Marcyites split from the SWP in 1958, Pablo gave them some coverage in his press. But he made a careful political separation between himself and them. We thought that was fair, even though we knew that the Marcyites were no good. One always wants to exploit the misfortunes of one's opponents, and the SWP was an opponent of Pablo.

However, something took place which we *could* evaluate from a distance. Around 1959 or so, a group with some prominent people, including Alasdair MacIntyre, broke away from Healy. We got their documents—probably published by Pablo—and saw that they mainly complained about various organizational abuses and had drawn classically Menshevik conclusions on the party question. So we said, these guys are no good. But Pablo, in his introduction, supported them without reservation. So we thought, forget Pablo. We also drew another, objectively quite stupid conclusion. Healy's defense of the correct Leninist position on democratic centralism caused us to tilt toward Healy and we started looking upon Healy much more favorably. But the enemy of your enemy is not necessarily your friend.

And then "World Prospect for Socialism" came out in 1961. We were getting more than restless over the Cuban question. And here was this really good, hard line "for the revolutionary workers party!" Since it wasn't against the law in the SWP, we got scores of copies and started handing them around. We thought, well, program is decisive, and this is the clearest and most pristine expression of the program of international Trotskyism that we've seen in a long time.

Then we got into this fight on the Cuban question, and got plunged into being the minority faction in the SWP.

And we were still trying to run the youth group, which I knew was going to be for a very short time. Wohlforth didn't seem to want to understand that, either.

And I couldn't stand the alternations that Wohlforth was doing. Every week he'd go down to 116 University Place and he'd be jerked around by Farrell Dobbs, and either we'd be in a hard oppositional stance or we were going to be conciliatory. And I said, we're through in the youth org. I think we ought to pay attention to what we can do. We've got some pretty good young cadres, there's a few branches that can be taken, because in those days branches were like independent castles with barons. They didn't use membership transfers—there weren't enough people to move around and they were all too old.

But I thought if we could get Philadelphia and New Haven and a branch on the coast, transform ourselves from



Bulletin

Healy's hapless toady and American servant, Tim Wohlforth, in 1966.

the youth majority into a tendency in the party as a whole with a majority in a couple of branches, that we'd get more longevity, to run a fight. Also we'd get more political prestige, because the youth didn't count for much. The old Cannonites vividly remembered what happened to the last youth organization: the YPSL-Fourth left with Max Shachtman.

Well, Wohlforth wanted to play around, and then just got mulish. At the same time, Mage had gone on a walking tour through Algeria in the middle of the war against the French and he came back pretty much a Lambertist. He was keeping it very quiet—I had to go visit his house, and I reached into his file of magazines, and there was a whole bunch of *La Vérités*. And Tim had done the same thing he pulled with Pablo—this time behind my back—and that is he had gotten into secret communication with Gerry Healy.

So we reproduced in our own little minority tendency the IC: we had a Cannonite, we had a Healyite and then we had a Lambertist! Earlier Wohlforth had made another departure; he had decided to support Swabeck on Mao's Great Leap Forward of '59-'60. Well, he got badly burned

on that, because Larry Trainor and Jim Cannon got up and disavowed Swabeck—Shane and Murry Weiss being the principal polemicists that shredded Swabeck. And I remember in a break one of the younger leaders, Bert Deck, asking me, "How come you didn't speak, Jim?" And I said, "Well, Comrade Swabeck was at the Fourth Congress of the CI. I think he's terribly out of line now. I think he was beautifully handled by Murry and Shane and I don't think you needed me to put my boot in too."

And the youth leadership was a bloody disaster. The Weissites had had the youth leadership. And then Wohlforth and Weiss had a falling out, and the majority of the youth leadership went with Wohlforth. So there was a very small and not very competent and quite hysterical Weissite presence in the youth leadership. (That's when we started asking for party reps. I remember Tom Kerry came once or twice, and he never came back. He had had it with these maniacs.)

Well, that's all Dobbs was waiting for. So he started pouring in Barry Sheppard and Peter Camejo. And he managed then, over the Cuba issue, to bring it to a national youth conference in December of '61, and clean us out.

OK, so suddenly we were in a situation in which Wohlforth is in private communication with Healy. He kept those letters pretty close to his vest. He had a set of two or three lieutenants, that he would reveal little bits and pieces to. Wohlforth and Healy would do whatever they did in their letters, and then Freddy [Mazelis] and I and one or two other guys would get the word to line up the masses of the faction, which probably consisted of 15 people in New York. I went out to California and I lined up some people that I'd known out there. So we got another wing, with the pre-eminent figure being Geoff White, with whom I had been seriously at odds for years, because I was in the left wing of the SWP and he came out of the CP pretty much a Deutscherite. So we got on not well at all. Also he was much more diplomatic than I was and the SWP believed in suavity, and suave I wasn't. So I got dumped out of the Bay Area and into the center. From which there is a political moral: if you really want to wipe somebody out, don't send them to the center.

SPARTACIST: How did the 1962 split in the RT come about?

Robertson: Then we started getting into trouble about the nature of the SWP. Because it looked to me like, with the SWP embracing the Castro road to revolution, we had a flagrant case of centrism here. You can go read the documents and, starting with a flirtation with Tito, every time there was an opportunity or an action, you could see that the SWPers were straining against the bounds of a formal revolutionary program, because their appetites were going somewhere else. The SWP was physically and socially in very bad shape by 1960. It had about 600 members, and they were ready for something.

They got it over Cuba. I remember Morris Stein, a nice fellow. He got up at the June '61 SWP convention and said, "What's happening in Cuba is the greatest thing since the October Revolution." He sat down, and that was the last we ever saw of him. Hooray—he had lived to see it. One has to draw conclusions from the SWP's Cuba position: that the party was a centrist formation rapidly moving to the right. It had crossed a certain kind of watershed. And we

had to fight.

I wrote a letter to Ed Lee in the Bay Area about how we have to not get wiped out. We used the phrase: otherwise each new rightward departure is going to create a new wave of oppositionists, who then will let themselves get washed out; our job is to stay here and accumulate such revolutionary Marxian discontent as the current course of the party is throwing up.

And Wohlforth didn't want that. Healy was saying, "Trotskyism Betrayed: The Story of the SWP," and at the same time, "the SWP in its central core is firmly proletarian and revolutionary."

And so Healy and Wohlforth pulled a coup in '62. The only trouble is, Wohlforth has never won a faction fight, ever. I mean, it's almost impossible for the main leader of a group to lose a faction fight (and he's lost about six of them in a row)—you really have to do it badly. The crucial trick is to alienate the large majority of your key lieutenants. Really infuriate and offend them. And be very unstable. You zigzag all over the place. That's Wohlforth—a talented, hard-working guy, but this short-term appetite for maximum-leader status. And terrible weakness—if you got a chance to pound him politically for a couple of days, you'd get the opposite line.

And so he really wanted to be the principal leader and he worked like a son of a bitch. He'd bring out all kinds of copy—which wasn't very good, he wrote a major error into every single article.

So he made an ever-closer pact with Healy, and dumped us. And that was supposed to be the end of us. Because I'm pretty sure that they believed that they were going to wipe us out. That we were a petty-bourgeois little group of six people hanging around Columbia University, and that in 1962 it was going to be all over for us. And then Wohlforth, to make sure, made a bloc with Dobbs to get rid of us. At least, Dobbs thought getting rid of us was a charming idea, but didn't think much of keeping Wohlforth around either. And then, once we were thrown out, Wohlforth got immediately demoralized and quit, declaring the party centrist.

SPARTACIST: But you didn't draw final conclusions about Healy?

Robertson: We didn't know what to do vis-à-vis Healy and the SLL. Because we continued to be impressed by them politically, by what they said programmatically. It looked like a big force, Gerry said he was the leader of the world proletariat and we were prepared to give him a contingent credit. So we persisted—we fought as nastily as we could with the local Wohlforthites, continued to be polite with Healy and took the best articles that Slaughter and others wrote for *Labour Review* and printed them as a pamphlet, "What Is Revolutionary Leadership?"

SPARTACIST: And that was it until the Montreal meetings in '65 and the '66 Conference?

Robertson: We had our ups and downs and Gerry diddled us a little bit over the years. Then I guess he was thinking that in 1966 something very big was going to happen. So he upped the voltage, and set up for the fall of '65 this conference in Montreal. And we went in, a lot of us, and all the Wohlforthites. We did some hard negotiating, got what we thought was a very satisfactory, principled resolution of our negotiations, rubber-stamped of course every step of

the way by the poor Wohlforthites, who came out of there looking pretty gloomy—very gloomy indeed. Well, I guess I was looking at them about the way the Chinese peasant looks at a little pig.

And off we went to London. We were under a lot of pressure, because the Wohlforthites had written their perspectives document as fluently and rapidly as they always did. And we were still working on ours when our delegation left for London in April 1966. I turned it in, kind of ruined and exhausted, and after that, stayed up all night again because they started the general discussion on the state of the world, and I thought, well, we're coming in, we're this very junior, puny, unimportant American group, but we owe it to these comrades that we're uniting with to offer some of our views on the main questions of the international movement. So we went in, and I made a presentation.

And on the way out that noon, finished, thinking that nobody would ever pay any attention, I ran into Gerry on the stairs and I said, "I've really had it. We did our document for the fusion. I made a statement to show where we're coming from, and now I want to go and take a nap." He just nodded. And then someone—I always sort of thought it was Banda, but I don't know—really didn't like some of the stuff we said.

Gordon: Our long-standing position that the fight against Pabloism had never been carried through internationally put us on the "wrong" side of a concealed power fight between the British and the French.

Seymour: There's another aspect where I think that we, again possibly inadvertently, gored their ox. They had this "final crisis" line, that the incomes policy was the beginning of fascism in Britain, that the ghetto upheavals in the U.S. were the beginning of the American revolution. And in the Spartacist presentation was the refusal to inflate—we said that the crisis of the Fourth International is not comparable to the situation of 1914, that revolutions are not on the order of the day, that we're not at the head of mass parties.

Robertson: So they were paying more attention to us qualitatively than we imagined.

SPARTACIST: Jim, how did you personally get along with Healy?

Robertson: I think Gerry Healy knew me a lot better than I knew him. In the first place, he only showed *a* face—he had a lot of faces. But he had 20 years on me. He'd seen all kinds of people in politics. And I think he had a very good idea of the customer he was dealing with.

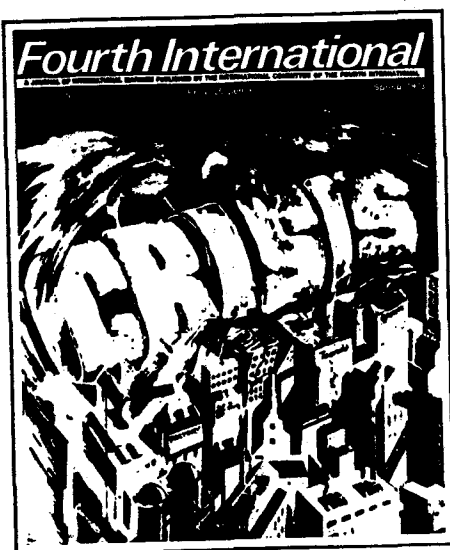
Let's be clear: I *liked* Gerry Healy, I got on very well with him, we saw eye to eye on all kinds of questions, gossip, nuances, tactics, like a couple of fairly hard-bitten communists who'd been through some mills. He had a hard young Cannonite on his hands.

I noticed a few odd things here and there. I did not like at all at the [April 1966] Morecambe conference of the Young Socialists, when he said, "you know, some YCLers turned up to distribute their paper and we sent them packing." I thought, wait a minute, that doesn't sound so good. And I thought he was a little flamboyant, telling me all these stories that I thought he shouldn't have told me, about concealing assets in the middle of a bankruptcy proceeding, for example. And he bragged that his organizers had cars, but he was planning to get them helicopters to move around Britain.

This is only now, in the light of this split that took place a couple of weeks ago—I think Healy was on to me a lot better than I was ever on to him. And he had an idea of what I'd come out of. I think he wanted a fusion in London very badly. He had to make what he took to be an unacceptable compromise in Montreal (which we took as good coin), figuring that he'd rectify it by a pressure cooker in London. And that blew up.

I think that he was under pressure from the French already, and wanted to produce in the English-speaking world, which was his half of the world. And I think that it bothered him a very great deal that it blew up, judging by the accounts coming out now that he was drunk and wild and unusually violent in the summer of '66; we represented in his mind a very big setback.

I know he had a perfectly good idea of what Wohlforth was. Because after the night of the first blowup, when I



Healyites' inane crisis-mongering was used to justify permanent organizational frenzy and brutality, gross economism and all-round political banditry.

wandered back in, probably after dinner, we went at it for a while. And then when that session adjourned, fairly late, Liz and I were called into Healy's room, with Banda in a shadowy corner, and Healy quite drunk, and he said, "Listen, Jim"—very friendly then, the sudden switch—"we can work this out. The fusion can go through. Just go and make a good act of contrition. You know you've got this petty-bourgeois American background; together we will struggle to overcome it. And I care nothing for Wohlforth—you'll go back home the leader."

And I looked at Liz out of the corner of my eye—I had come out of the CP you remember, not entirely an innocent—and I said something to the effect of "Gee, Gerry, this is a really interesting proposition. Our delegation wants to leave *right now* and consider it." And we got out of the room as fast as we could.

We'd run into Healy's Stalinist technique in '62. Geoff White and others wrote most eloquently then—if you sign confessions to stuff you don't believe, you have had it. You are neutralized as a reputable political factor henceforth. **Nelson:** You know that you're making public allegiance to views that you don't hold, and it sort of guts you. You're somebody else's person. You're Zinoviev waiting for the Moscow Trials.

SPARTACIST: So they did this long denunciation of you. What was the response of the other delegations that were there?

Gordon: I remember being endlessly harangued by large quantities of people from the Lambert section and VO: "Why don't you just apologize? We can get this out of the way, and then we can have clear political discussion." And VO would say: "So it's wrong. So it's unfair. But you are being petty-bourgeois individualists. OK, we can see it's unfair. But it's not that important, is it?"

Robertson: VO just backed off; they figured it was Healy's conference.

Seymour: The Japanese observer, I think, abstained, or maybe voted against.

Robertson: Hardy [VO] said to me, "You know, I made a mistake. I came with 18 female schoolteachers who speak English. I should have brought 18 of my auto workers. If I ever get into another conference with the Healyites...." But they just went along, that's all.

You know, it didn't happen by accident. Healy/Banda wanted to pick a fight, and we were either supposed to crawl or become wild and enraged and make weird indefensible political statements—it was a technique of Healy. Put the blocks to somebody, and you either break them or drive them to stand up and announce that Michel Pablo is the real world leader. And I thought, we'll just hang in here like Ulysses S. Grant, and fight it out all summer—because they started the fight on indefensible grounds, and we're not going to give them anything else to make the split over.

SPARTACIST: With the recent split everyone's started talking, and we learned that a lot of people on the British left think Robertson was beaten up at the London Conference.

Robertson: That story needs a correction. Our expulsion had the smell of violence about it, all right. We got downstairs at the end, and Gerry was quite drunk, and he was running around and he was visibly working himself up into a punchout—not between him and me, but he had these guys in the shadows. And I had a very vivid image of the alley in back.

What is quite true is that it was Lambert who intervened to cool Healy off, and we got out of there. So I never had a hand laid on me, but the suggestion was in the air.

Gordon: I can remember Jim telling me in London, "You know, we really fought hard in the SWP. We said some unkind things about Farrell Dobbs, we told Tom Kerry to shut up and sit down when he was heckling in a national convention, and there were a lot of people there that just couldn't wait to get rid of us, but I never felt that I was in physical danger when I was in the SWP headquarters."

SPARTACIST: After the '66 split, the Spartacist organization maintained a posture of loyalty to the IC for a period of time.

Robertson: As long as we had the same formal program in common. So we complained about Healy's administration, ending up with "Oust Healy!" But within a few months, the "Arab Revolution" and the Red Guards obtruded, and we said, wait a minute—we don't care now about Healy's internal administration, it is the administration of a formally, programmatically alien tendency. When you have a regime that is nominally of a revolutionary Marxist

character, and is multi-facetedly corrupt, that creates a tension. Because the corruption has to reflect an appetite alien to the program. That's always the basis of bureaucratism—when you proclaim one thing and practice another.

SPARTACIST: How did Hansen actually get hold of our documents, the ones he used in his pamphlet, "Healy 'Reconstructs' the Fourth International"?

Robertson: When we got back, we took about every scrap that we had in connection with the London Conference and the earlier negotiations in Montreal—we immediately mimeographed it all up in kits. I remember one night we had a social and invited everybody we could think of over, and we were handing these kits around to whoever turned up. And we got in the subway, and there was a friend of ours, a left civil-libertarian who we'd worked with on some cases before, his name was Marvin Siegal. I reached into the leftover kits, and I handed him one.

So he went home with his kit. He was pretty interested in it. He was living with Berta Green, who I think was on the National Committee of the SWP at the time. And he mentioned, "Oh, I ran into Jim, look what I got." And she took it right out of his hands! (He complained later, "She wouldn't even let me read it. She said it was a security matter.") And took the documents straight to the SWP. And the next thing we know, it's a pamphlet by Hansen, whose introduction seems so penetratingly knowledgeable, you'd think it was the power of Marxism. I gather he'd also had reports from the two dissident USec delegations that were there. So he had a lot of fun writing that introduction.

And then Healy made a great to-do out of it, that we had betrayed the class line by going to the SWP and giving the documents to them. Well it was a public split and these were our documents.

And in a straightforward way, that led to the beating of Ernie Tate, because that's the pamphlet he was selling when they creamed him.

SPARTACIST: Our tendency made a vigorous outcry against Healy after Banda's beating of Tate and Healy's legal action to suppress the story.

Robertson: It was either Healy or Banda, and I don't expect now we'll ever know which one, that actually organized the beating. It was a calculated act, orchestrated, not just somebody becoming unhinged. Tate was selling, they harassed him, they went inside and then half a dozen guys came out all at once and systematically beat the shit out of him. At the time (I don't know what's happened to him since) he had a bad medical condition. He had some kind of fine, black, grainy stuff in the fluid inside his eyes; and if he got a sharp blow it all swirled up and he was blind for some time afterward and had to lie in a darkened room for a long time while it settled out. So the Healyites knocked him down in the gutter and kicked the hell out of him! He was rather a mess. And we'd been pretty friendly—at one point we were right on the edge of winning most of the young and quite able Canadian Trotskyist cadre. But one of their key guys, John Riddell, had some contact with Healy that put them off very badly. They then went on to found the USec [United Secretariat] section in England.

SPARTACIST: In hindsight, did Healy have a "good" period, let's say 1957-67?

Seymour: I think the split of the Healyites from the

Labour Party Young Socialists in '64-'65 actually—with all proportions guarded—created some of the conditions that Jim Jones got when he took his operation to Guyana.

Because it's not simply that Healy had a formal literary posture, but that he had to fight for the line of orthodox Trotskyism, including the Soviet defensism which was expressed in those documents—he had to fight for that line as long as he was doing entry work in the Labour Party against the Labour Lefts and the Cliffites. For example, one of the split issues was that the Labour Party Young Socialists should defend the Warsaw Pact against NATO. And that was one of the key—if not *the* key—issues of a somewhat ragged split.

I was a very junior member of the Spartacist League coming not from the SWP, but rather from a background of sort of New Left Maoism with a short stint in Progressive Labor. And I went to England in September of 1965, to be an economics graduate student, and what struck me was precisely the degree to which the Healyite youth operation was like the politics that I had had to break from to become a member of the SL. In fact it reminded me of nothing so much as the Marcyite youth operation—on the terrain of a society much more dominated by Labourite reformism and with a more plebeian but not proletarian base—a youth group that basically consisted of high school students, not young workers. Some apprentices, but certainly not youth that were active in the trade unions as a central arena.

I had been in London for a couple of months when I wrote back, "Apparently the SLL has been recruiting into the YS on an activist, revolution-tomorrow line. Little attempt is made to raise the level of consciousness of most of them or to build cadre, but they're used for purely organizational work, selling the paper, etc., and peopling demonstrations. Needless to say, the turnover of the kids is high. If true, and I believe it is, it is a serious fault. At best it can be considered negligence caused by a rapid influx of young members, and at the worst a cynical exploitation of the aimless discontent of lower-class youth."

So I don't know what subjective change the central cadre underwent, but it was clear that once they had broken from the Labour Party, they built a pretty self-isolating, rather apolitical lumpen-plebeian youth operation which did not intervene in the mass organizations of the British working class. And I think that this provided them with what could be called the sociological and organizational basis for the subsequent degeneration, culminating in becoming agents for Qaddafi and justifying the murder of the Iraqi CP members.

Robertson: Remember their academic student journal, *The Marxist*? Very high level, fine stuff. And then I saw some of the members of the executive committee of the YS at Morecambe. Real good guys. There was one from Ulster in particular that I would love to have talked to. But every time there was the faintest air of the possibility of the loss of unanimity, Healy and Slaughter were right up at the front of the platform. I wasn't used to this in the youth organizations that I'd been in, where Shachtman had a reliable gang of half a dozen kids who were perfectly capable of running an operation.

I think we understand now where Healy's SLL came from. It had Gerry's cadres from the old RCP [Revolutionary Communist Party], the people that he got out of the

Communist Party after '56, and Seymour has added the third crucial component—the Young Socialists operation. Winning over this big chunk of the Labour Party Young Socialists gave them a certain kind of base in what you'd roughly call a lumpen section, and they were also at the same time working the adult employed industrial workers—and so they were walking on two stilts. If you look at "Wohlforth Terminated," you'll see that in Britain in those days, the lumpen consisted of unemployed, unskilled white kids who were actually the sons of employed industrial workers. The gap didn't open up the way that it certainly did for the Workers League in the United States when they tried to work the parallel social strata, so that on the one hand the WL aimed at black and Hispanic youth, at the same time pushing this Committee for a Labor Party which denied the black question, the war in Vietnam, and wanted to found a Labor Party headed by George Meany.

The SLL actually got a base among footloose kids. And it required the "festival" quality of ersatz politics to keep them going. Marches all over bloody hell, and all that sort of thing. The WL tried to reproduce that in the United States, and they're still looking for the killers of Tom Henehan.

The Healyites were always on the lookout for the take, and always sucking up to somebody. I think it was to Healy only a quantitative shift to go from playing footsie with Nye Bevan to Qaddafi.

SPARTACIST: After your experiences in '62, comrades, weren't you concerned going into the London Conference about Healy's manipulative organizational practices?

Nelson: If there's a cult made of Lenin, there's also from the social-democratic side a reverse cult made of Stalin. You know, Stalin was this beast that always lived in the belly of the Bolshevik Party, and then one day like in the movie "Alien" it comes ripping out and all of a sudden it starts chomping up everything in sight, and then you have Stalinism. That's kind of simple-minded.

So Healy had been around for a long time and done some rotten things. I also expect he could turn the leftism on and off if it served a purpose. So it's hard to tell from afar. We knew a lot more about the Workers League because we worked closely with them and knew the cast of characters. We weren't worried about Wohlforth and his bunch because we were very much harder politically than they were. And the differences they had with us, which we understood was a left-right difference, could be contained within one democratic-centralist organization. Except we were concerned about having the right relationship on our domestic ground with the international. And their organization was something of a curiosity, because they had tried to kill us in '62 and simultaneously put out some fine material.

Gordon: I want to go back to the Montreal Conference in '65. That ran for three or four days. We brought in a much heavier delegation than we sent to London; Montreal was the first time that I ever saw Geoff White. And we really went at it with Healy. The main bone of contention was whether a disciplined section can select its own leadership and make its own tactics. And Al reminded me that at one point Healy said, "Not one word of this document will be changed," and we were prepared to split right there. And it

was then that Harry Turner and Bob Sherwood came forward as the capitulators just by making a little noise in that meeting.

Nelson: Turner broke discipline: "Let's not be hasty, comrades"—as Jim was packing up his briefcase.

Gordon: Enabling Healy, after the London split, to address his letter to those two people, because they were soft. Healy was a lot of things but not stupid. And our tendency, including in '62, was prepared to accept international discipline. We found out only after the London Conference that there was no democratic centralism in the IC—they admitted the IC was governed by the principle of unanimity between the English and the French.

In Montreal, we raised our differences and Healy was pretty conciliatory on the politics and he said, "Oh, we have lots of differences with Mike Banda. We have differences over Vietnam, we have differences over Indonesia." And it's when Nelson got up and made a presentation on the '62 split—that Healy was responsible for it—at that point Healy blew his stack. Then he started saying, "Oh, come to London. We're not going to discuss this now—come to London, you can discuss this in London."

Here's a small story about something Healy didn't like at the London Conference. We said, "We and the Japanese comrade want to go off to Highgate Cemetery and see Marx's grave." Healy said, "Agh, only the Stalinists do that—all the visiting Stalinists from Eastern Europe go and lay flowers there." Well, we didn't care; we went and didn't think twice about it. It's that kind of attitude that I think made Healy decide we were unassimilable.

Robertson: You know, we weren't *afraid* of these guys in some political sense. I remember the '62 split. The night that Philips got back from England—Wohlforth and Philips, triumphant. First they both lit cigars to show there were members of the proletariat in the room. And then they brought out the document we were supposed to sign: "Here it is—take it or leave it." And I said: "Did you write it all down, Lynne [Harper]? Okay, that's a split, isn't it?" We weren't afraid of these birds. Why should we be? We thought we were probably quite as good as they were.

We knew how Leninism is supposed to work: the majority controls the line. You get a majority, you control the line; we get a majority, we control the line. If you don't like it enough, one of us splits! You want debate? You get debate. You want an internal bulletin? You get an internal bulletin. You have a "non-negotiable demand," and we don't accept it—well, that's that, it's time to go!

Nelson: That's how it was in '65 too. We worked our position out in caucus. Healy read us his proposal, we asked some questions, wanted some assurances about the relationship between the fused section and the international. He said, "That'll be handled by the American Commission." And then he read his statement. We said, "Well, what about putting..." He said, "Nothing different can be put in here. Nothing will be changed." And we had had a caucus where we said that if we don't get these assurances, we get out. Healy said no and Jim started packing his stuff up. I think Geoff White was talking, and Jim was starting to pack his material up. And then Turner pops up with, "Let's not be hasty."

Robertson: Have a good time with Moreno, Harry! [Laughter.]

Nelson: And we held out and Healy backed down.

Robertson: So here's the answer to the implied question, "when did we first know that Healy was a beast?" Well, we didn't care whether he was a beast—because we figured we were pretty tough too. It was Healy that wasn't willing to be in the same cage, let's keep that in mind. Somebody said to Cannon something about how Stalin corrupted the American Communist Party. He said, "No, don't be so sure. There were a lot of people who were yearning for corruption in the American Communist Party. Don't blame it all on the Russians." Wohlforth was not a victim of Healy. Wohlforth was a servant.

And we were not in a big hurry to go around and justify everything. We got bounced? Weaklings then run and suck differences out of their thumbs. We thought: well, this seems fraught with the possibility of political differences. We said: a leadership that behaves in such an irresponsible fashion is no good. And we let them come up with the political differences.

And now the evidence—it's not conclusive—is that Healy went around the bend that summer.

This absurd thing about an apology... "Gerry, you are rude! You will apologize to me"—except I wouldn't dare do that, I would have been beaten to a pulp on the spot. But given an equal relationship of forces, with VO's 18 auto workers in the room, Healy would have apologized to me for insult—then we might have had a unity. Healy was very good in Ceylon when he went out there in '64. Pudgy little colonial imperialist, he got up and started swinging his weight around. Bala Tampoe went and stood over Healy and said, "Sit down and shut up!" And Healy sat down and shut up.

So one noticed early on that Healy didn't seem to have a lot of fixed politics. Looking back, reviewing the fight we had in Montreal in '65 and the rest, I can see where Gerry would get nervous about us. We actually had firmly committed politics. We looked at what we thought were his fundamental political statements and we thought: this is

very good, this is really what we're about. And I can see where that would make brother Healy very nervous, encountering an organization in the United States that actually believed the stuff he was currently peddling, whereas he knew perfectly well that yesterday he was singing a different tune and would be again tomorrow.

Well, Gerry has his own administrative means. If we sign a sufficient number of confessions, get our back broken, then it doesn't matter where he takes his sleigh, we're going to take the ride. Only he ran into a lot of obstruction. Some of it came programmatically. And some was that we were in a fairly strong position: we were in another country, where we were more numerous and entrenched than they were. They announced in London at the end of the conference, of course we're going to make a campaign and rip the Sparts wide open. Instead, we ripped ten or a dozen people out of the Healyite organization in this country, because they were much smaller and their people were looking forward to getting into a fused organization with us, even if Wohlforth's head was going to roll.

Not that we did anything specially good, it was pure missionary position, going straight down the road according to program. When Tate got beaten up we yelled and screamed, while everybody in Britain was taking a dive on account of a couple of writs. "A high court writ?—oh my god, that's it." Well that didn't travel too well into another country.

The Tate beating—that's the first hard evidence we ever had of Healy's kind of violence. And then we yelled our heads off. Subsequently I've run into too many people in England who personally either participated in beatings for Healy/Banda or were the victims—or both—who simply shut up. So we have to ask a question: is this a matter of English moral fibre, or is there another political process at work here? Is it just the way things are done, the flip side of the mateyness in and around the Labour Party, to treat gangsterism like a guilty secret?

Well, part of the silence was certainly embarrassment.

Spartacist vs. Healyism, 1966-67

REUNIFICATION SMASHED

The unity between the American Committee for the Fourth International and Spartacist has been smashed. The Trotskyist movement internationally and in the U.S. is being seriously disorganized by G. Healy and M. Banda, leaders of the British Socialist Labour League. The Healy group dominates the International Committee of the Fourth International, whose forum, including ourselves, we deem the essential political reunification.

THIRD I.C. CONFERENCE

Defeat for World Trotskyism

It is a bitter irony that the Newsletter (organ of the British Socialist Labour League) headlined its article on the April Conference of the International Committee of the Fourth International, "Reunification of the Fourth International." The slogan of the conference: "The Fourth International is the only Trotskyist force which has not been destroyed by either Healyism or Stalinism."

and a special attack upon Robertson, as he occurred on the Slaughterer's report. While our indignation over a sharp political attack upon Robertson was not shared by the resolution, Spartacist's position. In the evening they perhaps obtained as the year as a result which followed organizational

Spartacist Statement to International Conference

REMARKS made during the discussion of G.M. Slaughter's Political Report at the International Committee Conference by George Robertson on 4 April 1966 on behalf of the Spartacist delegation (with minor editorial corrections).

Therefore the issue, "What is Publication?" has priority here heavily discussed. We disagree that Publication is but the expression of organic currents of reformism and Stalinism, having no room within our movement. We also disagree with Veto Governance's view that Publication can be explained simply by reference to the post-bureaucratic social composition of the F.I., any more than one could explain the specific nature of a slogan by reference solely to the weakened body in which particular

LONDON CONFERENCE AFTERMATH

All interested parties have now offered their views and taken their stands on the April International Conference called by the International Committee of the Fourth International. The Conference was marred by the driving away of the Veto Governance comrades unless grounds that they would not have been had Healy known their positions, which had been published months before the Conference, and nakedly trumped-up expulsion of the Spartacist.

Revolution and Truth

G. Healy, general secretary of the British Socialist Labour League, and his publicists in the American Committee for the Fourth International are evidently striving to compensate with volume for what they lack in cogency. Determined to do a "job" on the Spartacist League, Healy's efforts to discredit our "clique of post-bourgeois friends" is frankly impressive: very best coverage in five issues of Wohlforth's Bulletin, 10 of the SLL's Newsletter, sections of the August issue of Fourth International, and a 38-page pamphlet printing the first six attacks. As if the split itself did not have enough of a Kafkaesque quality, Healy and his ACFI mouthpieces across Spartacist of "sectarianism," "dogmatism," and "poorly informed attacks."

OUST HEALY! An Open Letter to Other Supporters of the IC

There is today a gross scandal in the Trotskyist movement, involving charges of an extremely serious nature levelled against the leadership of the British Socialist Labour League (SLL). Because of the political similarity between the Spartacist League and the SLL, and the close organizational relations existing at various times in the past, we feel it our responsibility to make our views on the matters involved clear and unambiguous.

HEALY AT LIÈGE AND PEKING

Capitalizing to the Maoist version of Leninism, the Healy-Banda leadership in the Socialist Labour League (SLL) through a qualitative step in its degeneration. A recent headline in the SLL Newsletter (14 Jan. 1967) calls for: "Conditional support of 'Red Guards'—the duty of every revolutionist." The article written by Banda, reveals exactly what the SLL supporters in his later, SLL-influenced analysis, reasons for this position shift: "Red Mao's line has not been one of opposition to imperialism either. It is essentially for this reason that we give him our support." (Newsletter, 14 Jan., 1967).

improvements in the living standards of the masses, all in the name of the "proletarian, cultural revolution," are completely reactionary moves, and cannot fail to alienate advanced workers all over the world. (Bulletin, 28 Sep., 1965)

That if the truth comes out, "Trotskyism" looks bad. But you have to be hard-nosed—in politics you can't do the gentlemanly thing and hope that if you don't talk about it, it will just go away. This thing happened, it has to be exposed and dealt with—and now there's a big public split and all the old bodies have risen to the surface.

Maybe there is also a certain cultural component: the background in Methodism. The Healy organization at their summer camps had sexual segregation and sex patrols. Their attitude toward homosexuals is vicious—the A. Jennings letter says: we uncovered the fact that there was a homosexual who slipped through and was actually training our pure youth, and you know what that means.

I think Peter Fryer was the SLL's most important recruit from the CP. He'd been a British *Daily Worker* correspondent in Hungary during the Hungarian Revolution. He came back and wrote a beautiful little book, which was called *The Tragedy of the Hungarian Revolution*. We must have sold those by the tens of thousands. Well, Peter Fryer turned out to be a man of many facets—he was quite good. And he started, presumably at the instigation of Healy and others, Peter Fryer's *Newsletter*, which became the *Newsletter*, organ of the SLL. So what happened to Peter Fryer? Well, I don't know.

Healy and Fryer had some kind of falling-out. And this was the first time I ran into some of Healy's megalomaniacal practices. Healy told me, he may have printed it, "Fryer has run for it. I'm having all the ports of England watched." In fact Fryer wisely had taken off for Portugal. The Healyites made much of it: "And this Peter Fryer—when he ran for it he left the country with his wife, his mistress and his mother." We were supposed to be appalled. I always felt that was rather elegant.

Peter Fryer really was the guy who introduced the SLL into the milieu of the British CP: the industrial apparatus, the intelligentsia and education department. Later when the Healyites were busy denouncing Fryer, Healy printed a little thing that said: "And now, look what has happened to Peter Fryer, as happens with all renegades" and they listed a bunch of renegades and the low pass they had come to. "This Fryer, he now writes books on 'sex'." So I read this, and I wondered what happened to Peter Fryer.

One night I was walking down Eighth Street in Greenwich Village and looked into a bookstore. Sure enough, there was a book by one Peter Fryer called

something like *The Anthropology of Sex Through the Ages*. He was indeed writing books on sex.

This gives you some of the flavor of the Healyite organization rather early on. Fryer was a very important acquisition from the CP. He did set up the Healyites' first press. And he was a top-flight Marxist journalist. He also had very fine theoretical capacity. His little article on Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks* (Volume 38) is a masterpiece, and is something that we'd always wanted to print as our own pamphlet, "What Is Dialectics?" And he was savaged by Healy.

And I thought that Healy made a mistake after 1966 with his whispering campaign against me personally—the way he put it in writing was "the relations within the delegation resembled that of a clique," which, translated, was a verbal campaign around the world that Robertson likes liquor and women. (Now during that conference I was a lot more sober than he was. He kept a bottle of whiskey in his desk drawer which he drank neat; I was pretty much dried out because I had a lot of writing and speaking to do.) But the nonconforming religious derivation of significant sections of the British working class is such that he thought this would be effective. And I thought: wait a minute, I think I know a little more about the proletariat of the world, a liking for liquor and girls is not automatically going to disqualify a Marxist politician from consideration over political issues.

One is reminded of the psychological pattern of a Jack the Ripper who on Sunday morning gets up and gives lay lectures about demon rum and bad women. The Banda wing says: if Healy was single-handedly building the party, what was he doing with his *other* hand? Well we don't know anything about Healy's relations with women, but we have seen the sanctimonious puritanism of the Healy organization—an attitude which goes back to the Methodist traditions of a founding section of British trade unionism in the last century.

One of the top leaders of the Independent Labour Party in the '30s put in his book something along these lines: "Ah, it's terrible, the drink. I've seen so many fine young men come to Parliament from the mines and the mills. And because the evil Tories have licensed Parliament as a royal palace exempt from the licensing laws, during the long hours in Commons these fine working-class lads turned to drink. And within a few years they became completely useless, completely corrupted." My answer is, in the thousand years that the Tories have ruled England, I don't believe that one of them has drawn a sober breath.

Gordon: At the London Conference in '66 Healy complained: we've got to have these bottles of wine here for the French during the meal breaks. Whereas you were supposed to do your drinking privately, out of Gerry's bottle presumably. So we had our meals with the Lambertists and VOers, who liked to drink wine and crack jokes—we just dove in indiscriminately among them, keeping them between us and the English delegates.

Robertson: The IC said things, and we acted on what they said. We weren't entirely blind, although I must say that we were very innocent of the techniques of controversy associated with Pabloism in Europe, which seem to consist of—if you announce that your most unyielding and fundamental principle is X, that's sure to be a lie. It took us a couple of trips to Europe to figure that one out, because

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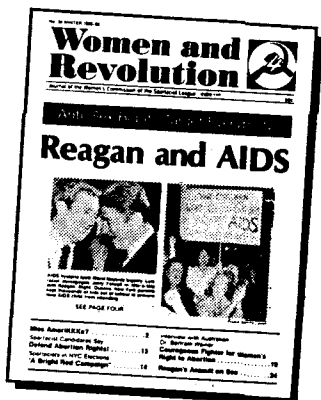
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we came from the "parochial American" Cannon/Lenin school, not the Michel Pablo style of wheeler-dealerism.

Lately we've heard countless stories of brutality. One such story is that Healy went up to a putative cripple, a comrade of the editorial apparatus, who was writing at a desk, and Healy began to kick him, and went on until eventually he got tired of kicking him and wandered away. I never got a chance to see anything like that. When we left the London Conference there was the smell of violence in the air, which we said some months later—after the Tate case, when we had something more than "we think maybe Healy was ready to have us beaten."

But we can do some reevaluation too: I think we were a lot more important to Gerry Healy than we considered at the time. We were actually a significant entrenched group. He had already tried to destroy us once, in '62. It hadn't worked—we bounced back and went straight down the road according to program.

He tried to pull us in again with the unification agreement in Montreal in '65. He had to give us what we thought was essential. He hedged it, with all his own protections, but we got what we thought we *had* to have. The IC determines the overall international program, Healy has the right to address our national conference, but the conference majority decides. That was the crucial clause that we fought about. His draft said: the future of the American section will be decided in the American Commission in London. Ours said: it will be decided in an American conference (where we happen to have the majority). So Healy bracketed it in all known ways, but he gave us what we said we had to have, expecting to take it away from us in London once he got us there.

And then that attempt blew up in his face, and there wasn't much he could do about it. And it's reported that he went quite mad in the summer of '66. In hindsight I think that we were a giant disappointment—much more so than we understood at the time—to the old man and it helped unhinge him. And I am sorry about the guys that were beaten (and the abused girls, if one believes what the Banda/Slaughter wing says)—the people Healy could get his hands on, who paid the price that summer for our intransigence. And if we were surprised by what happened at the London Conference it didn't matter because we just did what we had to do, according to our program and understanding.

SPARTACIST: Comrade Nelson was the anchorman in New York when the delegation went to London. Was that in the expectation of trouble?

Robertson: It sounded exactly like going to Moscow in the late '20s. You know, the factions go off to Moscow. You don't send everybody. Somebody's got to mind the store. We had the predominant assumption, since we'd fought with Healy in Montreal, that those accords were going to be carried out, but we were not hopelessly naive.

SPARTACIST: When the split took place in London, what was happening here?

Nelson: Well it actually started after the Montreal Conference. We started some common work and we had a pretty good fix on their U.S. organization, which was extremely soft. For instance, when we split out of the Fifth Avenue Peace Parade Committee in October '65 they stayed. Over the massive American bombing of Haiphong

harbor they signed a call beseeching, "Where is the voice of our president for peace on Christmas?" They were politically soft. Wohlforth broke down in a joint meeting and ran out of the room, crying, a month before the fusion as I recall. While we were being very sharp-toothed and determined and beady-eyed and saying, "Sure, parity in all committees, absolutely. You want the paper, you got the paper. Half the central committee, of course." We knew we were going to gobble them up. There was also a middle layer; we used to call them "November Bolsheviks." They wouldn't join either group, they were going to join the fused group, and they went away after the '66 split.

So Jim called up and said there's been a split, break off all contact and stop selling their paper. We laid out the tactics and we moved fast, setting up meetings right away with all of the pro-unity Wohlforthites we could find. On our side, when the delegation came back, Turner was the only one on the Political Bureau that was soft. I remember he raised a motion, he said we should have apologized. Jim said, "But I did, Harry." He said, "Well you should have really apologized." Jim said, "You mean I should have said what Healy wanted me to say." (And Turner did try running to Healy, a couple of years later.)

SPARTACIST: What were our relations with the ACFI—subsequently the Workers League—in this country?

Robertson: Our relations were that the Wohlforthites wanted violence against us. Wohlforth was zealous in seeking the maximum of physical destruction for our people. At the NPAC [National Peace Action Coalition] Conference where SWP and CP goons violently excluded us and Progressive Labor to keep their keynote speaker, a U.S. Senator, from having his feelings hurt, Tim Wohlforth personally led one of the goon squad charges. He was out for our blood. Harry Ring in the SWP's *Militant* praised the Wohlforthites for their loyal services.

Then later, they got some lumpen youth around them, mainly Hispanics and blacks. They programmed these kids for deadly violence against our people. They called us agents of the FBI and CIA and cops and tried to work these youth up to the point of murder. And at the same time Wohlforth was perfectly clear that when there were a few murders of our people, the kids who had done them would be immediately disavowed.

So we pulled back from selling at WL events in New York while continuing elsewhere to try to intersect them politically. They countered with a campaign of violent attacks on us in a number of places—Toronto and Los Angeles come particularly to mind. And we defended ourselves. And then we got this exquisite letter from David North, who was head of the WL by then: please stop your campaign of violence against us. To which we replied: we will always defend your democratic rights, we're glad you want to stop this shit. This exchange was published in our paper.

SPARTACIST: What were the differences with Wohlforth over Cannon?

Robertson: Wohlforth got hold of Shachtman's account in the *New International* of the fight between Cannon and Shachtman in the CLA [Communist League of America—forerunner of the SWP] in 1933. I remember arguing with Wohlforth, who said, "You know, Trotsky was really against Cannon." And I said, "Well, that's really interest-

ing, Tim. Where is this?" And he said, "Oh, it's well known."

Well, 15 years later I got hold of the CLA internal bulletins and the material that never got into the bulletins, and I can speak chapter and verse on the triad of Cannon and Shachtman and Trotsky. But it took a major research project mounted over many years to get all that material. Cannon owes a lot to Trotsky. At some point Trotsky did indeed have something resembling an organizationally third-camp position on the CLA dispute, but not for long. And Cannon said (I came across it just lately in the SWP's newest Cannon volume), referring to his own experience as a leftist CPer (Fosterite), "You know, before Trotsky got hold of me I was a very highly trained professional factional hooligan."

But when it came right down to it, there was no question about what the relationship between Cannon and Trotsky was.

But Wohlforth—lacking any documentation, with no knowledge except having read Shachtman's account 20 or 30 years later in the *NI*—Wohlforth instantly embraced Shachtman's contention: Trotsky was against Cannon, Cannon was never really a Trotskyist. This was on the road to discovering that the first good American Trotskyist leader was... Wohlforth.

Nelson: During the unity negotiations in 1965 Wohlforth took great exception when Jim said that the SWP had been badly damaged because they lost all their intellectuals with the Shachtman split. And Wohlforth got all bent out of shape and said, "how dare you say that, it was a principled split," which it was. Wohlforth didn't want unity with us, so he was coming out with all kinds of things, and then he and Marcus cooked up this line that Cannon was just a Third Period window-smasher—that was supposed to stick in our craw, which it certainly did.

SPARTACIST: In 1981 we supported Sean Matgamna's *Socialist Organiser* group in their defense against Healy's libel suit.

Robertson: There was Healy using the courts again, to bankrupt a small organization and shut everybody up. And we published Matgamna's letter and were planning to feed him a thousand pounds and any information we thought would help him fight the case that Gerry had brought against him.

Except that Matgamna returned our initial check, thereby insinuating that we were some kind of CIA agents, because first Matgamna appealed to the socialist public for support and then wouldn't take our money. What was really going on then was that Matgamna was playing footsie with Thornett, who was a right-wing split from Healy and specially hated our guts. Of course Healy always does this to opponents—calls them CIA agents.

SPARTACIST: In the *Socialist Organiser* article that we reprinted in *WV* No. 391, Matgamna said that Healy played a revolutionary role after the Revolutionary Communist Party "collapsed" under the leadership of Jock Haston and Ted Grant.

Robertson: I remember when I first heard the name Gerry Healy. An old guy, a soft SWP sympathizer in San Francisco, came back from England and said he'd seen this marvelous man—he has great weight on the docks and is a personal friend of Nye Bevan, has three MPs in his

pocket—his name was Gerry Healy, he was on the inside of everything. Well, his great weight on the docks was with the "blue union" that was fighting General Transport, and Gerry was right in there with a splitaway section of the bureaucracy in the out-of-London ports. And I was having a fight in the Shachtmanites over "What is the theoretical limit of nationalizations? Why can't Parliament every year just nationalize more and more until they've nationalized the most profitable sectors and undercut the economic foundations of the British ruling class?"

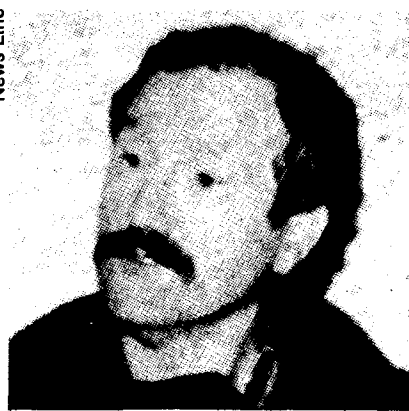
About the RCP we presently have to be pretty agnostic, because any time any three old members of the RCP get together in a pub, all the old wars start again. But I think that, whatever a madhouse the RCP was, this was the seminal period for British Trotskyism. And I think it was done to death by the International, a bloc between Cannon and Pablo with Healy as the local accomplice. I think they made a decision to destroy this organization.

Now Matgamna thinks that Healy's emergence at that time as the central figure proves that he was once a real revolutionary. When I look at what he did immediately afterward to become the underground wing of Aneurin Bevan's section of the Labour Party (while hundreds of then-Trotskyist cadres were dumped out into the wilderness) I remain a deep skeptic, without sufficient information. And very possibly, comrades, reflecting the fact that there was a lot I liked about Max Shachtman, who liked Jock Haston.

Now Haston had kind of an odd line on Russia, and maybe a sterile line on Labour. But instead of saying "you guys should have a more flexible line on Labour" the international leadership used a sledgehammer on the RCP, and Healy was the hammer man. Healy's line was not just entrism—Nye Bevan set up some kind of think tank which Healy participated in until the LP executive tumbled to the operation and got rid of it.

The RCP came from a fusion of two groups, each with multiple factions, that emerged in Britain in the late '30s, after a number of false starts. One of them turned up in 1938 at the founding conference of the Fourth International and the other didn't. Healy happened to be in

News Line



Scathing 1981 article (below) by wily centrist Sean Matgamna (right) stung Healyites; WRP sued Matgamna's paper for "libel."



the one that didn't. Cannon went to England at the time and was very impressed with Healy. But Haston was the principal leader of this cascade of six or eight factions. And they were rammed together by the international to form the RCP.

The Labour Party during the war was a junior partner with the Tories under Churchill. And the RCP began to become quite sensational and they picked up cadres. As the war ended and the Labour Party competed and won an enormous electoral triumph in 1945, Cannon and also Pablo were very much on the RCP's case, and Healy was their local inside man. I don't know all the rights and wrongs but I do believe that they did not try to reshape the RCP, but successfully destroyed it. And so far as I know that was the last Trotskyist organization in Britain, the SLL in the period from 1957-67 proving to be hollow.

Now this history happened, but it is certainly not clear to me that it had to happen that way. "Did he fall or was he pushed?" I think the RCP was pushed right out the window and went splat. Was it necessary? I don't know, sometimes you need to break up an organization, but I remain skeptical. And when it went splat, of course, its fragments turned up everywhere.

It's true the RCP was horribly disoriented by the Labour Party electoral victory. Their conception I think was a linear one—analogue to Cannon's "The Coming American Revolution" [1946], which tended to ignore the CP, the unions, the blacks, suggesting instead that what was going to happen was a massive linear extension of the SWP which when it got big enough would come to power. The RCP's perspective of steady linear growth came to a screaming halt one day, when little Major Attlee took over after Churchill, and furthermore the Labour Party actually carried out some nationalizations.

By the way, the RCP analysis on the Russian question wasn't that bad, it was just too simplistic. It certainly beat Wohlforth's and most everybody else's. It was simply that wherever the Russian Army arrived has become part of the Russian workers state, which as a first approximation had a certain merit.

On the Labour Party question, I think that from the end of the war and the general elections that immediately followed, up through the present time, developments in Britain in the working class have been linear—not a straight line, but a smooth curve. They went up a bit, largely as a result of the Labourites heavily increasing the taxes on beer and tobacco to subsidize the social security program that came in, and during the period of recovery when British industry functioned a bit. And now they've gone steadily downhill for a long time. But there have been no real major discontinuities. There was one opening of a modest sort at the juncture recently when the SDP [Social Democratic Party]—the CIA wing, pro-American wing of the Labour Party—split away.

Now, in that time Gerry has blown hot and cold on the Labour Party—always some new revelation. But there aren't any new revelations. Wohlforth did a memo on shallow entry; the Pabloists in Europe went wild, saying "that's not a scientific Marxist term." Shallow entry—you can't ignore the Labour Party, and you better not immerse yourself in it. And I don't mean that you should have a split in your group, one side going into the LP with illusions and the others being hard sectarians who say the LP is a

protofascist organization that you throw rocks at. No, you need a unitary organization which tries to play the Labour Party question the way you would an organ. And I've had that position since the fight in the Shachtman organization in 1952 over Bevan.

I would hope that all of our members are more or less members of the Labour Party, and I think often it's very unimportant. What are the tactics? Well, we would love to have a miner stand for election openly against Neil Kinnock. Simultaneously, in other places, there is the tactic of conditional support to LP candidates: here's where we Spartacists stand on issues; will you, selected Labour leftists, accept our support? And then get into the constituency campaigns and really support those that we think might exacerbate the situation inside the Labour Party.

A somewhat detached attitude, which does not ignore the Labour Party but recognizes that it must sooner or later be deeply *split*. This is very different from what Healy did then (and Grant [the *Militant* group] tries to do now): rah, rah, all the way with the Labour Party, which will, by a series of internal transformations, become the instrument for socialism in Britain.

SPARTACIST: And the earlier period of British Trotskyism, you called it "false starts"?

Robertson: There were no beginnings to British Trotskyism; it had to be imported. And it didn't take root right away. And it had no history. It was not like in Poland or Bulgaria or the United States, or even Germany or Belgium or France, where you had Trotskyists coming into existence at the time the Stalin-Trotsky fight began to unfold in 1925.

The first British Trotskyists are supposed to be the "Balham group." Know what they were like? "Well we went over to France and we spent our time above the pub. And we had mass unemployment in Britain and all those foreigners were screaming that some dictator had come to power in Germany. We couldn't imagine anything more irrelevant so we went back to good British soil."

So we had to implant in Britain, starting finally around '36 I think, and then under pressure two successive waves of unification were imposed, first around the time of the FI founding conference in '38 and then culminating in '44 with the RCP—a hothouse plant that needed very tender care. They ran into the very sharp objective change, from the Labour Party as a junior partner in imperialist war to a Labour government. The international did not help, it destroyed. And then you have fragmentation, and then that literarily brilliant decade of Healy, when he got the numbers from the youth group and the brains out of the CP.

We're just lucky we come from a country that had Trotskyist nuclei, admittedly late, and a continuous documented history. The internal bulletins and the volumes of the Cannon writings are available to us all. There's nothing specially American about that—we're just lucky to come from a protected enclave, unlike the Bulgarians or the Chinese or Vietnamese, the Russian Left Opposition, or the fragile European Trotskyist nuclei whose slender threads of human continuity with the Fourth International were simply physically wiped out by fascism and the war. ■

**1981 Healy "Libel" Suit
Against Socialist Organiser:**

**Matgamna-Thornett
Spiked
Anti-Sectarian
Defense**

EXCERPTED FROM SPARTACIST
NO. 31-32, SUMMER 1981

Every working-class militant should look forward to the day when the Healy/Banda gang is politically removed as a menace to the left and labor movement. A victory by SO against this attack would constitute a step toward that goal and we are therefore compelled by basic class principle to offer such resources as we can to assist in the defense of this case, including fund-raising and publicity, not least internationally. (The very English Healyites have a few shriveling international connections known as the "International Committee of the Fourth International.") We offer as well to make available our extensive files documenting the Healyites' history of slander, internal

intimidation and violent hooliganism. We urge our readers to likewise support this important defense of the workers movement.

* * * * *

SOCIALIST ORGANISER,
c/o 214 Sickert Court,
London N1 2SY.

2nd March 1981.

The Editor,
Spartacist Publications,
26 Harrison St.,
London W.C.1


Dear Friend,

Socialist Organiser appeals for support to the left wing and labour movement press against the attempt by the WRP to stifle accurate reporting and fair comment about them. The enclosed documents give the details of the WRP's threatened legal action and the case which looks likely to go to court.

I draw your attention to the curious fact that the WRP have not chosen to regard as libellous the statements about their relationship with Colonel Gaddafi, and to the proposals that were made at the end of Sean Matgamna's letter of 26th February 1981, including for a jointly agreed working class movement inquiry on the issue.

Yours fraternally,
John Bloxam. Secretary.

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31.7.81

Matgamna solicited our assistance to fight Healy's suit. Then he returned our check under pressure from the soft left milieu like Alan Thornett. One wonders what he would say about this today.

Dear comrades,

Herewith I am returning your cheque to the Labour Movement Press Defence Fund.

Fraternally,

M. Thomas

M. Thomas

From January 1975

Confessions of a "Renegade": Wohlforth Terminated

REPRINTED FROM WORKERS VANGUARD
NO. 61, 31 JANUARY 1975

In an account reminiscent of Jay Lovestone's recitation of the crimes of Stalin, ex-Workers League National Secretary Tim Wohlforth has now surfaced with a long document about his frame-up and purge at the hands of Gerry Healy, boss of the British Workers Revolutionary Party and godfather of the Workers League. After more than a decade of glorying in his role of fawning American junior partner to Healy, Wohlforth was unceremoniously dumped and replaced by his long-time lieutenant, Fred Mazelis (see "Workers League Crumbles," *WV* No. 56, 8 November 1974). The ouster was carried out personally by none other than Healy himself.

While Wohlforth's lurid 39-page account ("The Workers League and the International Committee," 11 January 1975) is evidently truthful as a description, it betrays a stunning lack of political understanding. Throughout his reign as tinpot despot of the Workers League Wohlforth slavishly emulated his mentor's organizational practices of suppression and slander, the deliberate destruction of cadres and the invocation of the absolute authority of the "International Committee" to intimidate any stirrings of opposition among the membership. Now that Healy has turned the notorious Wohlforthite "method" against Wohlforth himself, the deposed former accomplice finds the only possible explanation to be that Healy has suddenly lost his mind:

"He is seized by at times what approaches madness for subjective idealism is a form of madness as it rearranges the world according to the individual. He becomes convinced that he is surrounded by CIA agents and proceeds on that basis. Anyone who objects is denounced for being an anti-internationalist...."

Subjective idealism must be pretty rampant in Healyite circles. Wohlforth makes the following modest assessment of the import of his removal as National Secretary: "The explosion which has taken place between Comrade Healy and the Workers League is of great historic significance. Condensed within this experience is all the past experience of the Fourth International." By way of contrast, the Spartacist tendency was compelled to break from Healy in 1962 in order to maintain our political integrity, but we refused to characterize Healy/Wohlforth's unprincipled organizational maneuvering as politically definitive (much less world-historic) until 1967 when it acquired a clear programmatic basis.

Wohlforth's testimony amply confirms every organizational allegation ever made by the Spartacist ten-

Lider máximo
Tim Wohlforth
of the
American
Workers
League
before being
terminated by
his master
G. Healy.



Workers Vanguard

dency, but for Wohlforth commencing only on 30-31 August 1974 when the skies fell in on him. Wohlforth's fundamental response to every exposure by us of the Workers League's cynical opportunism, Stalinist-style gangsterism and fraudulent "mass" posturing has always been that Spartacist is no good because it is "anti-internationalist"—i.e., that we refused to unquestioningly accept the "discipline" of the International Committee. We replied that the IC is no Marxist international, and "the IC" is but an empty abstraction to cover rotten politics, akin to the Stalinists' abuse of "the Party."

The Horse's Mouth

Now let us see what Wohlforth has to say today about the International Committee:

"... It never was allowed to go beyond the level of small groups basically functioning as appendages of the SLL-WRP [Socialist Labour League was the earlier name of the Workers Revolutionary Party, Healy's British group]. More precisely, the IC never went beyond being an international organization around a single individual, Gerry Healy...."

"... That these differences were not openly confronted and fought out within the U.S. and internationally reflected the atmosphere which prevailed in international relations within the IC. Open discussion and political struggle was discouraged by Comrade Healy's tendency to push every discussion to the most extreme point and to seek to break the person who disagreed with Comrade Healy. Only a most muted discussion ever took place in the international movement under such conditions...."

"... There are no elected bodies. The IC is, as we shall see,

whatever the Workers Revolutionary Party wants it to be. It is the WRP which writes whatever statements are occasionally issued. It is the WRP which calls whatever meetings of the IC that are held and which determines what sections should attend. It is Comrade Gerry Healy who determines what the WRP determines....

"... To Gerry Healy there is a complete identity between the international movement and his national party, the Workers Revolutionary Party. Internationalism stops at the frontiers of Britain. It is seen as a 'principle' which requires the subordination of *other* parties to the international which is seen as identical with the WRP. To what is the WRP subordinate?"

Well, former head of the American section, you should know. Only, we always thought you liked it that way!

Healy as Big Daddy

Wohlforth always dismissed the Spartacist tendency's allegations about the grossly bureaucratic practices of the Healy/Wohlforth regimes with smug demands that we demonstrate upon what materially privileged stratum the WL regime is based. In his present document, however, Wohlforth (never one to worry too much about consistency) makes no attempt to locate any "material base" for Healy's conduct. He simply declares that the Workers League has reverted to centrism (a term, incidentally, which he employs for every variety of political animal, including Max Shachtman in 1956 as the latter prepared to liquidate into CIA-influenced American social democracy). Yet there is a certain sociological logic to the Healyites' practices.

The Healy organization's attempts to work within the British labor movement have been uniformly sterile and disastrous. At one or another time over the past twenty years they have amassed a certain following among dock workers, construction workers, coal miners and auto workers, and have nothing but their ex-supporters' bitterness at the Healyite oscillations between adventurism and opportunism to show for it. (Their present "mass base" in the television and film industries can be expected to go the same route, although perhaps somewhat more eccentrically considering the vision of social reality as refracted through a television camera.)

But the Healy organization has been quite successful in maintaining a relatively large, flashy, high-turnover youth operation which every year draws in sizeable numbers of militant British youth by offering them pageants, dancing, rock bands and sports events together with a dash of

"socialism," miscellaneous marches and lots of newspaper selling. The British masses are infused virtually throughout with a relatively very high degree of class consciousness, so that even the semi-lumpenized youth from whom the Healyites recruit characteristically share a strongly class-conscious outlook, even if their capacity to intervene in the class struggle is marginal and episodic.

But since such layers lack both the discipline of the labor process and any obvious immediate personal use for knowledge, a high-volume, high-turnover operation aimed at them necessarily requires a strong dose of authoritarianism and the manipulative use of dogma as a substitute for program. Thus we can attribute to the Healyites a lumpenproletarian component as the context for their opportunist/adventurist oscillations and systematic organizational abuses.

Wohlforth as Huey P. Newton

Beginning in the summer of 1971 Wohlforth, evidently in association with Healy, launched the Workers League on a sharp turn "to the youth" intended to parallel the British technique. But the attempt to import the WRP style of semi-lumpen youth organizing intensified the contradiction between "Trotskyism" and the requirements of such an operation. The corresponding layers in American society to the raw material of Healy's Young Socialists are overwhelmingly ghettoized black and Spanish-speaking youth, a generation or two removed from rural isolation and poverty, very heavily chronically unemployed, in a country with no political class consciousness and themselves with so little access to the labor movement that economic class consciousness often appears as a privilege of older white workers aimed against minority-group youth. While Healy's pseudo-Trotskyism associated with a semi-lumpen base makes a certain kind of sense in class-conscious Britain, a nationalist or Maoist rhetoric corresponds far more closely to the ideological proclivities of American raw ghetto youth.

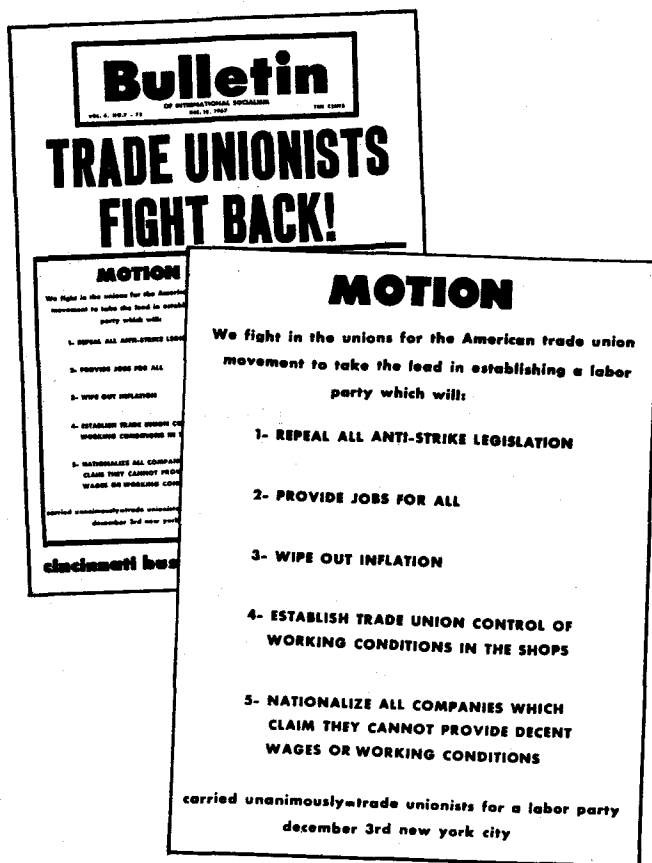
Very serious and dedicated revolutionists can indeed be recruited from such strata, but under prevailing conditions only by the individuals involved breaking, through a difficult, lengthy (and often unsuccessful) process, from ghetto existence and its dominant ideologies. But the Healy/Wohlforth approach—which is strikingly analogous to government summer programs for restless youth—is not intended to lead to the crystallization of black and Spanish-speaking communist cadres but to supply a "mass" base for a mock-extremist political operation. Therefore the Workers League found itself forced to parallel the techniques of, for example, the Black Panthers: an infallible leader and a militarized regime to impose discipline.

The Workers League turn toward "youth in the neighborhoods" was evidently seen by Wohlforth as a bulwark against "liquidation" into "trade union work." He explains that political backwardness "makes it so easy for demagogic forces to maneuver within the unions disguising themselves as militants. Union policy alone is insufficient to flush them out." This is, of course, true given the Wohlforthites' crassly opportunist line in their every encounter with the union bureaucracy, which Wohlforth defends at some length over the example of support to



Workers Vanguard

Fred Mazelis



1967 program for a "labor party," Healy-style: antiwar activists, blacks need not apply.

Arnold Miller of the Mine Workers.

Not surprisingly, Wohlforth is unable to grasp what is wrong with his organization's incursions into the labor movement. For example, his only criticism of the "Trade Unionists for a Labor Party" operation is that the Workers League liquidated its public face into this front group; there is no mention of the fact that the front group's program deliberately omitted any mention of the crucial political issues facing the working class at that time, racial oppression and the Vietnam War. No wonder Wohlforth thinks that the only way to avoid opportunist trade unionists—i.e., cynical but articulate cadres who will sooner or later abandon the small change of the Workers League to carve out careers within the union bureaucracy—is to build a base in a milieu which is deeply alienated from the labor movement.

The document is full of vituperative attacks against "conservative," "abstract propagandist" forces in the Workers League who "represented a centrist retreat from the construction of a revolutionary youth movement" and counterposed a call for more trade-union work. (Before accepting the bogeyman of a Workers League totally submerged in the unions, we should point out that in the entire document the only trade-union fraction mentioned—although there are references to journalistic coverage of other industries—is a white collar fraction in the SSEU [welfare workers] composed of college graduates.) These elements are castigated for holding themselves aloof from the militants drawn around the youth organizing; at the summer camps, for example, they even

"hid behind bushes to keep away from the youth."

What these summer camps were actually like is testified to by Wohlforth:

"... the first days of the [1974] camp became preoccupied with the question of discipline. It actually took longer this year than last to get some agreement on the rules which governed the camp. Even after this agreement was reached the disciplinary problem would plague the camp to its last day.... Anyone who now dismisses this experience as a 'disaster' dismisses the real material struggle to build a movement of workers.... The United States is the center of the capitalist crisis. A peaceful, orderly camp would reflect only the unreal, idealist distance of such a camp from the class struggle in America."

It may be surmised that some of the Workers League members balked at serving as wardens for restless youth lured to these events by means such as those of which Wohlforth boasts in explaining the great "success" of the 1973 YS conference:

"We held talent shows and bazaars and other events during the course of building for the conference.... At the end of the conference, a highly successful dance was held with a well-known band."

The Ax Falls

Internally in the Spartacist League around 1966, the following historical analogy was presented: Stalin/Healy, Foster/Wohlforth, Browder/Mazelis. Yet now even after the fact Tim Wohlforth is obviously unable to make head or tail of the reason for his dramatic fall from grace.

The first intimation of trouble occurred in 1973, when Wohlforth received a letter from the WRP's Mike Banda criticizing his draft resolution on American perspectives and insisting on "the primacy of the European Revolution—particularly in England" in apparent counterposition to Wohlforth's emphasis, allegedly based on Healy's remarks to a Workers League plenum, on the "understanding that the center of the world capitalist crisis was the crisis of American capitalism." In the present document Wohlforth criticizes Banda for the latter's infatuation with the Vietnamese and Chinese Stalinists, an astute observation coming a mere ten years or so after our tendency had noted that self-same fact. Wohlforth's response to becoming the recipient of two different lines from England was to try "as best we could to straddle the contradictory positions put forward by Healy in January and Banda in March."

But the ax was first unsheathed in conjunction with "a series of classes which we opened up to the Spartacist group" (i.e., the Workers League violated its long-standing practice of excluding Spartacist members from publicly advertised events). Wohlforth describes his peremptory summons to England:

"In late June the British comrades called me over for consultations. They were particularly upset by a reference in one of the classes which suggested that the relations between the British and French movements had been one of compromise.... The British intervention, however, took on an extreme character. Every even potential difference was magnified to an absurd degree. I was even attacked as being an American pragmatist for purchasing an American rather than a British web offset press! As the week progressed the hyperbola progressed. By the end of the week's visit the British comrades—more exactly Comrade Healy—threatened to break a 12 year political relationship with the League over this single sentence. "The night before I was to fly back the discussion—

actually a one way shouting match—went on until 2:30 a.m. I was sent to bed with all political relations broken. A public statement was to appear in the *Workers Press* [Healy's newspaper]. Then at 5:30 a.m. I was awakened for one last meeting with Comrade Healy at which I was told I would be given one last chance. I was to fight for the very life of the League against centrism within it. . . . Particularly I had to break with the centrist elements around me in the leadership and drive the movement forward into the working class. Special mention was made of Comrades Lucy St. John, Dennis O'Casey and Karen Frankel. "I returned to the United States shell-shocked. I immediately launched a bitter struggle within the leadership of the party and throughout all the branches in the country. . . ."

Having evidently interpreted his instructions as a license to undertake a wholesale purge, Wohlforth proceeded to drive out of the Workers League virtually every prominent experienced cadre (see "Whatever Happened to the Workers League?" in *WV* No. 53, 27 September 1974). How hollow now ring Wohlforth's pious words about the preservation of cadres: "Such individuals embody great experience. This is why we must proceed with such care, with such restraint and caution, when moving organizationally with a cadre."

Apparently Healy had not anticipated such carnage, because he intervened again claiming that "the very struggle he had urged me to take up within the party leadership was 'factional'." But he apparently was not yet prepared to move against Wohlforth, for at the April 1974 International Committee conference he held up the Workers League "as a model" and squelched the Greek delegate who requested a full discussion on the hemorrhaging of leading Workers Leaguers.

A Method in Healy's Madness?

Wohlforth was finally removed at the 1974 Workers League summer camp. Wohlforth's own recitation of the events indicates that here was a man who was prepared to capitulate time after time over any political or organizational question, until he was brought face to face with the ultimate insult: Healy's charge that Comrade Fields, Wohlforth's close companion, was an agent of the CIA.

Wohlforth recounts that two weeks before the camp he was again summoned to England. When he arrived:

"I was whisked to a special meeting with Comrade Healy also attended by Comrade Banda and other comrades. The following was immediately proposed: (1) the whole past year had been a mistake, a turn into community politics and a retreat from the working class; (2) the former party members who had left were driven out by myself and Comrade Fields who represented a clique leadership; (3) Comrade Fields was probably a CIA agent; (4) there was to be no national conference this Fall; (5) the group of former party members was to be urged to come to the camp for discussions and brought back into the party without discussion with the PC. . . ."

"I returned to the United States a bit shell shocked. The British comrades, I thought, had always been right. They must now be right. I did my best to hold to that position while I proceeded to build the summer camp—now less than a week away. . . ."

"Comrade Healy sent Comrade Slaughter ahead of him to make sure it was 'safe' for him to come. Comrade Slaughter was to call England to reassure Healy. A special Political Committee meeting of the WRP was scheduled to decide whether or not Comrade Healy would be allowed to come to the camp without risking his life. . . ."

"Immediately upon arriving in Canada Comrade Healy



Workers Press

Workers Revolutionary Party is born: C. Redgrave's bizarre pageant for 1973 founding conference.

began on the question of the CIA. . . . Comrade Healy was now convinced he was in the midst of a nest of the CIA. He even considered the thought that the whole Workers League was a CIA front. . . .

"A meeting was immediately organized of IC comrades at the camp. I was accused of harboring and covering for a CIA agent. It was stated that I had failed to report on Comrade Fields' past CIA 'connections'. . . . I tried as best I could to accept everything Comrade Healy stated in the way of criticism of the League and my functioning. I no doubt accepted more than I should have. But I simply could not accept this charge against Fields. . . ."

"The Political Committee was taken in a large van across to the other side of the lake. There we sat silently with the former party comrades and Comrade Healy proposed their readmission. Without so much as a word being said the Political Committee voted the comrades back into the party. . . ."

"On Friday night Comrade Healy, at the suggestion of the German comrade, called a special meeting of the Central Committee of the Workers League, attended also by IC members present at the camp. At this meeting everyone was encouraged to denounce the leadership of the party in order to bolster the characterization of the past year of party work as liquidationism. Comrade Healy called the session 'Christmas' and thoroughly enjoyed it. It was at this meeting that Comrade Healy first proposed that I be removed as National Secretary of the party. In actual practice, the shift in leadership was already well underway. . . ."

"Comrade Healy started the discussion [at the next Central Committee] meeting with his charges that Comrade Fields was an agent of the CIA. I was held complicit in the situation [by] not reporting it to the IC. . . . In the middle of these proceedings I stated that I disagreed with the whole proceedings. This produced an extreme reaction in Comrade Healy.

"It was this mild resistance on my part which encouraged Comrade Healy to go ahead with the already well developed plans to remove me as National Secretary. Comrade Healy proposed that Comrade Mazelis put forward a motion to remove me as National Secretary and to suspend Comrade Fields from party membership pending an investigation into the CIA charges. This Mazelis did and it passed unanimously receiving even my vote and that of Comrade Fields. Then Comrade Healy proposed that I nominate Comrade Mazelis as National Secretary. I proceeded to do so and it passed unanimously. . . ."

"I shortly discovered that the action taken on August 31 was definitive in character. A special meeting of the IC was called which after the fact: (1) endorsed Comrade Healy's totally unauthorized actions; (2) specifically barred me from any role in the day to day political leadership of the

party; (3) barred Comrade Fields from any contact with the League of any sort. I offered my resignation from the League in response to this action. To continue in the League would have been a mockery of the entire struggle which had preceded August 31."

Subsequently a commission of inquiry consisting of two people including Mazelis cleared Fields of the charge of being a CIA agent (although, with typical arbitrariness, after being acquitted she was barred from holding office for two years). On the commission's invitation, Wohlforth reapplied for membership. Healy, however, ruled that Wohlforth must first appear before the IC, which Wohlforth refused to do.

Stalin is reported to have told the Lovestoneite leaders in Moscow, "By the time you get back only your wives will support you." Is it possible that Healy was pursuing an analogous method in his choice of technique for the disposal of Wohlforth—finding in Wohlforth's relationship with Fields the key to one abuse which even Wohlforth, with his apparently limitless appetite for political self-abasement, would be unable to swallow?

What is even less clear in the Wohlforth document are the precise reasons for Healy's decision to heave his American epigone over the side. One can speculate about the role of Banda or the possibility that Healy felt threatened by an occasional twisting of his tail by Wohlforth who had actually achieved junior partner status after the rupture with the French made the Workers League a correspondingly larger component of the IC operation. But it is likely that Wohlforth's wholesale destruction of the Workers League cadre was a prime mover in the process, and thus Wohlforth is a victim primarily of his own gratuitous organizational brutality.

The prognosis for the Workers League is not good. The comparison of statistics Wohlforth adduces to document its decline is unreliable since the earlier counts were originally concocted with Wohlforth's well-known proclivity for mendacious multiplication, but it is obvious that the Workers League membership is shrinking. Healy/Mazelis' efforts to win back the separated brethren will have at best limited success, as the human material is badly damaged by its earlier experiences in Healyite "democratic centralism."

The new leadership is uninspired; even granting Mazelis a certain flair for legalistic stabbing-in-the-back, as demonstrated particularly at the 1966 London Conference (which Wohlforth sat out, sulking), he is so colorless as to be almost invisible. The disruption of the pecking order should continue to produce a lot of scrambling among ambitious WL cadres, among them David North, who figures prominently in the Wohlforth document. And the Healy organization in Britain has itself recently suffered a serious blow with the reported departure of some 200 members around one Alan Thornett.

No Tears for Wohlforth

As for Wohlforth, we can say with sincerity: it couldn't happen to a nicer guy. Wohlforth has spent twelve years masquerading as a Trotskyist and helping Healy to do the same, in the process politically destroying whatever serious elements from among militant minority-group youth his organization has encountered, repelling most of them, convincing them that "socialism" is just another con game whose purpose is their manipulation, and converting a few

into cynical fellow operators.

Wohlforth's greatest crime—in which he was abetted by Healy and Art Phillips—was that, in pursuit of supreme authority for himself and shortcuts to influence and numbers, he broke up the left wing within the SWP in the 1961-62 period. He split the opposition to the SWP's sharp right turn, cut it off from the possibility of winning valuable comrades from a section of the old-time SWP membership, set up our tendency for expulsion from the SWP in a situation of weakness and isolation which almost destroyed us, certainly setting us back a number of years. No amount of new-found empirical "wisdom" on Wohlforth's part can undo the enormous objective service he rendered the Pabloists at that crucial juncture, nor his continued service to them as foil and horrible example of what happens to those who break away to the "left."

But his ignominious departure from the Healyite fold at least accords us an opportunity to display to him a little piece of Wohlforthite viciousness. One of the practices at which Wohlforth excelled was the art of gratuitous denunciation. He always insisted that any individual leaving the Marxist movement for any reason must be denounced as a "renegade." In particular he waxed eloquent over a statement circulated internally within the Spartacist League in response to the resignation of Geoff White, formerly a founding leader of our tendency. Our statement replied to the evolved anti-Trotskyist political positions of White but also expressed recognition of his years of collaboration during which, recognizing his increasing political distance (the product in part of the demoralization engendered by Wohlforth's wrecking operations), he sought to train younger cadres to carry the movement forward.

Now Wohlforth has become, in his own terms as well as ours, a "renegade." With his usual pomposity, and lavish use of the imperial "we," Wohlforth pontificates:

"It is true we lost the skirmishes with the centrists but we won the theoretical fight at each point. We have left a priceless heritage in this theoretical struggle. This now passes on to the new generation of revolutionary fighters who face the big battles with the capitalist class itself."

Roughly translated, "I quit." And a final irony is that it was Geoff White who rendered the Marxist movement's verdict on Wohlforth when he remarked years ago, "Wohlforth is the living proof that crime does not pay." ■

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From January 1965

Appendix I REPRINTED FROM SPARTACIST NO. 4, MAY-JUNE 1965

More on Vietnam

New York, N.Y.
15 January 1965

The Newsletter,
London, England:

Dear Comrades,

The article which appeared in the January 2 *Newsletter* under the title "Vietnam: workers face 20th year of war" by P. Desai, was deficient in both historical accuracy and Marxist criticism. It refers to the "heroic" struggle of Ho Chi Minh and the Indo-Chinese Communist Party from 1945 to 1954 without mentioning that this "heroism" expressed itself in a consistent policy of betrayal of the revolutionary workers' and peasants' movement which has served only to prolong the war. The article does not refer to the murder of Trotskyists by the Communists, the disarming of the workers and peasants, and the handing over of the population to the Allied occupation forces late in 1945.

Communist policy at that time was aptly described by Nguyen Van Tao, a top Stalinist: "Our government, I repeat, is a democratic and middle class government, even though the Communists are now in power."

The Trotskyists were murdered precisely because they stood in the way of capitulation to the Allied powers which then included a Soviet Union anxious not to displease its French ally. Thus, in Indo-China Stalin's policy of peaceful coexistence led to a bloodier and more costly conflict than would have been necessary had there been a Marxist and not Stalinist leadership.

And the outcome of the war against the French was another capitulation! At Geneva in 1954 the fat Soviet and

somewhat leaner Chinese bureaucracies, together with the United States, Britain and France, decided the outcome of the war without the participation of the Vietnamese! The revolutionary forces, following the terms of the settlement imposed on them, withdrew from areas under their military control with the understanding that the imperialists would permit free elections!

Thus, the retreats and betrayals of Stalinism have been a determining factor in the nature and extent of the present war.

And yet another betrayal is being prepared by the Communists in the National Liberation Front. Their demand for a *neutral* South Vietnam leaves open the possibility of a settlement which will leave basic problems unsolved, *and will thus require further armed struggle.*

And this treacherous policy is not criticized in the *Newsletter* article! Nor is there mention of the necessity for building a Marxist party which will lead the struggle not for neutralism, but for a *Vietnamese workers republic.*

What has happened to the Permanent Revolution? Do we now put our faith in Stalinists and petty-bourgeois nationalists? It is a Marxist's responsibility to expose the inadequacy of the program, as well as the treachery of the leaders, which have led the masses to suffering and defeat. The article by P. Desai in *The Newsletter*, however, fails in this respect. Instead, it leaves us with confidence in those same forces which have several times betrayed the Vietnamese workers and peasants, and are once again preparing a similar tragedy. I trust that this article does not reflect the editorial policy of *The Newsletter.*

Fraternally,
P. Jen

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From April 1966

Appendix II REPRINTED FROM SPARTACIST NO. 6, JUNE-JULY 1966

Spartacist Statement to International Conference

REMARKS made during the discussion of Cliff Slaughter's Political Report at the International Committee Conference by Comrade Robertson on 6 April 1966 on behalf of the Spartacist delegation (with minor editorial corrections).

In behalf of the Spartacist group, I greet this Conference called by the International Committee. This is the first international participation by our tendency; we are deeply appreciative of the opportunity to hear and exchange views with comrades of the world movement.

Therefore, we feel we have the responsibility to present to you our specific views where they are both relevant and distinctive, without adapting or modifying them for the sake of a false unanimity which would do us all a disservice, since we have, in our opinion, some valuable insights to offer.

We are present at this Conference on the basis of our fundamental agreement with the International Resolution of the I.C.; moreover, the report of Comrade Slaughter was for us solidly communist, unified throughout by revolutionary determination.

1. What Pabloism Is

The central point of the Conference is "The Reconstruction of the Fourth International, destroyed by Pabloism." Therefore the issue, "What is Pabloism?" has properly been heavily discussed. We disagree that Pabloism is but the expression of organic currents of reformism and Stalinism, having no roots within our movement. We also disagree with *Voix Ouvrière's* view that Pabloism can be explained simply by reference to the petty-bourgeois social composition of the F.I., any more than one could explain the specific nature of a disease by reference solely to the weakened body in which particular microbes had settled.

Pabloism is a revisionist answer to *new* problems posed by the post-1943 Stalinist expansions. And Pabloism has been opposed within the movement by a bad "orthodoxy" represented until the last few years by the example of Cannon. We must answer new challenges in a *truly orthodox* fashion: as Gramsci put it, we must develop Marxist doctrine through its own extension, not by seeking eclectic absorption of new *alien* elements, as Pabloism has done.

The pressure which produced Pabloism began in 1943, following the failure of Leon Trotsky's perspective of the break-up of the Soviet bureaucracy and of new October revolutions in the aftermath of the war: this failure resulted

from the inability to forge revolutionary parties. After 1950, Pabloism dominated the F.I.; only when the fruits of Pabloism were clear did a section of the F.I. pull back. In our opinion, the "orthodox" movement has still to face up to the *new* theoretical problems which rendered it susceptible to Pabloism in 1943-50 and gave rise to a ragged, partial split in 1952-54.

Inevitable Struggle

The fight against Pabloism is the specific historic form of a necessarily continual struggle against revisionism, which cannot be "finally" resolved within the framework of capitalism. Bernstein, Bukharin, and Pablo, for example, have been our antagonists in particular phases of this struggle, which is both necessary and inevitable, and cannot be "solved."

These are some of our views about Pabloism; they are not exhaustive, for they are shaped by the particular aspects of Pabloism which have loomed large in our own struggle against it.

We take issue with the notion that the present crisis of capitalism is so sharp and deep that Trotskyist revisionism is needed to tame the workers, in a way comparable to the degeneration of the Second and Third Internationals. Such an erroneous estimation would have as its point of departure an enormous overestimation of our present significance, and would accordingly be disorienting.

We had better concentrate upon what Lenin said concerning the various, ubiquitous crises which beset imperialism (a system essentially in crisis since before 1914); Lenin pointed out that *there is no impossible situation for the bourgeoisie, it is necessary to throw them out*. Otherwise, "crises" are all in a day's work for the mechanisms and agencies of imperialism in muddling through from one year to the next. Just now, in fact, their task is easier, after the terrible shattering of the Indonesian workers' movement; add to this the other reversals which expose the revisionists' dependence on petty-bourgeois and bureaucratic strata, like the softening of the USSR, the isolation of China, India brought to heel, Africa neatly stabilized, and Castro a captive of Russia and the U.S. The central lesson of these episodes is the necessity to build revolutionary working-class parties, i.e., our ability to intervene in struggle.

2. Anti-Pabloist Tactics

A French comrade put it well: "there is no family of Trotskyism." There is only the correct program of

revolutionary Marxism, which is not an umbrella. Nevertheless, there are now *four* organized international currents all claiming to be Trotskyist, and spoken of as "Trotskyist" in some conventional sense. This state of affairs must be resolved through splits and fusions. The reason for the present appearance of a "family" is that each of the four tendencies—"United Secretariat," Pablo's personal "Revolutionary Marxist Tendency," Posadas' "Fourth International," and the International Committee—is in some countries the *sole* organized group claiming the banner of Trotskyism. Hence, they draw in all would-be Trotskyists in their areas and suppress polarization; there is no struggle and differentiation, winning over some and driving others to vacate their pretense as revolutionists and Trotskyists. Thus, when several Spartacist comrades visited Cuba, we found that the Trotskyist group there, part of the Posadas international, were in the main excellent comrades struggling with valor under difficult conditions. The speeches here of the Danish and Ceylonese comrades, representing left-wing sections of the United Secretariat, reflect such problems.

The partial break-up and gross exposure of the United Secretariat forces—the expulsion of Pablo, the Ceylonese betrayal, the SWP's class-collaborationist line on the Vietnamese war, Mandel's crawling before the Belgian Social-Democratic heritage—prove that the time has passed when the struggle against Pabloism could be waged on an international plane *within* a common organizational framework. And the particular experience of our groups in the United States, which were expelled merely for the views they held, with no right of appeal, demonstrates that the United Secretariat lies when it claims Trotskyist all-inclusiveness.

We Must Do Better

Up to now, we have not done very well, in our opinion, in smashing the Pabloites; the impact of events alone, no matter how favorable objectively or devastating to revisionist doctrines, will not do the job. In the U.S., the break-up of the SWP left wing over its five-year history has been a great gift to the revisionist leadership of the SWP.

At present, our struggle with the Pabloites must be preponderantly from outside their organizations; nevertheless, in many countries a period of united fronts and organizational penetration into revisionist groupings remains necessary in order to consummate the struggle for the actual reconstruction of the F.I., culminating in a world congress to re-found it.

3. Theoretical Clarification

The experiences of the Algerian and Cuban struggles, each from its own side, are very important for the light they shed on the decisive distinction between the winning of national independence on a bourgeois basis, and revolutions of the Chinese sort, which lead to a real break from capitalism, yet confined within the limits of a bureaucratic ruling stratum.

Two decisive elements have been common to the whole series of upheavals under Stalinist-type leaderships, as in Yugoslavia, China, Cuba, Vietnam: 1) *a civil war of the peasant-guerrilla variety*, which first wrenches the peasant

movement from the immediate control of imperialism and substitutes a petty-bourgeois leadership; and then, if victorious, seizes the urban centers and on its own momentum smashes capitalist property relations, nationalizing industry under the newly consolidating Bonapartist leadership; 2) *the absence of the working class* as a contender for social power, in particular, the absence of its revolutionary vanguard: this permits an exceptionally independent role for the petty-bourgeois sections of society which are thus denied the polarization which occurred in the October Revolution, in which the most militant petty-bourgeois sections were drawn into the wake of the revolutionary working class.

Political Revolution

However it is apparent that supplemental political revolution is necessary to open the road to *socialist* development, or, in the earlier stages, as in Vietnam today, the *active* intervention of the working class to take hegemony of the national-social struggle. Only those such as the Pabloists who believe that (at least some) Stalinist bureaucracies (e.g., Yugoslavia or China or Cuba) can be a revolutionary socialist leadership need see in this understanding a denial of the proletarian basis for social revolution.

On the contrary, precisely, the petty-bourgeois peasantry under the most *favorable* historic circumstances conceivable could achieve no third road, neither capitalist, nor working class. Instead all that has come out of China and Cuba was a state of the same order as that issuing out of the political counter-revolution of Stalin in the Soviet Union, the degeneration of the October. That is why we are led to define states such as these as *deformed workers states*. And the experience since the Second World War, properly understood, offers not a basis for revisionist turning away from the perspective and necessity of revolutionary working-class power, but rather it is a great vindication of Marxian theory and conclusions under new and not previously expected circumstances.

Weakness and Confusion

Many statements and positions of the I.C. show theoretical weakness or confusion on this question. Thus, the I.C. Statement on the fall of Ben Bella declared:

"Where the state takes a bonapartist form on behalf of a weak bourgeoisie, as in Algeria or Cuba, then the type of 'revolt' occurring on June 19-20 in Algiers is on the agenda."

—Newsletter, 26 June 1965

While the nationalization in Algeria now amounts to some 15 per cent of the economy, the Cuban economy is, in essence, entirely nationalized; China probably has more vestiges of its bourgeoisie. If the Cuban bourgeoisie is indeed "weak," as the I.C. affirms, one can only observe that it must be tired from its long swim to Miami, Florida.

The current I.C. resolution, "Rebuilding the Fourth International," however, puts the matter very well:

"In the same way, the International and its parties are the key to the problem of the class struggle in the colonial countries. The petty-bourgeois nationalist leaders and their Stalinist collaborators restrict the struggle to the level of national liberation, or, at best, to a version of 'socialism in one country,' sustained by subordination to the co-

existence policies of the Soviet bureaucracy. In this way, all the gains of the struggle of the workers and peasants, not only in the Arab world, India, South East Asia, etc., but also in *China and Cuba* [our emphasis: Spartacist], are confined within the limits of imperialist domination, or exposed to counter-revolution (the line-up against China, the Cuban missiles crisis, the Vietnam war, etc.)."

Here Cuba is plainly equated with China, not with Algeria.

The document offered by the French section of the I.C. several years ago on the Cuban revolution suffers, in our view, from one central weakness. It sees the Cuban revolution as analogous to the Spanish experience of the 1930's. This analogy is not merely defective: it emphasizes precisely what is *not* common to the struggles in Spain and in Cuba, that is, the bona fide workers' revolution in Spain which was smashed by the Stalinists.

Overcoming Bad Method

The Pabloites have been strengthened against us, in our opinion, by this simplistic reflex of the I.C., which must deny the possibility of a social transformation led by the petty-bourgeoisie, in order to defend the validity and necessity of the revolutionary Marxist movement. This is a bad method: at bottom, it equates the deformed workers' state with the road to socialism; it is the Pabloite error turned inside out, and a profound denial of the Trotskyist understanding that the bureaucratic ruling caste is an *obstacle* which must be overthrown by the workers if they are to move forward.

The theoretical analysis of Spartacist concerning the backward portions of the world strengthens, in our estimation, the programmatic positions which we hold in common with the comrades of the I.C. internationally.

4. Building U.S. Section

The principal aspect of our task which may be obscure to foreign comrades is the unique and critically and immediately important *Negro* question. Without a correct approach to the Negro young militants and workers we will be unable to translate into American conditions the rooting of our section among the masses.

We have fought hard to acquire a theoretical insight in the course of our struggle in the SWP against Black Nationalist schemes which disintegrate a revolutionary perspective—defending the position that the *Negroes in the U.S. are an oppressed color-caste concentrated in the main in the working class as a super-exploited layer*. And we have acquired a considerable experience for our small numbers and despite a composition which is still only about 10 per cent black. We have a nucleus in Harlem, New York City. We intervened in several ways in the Black Ghetto outbursts over the summers of 1964 and 65, acquiring valuable experience.

[The balance of the remarks was not written out before delivery; it is given as reconstructed from the rough notes. The issue of propaganda and agitation was not significantly gone into in the report, but is in the Spartacist draft document on tasks assembled the night before the oral report was given, hence the relevant section of that draft is also quoted below.]

Our draft resolution before you states regarding our Southern work that, "Perhaps our most impressive

achievement to date has been the building of several SL organizing committees in the deep South, including New Orleans. This is a modest enough step in absolute terms and gives us no more than a springboard for systematic work. What is impressive is that *no other* organization claiming to be revolutionary has any base at all in the deep South today."

Black and White

The race question in the U.S. is different from that in England. In fact it is part way between the situation in England and that in South Africa. Thus some 2 per cent of the British population is coloured; in South Africa over 2/3rds of the people are black. In the U.S. if some 20 per cent of the population is Negro and Spanish-speaking, then within the working class, given the overwhelming concentration of whites in the upper classes, the others comprise something like 25 or 30 per cent. What this means is that in England the intensity of exploitation is spread unevenly, but rather smoothly throughout an essentially homogeneous working class. At the other extreme in South Africa, the white workers with ten times the income of the black, live in good part themselves off the blacks, thus imposing an almost insuperable barrier to common class actions (witness the European and Moslem workers' relations in Algeria). In the U.S. the qualitatively heavier burden within the class is borne by the black workers. In quiescent times they tend to be divided from the white workers as in the lower levels of class struggle such as are now prevalent. Therefore the *black youth* in America are the only counterparts today to the sort of militant white working class youth found in the British Young Socialists.

Uniting the Class

However, we are well aware that at a certain point in the class struggle the main detachments of the workers, as such, i.e., black and white in common class organizations such as trade unions, become heavily involved. Every strike shows this. In preparation for the massive class struggles ahead we have begun to build fractions in certain accessible key sections of the working class. But today the winning over of young black militants is the short cut to acquiring proletarian cadres as well; virtually all such militants are part of the working class.

Finally, we know that under the specific conditions in the U.S. to build a genuinely revolutionary party will require the involvement in its ranks and leadership of a large proportion, perhaps a majority, of the most exploited and oppressed, the black workers.

A Fighting Propaganda Group

The Spartacist draft theses state: "The tactical aim of the SL in the next period is to build a sufficiently large propaganda group capable of agitational intervention in every social struggle in the U.S. as a necessary step in the building of the revolutionary party. For this intervention we seek an increase in our forces to at least tenfold. From our small force of around 100 we move toward our goal in three parallel lines of activity: splits and fusions with other groups, direct involvement in mass struggle, and the strengthening and education of our organization." ■

From January-February 1967

Appendix III REPRINTED FROM SPARTACIST NO. 9, JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1967

An Open Letter to Other Supporters of the IC

Oust Healy!

There is today a gross scandal in the Trotskyist movement, involving charges of an extremely serious nature leveled against the leadership of the British Socialist Labour League (SLL). Because of the political similarity between the Spartacist League and the SLL, and the close organizational relations existing at various times in the past, we feel it our responsibility to make our views on the matters involved clear and unambiguous.

* * *

The content of the charges is revealed in the following letter circulated by Ernest Tate.

"Dear Editor,

"I believe it is a tradition in England that all socialists should be allowed to sell or distribute their literature, without hindrance or fear of violence, outside public meetings. I would like to report an outrageous violation of this tradition to your readers and ask for their assistance in preventing it from happening again.

"As quite a number of people on the Left know, I manage Pioneer Book Service, a large outlet for Trotsky's books in England, and I or some of my friends try to cover most meetings with our literature. On Thursday, 17th November, I went along to Caxton Hall to sell literature outside the Socialist Labour League's meeting on the 10th anniversary of the Hungarian revolution.

"I arrived at 7:15 p.m. and began to sell the *International Socialist Review* and a pamphlet, critical of the S.L.L., entitled "Healy 'Reconstructs' the Fourth International." Several people were selling literature. A group of Irish Communists were selling their publication and someone was selling the English *Militant*.

"Initially there was some baiting of me by the Socialist Labour League supporters who were selling the *Newsletter* in the doorway of Caxton Hall, but nevertheless I was not prevented from selling.

"At 7:50, Gerry Healy and Michael Banda entered the hall. A few seconds later Healy came to the entrance and indicated to his followers that I should be removed from the front of the hall.

"I was immediately set upon and physically assaulted by six or seven Socialist Labour League supporters. My literature was knocked from my hands—I was punched and thrown to the ground, my glasses were smashed, and as I lay on the ground I was kicked repeatedly in the groin

and stomach.

"After the attack I had to attend the casualty department of Middlesex Hospital and I was forced to stay in bed for the greater part of the next day. At the moment of writing I am still badly bruised.

"The issue is a simple one. The Socialist Labour League Leadership hope by their actions to prevent me selling my literature outside their meetings. They hope to take away my freedom of speech. This attack comes after a number of threats against me and my friends by members or supporters of the Socialist Labour League. At Brighton during the Labour Party Conference, my comrades were physically threatened and prevented from selling our literature. The same was true at the recent anti-war demonstration in Liege, Belgium, where I was threatened.

"I refuse to be intimidated. Neither a Fascist Mosley nor an ultra-left sectarian Gerry Healy who imagines himself to be a Trotskyist, should be allowed to curtail our democratic rights. I intend to be present at the next public meeting of the Socialist Labour League to sell my literature. I ask for the full support from all people on the Left to ensure I do it without interference from the misguided followers of Gerry Healy.

"Fraternally,
ERNEST TATE"

* * *

Following the circulation of this letter among Left and labor circles in England and its reprinting by several radical publications, the SLL instituted legal proceedings against Comrade Tate and threatened publications printing Tate's letter with the same treatment.

"Alighting from Coaches"

That Healy had Tate beaten is not disputed—in fact it is *defended*, as being within the framework of bourgeois "law and order." According to Healy's lawyers, the Tate letter "*described a disturbance on the pavement outside Caxton Hall, where the meeting was being held at which our client was a speaker. The letter states that Mr. Healy indicated to his followers that the writer of the letter should be removed from the front of the Hall and that he was assaulted by supporters of the Socialist Labour League. We are instructed that this is inaccurate. Mr. Healy, in fact, asked a steward to clear the pavement in front of the entrance to the*

Hall in order to allow passengers alighting from coaches to enter the Hall without being obstructed."

This grotesque legal language only serves to point up the hypocrisy of a man claiming to be a proletarian revolutionary leader using such a law—from the period when lords and ladies descending from their coaches had the right to smash beggars, petitioners, children and anyone else in their way—against another member of the labor movement.

Healy's legal action was clearly intended to intimidate other publications from printing the letter and to end public discussion of the whole matter. Two of the papers which had printed the letter, the *Socialist Leader* and *Peace News*, issued retractions and paid the costs demanded by Healy.

Perhaps Healy's having Tate beaten might have been rationalized as an uncontrolled individual outburst of anger; but the appeal to "the Queen's Justice" implicates the entire SLL leadership, both in the initial hooliganism and in the attempt to suppress discussion within the workers' movement.

Gangsterism

Such tactics applied internally are not new to Healy. We have not previously spoken of the atmosphere of physical intimidation that surrounded the April London Conference, but it was present. We have since heard well-authenticated accounts of the use by the SLL leadership of calculated violence ("punch-ups") to silence internal critics. We already knew that Healy had developed a technique which destroyed the revolutionary morality of those around him by systematically forcing them to make false confession against themselves. It was for refusing to do this that Spartacist was expelled from the April Conference of the International Committee.

What has now led Healy to employ these tactics *outside* his movement? This summer the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) issued for their own purposes a pamphlet on the April Conference entitled "Healy 'Reconstructs' the Fourth International," the one Tate was attempting to sell outside the SLL meeting. The pamphlet consists mainly of correspondence between Spartacist and the SLL prior to and following the Conference. It lays bare—most clearly in Healy's own words—the criminal wrecking tactics he employs within the international Trotskyist movement. In denouncing the pamphlet in the 20 August *Newsletter*, the Political Committee of the SLL stated: "*We shall not hesitate to deal appropriately with the handful of United Secretariat agents who hawk it around the cynical fake-left in England.*"

"Outside the Working Class"

Healy has attempted to put a theoretical face on his actions against supporters of the SWP—one similar to that used by the Stalinists in the thirties to justify their gangster attacks on Trotskyists. Then Trotskyists were labelled "counter-revolutionary" and beaten when they attempted to circulate literature explaining what was happening in the Soviet Union. The SLL at a "Special Conference" held 26 and 27 November passed a Declaration on the Socialist Workers Party, printed in the 3 December *Newsletter* and reprinted in the *Bulletin*. The document describes the SWP as "*turning completely away from the working class.*" The

dispute between the SLL and the SWP is "*a fight between the working class and the servants of the class enemy.*" It states: "*We tell the SWP: The days when you could address us as 'comrades' are long since gone. Your political actions have placed you outside the camp of Trotskyism and of the working class.... There can be not the slightest question of your telling us what we must do to re-establish our reputation with you.*" At the conclusion of the document appears the statement: "*The issues raised in the Nov. 21st letter by Farrell Dobbs, Secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, about what happened at Caxton Hall on the night of November 17th, we cannot discuss at this stage for legal reasons.*" Yet even if supporters of the SWP must be cleared from the streets as "*servants of the class enemy,*" the appeal against them to the bourgeois courts is not explained. The Trotskyist movement has always opposed any appeal to the bourgeois state, even against Fascists.

Healy Exposed

The turn by Healy and the SLL leadership to the political methods of the petty bourgeoisie and to the bourgeois courts is not the action of either genuine revolutionists or of "ultra-left sectarians." Such methods have no relation to



no credit

Trotsky denouncing machine-gun attack on him by Stalinist gangsters.

the formal politics of the SLL, the politics of revolutionary Trotskyism. How is this contradiction to be explained? *We say that Healy is an aggressive and greedy adventurer whose particular politics have changed frequently.* At the present he is claiming to adhere to the revolutionary Marxist program of Trotskyism. Tomorrow his politics will be something else, just as they were only a few years ago when Healy was indistinguishable from the Bevanites in the Labour Party. Furthermore, Healy is an adventurer peculiarly preoccupied with sharp financial deals and with technical and material matters. His Plough Press does heavy commercial work—using his comrades' labor. He believes that "weak" national sections should financially support the "strong" one, i.e., his. Thus in 1961 he took over \$1,000 from those of us who were then his supporters in this country in order to make a world tour. The tour never materialized, nor was the money returned or otherwise accounted for. (Copies of the relevant correspondence and cancelled checks would be available to any bona-

fide workers' investigating commission.) Since then Healy has always sought, successfully, to conduct his relations with comrades in the U.S. at a profit. Churchill once described England as a nation of small businessmen. Healy stands as the left wing of his nation.

Sack Healy!

The persistent adherence by the Spartacist League to the revolutionary principles and program of Trotskyism, to which Healy gives lip service, have twice led Healy to break with and attempt to destroy us. Because of this adherence, the Spartacist League is not now besmirched by the public exposure of the gangster tactics Healy uses. Just as Farrell Dobbs' telegram of condolences to Mrs. Kennedy came as a revelation, even to those who were most aware of the deepening revisionism of the SWP, so Healy's outrageous beating of Tate, compounded by dragging the victim before the courts of Elizabeth II's England, is a striking exposure of his and his leading committee's bankruptcy as revolutionists. To the members of the SLL and the other sections of the IC, we say: OUST HEALY!

In the United States the American Committee for the Fourth International (ACFI) has consistently aped Healy. Its members have now individually defended Healy's attack on Tate by saying, "Well, we want to smash Pabloites, don't we?" while the *Bulletin* reprints Healy's cynical statement that questions pertaining to "the events around Caxton Hall" cannot be discussed "for legal reasons." The ACFI members, whose initial weaknesses were exploited by Healy in typical Comintern fashions, are now being made to accept and justify ever greater departures from revolutionary practice. As with Stalin's Comintern, sections that have developed along this path have no inner stamina to resist any threat or any "opportunity" domestically. At the first opportunity we will see ACFI's vaunted "internationalism" (i.e., loyalty to a British clique) change into the most vicious American nationalism.

As for the SWP, it is certainly their right to factionally use against their political opponents this act of hooliganism. However, as Oscar Wilde once pointed out, hypocrisy is the acknowledgement vice pays to virtue. The SWP today is chasing after the same pacifists, Stalinists and middle-class elements who have been and will be guilty of the most serious violence against the working class and its left wing, both directly and through the bourgeois state. However, despite the motives of the SWP, its objective call at the present time for democracy within the labor movement is correct. We concur, only insisting that this democracy be applied impartially to *all* sections of the workers' movement. Furthermore, we are for the defense by any measures necessary of the right of Tate or anyone else within the workers' movement to press their opinions. The legal defense imposed on Tate certainly merits the support of all militants, and contributions for this purpose may be sent to him c/o Pioneer Book Service, 8 Toynbee Street, London, E.1, England.

Trotsky's Method

In addition to the defense of Tate, what can be done to apply the maximum pressure against repetitions of this

conduct? Trotsky has offered us an example of how to proceed in his article, "A Case for a Labor Jury—Against All Types of Gangsterism in the Working Class Movement; On the Murder of the Italian Stalinist Montanari." In this emigre quarrel the killer had apparently been victimized by the Stalinists and after resorting to violence he was for a time falsely linked by them to the Trotskyists. The conduct of the Italian Communist Party then roughly corresponds to the SLL's now. The conclusion of the article from the *New Militant*, 5 October 1935, is reprinted here:

"...The Montanari-Beiso case is important precisely because a conflict on the political plane has led to a supremely senseless act of murder of one emigre by another. In this there lies an ominously serious warning, and it is necessary to grasp its significance in time!

"The matter is now in the hands of the bourgeois law courts. The official investigation is obviously not intended to cast light on the bloody tragedy from the standpoint of revolutionary morals of the proletariat. The prosecution will probably try only to compromise the proletarian emigres and the revolutionary organizations in particular. But the agents of the Comintern will also try to exploit the trial for every vile purpose, as they are obliged to do. The duty of workers' organizations, without any regard for political banners, lies in one thing: *in shedding the greatest light possible on this case*, and thereby, insofar as it is possible, to prevent the repetition of gunplay in revolutionary circles.

"In our opinion, the labor organizations must establish, without any further delay, an authoritative and non-partisan Committee which would go over the entire material, including Beiso's letters mentioned in *l'Humanite*, to examine all the witnesses and representatives of the parties and groups who are concerned or interested in the case, so that the political, moral and personal circumstances in the case be clearly established. This is necessary not only in memory of Montanari, not only to reveal Beiso's real motives, but also to purge the atmosphere of all working class organizations of treachery, calumny, hounding and gunplay. Naturally the interests of the case would be best served if the representatives of *l'Humanite* and of the Central Committee of the Italian C.P. were to take part in this Committee. But we may safely predict that they will most certainly refuse: these politicians stand only to lose from an impartial investigation, and much more than would appear on the surface. But the investigation ought not to be wrecked by their refusal to participate. Every honest participant in the labor movement is deeply interested in seeing to it that this abscess is opened which can otherwise develop into gangrene. The tragic case of Montanari-Beiso must be brought before a labor jury."

Workers' Inquiry

In the event that the grip of Healy's clique on the Socialist Labour League is too strong, or Healy's leading collaborators on the International Committee too cowardly, to intervene directly to oust Healy, we think it appropriate to force a workers' inquiry to expose this fraud who disorients and corrupts the Trotskyist movement by posing as a revolutionary leader. ■

From April 1968

Appendix IV

The Split in the Revolutionary Tendency

Preface to Marxist Bulletin No. 3, Part I: Documents and Correspondence on the 1962 Rupture by Philips, Wohlforth and Healy of the Minority Tendency of the SWP

In a dispute within the revolutionary movement, no serious revolutionist would take sides without recourse to the documents wherein both parties argue their positions. Nor, for a revolutionary, is it *simply* a question of who is right and who wrong. (For example, the political issue at dispute in the 1962 SWP Revolutionary Tendency split—the degeneration of the SWP as a revolutionary party—has been clearly resolved in our favor over the course of time.) Rather, it is also a question of knowing, in detail, the “how” and “why” on both sides in the dispute—the development of the struggle, why one side presumably was led to evolve an erroneous position, the methods by which the parties conducted their struggle—so that we may strengthen ourselves in the face of our vastly greater revolutionary tasks on the morrow. It is for this reason that the Spartacist League is publishing a series of *Marxist Bulletins* presenting the various documents and correspondence of both sides relating to the Revolutionary Tendency (RT) split. We believe the documents speak for themselves.

1962 Split Aided Right Wing

The unprincipled split in the SWP revolutionary minority tendency, conceived by Wohlforth and technically engineered by A. Philips—despite the fact that the latter’s own membership in the RT had never been formally resolved—with the aid of Gerry Healy of the British Socialist Labour League (SLL), had far-reaching consequences. First, a number of precious cadre were lost from the revolutionary wing of the party. These were mainly older comrades whose experience in many cases went back to the Communist Party of the 1920’s and early 30’s. By and large these comrades held in the inner-tendency dispute the Wohlforth view that the SWP remained a revolutionary party; but they were disillusioned and demoralized to see once again a leader they had trusted resort to lies and the most unprincipled organizational methods—a repeat of their experiences in the Communist Party and, more recently, in the SWP. Given this final disillusionment they left the tendency and the party.

Secondly, the split, which was obviously politically unfounded, had the effect of making both wings appear unserious, and detracted from the consideration that rank-and-file party members might otherwise have given to the

revolutionary viewpoints then being advanced by both sides of the now-split minority. This ultimately rendered those with revolutionary politics in the SWP far less effective than would otherwise have been the case in carrying through their task of polarizing the party membership around a revolutionary working-class perspective and exposing the revisionism of the central party leadership.

Finally, the breach in the revolutionary forces which was initiated within the SWP was perpetuated after the exclusion of both wings from the party, and led for a time to the grotesque and confusing spectacle of two hostile and competing public organizations (the Spartacist League and the American Committee for the Fourth International, “ACFI”) with similar political lines. This breach continued for several years until the organizational contradiction was eventually resolved politically when the ACFI (currently calling itself “Workers League”) assumed adaptationist positions not fundamentally different from those of the SWP. But, from the initial moment of the split and for as long as it was politically principled, Spartacist consistently attempted to heal the organizational breach in the revolutionary forces.

Nature of the SWP

Unity is one of the principal weapons of the working class in its struggles. Only the most fundamental and irreconcilable programmatic differences justify an organizational split in the revolutionary vanguard—or even the formation of an intra-party faction. Certainly an assessment of the political character and direction of the SWP was a necessary and important question for the minority tendency. But, given the overwhelming agreement within the minority that the road to Socialism can be opened only by workers’ revolution under the leadership of a revolutionary vanguard party, as opposed to the revisionist concept of the SWP leadership that vanguard leadership is nonessential and that the road to socialism can be opened by non-working-class forces, the just-unfolding dispute within the minority primarily had tactical implications and was certainly not a legitimate split issue.

In any event, the contention of the wing around Shane Mage, James Robertson and Geoffrey White that the SWP

majority had become centrist and had adopted the theoretical revisionism and political program of Pabloism, as opposed to Wohlforth's position that the SWP remained revolutionary and would be "the main instrument for the realization of socialism in the U.S." (see Document 10, point 3) was clearly evident by the 1963 SWP Convention to anyone claiming to stand on the basis of a Trotskyist world outlook. At the Convention the SWP majority voted to rejoin the Pabloist International Secretariat from which the party had split in 1953, and also accepted a resolution on the Negro struggle totally capitulating to Black Nationalism—for the first time applying the essentials of Pabloism to the class struggle in this country. Had the political nature of the SWP been the *real* issue in the RT split, it would have then been possible to effect a reconciliation between both wings of the tendency at this point. That this *never* was the real reason for the Wohlforth-Healy split from the RT majority was plain by Healy's publication, prior to the split, of the document "Trotskyism Betrayed—The SWP Adopts the Political Method of Pabloite Revisionism" and by the 22 May 1963 statement of Healy: "By February 1962 it had become clear that to all intents and purposes the policies of the SWP were indistinguishable from those of Pablo and his group" (our emphasis). In fact, Wohlforth himself had declared verbally only a few weeks prior to launching his splitting attack within the tendency, "The SWP is centrist from top to toe."

Wohlforth's Real Reason

The real reasons for the split were far less savory—the question purely of "regime," in its most narrow and inadmissible sense. Basic was Wohlforth's perception that because of his past mistakes (See Preface to *MB* No. 2), his de facto leadership of the RT was being challenged, and he went into an organizational frenzy when he realized that on the issue on which he had chosen to make a showdown, the nature of the SWP, he was about to receive a minority vote within "his" tendency. This led him to oppose democratic-centralism within the tendency such as was called for and justified by the tendency's program and tasks. (See Document 9, "Thus when the differences on our fundamental attitude towards the revolutionary party come up in our tendency they cannot be resolved by majority-minority vote and discipline....")

In addition, the witch hunt atmosphere created by the SWP leadership against the minority was affecting Wohlforth, never noted for his resistance to pressure. By offering a conciliatory and non-struggle position (see Documents 3 and 6 of *Marxist Bulletin* No. 2, and especially Document 10 of this collection), Wohlforth hoped to crawl back into the good graces of the Majority leadership and to retain his position as "party leader" (Wohlforth was the only minority member on the SWP leading body, the Political Committee). To this end he was prepared to sacrifice his political co-thinkers. This is the clear meaning of the statement "Call for the Reorganization of the Minority Tendency" presented to the party on 13 November 1962 and of his discussion with "Farrell" (Dobbs—National Secretary of the SWP) as described in the first two paragraphs of Document 9, "Of course I made it clear to Farrell...." Wohlforth desired and, through a

series of provocations, prepared the expulsion from the SWP of the Mage-Robertson-White wing with which he was in fundamental political agreement, by the Majority with which he was in fundamental political disagreement, in order to end the challenge to his personal leadership both of the minority and within the SWP. This is the subject of *MB* No. 3, Part II.

Mechanics of the RT Split

Wohlforth's desire for organizational control at no matter what cost meshed with Healy's (then International Committee head) desire for puppet-like agents internationally rather than for vigorous, disciplined national sections. The manner in which the split was carried out is most instructive in itself. Philips, a co-thinker of Wohlforth on the SWP, was invited to England by Healy, allegedly to consult on trade union questions but in actuality to make final preparations for the split. The cover purpose for the trip was advanced in order to secure financing from the entire tendency, a bit of literally criminal financial fraud characteristic of the whole unsavory spirit of the split. The RT majority, while suspecting that something more than "trade union consultation" was afoot, nevertheless acted in good faith, raising most of the money for Philips' trip but also sending along with him, by vote, a statement that his views on issues of controversy within the American group were not necessarily those of the majority.

Philips returned from England with the ultimatum to the tendency, presented in Healy's name (Document 5), which contained an assessment of the political nature of the SWP contradictory to that held by the tendency majority. Had such an assessment been adopted by vote at a meeting of the proper international body to make such a decision at which a representative of the U.S. position had been present to argue its views, the RT would have accepted the decision. However, such was not the case. An ultimatum was disloyally cooked up and presented; signatures affirming the false position were demanded; no discussion or vote was permitted; and all not signing were automatically "expelled" from the tendency. Under such conditions to affirm to one's comrades positions one considered false was tantamount to surrendering one's revolutionary integrity; to so affirm would have forfeited one's ability and right ever after to argue one's real views within the organization—absolutely essential to a revolutionary organization and assured under genuine democratic-centralism. The overwhelming majority of the American section, whether agreeing with the analysis presented in the document or not, refused to go along with such tactics. Over two thirds of the tendency were thus "expelled," with the remaining eleven going on to form "The Reorganized Minority Tendency."

After the refusal of the majority of RT comrades to sign the ultimatum, Wohlforth went to party National Secretary and Majority leader Dobbs with an edited version of the document, implying that the leadership of the RT were disloyal party members. His method in this business ironically anticipated that used a year later by the SWP leadership in expelling the RT leadership from the party. At the Tendency meeting of 3 November 1962, Wohlforth had to admit he knew of no actual *acts* by tendency majority members in violation of SWP discipline but that

"disloyal" ideas were sufficient, and it was the duty of loyal party members to inform the party leadership of "disloyal" members. Immediately prior to the 1963 SWP Convention in a continuation of his unprincipled bloc with the revisionist party leadership, Wohlforth presented them with his document "Party and Class" (in *MB* No. 3, Part II) containing lying allegations against the Mage-Robertson-White tendency, including the charge that they had a "split perspective" towards the party—a contention proved patently false by a time 8 months later when M-R-W still remained in the party (see our reply then, "Discipline and Truth," *MB* No. 3, Part II made as part of our struggle to stay in the SWP). On the basis of Wohlforth's document as evidence, Harper, Ireland, Mage, Robertson and White were suspended, then expelled, subsequently forming the Spartacist League.

Wohlforth Cracks—Again

With the larger minority out of the party, the full pressure of the Majority fell upon the very small and pressure-prone Wohlforth grouping, doubly upset by the successes of Spartacist outside. Almost immediately Wohlforth became demoralized, and only four months later, in October 1963, was proposing within his own tendency that they leave the party. When this was opposed by Philips and other surprised tendency supporters, Wohlforth first broke with Philips then, with Healy's aid, provoked his grouplet's own exclusion from the SWP. Following their departure from the party they went on to form the ACFI.

Time has made clear who was right and who wrong on the nature of the SWP. The Wohlforthites now go so far as to claim the SWP *never* was revolutionary! (See, for example, Wohlforth's "Struggle for Marxism in the U.S." in which he proves the first genuine American Marxist is... Wohlforth!)

Healy's Incapacity

A far more important question than this, though, has since been resolved. The question of the ability of a leadership such as Gerry Healy's to rebuild the world Trotskyist movement was raised by his methods towards the American section in 1962—methods which repeated the worst organizational practices of the Comintern during the late 20's. In 1962 most comrades preferred to withhold judgment, hoping that Healy's actions were a single incident undertaken through the mistaken advice and lies of Wohlforth and Philips that the tendency majority had given up a struggle perspective within the SWP and was preparing to split.


Healy on a number of occasions made it crystal clear that "the technique of the lie" was quite admissible, and even necessary for his purposes, for temporary tactical advantage or to break the authority of possible opponents in a factional dispute. Thus, in his letter of 12 November 1962 (Document 9), Healy argued that the American comrades should have agreed to the false statement just as in a similar situation his own grouping had done in 1944 within the British Revolutionary Communist Party. He described the leadership of the RCP at that time as "a mixture of ultra-Lefts, opportunists and centrists"—the classical definition of a centrist tendency. However, he goes on to state that to

have characterized them in this fashion might have alienated the rank-and-file and therefore the politically correct characterization was withheld. At the London Conference in April 1966 (see *Spartacist* No. 6) Healy demanded the Spartacist delegation lie, confessing themselves to be petty-bourgeois American chauvinists, as a condition for IC membership. Again, in the interests of the revolutionary future of Spartacist, our delegation refused to do so and were once again "expelled" by this Healy.

Healy's total inability as an international Trotskyist leader was finally established at the London Conference where Spartacist was expelled although willing to accept democratic-centralist discipline and although the political basis for inclusion within the IC had already been admitted, "Voix Ouvrière," a large French Trotskyist group, was driven out; and practically all observers from other groupings were alienated (see *Spartacist* No. 6).

The political basis for these organizational methods had now become clear with the IC's adoption of a line of critical support for Mao and the Red Guards and their embracing of "the Arab Revolution" being led by Nasser and Syria. Healy had but shortly before been deeply immersed in the Bevan wing of the Labour Party bureaucracy. Then for several years he carried on a correct political struggle against Pabloism. Now he moves at full speed towards this political revisionism mixed, however, in his case by a characteristic compounding of sectarian Stalinist "Third Period" tactics and violence against working class and socialist opponents. Our conclusion is that Healy is an opportunist in motion, periodically adopting whole new programs for a temporary organizational advantage. The IC cannot go forward towards the task of reconstructing the Fourth International without first understanding and ridding itself of such a leadership. In contrast stands our own revolutionary consistency, over the whole course of our development, in principles, programmatic development and practice.

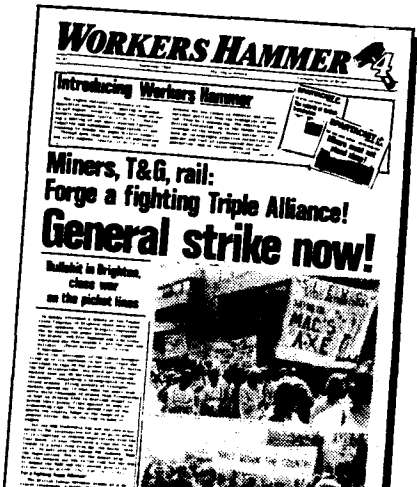
Marxist Bulletin staff, April, 1968

WORKERS HAMMER 

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From February 1977

Appendix V REPRINTED FROM WORKERS VANGUARD NO. 143, 4 FEBRUARY 1977

WL/SL Exchange on Workers Democracy

Look Who's Calling Us Comrade

New York, N.Y.
January 23, 1977

Dear Cde. Robertson:

I wish to call to your attention that in recent weeks members of your organization have sought to disrupt both the political work and public meetings of the Workers League and Young Socialists.

On Saturday, December 4, 1976, your organization staged a provocative demonstration outside the election headquarters of the Workers League in Los Angeles. One of our members was physically attacked and thrown through a pane-glass window. The actions of your organization resulted in bringing the police to the scene. As you know, the police raided these election headquarters over the summer, and your demonstration gave them still another opportunity to harass our members.

Less than a week later, in Toronto, two members of the Canadian Workers League were physically attacked by 12 Spartacist members—some of them Americans—as they attempted to distribute leaflets on the university campus to advertise a public meeting.

On Wednesday, January 19, 1977, 13 members of Spartacist physically threatened members of the Young Socialists and prevented them from holding a meeting at California State University in Los Angeles.

Such provocations and use of violence play into the hands of the police and the most reactionary class forces. They can only damage the socialist movement. I urge you to abandon this provocative policy and call your members to order.

Fraternally,
David North,
National Secretary, Workers League

New York, N.Y.
27 January 1977

D. North,
Workers League

Dear Comrade,

We have received your letter of 23 January. It is evidently either (a) itself a provocation designed to facilitate frame-up attempts by you in connivance with bourgeois police authorities, and/or (b) a tacit announcement, possibly as a result of the current relationship of forces between us, that

your organization is contemplating some change in your years-long standard practice against us (as well as other socialists). Both in the U.S. and abroad this has consisted of the eager use of your own violence, limitless slander, and where possible, the employment of the police to do your dirty work. These are facts which can, for example, be testified to first hand by sellers of any other socialist newspaper at your meetings over the years.

We have commented as appropriate in our public press on the motives and purposes behind your long and unbroken record of all-sided attempts to suppress and destroy the processes of workers democracy and we see no reason to pursue these matters here.

As for the particulars which you presently allege, our *Workers Vanguard* has already noted the very different reality of such incidents (and many others).

Especially significant is the fact that the last two major assaults by your people that we know of were centrally against cameramen in front of Healyite meetings. These comrades were attempting to deter or failing that document your calculated violence against other socialists (see *WV* No. 130, 22 October 1976 and *WV* No. 137, 10 December 1976).

To the extent that your organization does not continue to try to deprive us of those rights necessary to the socialist and labor movements, you can assure yourselves that the concerns so hypocritically expressed in your letter will automatically disappear. And we note that in any case we will continue to defend your own legitimate rights should they be threatened from any quarter.

Corresponding to your violence against us has been your previous justification that we are "police agents," "finger-men of the world bourgeoisie," etc. (Just try physical assault on genuine police agents sometime!) We therefore find your closing paragraph, with its appeal to us as fellow socialists to stand against provocations and violence, particularly obnoxious and hypocritical. Truly your situation must be precarious for you to certify our "socialist" legitimacy. In any case, and in honor of our present elevation by you, we too are giving salutations to you as "comrade" and "fraternally," although since you also identify us as accomplices to the SWP leaders who are "GPU accomplices" according to your currently most active slander campaign, we do so with repugnance.

Fraternally,
J. Robertson

From May 1985

Appendix VI EXCERPTED FROM WORKERS VANGUARD NO. 379, 17 MAY 1985

Smash Fascist Smear of SL

Imagine that you open up a presumably left-wing paper and see this headline: "Fascists Lead 5,000 Black Workers to Stop Klan in Washington." You might think you fell asleep and woke up in *Alice in Wonderland*. What kind of "fascists" would lead thousands of militants, drawn mainly from predominantly black unions, to stop a KKK provocation? On 27 November 1982 the Spartacist League mobilized the vanguard of the black working class to deal a big defeat to the racist terrorists who, emboldened by Reagan reaction and by the broad-daylight "Greensboro massacre" of five leftist union and civil rights activists in North Carolina, were seeking to march in the nation's capital for the first time since 1925. Now somebody wants you to believe that the organization which led the labor-based action that stopped the Klan is "racist" and "fascist." These characterizations of the SL appeared in the March 1 *Bulletin*, newspaper of the Workers League. And if the *Bulletin* did not print the headline we have imagined for them about November 27, it's only because the WL rarely mentions the existence of the mobilization—the largest labor-based anti-fascist action since the 1939 anti-Nazi rally at Madison Square Garden, also led by Trotskyists—except to bait it as a "provocation."

The WL is the sinister American incarnation of Thomas Gerard Healy (aka "Gerry"), a corrupt plebeian political adventurer who, as sort of an illegitimate stepchild of Sir James Goldsmith, Rupert Murdoch and Ian MacGregor, runs a considerably larger operation in England. The *Bulletin* article, ostensibly a response to our coverage of the



Workers Vanguard

Union-based mass mobilization of blacks led by reds takes back the streets of Washington from killer KKK. Healyites now say Spartacists who initiated this militant anti-fascist action are "fascists."

case of Bernhard Goetz, the so-called "New York subway gunman," claims that our articles are "explicitly racist" and establish the completion of "the evolution of the Spartacist group toward fascism." Later it defines us as "a middle-class cult group" and expounds on our political origins in the typical Healyite style which combines deliberate slander with a bizarre paranoia. The article launched in the U.S. was picked up and reprinted by Healy's papers in England and Australia and, in Sinhalese translation, in Sri Lanka.

Then on April 19 a new *Bulletin* article appeared headlined "Spartacist Opposes Anti-Apartheid Struggle," charging us with "demoralization, cynicism and racism" and terming us "petty-bourgeois reactionaries." Both articles carry the by-line of David North, head of the local American Workers League. The basis for Healy's charges of Spartacist "racism" and "fascism" boils down to two things: 1) that we object to the Healyites' view that people, as opposed to the state, have no right to bear arms; 2) that we say that nothing short of proletarian revolution can win freedom for the black masses of South Africa. But what's really going on here has little to do with Goetz or South Africa, and everything to do with the British miners strike, as we shall see.

Gerry Healy has a problem. His problem is that a lot of people just learned some things in the heat of sharp class struggle in Britain. And they saw Gerry Healy and his gang fronting for the redbaiters and union-busters, screaming for the blood of miners union leader Arthur Scargill.

The British miners strike was 12 months of class warfare in the coal fields, a militant struggle which shook Margaret Thatcher's Britain to its foundations and pointed toward the question of which class shall rule. Confronted with the deliberate treachery of the pro-capitalist Labour Party/ Trades Union Congress tops who, all in the name of "unity" of course, herded scabs and isolated the miners to face Thatcher's fury, the militant miners, winning to their side the best elements of the oppressed and exploited, held out for a year and spiked the Tories' effort at wholesale destruction of the union.

All of the English fake-left stands pretty exposed by their gutless behavior. Flinching from the hard battle against the hated "Iron Lady," they mostly made outright apologies for scabbing, and all espoused "unity" when what was needed was a sharp break with the TUC/Labour tops' stab-in-the-back refusal to spread the miners strike. But even among this sorry lot, Healy's gang was distinguished by very special treachery.

Fingerman for TUC Cold Warriors

Healy made his loathsome "contribution" to the British miners strike before the strike began, at the Trades Union

Congress meeting at Blackpool in September 1983. The order of the day there was to draw the line in support of the Cold War politics of Reagan/Thatcher and to impose on the unions the policies of the TUC right wing, including cooperation with the Tories over anti-union legislation and conciliation toward the rightist, pro-American split from the Labour Party, the Social Democratic Party. The key task for the likes of Frank Chapple, Bill Sirs & Co. was to isolate leftist union leaders, and in particular to witchhunt miners union head Arthur Scargill, so that this militant union should face all alone the anti-union assault that Thatcher was already preparing.

The Blackpool TUC opened by solidarizing with Reagan's barbarous Korean Air Lines Flight 007 war provocation against the Soviet Union, which sent over 200 innocent people to their deaths. Not surprising, given that Chapple, Sirs and others of the TUC leaders are open sponsors of the CIA-backed "Labour Committee for Transatlantic Understanding," mouthpiece in the labor movement for Thatcher's NATO-loving line. In the midst of this carnival of the Labour rights, on the third day of the TUC, the Healyites dropped a carefully aimed bombshell: their *News Line* published a letter by Arthur Scargill in which he correctly castigated Polish Solidarność as "an anti-socialist organisation" seeking the overthrow of the Polish state. Healy had waited seven weeks to publish Scargill's letter at the optimal moment. It was a bonanza for the Tory rags of Fleet Street and became the centerpiece of the TUC right's wholesale redbaiting attack on Scargill. The Healyites were so proud that they issued a pamphlet about their role in the anti-Scargill witchhunt.

The British miners strike—which side were you on? This is the defining question for the left in England right now. And where was Healy?—the fingerman for the most right-wing agents of British capitalism in the labor movement, at the very moment that the lines were being drawn for the biggest class battle in more than half a century. The South Yorkshire miners who reportedly canceled their order for *News Line* after Blackpool expressed the contempt for Healy and his whores which has certainly become generalized in the miners' communities.

We're Marxists, defenders of the working class. We vigorously supported the miners strike, by raising the strategy and tactics we believe were necessary to win the struggle, including by seeking where we could to spread the strike to other unions (our supporter Patrick Sliney was sacked because he fought for active solidarity by his own union). American Spartacists, through the Partisan Defense Committee, raised over \$20,000 for the British miners from American workers, against the active opposition of the AFL-CIO tops who refused to lift one little finger for a militant British union which is led by "reds" like Scargill. We have our criticisms of the miners' leadership; indeed neither we nor Scargill have been quiet about our differences, but over this crucial class battle there was a unity of action, albeit a very lopsided one. And Scargill ran the miners strike about as well as any Labourite bureaucrat could—that is, showing the limitations and underlying weakness of the best-intentioned "Labour left" reformist.

Meanwhile, some of the best elements among the miners have started paying attention to the Spartacist League of Britain. They think the Spartacists had the right strategy to

win the miners' struggle: pull in a couple of the other key unions to "shut down the country." Alone among the British left papers, our *Workers Hammer* told the truth: the need for a fighting workers leadership not afraid to confront the capitalist state in a struggle which poses the question of class power; the essential role of a revolutionary party forged by splitting the militant ranks of labor from the traitorous tops, uniting the vanguard fighters on behalf of all the oppressed of capitalism. That's why slandering the Spartacists has suddenly become urgent business for the Healy gang once again. England is Healy's home base, and he even used to aspire to a following among the miners. So the American Healyites in their remote bunker got their orders to do a smear job on the Sparts.

The opportunist British left, and Healy the counterfeited leftist, are eager for the working people to forget the lessons of the hard-fought strike, which was a profound exposure of the slavish Labour "leadership." The social consciousness of the miners was altered as they found that the specially oppressed, from blacks and Asians to homosexu-



Workers Hammer Spartacist League/Britain banner calls for massive union solidarity with embattled miners. Healy served as fingerman for TUC Cold Warriors, Tory union-busters against leftist miners union leader.

als, were a solid base of outside support for the strike. The miners got a concentrated education in the nature of the bosses' state and the cops. And they learned about Healy. In the normal course of things, lessons pretty quickly become eroded or submerged in defeat, as political life flows back into the usual channels—i.e., the reformist channels of the Labour Party. But the miners union has a long memory, and it's our job to see that the lessons of this struggle are not forgotten.

Healyites: An Organization for Hire

When we first encountered the Healyites many years ago, they had begun espousing orthodox, anti-revisionist Trotskyism. (Indeed they still try to do so when it suits

them, except that they come close to posing Trotsky as Stalin's agent—a fairly unique paranoid delusion.) But they do not have inherent politics of their own nor have they had any for a long time. For nearly two decades, they have done their best to be simply an organization for hire.

Healy's appetites came to fruition when the Healy gang became the most unashamed devotees of assorted gangs of Near East murderers, vicious reactionary militarist regimes like Colonel Muammar el-Qaddafi's Islamic fanatics in Libya. The Healyites have been among the world's most fulsome supporters of the ayatollah Khomeini in Iran, the most grotesque champions of the "unity" of Arafat's PLO. In 1979 they explicitly justified the Iraqi Ba'ath regime's execution of 21 members of the Stalinist Communist Party, historically the leadership of the militant, strategic oil workers. Healy's embrace of these murderous capitalist regimes was prepared by years of cynical adulation of the so-called "Arab Revolution," a classless and entirely disembodied notion whose function is to permit those who are so inclined to justify anything in the name of "anti-imperialism." But more than ideology is involved in Healy's posture; the deal was consummated with something a lot more solid than the collected works of Colonel Qaddafi. Healy's embrace of Qaddafi coincided with the reappearance of a Healyite daily paper, *News Line*, in England two months after his previous daily, *Workers Press*, had folded.

Hence the Healyites, as corrupt press agents for some of the world's most unappetizing capitalist regimes, are hardly acting as a part of the workers movement. But then they have always been distinguished by an incredible programmatic instability and a cynicism which boggles the mind, as well as a penchant for physical gangsterism against dissident members and political opponents. They are characterized by slavish Labourite reformism, which in the U.S. is expressed in the most grotesque catering to the white labor aristocracy, at the same time as they seek to appeal to restless youth with the most ultra-"revolutionary," not to say bloodthirsty, rhetoric. The Healyites are a professional cheering section for Third World nationalism and worse, at the same time as they are marked closer to home by the most cringing legalism. Out of this dichotomy comes the attachment to frenzied slander and violence and the insistence that nobody should remember what was written yesterday and the day before.

From their earliest days the American Healyites have been on the market for an influential patron to sell themselves to. When they're not practicing the world's oldest profession on behalf of Near Eastern despots, they are sucking up to the labor bureaucrats at home. In 1967, at the very moment when millions of youth were being radicalized by the imperialist war against Vietnam and the movement for black freedom, the *Bulletin* put forward a program for a "labor party" that only George Meany could love. Meany, who headed the AFL-CIO at the time, was part of the Cold War labor "leadership" installed after the American labor movement was beheaded by the anti-"red" purges which drove out the communists and militants after World War II. Meany & Co. supported U.S. imperialism's war against Vietnam even after most capitalist politicians had given it up as a losing cause.

Take a look at the WL's five-point "labor party"

program, which we reproduce [on page 34] from the *Bulletin's* front page. For the WL, the war and black people just didn't exist. A program for labor? This was a program for the bureaucratic fat-cats whose conservative, openly racist and pro-government line makes the AFL-CIO a bastion of sellouts at home and a witting cover for the CIA's anti-labor machinations all over the world. Now almost 20 years later, George Meany himself couldn't have done a better job than Healy did at Blackpool to spearhead the Cold War witchhunt of Scargill to facilitate "Iron Lady" Thatcher's union-busting.

Catering to the labor bureaucracy means mimicking every aspect of racial insensitivity and political backwardness. And so the WL displays a recurring fondness for cops and prison guards as an alleged part of the labor movement; in 1971 the *Bulletin's* approving front-page article on a bonapartist "strike" by New York cops was headlined "New York Labor Explodes."

This is all of a piece with the *Bulletin* headline "Black Caucuses Are Reactionary," the constant sneering at women's liberation which perfectly reflects the Healyites' consistent hostility to all questions of fighting special oppression.

But at the same time that the Healyites are sucking up to the labor aristocracy, they're also working the other side of the street (or you could say that they're crippled on two legs). To obtain a "base," they spout a lot of militant rhetoric intended to appeal to restless, alienated unemployed young people. This provides a pool of semi-lumpenized kids to serve as cannon fodder under the direction of a totally cynical and corrupt cadre. The emphasis on youth also has another advantage: it's important to Healy that nobody know what he said yesterday, and kids are good for that.

But this system, transplanted into the U.S. by the Workers League, has a problem which is reflected in the exaggeratedly schizophrenic profile apparent in every issue of the *Bulletin*. In England, the lumpen youth and the working class are mainly of the same ethnicity. The 16-year-old white kid that joins Healy's Young Socialists out of desperation at the conditions of life under decrepit British capitalism normally partakes of the same general outlook as his older brother—he is aware that there is a working class and a capitalist class and sees the Labour Party as immutably the vehicle for protecting working-class interests, however impatient he may be with the old men who run it. He can enjoy the endless youth marches and the revolutionary rhetoric in the spirit in which they are intended: as pressure tactics in the framework of the tired old reformist perspective toward the Labour Party, "make the Lefts fight."

In America, the counterpart to these unemployed white youth are a lot harder to handle. They are mainly black and, under the American conditions of negligible class consciousness in the whole working class, they can by no means be presumed to be pro-union, and will not be kept in line by the exciting prospect of a labor party, particularly the pro-cop, anti-black "labor party" favored by the WL. So the Healyites have some problems as they run around depressed inner cities like Detroit seeking a base by posing as defenders of black folk and "racist"-baiting anyone who intrudes on their turf.

Not all their problems are political, either. The schema

worked out by Healy for the English social reality and loyally applied by the WL here has had some unexpected consequences. As you may know, every issue of the *Bulletin* since October 1977 has carried a front-page call: "Investigate the Murder of Tom Henehan." From the facts as the WL presents them, we have to assume that Henehan, a Healyite cadre who was on duty at a WL dance when he was shot, was probably just applying the normal Healyite techniques of cajoling and strong-arming kids looking for a good time, in order to get them onto the buses for a conference somewhere, or into a contingent for a youth march, or into a dance hall for a Healyite festivity, and then to keep them there. Only this time, unfortunately for Tom Henehan, some of the kids the WL was manhandling evidently had big brothers. Of course this rather simple explanation is far from sufficient for the WL, which insists that the two men who were convicted of shooting Henehan were paid political assassins, and insinuates they were working for the Socialist Workers Party, laying heavy stress on "the role of confessed FBI informant Edward Heisler within the leadership of the SWP during the months that the assassination of Tom Henehan was prepared..." Healy uses his paranoia as a kind of justification for fleeing Trotsky's revolutionary Marxism, coupling it with an ever so abstract and arid manipulation of a mystified "dialectics" where only Gerry gets to know which "opposites to hold fast to."

Anti-Trotskyist Slander Machine

The Henehan affair is part of a multi-year slander campaign which the Healyites call "Security and the Fourth International," aimed at the SWP, now a reformist shell but formerly the Trotskyist party in this country. Healy's chief target is veteran SWP leader Joseph Hansen, who died in 1979. Hansen presided as "theoretician" over the SWP's reformist degeneration in the 1960s. Running the SWP at the time was Farrell Dobbs, with present SWP head Jack Barnes (not, as *WV* readers know, one of our favorite people) waiting in the wings. Healy, in successive waves of escalating wild slanders, posited that Hansen was a long-standing agent of the FBI and of the Russian secret police as well. Healy claims that Hansen had, as part of Leon Trotsky's entourage in Mexico, set up Trotsky's assassination by the Stalinist GPU. Thereby Healy echoes the discredited Stalinist lie that Trotsky was killed by his "own people." And from the claim that Hansen was an operative of the Stalinist and capitalist secret police, it's a short half-step from Hansen to Cannon to Trotsky.

A couple of years ago the American Healyites brought suit in federal court against the SWP for having expelled one Alan Gelfand. Thus they invoked the U.S. government as arbiter, supposedly to return the SWP to the revolutionary road!

Healy Loves the Law

Taking workers organizations to the capitalist courts is a hallmark of Healyism. For at the same time that the Healyites are violent, they're very legalistic, and indeed Healy just loves the law. In 1966 the Healyites strong-armed Ernie Tate, an SWP supporter, when he was trying to sell literature on the sidewalk outside a Healyite political event in London, then brought charges against him in

court. In 1981 the British Healyites' Vanessa Redgrave brought a libel suit against *Socialist Organiser* editor Sean Matgamna after Matgamna published an exposé of these political bandits. (Interestingly, Redgrave's suit conspicuously chose not to contest Matgamna's allegation that Healy & Go. have received material aid from Qaddafi's Libya.)

Healy's love for the law brings us straight back to the Goetz case. For the Healyites' basic thrust on the Goetz case is, simply, that only duly constituted authority should carry guns. All the cheerleading for "revolution" abroad notwithstanding, nobody beats Healy for legalism close to home.

Probably the Healyites are counting on the indisputable shock value of the Goetz affair itself for the distant reader. Even many Americans, if they aren't vividly aware of the New York subways, will just be put off by the idea of people shooting people. Middle-class Britishers who think their own cops never carry guns are probably utterly bewildered by the American social reality. It's hard for them to know what it means to be approached by four young black strangers in the IRT (the South African legal code, perhaps derived from the British, has a precise phrase for what New Yorkers know as a shakedown: "demanding with menaces"). English readers might consider how it feels to walk into a railroad car full of crazed soccer fans. Or try walking down Shankhill Road at high noon wearing a crucifix. Brother, your ass is grass.

So a lot of working people—and when we say "working people" we, unlike the Healyites, don't just mean white working people—initially responded to the Goetz case by observing that people might be better behaved if they were reminded that the skinny white guy with glasses, the black grandfather sitting next to him or the Hispanic mother across the aisle might just be "packing" a gun. This response was particularly marked among black people.

Integral to this widespread attitude is fear, and not just the often justified fear of random, casual crimes of violence by lumpen youth with little to lose, but also the eminently sensible fear of the cops. Nobody thinks the cops—being too busy sitting around getting drunk when they are not out dealing drugs or choking black kids to death—will protect them. Particularly in the social matrix of New York City, a cop is: 1) a psycho, 2) a racist and 3) not too fond of the big boys who really are on top. (Of course, the Healyites don't share this view, instead embracing the cops as a purported part of the union movement.) The real problem in New York today isn't one "subway vigilante" but the systematic police torture and murder of dark-skinned people, a daily occurrence in today's "fear city." Seeking to hide this fact, the WL puts itself right up there with [New York mayor] Ed Koch in alibiing cop terror against the working people.

The masses are being attacked in every imaginable way by a vicious Reaganite bourgeoisie on top while being eaten from below by despairing lumpen youth. And these moods do tend to a polarization—ultimately, fascism or workers revolution. And the reformists are in the business of pretending that things will get all better if only we bring back the capitalist Democratic Party (in Britain, the sellout Labour Party).

As Marxists, we oppose the monopoly of the means of violence in the hands of the capitalist state: gun control means nobody will have guns except the racist cops, the

criminal elements which capitalism spawns, and let's not forget the *Times* editors with their pistol-packin' chauffeurs. When the *Times'* Sulzberger lectures that everything would be okay if people would just be reasonable and the cops would act responsibly, he knows he's got his armed men downstairs and his pistol in his desk drawer.

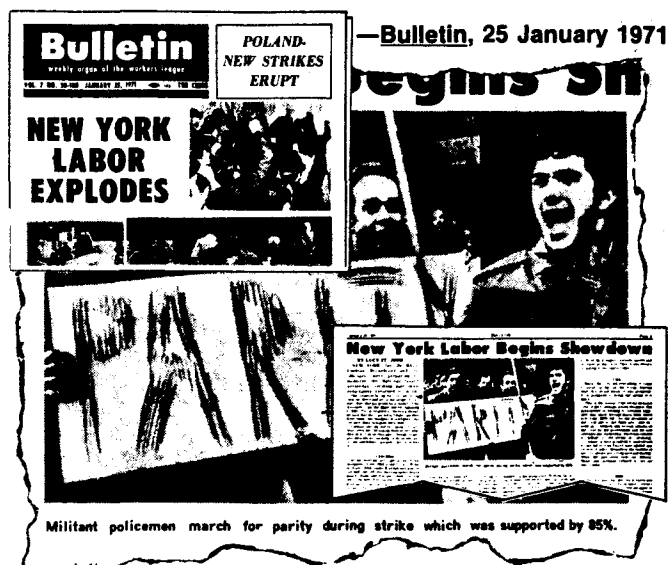
So the bourgeois press just can't stand the widespread alienation from the capitalist "justice" system and cops. Their line boils down to: in the interests of social orderliness, the citizens must rely on the cops no matter what. Nobody is more explicit on this than William Safire, the former Nixon press agent who is now the house ultra-conservative for the *New York Times*. In his *Times* column on April 8, Safire wrote:

"If you are menaced by someone who demands your property, give it to him, remembering his face or voice; only if you are reasonably sure he means to kill you, and you happen to be legally armed, should you give it to him in the more vigorous sense."

Safire, who sees himself as a conscious agent for the capitalist state, thinks that unless you happen to be legally armed, you should die for the higher good of the state. This, curiously enough, doesn't satisfy most people. But at least Safire is consistent; he knows he's a particularly right-wing mouthpiece for America's rulers. His line is: trust the state. And so is Healy's. For Healy too, only duly constituted authority should have guns. The corollary is that the British cops had the right to do anything they wanted to the striking miners. We say no, everybody has the right to carry and to be accountable for their deeds. Which in the case of Goetz is a moot point, for the "subway shooting" was an ambiguous situation: a disturbed, possibly racist, previously victimized, armed man and four menacing criminal youth, one of whom may now be paralyzed for life.

In the British Isles everybody (with the conspicuous exceptions of the IRA and the British government) believes that firearms are a bad business. Well, we have to observe that great questions are generally resolved with guns, and sometimes daily individual existence also involves this question. In this racist society, blacks have been terrorized since the beginning of slave times; the gravest offense for them has been the mere possession of a firearm, just as for the Irish Catholics in Ulster. Those who intend to engage in social struggle cannot afford to be principled pacifists. We continue to feel keenly and bitterly the Greensboro massacre, where a well-organized cabal of Klansmen and Nazis with the assistance of the cops and FBI opened fire on a peaceful anti-KKK demonstration and selectively assassinated five supporters of the leftist Communist Workers Party. We wish that we could have been part of an effective security squad protecting those anti-racist demonstrators. And through our strategy of mobilizing the organized power of labor and blacks against fascist terror we assisted the black unionists and youth of Washington, D.C. in stopping the emboldened Klan in the streets.

On the level of individual existence too, one had better have a calculus of violence. Consider three cases: the crucial Willie Turks case, the tangential Tom Henahan case, and the dubious Bernhard Goetz case. Willie Turks was a black transit worker whose job took him to the Gravesend section of Brooklyn, an enclave of ethnic white losers. For the crime of wanting to buy a bagel on Avenue X late at night after getting off work, Willie Turks was



Cop-loving Workers League salutes bonapartist "militancy" of capitalism's hired gunmen.

beaten to death by a gang of racist punk kids. We think Turks should have been carrying; we think he should have had a fighting chance at self-defense. Following his murder we agitated that the Transport Workers Union should mobilize a massive demonstration of unionists on flatbed trucks through Gravesend to serve notice that Willie Turks had thousands of union brothers who intend to protect the rights and lives of black working people. That's the kind of law and order we support. But not Healy: he is for the absolute monopoly of armed force by the previously authorized gunmen of the capitalist state, which is of course presumed to be colorblind and class-neutral.

To recognize the ambiguity of the Goetz case means to defend the idea that Willie Turks ought to be alive. And that the Klansmen and not the anti-Klan radicals at Greensboro should be in the ground, like their comrades at Bitburg. Self-defense for Willie Turks is the individual unit of what, collectively posed, is simply the right to engage in social struggle: the right to demonstrate against the Klan, and ultimately the right of a workers party to organize for power. Marxists understand that bourgeois democracy operates in this country, up to the point that the ruling class begins to feel itself threatened; at that point, the couple of communist representatives that we will have managed to get elected to the bourgeois parliament get hauled off and shot. Whether or not you can abjure the use of force on principle depends on your aims. It's not that Healy has flunked Lenin on the nature of the state, force and violence. No, it's just that what he seeks is not socialist revolution but cooption, whether it's in the government barracks in Tripoli, Libya or Baghdad, Iraq, or at home in England's Buckingham Palace.

A Short Course in American History

The *Bulletin* article was written for foreign consumption; Healy intends it to be read by suckers who are moreover ignorant of American reality. Today in America, nearly half our homes have firearms—long arms, handguns, often both. This is not generally known in countries with strong states that emerged to institutionalize the oppression of

their own people, unlike America, created by European settlers pushing the frontier westward over the continent's indigenous inhabitants.

It's good for the cops that when they go to the shooting range they get to pass rows and rows of expert marksmen who are women, kids, blacks, Asians, you name it. Formal legal equality for blacks, obtained only after World War II for the most part, includes the right to bear arms, and black Americans cherish that right no less than whites. Indeed, turning this point around, a powerful impetus to the civil rights movement was returning black soldiers who, having risked their lives in World War II and especially Korea, were not about to submit passively to the degradations of Jim Crow racism when they got back home.

The right to bear arms in America was established in a reactionary context: a frontier society murderously subduing the continent's aboriginal peoples and controlling a laboring population consisting largely of black slaves, indentured servants, etc. But it became part of the formal legal doctrine of this country and is protected in the U.S. Constitution. Now there is a faction fight going on over this question: the right to possess a gun is mostly protected, but the right to carry is under fire. The purposes behind the gun control campaign, and its intended bloody consequences, are nowhere clearer than in the case of the martyred Malcolm X. As the most prominent militant champion of black rights and an outspoken advocate of self-defense against racist attack, Malcolm X was, in his own words, "a marked man." Naturally the cops had less than no interest when he got death threats and his house was bombed. But when it became known that Malcolm was carrying a .30 caliber carbine in his car, the New York City Council zipped through legislation against carrying rifles or shotguns in public. And then when Malcolm X was shot down in the Audubon Ballroom, the man who was immediately arrested was one of Malcolm's bodyguards who had managed to wound one of the assassins. Indeed the state, William Safire and Gerry Healy are very tender on the right of self-defense. In the face of deadly danger, they insist, you should just die, because it strengthens the state.

So Americans have guns, and want to keep them. This is a sociological fact of life in America, and will be a useful fact when the mass of the American population feels immediately and overtly threatened by a tyrannical government. As Marxists, we have campaigned consistently for the right of self-defense and against gun control.

In our article on the 1964 cop riot against the masses of Harlem, we called for neighborhood block councils to organize the ghetto struggles, wage rent strikes against slumlords, and oppose cop brutality: "Moreover, such councils form a natural basis for the organization of defense patrols to protect the community against future police riots—and such patrols are the embryo of that workers militia which will defend the coming American Revolution" ("Harlem Riot and After," *Spartacist* No. 3, January-February 1965). A major document adopted at the SL's Founding Conference in 1966 calls for revolutionary ghetto organizations: "One of the most important functions of such representative popular organs would be the organization and direction of effective self-defense against police and racist violence. The potential for rapid growth by the American fascist movement adds to the

seriousness of this task..." ("Black and Red: Class Struggle Road to Negro Freedom," *Spartacist* No. 10, May-June 1967).

Our general outlook is to agitate, under particular, appropriate, urgent circumstances, for an armed popular militia independent of the established state power. There is a long historical tradition behind this. Concretely, where the armed forces of the state are seen as immediately illegitimate and abusive, the effective call for and creation of such a militia can be a springboard for dual power. In Russia such a formation was called the Red Guards. But of course England, already under Charles II, wiped away such ideas after the English Revolution. And the English parlour pinks, masquerading only sometimes in red wolf's clothing, have gone but a very little way to undo that counterrevolution. And Gerry Healy is of that legally fetishistic English pinko ilk. But he is also specially dangerous, because he imposes this kind of nasty English authoritarianism on his followers in very different circumstances around the world where the question of social power is active and immediate. He is a racketeer in the "revolution" business.

Classless Demagogues

The Healyites are intellectual thugs for hire, and not all that intellectual. They always have a simple answer for everything, but it's isolated from reality, and not accidentally. It's a bad thing to merchandize a counterfeit world, to know and to ignore, the essence of cynicism.

And what about "fascism"? Well, we could say that for some of the regimes the Healyites support, fascism's big problem is that it's an enemy of Allah. That would be the snotty response, but we want to be serious. The Healyites have done their best to be an organization for hire. They've found their niche as kept creatures of various gangs of oil-rich nationalist murderers, whose slaughter of communist workers they extol. Thus they are classless demagogues, all-purpose mock extremists whose radicalism has nothing in common with socialist struggle. Of course Hitler was a radical too. As opposed to the old-time German conservatives, who merely wanted the Kaiser back, Hitler wanted a "New Order." And he was a nationalist; he wanted to do away with all communists, Jews, the Pope—indeed anything trans-national.

Make no mistake about it, there is a real fascist potential here. What is Healyism? It's mindless extremism even in pursuit of the most trivial aims and an unbounded admiration for power in the hands of Third World strongmen. It's baiting as "fascists" the revolutionary Marxists because we did our earnest, modest best to aid the miners' struggle while Healy was going all out to stab the union in the back. It's a social base that presently consists of lumpenized youth along with a thin layer of TV and cinema personalities leading a gilded existence and whose view of social reality comes through a camera lens. It's an organizational "method" of lies, gangsterism and anti-knowledge. Indeed the Healyites have the potential to become just about anything. Winston Churchill is said to have remarked once regarding a prominent fellow MP, "Oh, that's the chap who gives degeneracy a bad name." Add to degeneracy wild vituperation devoid of any class basis or connection to social reality and you have... Gerry Healy and his Workers League. ■

British Communism...

(continued from page 64)

British SLP, the Russian Bolshevik Party was forged as an instrument *to struggle for power* amid the universal revolutionary ferment of the last years of the tsarist empire. It was this which set the Bolsheviks apart from even the best pre-World War I socialist parties in the West. In the discussion one conference participant pointed out:

"...[T]he Communist International does not fall from the skies, it comes from the experience of the Russian workers movement and the Russian Revolution. ... [T]he combination of a great empire; a central ethnicity that was not to be threatened, but massive national oppression; the growth of a great, raw, militant proletariat; pressures given the autocracy such that every member of the intelligentsia went through a selection process—all this churned up through wars, agrarian issues—[thus it was] that of all the parties of the Second International the Russian Social Democrats had the vanguard of *experience*."

The Bolsheviks' revolutionary experience was generalized and codified in the famous 21 Conditions for membership in the Communist International.

The British SLP was an example of a small Marxist propaganda group, originating and developing under relatively stable conditions of bourgeois democracy, which was then confronted with convulsive events, namely, the first imperialist world war and the Russian Revolution. The SLP had become so habituated to its prewar situation that it failed to make the turn toward the tasks of a new, far stormier period of social struggle.

Presentation

Comrades all have the study guide, the questions that were prepared to be thought about in conjunction with reading the book of Challinor.

For some of these questions the answers are quite clear; others are complex and require a lot of evaluation, thought



Verlag Kurt Desch

SDF leader H.M. Hyndman's rabid chauvinism provoked bitter opposition of British far left.

SLP



American Marxist Daniel De Leon's conception of socialist industrial unionism deeply influenced British SLP.

and weighing; and at least one of them ought to frighten you a bit—which is, how *does* a party prepare for unanticipated and perhaps unprecedented events in a situation where the tasks posed by those events may for a period be far beyond your capacity? And the simple answer that comes to mind is: go through the experiences of the Bolshevik Party. Which may seem like a tautology, but isn't. And that's the point of this talk—that comrades Lenin and Trotsky and the first four congresses of the Communist International provide us with at least the political method and structure whereby we can forge a party which has both the program and possibly the capacity to make the rapid changes and adjustments necessary to lead to the revolutionary victory of the workers over the bourgeoisie.

I'd like to begin discussing the book by reading a quote from James Cannon, pioneer American Communist and Trotskyist, which I think sets this book in its context. And the quote is from Cannon's review of *The Roots of American Communism* by Theodore Draper. You'll find it in the book *The First Ten Years of American Communism*. Cannon says:

"The traditional sectarianism of the Americans was expressed most glaringly in their attempt to construct revolutionary unions outside the existing labor movement; their refusal to fight for 'immediate demands' in the course of the class struggle for the socialist goal; and their strongly entrenched anti-parliamentarism, which was only slightly modified in the first program of the Communist Party. All that hodgepodge of ultra-radicalism was practically wiped out of the American movement in 1920-21 by Lenin. He did it, not by an administrative order backed up by police powers, but by the simple device of publishing a pamphlet called "*Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*." (This famous pamphlet was directed in part against the Dutch theoreticians who had exerted such a strong influence on the Americans and a section of the Germans.)"

Cannon goes on:

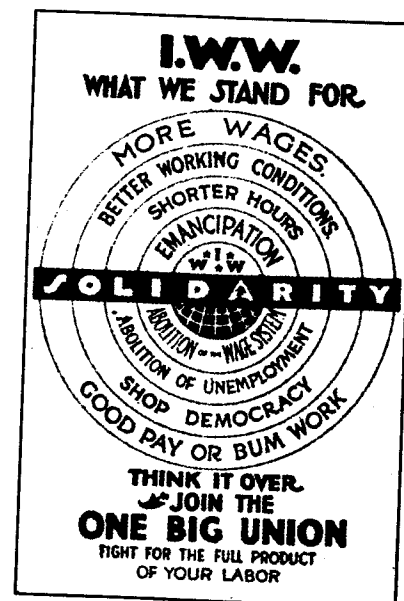
"The 'Theses and Resolutions' of the Second Congress of the Comintern in 1920 also cleared up the thinking of the American communists over a wide range of theoretical and political problems, and virtually eliminated the previously dominating influence exerted by the sectarian conceptions of De Leon and the Dutch leaders."

There were other factors also ably cited by Kendall. There were a very large number of Irish immigrants in the Clydeside area, many of whom were active supporters of Sinn Fein. And as comrades know, the great Irish revolutionary James Connolly was indeed one of the founders of the SLP. Large-scale capitalism came late to Scotland and a large proportion of the proletariat of Glasgow had been uprooted from the countryside and pushed into the city, which like Petrograd had enormous engineering plants. So for a number of reasons the SLP sank its roots very deeply into Scotland and had very close links with the Irish struggle, and also, because of the large Scottish and Irish emigrations to North America, with the class struggle in the United States.

Impact of 1905 Russian Revolution

One of the enormous international impacts of the 1905 Russian Revolution was to turn the attention of socialists to the power of mass political strikes. In Germany Rosa Luxemburg and her followers seized upon the weapon of the mass strike as an answer to the social-reformist passivity of SPD [Social Democratic Party] tops, while failing to grasp the critical differences between the activities of the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in the 1905 upheavals in Russia [see "The Russian Revolution of 1905," *Workers Vanguard* Nos. 288 and 289, 11 and 25 September 1981]. The experience of 1905 was very directly connected with the founding of the IWW in the United States in that same year. This inspired subsequently similar efforts on the

American IWW, formed in the wake of 1905 Russian Revolution, inspired left-socialist and syndicalist militants in Britain.



part of the British SLP.

However, the British SLP's Advocates of Industrial Unionism (AIU) never managed to rise to the level of the IWW despite a very strong swing toward syndicalism on the part of the British proletariat in the period from 1905 through 1913. In those years of stormy class conflict, a response to a massive rationalization and further concentration of British capital at the expense of the workers, trade unions in Britain grew enormously. This upsurge hit its high point in 1912 with the great miners strike.

During this period the AIU managed to only hitch a ride on this elemental wave of class struggle. But this was sufficient to blood its militants in the class struggle, and root them deeply in the militant proletariat in the sprawling Clyde engineering plants. This was to place them in a strategic position during the tumultuous strikes that ripped the region both in 1915-16 and early 1919.

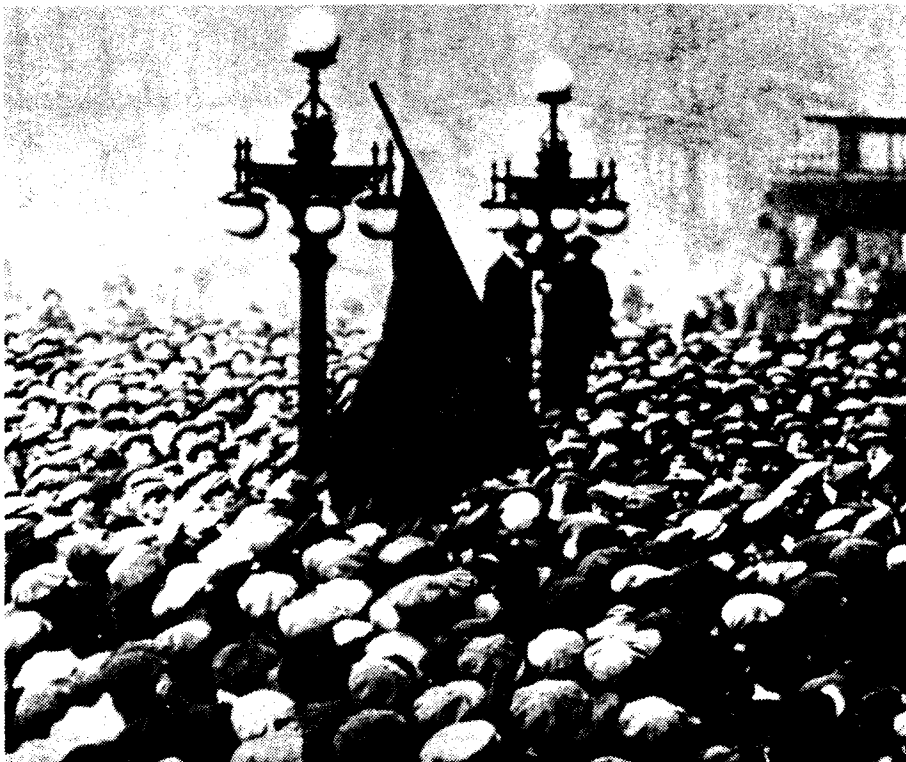
In comparison with its British competitors, e.g., Hyndman's BSP and the ILP, the British SLP was impressive. Indeed it compares favorably to the American SLP of De Leon. The British SLP rejected De Leon's sectarian disavowal of "immediate demands," and played an important role in the class struggle. De Leon found himself isolated from the labor movement with his split with the IWW in 1908. Already in 1900 Hillquit, Berger and Debs had led a split out of the SLP to found the Socialist Party (SP). Cannon asserts in *The First Ten Years* that the SLP even before 1905 was well on its way to becoming a sect, noting the SP not only pulled in all the reformists, but also most of the left, vital revolutionary elements of the American proletariat.

Forging a Bolshevik Party

Challinor definitely misleads his readers by implying that the De Leonist SLP was two-thirds or three-quarters of the way to being a Bolshevik-type party. He says, "Clearly, the SLP was among the first to see the need for an organisational and ideological split from social democracy." In discussing this matter it's particularly useful to look at the SLP through the lens of Lenin's *What Is To Be Done?* About a year before the SLP was born, Lenin wrote

International Spartacist Tendency Directory

Correspondence for:	Address to:
Ligue Trotskyste de France	Le Bolchévik, BP 135-10 75463 Paris Cédex 10 France
Spartacist League/Britain	Spartacist Publications PO Box 185 London, WC1H 8JE England
Trotzkistische Liga Deutschlands	Postfach 16 07 14 6000 Frankfurt/Main 1 West Germany
Lega Trotskista d'Italia	Walter Fidacaro C.P. 1591 20101 Milano, Italy
Spartacist League/U.S.	Spartacist League Box 1377 GPO New York, NY 10116 USA
Trotskyist League of Canada	Trotskyist League Box 7198, Station A Toronto, Ontario M5W 1X8, Canada
Spartacist League of Australia/New Zealand	Spartacist League GPO Box 3473 Sydney, NSW, 2001 Australia



no credit

Scottish revolutionary internationalist John Maclean (right) led militant Clydeside workers. Massive 1919 Clyde general strike (above) was met with armed troops.



Strickland Press

this work. If "*Left-Wing Communism*" constitutes a handbook on communist tactics, *What Is To Be Done?* contains the blueprints for the construction of a party and a cadre. So that the whole struggle against economism, the struggle for a party of professional revolutionaries, the struggle which Lenin talks about at great length in "*Left-Wing Communism*"—for a political party to be a tribune of the people, to master politics in many arenas—all this is laid out of course in *What Is To Be Done?* You don't see anything at all like this in the SLP.

On everything from press questions to forms of organization the differences are clear. In particular they are clear on the necessity of constructing a cadre of full-time professional revolutionaries. The British SLP had difficulty keeping a full-timer and a lot of the time didn't have one. I found it a source of great irritation that Challinor holds this up as a virtue. Referring to the valiant work of SLP leader MacManus during the war, he says:

"It is hard to imagine how great the strain upon certain individuals must have been. For example, Arthur MacManus was editor of *The Socialist*, and in 1915, when the Clyde Workers' Committee was formed, he became its chairman. As spokesman for this rank-and-file organisation, the most powerful of its kind in the country, he played a leading role in the creation of a National Workers' & Shop Stewards' Movement. All this was done in his spare time; he also had a full-time job as an engineer at G. & J. Weir's Cathcart works, where he was the most well-known militant. Besides these commitments, which would have been more than enough for half a dozen men with only a normal amount of energy, MacManus found time to help in the struggle in Ireland. In 1915, James Connolly visited Glasgow and told his old SLP comrades that the authorities had suppressed their journal, the *Irish Worker*. So the SLP undertook to print it clandestinely on the

Party's press at Renfrew Street. In his autobiography Tom Bell stated, 'Comrade Arthur MacManus was especially keen on doing this; working night and day to get it out, and arranged for the shipment of the paper, which he took over personally to Dublin'."

Heroic MacManus indeed was. But the inability of the SLP to provide for full-time party workers was a source of abiding weakness. It prevented the cohering of a cadre around a program, and prevented that leadership from jelling. One gets the impression of a lot of very talented, capable, tough-minded, experienced propagandists and trade-union agitators who tended to be more an association than a party. I think this explains one of the big questions that this book raises. Why was it that those elements of the SLP who were for a fusion with the Third International, who wanted to bring the SLP in as part of the Communist Party of Britain and who themselves were among the most pre-eminent of the SLP leaders, actually had the organization taken away from them and were incapable of effecting any significant split for Leninism? The answer is to be found in their inability to construct a party with the resources, but above all the perspective, of maintaining a cadre of professional revolutionists.

If the SLP started out as a good split from the SDF, on the eve of World War I it had a very murky split, reflecting above all the political incapacity of De Leonism to serve as a guide for revolutionary action. In 1912 the SLP lost over half its members in a dispute over whether or not it was permissible for the party to support reforms—e.g., should an SLP councillor in Glasgow cast a vote for more money to the unemployed. Defeated at the Manchester conference, the anti-reform "impossibilists" walked out of the

party, taking a majority of the membership with them.

The SLP had a good line on the first imperialist war, but its activities in the unions during the war revealed weakness in the party. In short the SLP did not carry its line against the war in a way that counted into the massive Clyde strikes of 1915-1916—strikes in which the SLP played a leading role. Challinor excuses this on the grounds that for the SLP to insist that the Clyde Workers' Committee—which was running this massive strike against the Munitions Act—adopt the SLP's line on the war would have split the Workers' Committee. Again you see here a failure to grasp what Lenin later was to try to teach the British workers movement—which was that they were obligated to have their people who were working in that arena attempt to transform this strike, to agitate to infuse the strike with a political content aimed against the imperialist war and the British government. The strike was a strike against key munitions industries in wartime, and against the Munitions Act. Objectively it was a political strike against war par excellence.

Instead the behavior of SLP strike leader John Muir dragged the SLP's antiwar banner in the mud. Dragged before the bosses' court for his role in the strike, Muir cravenly swore that the strike was a purely economic struggle over shop issues and that he was for the war and war production! And the SLP tolerated this renegade remaining in its ranks! The honor of the Clyde Workers' Committee was upheld by John Maclean, the representative of the left internationalist wing of the BSP, who turned his trial into a political indictment of the bourgeoisie and its imperialist war.

British capitalism emerged from World War I profoundly shaken. Under the impact of the October Revolution the class antagonisms generated by war exploded in a

massive postwar strike wave accompanied by episodic strikes and mutinies in the army and navy. In January 1919 the Clyde workers went out in a massive general strike for a 40-hour week. The government responded with armed troops. Unfortunately the strike did not spread and the strikers did not test the troops. At the time the government had only two battalions of reserves.

Challinor quotes from Aneurin Bevan's *In Place of Fear*, which described the famous 1919 meeting between the prime minister, Lloyd George, and the leaders of the Triple Alliance. All I can say is, Lloyd George knew his Labour leaders [laughter]—which he ought to, since the Liberal Party and the ILP and the trade unions were very closely linked. It reminds me of the German events of the autumn of 1918, when the troops were mutinying and forming soviets. The German general staff pulled the same act on the German soldiers' soviets on the Western Front, saying, "Well, fine. You soldiers' soviets have to withdraw two million people from France and Belgium. Here, you do it. Are you ready?" Nope, they weren't. But that was a gamble [laughs]. In Britain a couple of the right guys in there and one might have had something approaching a 1905 situation, or at least a very big, much more massive wave of political strikes—which would have put the British workers in a lot better position both objectively and from a standpoint of cohering a communist party. The whole incident both highlights the counterrevolutionary role of the trade-union tops, and exposes the political incapacity of the SLP which had no idea how to overcome these roadblocks to revolution.

Challinor plays up the very real strengths of the SLP, while downplaying its De Leonist weaknesses—indeed, treating them as virtues. Meanwhile he presents such a compelling picture of the wretchedness of the BSP that one

Are You Ready to Take the Power?

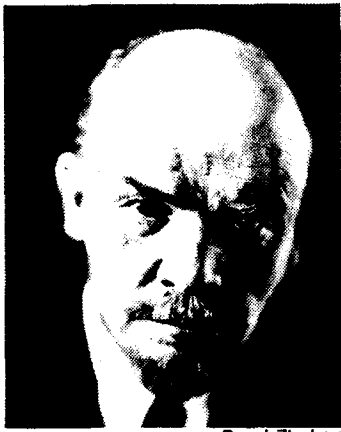
We reprint below an excerpt from In Place of Fear, the autobiography of the late Aneurin Bevan.

I remember vividly Robert Smillie describing to me an interview the leaders of the Triple Alliance had with David Lloyd George in 1919. The strategy of the leaders was clear. The miners under Robert Smillie, the transport workers under Robert Williams, and the National Union of Railwaymen under James Henry Thomas, formed the most formidable combination of industrial workers in the history of Great Britain. They had agreed on the demands that were to be made on the employers, knowing well that the government would be bound to be involved at an early stage. And so it happened. A great deal of industry was still under government wartime control and so the state power was immediately implicated.

Lloyd George sent for the Labour leaders, and they went, so Robert told me, "truculently determined they would not be talked over by the seductive and eloquent Welshman." At this Bob's eyes twinkled in his grave, strong face. "He was quite frank with us from the

outset," Bob went on. "He said to us: 'Gentlemen, you have fashioned, in the Triple Alliance of the unions represented by you, a most powerful instrument. I feel bound to tell you that in our opinion we are at your mercy. The Army is disaffected and cannot be relied upon. Trouble has occurred already in a number of camps. We have just emerged from a great war and the people are eager for the reward of their sacrifices, and we are in no position to satisfy them. In these circumstances, if you carry out your threat and strike, then you will defeat us.'

"'But if you do so,' went on Mr. Lloyd George, 'have you weighed the consequences? The strike will be in defiance of the Government of the country and by its very success will precipitate a constitutional crisis of the first importance. For, if a force arises in the State which is stronger than the State itself, then it must be ready to take on the functions of the State, or withdraw and accept the authority of the State. Gentlemen,' asked the Prime Minister quietly, 'have you considered, and if you have, are you ready?' From that moment on," said Robert Smillie, "we were beaten and we knew we were."



Pavel Zhukov



no credit



Viktor Bulla

Lenin and Trotsky led Bolshevik Party which directed massive revolutionary upheaval in Russia toward proletarian seizure of power, October 1917. Founding of Communist International, 1919, was based on experience of the Bolshevik Revolution. Above: Petrograd Red Guard, May Day 1917.

wonders how any chunk of this party made it into the Comintern. In fact the BSP was a heterogeneous organization that underwent a series of left-right polarizations under the impact of the war and the Russian Revolutions of 1917.

Affiliation to the Communist International

Following the 1916 split between Hyndman and E.C. Fairchild, who had a Kautskyite position on the war, the BSP moved leftward. At its April 1919 Conference the BSP declared itself for soviet rule and polled its branches on affiliation to the Communist International (CI). Fairchild supported the Russian Revolution, but didn't consider a soviet-type revolution in Britain a serious possibility. The left majority, including John Maclean who maintained a consistent internationalist position as a BSPer throughout the war, believed the British revolution was on the order of the day and that they should link up with the Third International. The result of the ballot on affiliation to the Communist International, announced in October, was 98 to 4 in favor of affiliation.

Undoubtedly among those for the CI were a goodly number of "November Bolsheviks." Theodore Rothstein, a rotten apple, was perhaps the leading example of this layer. His trajectory was parallel to that of many left social-democratic sharpies in Europe, who thought that the Third International was the wave of the future. You had the Frossards and Cachins and scads of social democrats in the French party who went over to the Third International but didn't belong there. The main aim of the 21 Conditions

was to filter such people out, and also to filter out the practices they brought with them.

The Russians were, I think, much more familiar with the BSP than SLP. All of the Bolshevik congresses except the one held in Stockholm—from 1903 to the Revolution—were held in London. Lenin himself lived for a time in London, as did some 30,000 other Russian émigrés. And of those that were leftists—adherents to socialism—many belonged to the BSP. They constituted a large portion of the left wing of that organization. During the war a very large number of them were supporters of Trotsky's *Nashe Slovo* which was printed in Paris. Challinor makes the point that half of the circulation of that journal took place in Britain, and the overwhelming proportion of that in London. There was also a colony of Russian exiles—and that too swelled enormously after the 1905 Revolution—in Scotland, again associated with the SDF/BSP.

Litvinov and Chicherin and a number of others were associated with and had links with the BSP in London. Further, SDF members both in England and Scotland ran guns to the Russian revolutionaries from 1905 through 1907—quite a lot of them, hundreds of Brownings, millions of rounds of ammo. They would buy them in Europe, smuggle them to Newcastle, get them to Scotland, and then on to tsarist ships to smuggle them into Russia.

So not all BSPers were clones of the top-hatted and corpulent H.M. Hyndman! As with the SLP, a significant part of the BSP far left was located in Scotland. Most noteworthy was John Maclean, who as earlier indicated maintained a consistent internationalist position on the war, and played an important role in the Clyde strikes. The

formidable Maclean was arguably the most capable proletarian revolutionist in Britain and a close associate of BSPer Peter Petroff, a hero of the 1905 Russian Revolution.

The Communist unity negotiations in Britain are very confusing, above all a reflection of the political confusion of the participants in the negotiations. There were three main groups and a couple of subsidiary ones. You had the SLP, Sylvia Pankhurst's Workers' Socialist Federation, the South Wales Socialist Society and the ILP left, and they all hailed the Russian Revolution—both revolutions. And some of them genuinely hailed the second one too. [Laughter.] It does strike you in reading the SLP's writings on the Russian Revolution that on the one hand, yes, they're happy it happened and... its real, main and key significance was it vindicates the SLP and its line in Britain! [Laughs.] In short, to repeat, the SLP failed to appreciate the world-historic significance of the October Revolution both in the broad sense and also in the particular communist sense that Lenin outlined in "*Left-Wing Communism*."

I think Challinor makes a very good case that Lenin did not have clear ideas on everything that was going on in Britain. How could he? He was at some distance from the events, and certainly had other things occupying his mind in the immediate period after the October Revolution. Further, revolutionary Russia was blockaded by the imperialists. His information was partial.

However, Lenin did recognize something very important: that there needed to be a unified Communist party in Britain. You had all these groups claiming adherence to the October Revolution, to soviet government and for the Third International. There was an objective requirement for a Bolshevik-type party in Britain. But if there was to be such a party it had to have a policy toward the Labour Party. What gets omitted in Challinor is *any* policy toward the Labour Party except throwing rocks at it.

Was Britain going through a revolutionary period in 1918-1920? No. But if the Triple Alliance had decided to tell Lloyd George to shove it, we might have had something

break. But that didn't happen, and a lot of people voted Labour. There were 4 million workers affiliated to the Labour Party. The Labour Party in 1918 became socialist. You better believe that had something to do with the October Revolution and the Labour Party covering its ass. For communists the question was how to deal with this obstacle.

The most striking failure was, as I mentioned earlier, the failure of the pro-fusion wing of the SLP, the Communist Unity Group of MacManus and Bell, to carry the majority of the SLP into the CPGB. They had no conception of factional struggle for their particular position. Thus the best of the SLP, who could not understand how to conduct a faction fight in their own party, certainly could not understand what Lenin was talking about at all regarding the Labour Party. Challinor drags out J.T. Murphy's "cogent arguments" against Labour Party affiliation. These are not very cogent at all and have been answered dozens of times. Reading Murphy what comes through is: we'll either be swamped in the Labour Party or we have to destroy it. There's no conception of using class-struggle means to polarize and gut it—i.e., no conception therefore of political struggle for a political line and program. Behind that is the conception of the party as the worst sort of a passive propaganda society.

This was a fatal flaw of De Leonism, its social-democratic underbelly. The party through patient propaganda and education was to win the proletariat to its side. In the U.S. De Leon projected the SLP would eventually win at the polls and dissolve the capitalist government. Should the bourgeoisie resist, they would be "locked out" by the socialist industrial unions, which would then proceed to administer socialism. The concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat, of a transition period and of the role of the party in that transition are absent.

So the SLP had a pretty good party in terms of—not the party that made the October Revolution—but of what was floating around in England or even the U.S. in that period. They didn't make it. What stands out is their parochialism. In the U.S. out of the left wing of the SP came the Haywood

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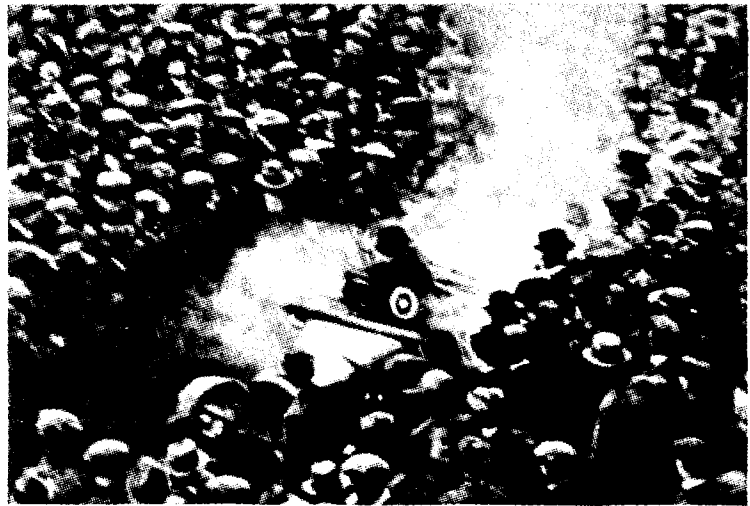
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Class war in Britain, 1919: London—Striking workers deal with “gentlemen” scabs during great rail strike (left). Belfast—Demonstrators surround car of Lord Mayor during general strike (right).

wing of the IWW, Cannon, Swabek, John Reed, the foreign-language federations and a few of the native American workers. And out of that was forged a viable Communist Party—a little *too* viable in its early period. Like Cannon said, they fought like hell all the time. It was the Comintern that came in and provided the lessons and the correctives to teach the young American CP how to become a Leninist party—how to solve a lot of the problems that had tied up the American party and British and German and pre-war social democracy.

The party issuing out of the 1920 Communist Unity Convention was stillborn. And the indication of that was—no fights. The recent Euro/tankie fight is the CPGB's first serious faction fight. Very early on the British party acquired a set of leaders who seemed to live forever [laughs] and didn't get any better. The congenital incapacity of the CPGB was evident during the 1926 General Strike and since, and has also had negative impact on Trotskyism in

Britain. Cannon and a section of the American CP were forged into genuine Leninists who, when the degeneration of the Comintern came, were able to pick up the banner. This was not the case in Britain. Gerry Healy tries to suck glorious origins of British Trotskyism out of his thumb, but it's a fact that Trotskyism had to be imported.

The SLP in Britain disappeared very quickly after it stood aside from the Third International, in many ways like the syndicalist wing of the IWW did in the U.S. Cannon made the point that one would have thought, on the face of it, given the history of the IWW during the war which was as a semi-party, certainly revolutionary-minded and with many experienced militants, that a large number of them would have made it to the Communist Party. But, as he put it, it was the foreigners, the callow youth, only some fragments of the IWW that actually came to be the core of the American Communist Party. They didn't have the experience of many of the IWW, but in the end program

Dietz



Armed workers and soldiers of Spartacist uprising in Germany, January 1919. Liebknecht and Luxemburg's failure to build Bolshevik-type vanguard party in imperial Germany was key factor in defeat of proletarian revolution.

was decisive. But there at least you had a germ cell that was fertilized and grew. I think in Britain what you had was a miscarriage; Challinor might more aptly have titled his book "The Abortion of British Bolshevism."

For Challinor, himself a supporter of the anti-Soviet and social-democratic Socialist Workers Party (SWP) of Britain, the abortionists are Lenin and the Communist International. Clearly he feels that it was erroneous to insist that the new CPGB affiliate to the Labour Party, as this blocked the majority of the SLP, whom he wrongly considers the "native Bolsheviks," from entering that CP.

Challinor's position should be contrasted with that of Lenin at the Second Congress. Lenin insisted that the question of the Labour Party be debated before the International. He insisted that the new International not repeat the experience of the Second International and let the British comrades get into a room and decide the question among themselves. The Labour Party question was not simply a British question but an international

problem. It was the obligation of the CI to come up with a policy and pursue it. If this led to some splits, so be it, but it would be good experience for the British party to try to implement these tactics.

Challinor does not take up the real difficulty in implementing the CI's policy. To carry it off successfully you needed a hard, cohesive, ideologically tested formation. And that certainly was not what the British CP was. We have a contradiction. If the CPGB had successfully affiliated, they probably would very likely have capitulated in just the way many of the SLPers feared they would. [Interjection: Adopt a position in favor of entry, and *don't* enter!] Right, right! A zero approximation of a position of shallow entry! [Laughter.] What you needed were Comintern reps on the scene to take these various would-be Bolsheviks by the political scruff of the neck, to teach them and fight with them. Lenin was very aware that a policy of affiliation was no automatic recipe for success. He thought this would be a good school for the CPGB, a school of

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political struggle, leading very possibly to splits and a fusion on a higher order.

Challinor, like all anti-Leninist centrists, invokes Lenin against Lenin. He quotes Lenin's criticism of the Third Congress Org Resolution that it was "too Russian." We've made the point numerous times but it bears repeating. Lenin thought that resolution was "too Russian" in the sense that it was too long and no one would read or understand it. But if you read on, he remarks (and this was his last speech to the Communist International):

"We Russians must also find ways and means of explaining the principles of this resolution to the foreigners. Unless we do that, it will be absolutely impossible for them to carry it out. I am sure that in this connection we must tell not only the Russians, but the foreign comrades as well, that the most important thing in the period we are now entering is to study. We are studying in the general sense. They, however, must study in the special sense, in order that they may really understand the organisation, structure, method and content of revolutionary work. If they do that, I am sure the prospects of the world revolution will be not only good, but excellent."

—Collected Works Vol. 33

Better the road of Lenin than that of Challinor!

Summary

A question was raised about the attitude of the SLP to the colonial question, and in particular to the Amritsar massacre. Regarding this a British comrade has handed me a note stating that a reading of *The Socialist*, the SLP's newspaper, and also *The Call*, which was the BSP's, indicates that in fact they did take it up. He observes: "If it's possible to differentiate active internationalism in the building of the party from the tribune of the people, I think they were pretty good on the latter." In that sense I think they would therefore be with the best of the Second International. Comrades recall that last year we printed the following quote from Trotsky on this question from his 1932 essay "What Next?" He was referring to the German centrists, and Ledebour in particular:

"Ledebour demands that a battle be waged against colonial oppression; he is ready to vote in parliament against colonial credits; he is ready to take upon himself a fearless defense of the victims of a crushed colonial insurrection. But Ledebour will not participate in preparing a colonial insurrection. Such work he considers putschism, adventurism, Bolshevism. And therein is the whole gist of the matter."

The American SLP hung on for years, and it's a question as to how this happened. It's *not* the same people who founded the party in the 1860s or the 1870s although, to look at them, sometimes you think so. [Laughter.] They became a sect, but some sects don't make it. The American SLP made it because they did have a base among some of the foreign-language groups. They stopped publication of their Bulgarian-language paper only a short while ago. It's been pointed out that the SLP probably got the Bulgarians in the U.S. because they were the closest thing to the Narrows [Bulgarian Narrow Socialist Party]. [Laughter.] Shachtman in '46 decided the Workers Party would become a small mass party in a very big country. The Bulgarians tried to be a small party in a small country and wound up a mass party.

As I said, John Maclean was probably the best of the BSP. Indeed Lenin singled him out as representing



no credit

Delegates to Second Congress of Communist International view Red Army parade in Moscow, 1920.

the best far-left, internationalist wing of British socialism. And he also didn't make it. He spiraled into creating a nationalist party, i.e., the Scottish Communist Party. He thought that the axis of a workers revolution in Britain would be an Irish/Scottish revolution. And London would follow—which is just plain wrong. You have to get the capital. In other times, from a very different class standpoint, this strategy was tried and didn't succeed. [Laughter.]

When the Independent Labour Party and the Labour Representation Committee were being formed it was not at all clear that they would forge a labor party which would capture the allegiance of the British proletariat. But indeed it did succeed, and by 1918 had become a formidable obstacle to proletarian revolution. Remember the Leeds Conference, where you had people like Snowden and Henderson coming out for "soviets" in Britain... adopting the protective coloration of pink.

In closing, to reiterate Cannon's point: the October Revolution marked a watershed not only in the broad international sense but also in the specific, communist sense. It was the Bolsheviks who taught us how to forge parties of a new type—vanguard parties, Leninist parties, combat parties. The experience of Bolshevism solved all the dilemmas that had arisen in the preceding period: the questions of "boring from within," parliamentary action, industrial action, etc. So that we stand far higher than the SLP did, but on the shoulders of the Russian Revolution. If we can see these things it's because we're the continuators. As Cannon said, "We are the party of the Russian Revolution"—our teachers. ■

The Far Left: 1900-1920

British Communism Aborted

A REVIEW

The Origins of British Bolshevism
by Raymond Challinor
Croom, Helm Ltd., London, 1977

If knowledge is not always power, ignorance is always weakness. With the deteriorating American school system calculated to produce ignorant youth in a period of reaction and Cold War, education of Marxist cadre is a crucial task for a Leninist organization. In this spirit, the Spartacist League/U.S. has instituted a nationally centralized program of internal education in Marxism and general knowledge.

As an aspect of this educational program, a significant part of the Central Committee plenum of the SL/U.S., held last August, was devoted to a consideration of Raymond Challinor's *The Origins of British Bolshevism*. This is a study of the British Socialist Labour Party (SLP) from its origin around 1900 to its rapid disintegration in the early 1920s, following the organization's refusal to participate in the formation of the British section of the Communist International. Also as part of the education program Ed Clarkson of the SL Central Committee gave an educational presentation on Lenin's "Left-Wing" Communism: *An Infantile Disorder* to a National Committee plenum of the



James Klugmann

First Central Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920. Third International fought for united party of British revolutionary socialists.

Spartacus Youth League, the SL's youth section (reprinted as "Leninist Tactics and the Road to Workers Power" in *Young Spartacus* Nos. 130 and 131, October and November 1985). We print below an edited version of a presentation to the plenum by comrade George Foster of the Spartacist League Central Committee on Challinor's book.

This study of the British SLP illuminates in one important, concrete case the historic problem of forging Communist parties in the West out of the subjectively revolutionary elements in the pre-1917 socialist and anarcho-syndicalist movements. It also adds appreciably to our understanding of why the Communist Party in Britain was stillborn. The sterility of the CPGB and absence of a real Leninist tradition in Britain have been key negative conditions for the complete hegemony of Labourite reformism over the workers movement right down to the present.

The Third International

Much of the discussion focused on Challinor's parochial and nationally limited conception of revolutionary organization. The very title conveys a false understanding, as if a genuine counterpart of Russian Bolshevism was *spontaneously* generated on British (or Scottish) soil. Unlike the

continued on page 54



The Socialist, voice of the Socialist Labour Party, which was based on revolutionary-minded workers in Clydeside, Scotland.