



Rhodesia election settles nothing Black masses confront Mugabe

27 March — "No more baas, no more madam — Zimbabwe is free", said one woman's sign in Salisbury. The results of the February election in Rhodesia had just been announced, and the unexpected victor was guerrilla leader Robert Mugabe, who took 57 of the 80 parliamentary seats allotted to blacks. To the black masses of Rhodesia, it seemed that at last they had won a decisive victory in the years-long, bloody struggle against the white supremacist settler regime. After the thousands killed and maimed, the tens of thousands more made homeless by butcher general Peter Walls' racist shock-troopers, the millions crammed into the tribal trustlands to face

starvation — they did not vote for the "Marxist" Mugabe in order to shore up the white capitalist exploiters' system.

Mugabe did not waste any time giving black working people the first bitter taste of disillusionment. When thousands of black workers from Bulawayo to Salisbury walked out on strike in late March — for higher wages, over fears about their pension funds, and in one case to get rid of a white racist who had spat on a

black worker — the black neo-colonialists clamped down quick. Citing the legislation of the previous white racist regime, one official announced that all strikes were illegal. White bosses who had sacked some 750 black strikers were, he added, all "within their rights" whereas the strikers were liable to arrest and prosecution.

"Any action at this stage can only serve to damage the goodwill which has been built up between

Government, the employees and their employers...", announced new Minister for Labour Kumbirai Kangai (*Australian*, 20 March). And to get the strikers back to work, Kangai promised to "examine" their grievances after 18 April, the day chinless wonder Prince Charles is due in Salisbury to officially declare the new Zimbabwe "independent". But after 18 April, all the black masses can expect is further open and intensified strikebreaking. Just as Angolan MPLA leader Agostinho Neto broke the Luanda dock workers' strike of 1976, so now will Mugabe break the strikes of the miners and railway workers of Rhodesia.

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Dockers join steel workers For a British general strike!



Sheerness, Kent: steel workers march to shut down scab private operator.

Socialist Challenge

LONDON, 27 March — The British steel strike has become a bitterly fought war of attrition. For thirteen weeks now the 150,000 striking British Steel Corporation (BSC) workers have held out despite mass intimidation and arrests of pickets, press vilification and extreme financial hardship. Their strike committee rooms in Birmingham have been broken into and ransacked by the police; in Rotherham, the local strike headquarters was firebombed on the evening of 23 February by a professional thug who

intended to *kill* the 20 strikers who would normally have been in the offices at that hour.

But still the workers have not been deterred and are now dug in hard as their strike begins to have an impact on the economy. And in a potentially explosive development, 5000 dockers and shoreside workers voted on 21 March to strike indefinitely to protest a management layoff of 100 workers who had refused to handle scab steel. The dockers

have also called for an all-out national docks strike — bring them out now!

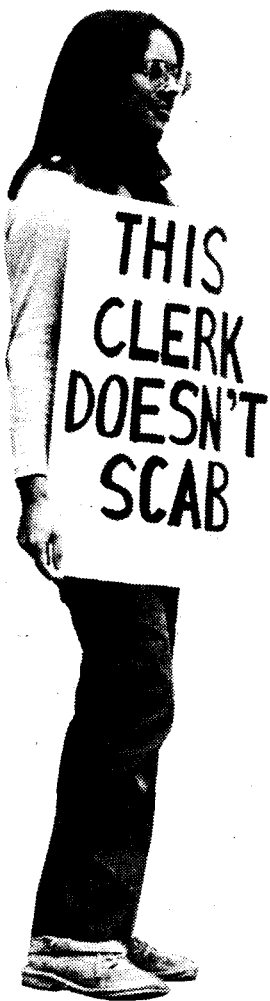
Their official leaders, on the other hand, have been desperately trying to end the strike through a rotten "compromise" offer to BSC management. So far the Thatcher government and BSC bosses have spurned the bureaucrats' sellout proposals in the hope of inflicting a major defeat on the steel workers union, the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC). But on 21 March, management accepted a *union* proposal that the Tory

government establish a three-man committee of inquiry to "deal with the pay dispute". So confident are the employers that this body will back them up, they have committed themselves *in advance* to accepting its findings. But whether ISTC general secretary Bill Sirs can get the strikers back to work by Easter as he plans remains very doubtful.

What has most encouraged the Tories to hardline it is the criminal backstabbing and treachery of the union leaders, from

Continued on page 8

Fairfax - One out, all out!



Fairfax clerk Linda Menzie wouldn't scab on printers during January strike.

In January printers at the Sydney plant of John Fairfax & Sons struck in defence of a Printing and Kindred Industries Union (PKIU) chapel representative victimised by management. Their strike was marked by active picketing involving at times over 100 workers. And joining the printers on their picket lines were metal tradesmen, iron workers, engineers, plumbers, sections of the Transport Workers Union and one clerical worker, Linda Menzie, who refused on principle to scab on another union's picket line.

Two months later, some 80 metal workers in the AMWSU, iron workers (FIA) and members of the Australian Society of Engineers are back out, on strike since 5 March. But in marked contrast even to the limited struggle in January, no picket lines are up, and for the most part PKIU members are going about their normal work. The result: Fairfax papers are getting into the shops and newsagents without the slightest difficulty.

For any trade unionist though, the response to the metal workers' strike should have been immediate: an injury to one is an injury to all! One out - all out! Unless the fitters shut down production at Fairfax, their demands will not be won. The craftist arguments advanced that it is alright to go to work provided the struck labour is not replaced is as treacherous now as it was two months ago: all those who go to work during a strike at a given plant help to keep production going, whether they like it or not. Thus, while the metal workers should put up their own picket lines now, the fact that there is no physical picket line outside the plant doesn't alter things: a struck plant is a struck plant and no trade unionist should work in one.

The metal workers' strike is over a basic wages and safety issue. It was provoked when Fairfax management attempted to take away the unionists' established right to determine the number of riggers (experienced tradesmen responsible for hoisting heavy machinery) needed on certain jobs. And when the bosses used scab staff labour to carry out the metal workers work, the PKIU came out, on 8 March and again the next weekend.

At the 11 March PKIU mass meeting which voted to end the first walkout, a significant minority of 50 or so voted against returning to work. One militant pointed out that as long as the metal workers were out, Fairfax was struck and should not be worked in. He added that regardless of the vote he would not be returning to work until the strike was over, and attacked the official policy of working with apprentice metal workers during the dispute. To do so, he said, not only attacked the strike but also undermined the struggle for full union rights for these youth, legally prohibited from striking. But even though this speech was greeted with applause, the motion to return carried.

Despite declaring all Fairfax publications black, the metal workers have opposed bringing the PKIU and other unions out in support. One of their fears is that if the less militant PKIU comes out, they will be swamped at a mass meeting, outvoted and forced to go back to work. The answer to this possible sabotage of the strike is not to go it alone, but must be to fight for the basic principle that no section or union goes back while another section is in dispute. When the printers go out, the fitters always go out also; and this is the policy which they should now be demanding of the PKIU

— united strike action and solid mass picketing to shut the plant down. Craft divisions within the working class benefit only the employer — both this strike and the January one show the need for one industrial union, led by a militant class-struggle leadership, to defend the workforce against management provocations and attacks.

During the current strike the Fairfax bosses have succeeded in recruiting scab labour through CES to help break the strike. Disgustingly, among the volunteers for this union-busting operation were some Sydney Uni "leftists", including Siobhan Mullany, advertising manager of the student paper *Honi Soit*. In an unsigned ("Yours in Sisterhood"), undated letter in the 24 March issue of the paper, a number of these scabs now shamefacedly admit that they did work; and as Mullany later admitted when confronted by a Spartacist League member, they were fully aware at the time that the PKIU, at least, was on strike. But they dredge up a battery of legalistic excuses: Fairfax management "conned" them into doing it; student allowances are so low that they were "tempted" into taking the fat cheques Fairfax normally pays to blacklegs; they "deplore" scabbing anyway.

This apologia is cynically advanced in the hope that a sanitised "confession" (and a pledge to pay their dirty money to an unspecified "Strike fund") will exonerate them. But as the Spartacist League proved in the cases of Gary Nicholls and Barbara Ramjan in 1978, "a little bit of scabbing" is not all right. A scab is a scab, and we have no intention of letting Mullany and her ilk forget it. Victory to the metal workers' strike — Shut Fairfax down! ■

Protests and statements of solidarity continue to come in responding to the murderous knife attack on German Spartacist leader Fred Zierenberg by Afghan reactionaries and various foreign Maoists at Frankfurt University on 25 January (see Australasian Spartacist no 71, February/March 1980). Comrade Zierenberg has since been released from hospital and is now recovering from the near-fatal wounds he received. Statements have been received and/or articles printed from several sections and sympathising groups of the United Secretariat (USec), including the Swedish KAF, Chilean LCCh, German GIM, Dutch and Japanese sections. The Australian USec section, the Socialist Workers Party, also carried a news item in the 19 March issue of Direct Action. We reprint below a selection of these statements, including a press release from the Frankfurt Turkish People's House.

Letter from Japan

Tokyo
21 February 1980

Dear Editor,

I thought readers would be interested to know that news of the murder attempt against our comrade did reach Japan, and did reach the pages of the USec press. The following comes from *Sekai Kakumei*, 18 February 1980, no 615. The article is signed Kazuko Fujimura.

"This news just arrived from a comrade in West Germany.

"Yesterday a shocking thing occurred. At a Frankfurt University teach-in on the Afghanistan problem, the TLD (ultra-sectarian self-styled Trotskyist) was attacked by a Maoist group, an Islamic group, and the Maoist-influenced General Union of Afghan Students, who used iron pipes and knives. One TLD member was critically injured while several others received serious wounds. Intra-left violence, which has become commonplace in Japan, is on the rise in Germany. Two weeks earlier a Turkish leftist, leafletting for a University forum in Berlin, was stabbed to death by a Turkish fascist and the protest demo for that was held only a few days ago. Clashes between left and right, Maoist and rightists combinations, and terrorism against the left, is no longer a climate exclusive to Italy and Spain but has spread to Germany as well. The GIM (German section of the FI) has warned about this danger and posed the question of a resolute challenge to this."

Protests against knifing of German Trotskyist

This comes from the vernacular weekly of the DYI (Japanese section of the USec). It is especially disgusting to read about the GIM's "warnings" in the pages of their fraternal group's press for a couple of reasons. Firstly the attack took place against the "ultra-sectarians" because they were the only ones with enough guts to defend the Soviet presence in Afghanistan — a position with which the DYI is sympathetic. And secondly the GIM's refusal to defend the TLD's later forum proves that their warnings are empty.

When the day comes to avenge this murderous deed, I wonder if the GIM will still be warning about these dangers.

Sincerely,
Stevens

LCCh statement

To the Workers and Students of the University of Frankfurt
To All Political Organisations
Claiming to Struggle for
Democracy, Proletarian
Revolution and Socialism

In response to the assaults and attacks suffered by members of the German Trotskyist League (section of the International Spartacist Tendency) on 25 January of this year as they were publicly expressing their viewpoint on the situation in Afghanistan, the Liga Comunista de Chile considers it its duty and responsibility to state the following:

We reject and repudiate the attack perpetrated by elements belonging to GUAFS, "Fight Back" and ATIF/ATOF against members of the German Trotskyist League and characterise this attack as an outrageous and criminal act against the democratic rights won by the workers and student movement. The Liga Comunista de Chile, in addition to solidarising with the comrades who were victims of these attacks, calls on all political organisations belonging to the

workers and student movement of Frankfurt to close ranks against the use and practice of such gangster methods, typical of fascist groups, in order to eradicate them definitively from the workers and student organisations.

External Secretariat of the
Liga Comunista de Chile
4 February 1980

Frankfurt Turkish People's House press release

Frankfurt am Main
13 February 1980

We most sharply condemn the brutal attack by members of the Turkish Maoist organisations ATIF/ATOF against supporters of the TLD at the forum of the Frankfurt ASTA on Afghanistan on 25 January 1980. We see this attack in the context of a constantly increasing anti-Soviet frenzy which is a slap in the face to all peace-loving people.

When one observes how these forces behave here, one can judge what deeds they would be capable of with the help of American military support.

We demand the most stringent punishment of those involved in this knifing.

Turkish People's House
Secretary, Board of Directors
Necati Ozelik

KAF statement

Stockholm
13 February 1980
ASTA
Frankfurt University
Frankfurt, West Germany

Comrades

We have been informed that members and sympathisers of the Troztkistische Liga Deutschlands (TLD) were attacked and injured at a public meeting on Afghanistan that was arranged by the University of Frankfurt the 25th of

January. The responsible for the attacks are said to be members of the General Union of Afghani Students Abroad (GUAFS), "Fight Back" and the ATIF/ATOF.

In this way we would like to solidarise with the TLD in a protest against this horrifying attack on the democratic right of the TLD to put forward their opinions. Even if our party has deep political disagreements with the TLD and the "International Spartacist Tendency" we condemn the attempts to silence those who refuse to participate in the imperialist-led witchhunt against the Afghan revolution and the USSR. Stop the right-wing attacks!

for the Political Bureau
of the Communist Workers League
Swedish section of the Fourth
International
Hakan Blomqvist

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New Sandinista jailing of leftists

On 11 February Nicaragua's Sandinista-led "Government of National Reconstruction" sentenced four leaders of the left-wing People's Action Movement (MAP) and its trade-union arm, Workers Front (FO), to two years of "public works" (forced labor). The convictions of Melvin Wallace, Juan Alberto Enriquez, Carlos Domingo Cuadra and Isidro Tellez followed the forced closing of the MAP/FO-linked newspaper *El Pueblo* on 23 January. Charges were later brought against seven MAP/FO leaders, including Enriquez and Tellez, for illegal possession of arms and violations of the Public Order and Security Law carrying possible penalties of up to ten years in prison. The legal proceedings were accompanied by mass rallies organized by the Sandinista Front (FSLN) where, according to the New York *Guardian* (27 February), thousands shouted slogans such as "Death to ultraleftism" and "Death to Trotskyism".

The arrests of the MAP/FO leaders are not isolated incidents but part of a pattern of harassment, imprisonment and slander by the FSLN against its left-wing critics. *El Pueblo* was first closed and its editor, Melvin Wallace, arrested within days after the FSLN columns rolled into Managua last summer. In August the "Trotskyist" Simon Bolivar Brigade, an international contingent which had joined the FSLN in the final days of the Somoza dictatorship, was forcibly expelled from the country. In October, FSLN *comandantes* launched a wave of jailings against the MAP/FO

and the ostensibly Trotskyist LMR, charging them with responsibility for armed attacks on FSLN troops and other "counterrevolutionary" actions. The recent jailings, however, were justified by no more than government declarations that articles in *El Pueblo* constituted "destructive criticism" and sought "to damage the popular interests".

But the real "crime" committed by the MAP/FO, a pro-Albania Stalinist group, was to support and lead strikes against nationalized and private businesses and to criticize the FSLN's pro-business policies. In the interests of bankrupt Nicaraguan capitalists, the Sandinista regime has opposed all strikes, eliminated the traditional "13th month" Christmas bonus and reneged on its earlier promise to pay wages due from the period of the civil war. A series of strikes and factory occupations, led by the FO and the pro-Moscow Communist Party, was answered by charges that the CIA, working through "union pseudo-leaders" was trying to "destabilize the economy and make impossible economic reactivation".

Despite the anti-Trotskyist tirades of FSLN leaders, the US Socialist Workers Party (SWP) has consistently supported the anti-left and anti-working-class repression in Sandinista Nicaragua. While the FSLN breaks strikes in order to demonstrate its commitment to working out a *modus vivendi* with Nicaraguan capitalists and US imperialism, according to the SWP Nicaragua today is "a country in which the workers and peasants have political power"



FSLN minister Jamie Wheelock on US tour.

(*Perspectiva Mundial*, 10 March). "The FSLN", they claim, "has made it clear that it upholds the right to criticism [except 'destructive criticism']". It is defending the independence of the trade unions and mass organizations from the state [except that it forces them into the government-controlled union federation]. It has opposed any acts of

coercion against strikes and demonstrations by workers and peasants [except that it arrests the leaders]" (*Intercontinental Press*, 18 February).

Ever-so-slightly squeamish about tossing leftists in jail for writing "sectarian" editorials, the SWP heaved a sigh of relief when the government backed up the charges against the MAP/FO with the discovery of what FSLN leader Tomas Borge described as "more than three thousand arms to be employed in the counterrevolution". If they didn't have such "secret arsenals", the MAP/FO might be the only people in Nicaragua without guns. But the SWP openly supports these jailings, alleging, "The Nicaraguan government has the responsibility and the right to take energetic measures of self-defense against this type of violation of the security of the revolution" (*Perspectiva Mundial*, 10 March).

By championing the anti-left repression unleashed by the FSLN and its capitalist partners, the pacifist-legalist SWP cheerleaders for *sandinismo* prove that they are not Marxists — who stand for the right of self-defense for the working masses, not bonapartist governments — nor even "consistent" (bourgeois) democrats (what about the "right to bear arms"?). All genuine revolutionaries, as well as all defenders of trade-union and democratic rights, must denounce the closing of *El Pueblo* and the jailing of the MAP/FO leaders. Free all left-wing prisoners in the FSLN jails!

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Crisis in British WSL

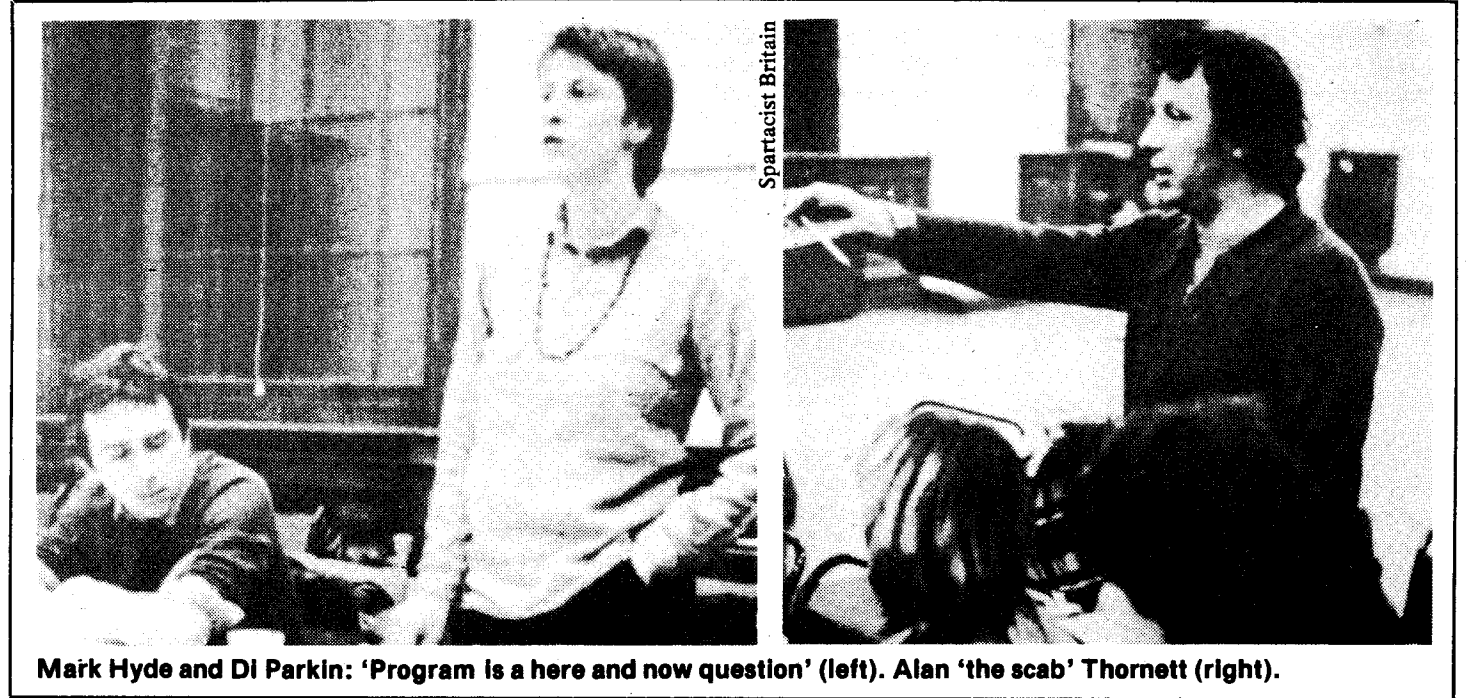
Scab Thornett purges Trotskyists

At a specially convened national conference on 12 January the right-centrist Workers Socialist League (WSL) carried out a bureaucratic purge of a left-wing opposition, the Leninist Faction (LF). This is the most important split from the WSL since early 1978, when the Trotskyist Faction (TF) left to fuse with the London Spartacist Group and form the Spartacist League/Britain (SL/B). Two years ago most of these lately expelled cadres were active fighters against the Trotskyist Faction — indeed one, Mark Hyde, co-authored the only attempt at a serious reply to the TF by the then WSL majority. Now these militants have themselves re-examined and rejected the bankrupt program and record of the WSL.

The appearance of the Leninist Faction has awakened considerable interest in the British ostensibly Trotskyist milieu — which includes more than a half dozen stagnating small groups without significant international ties, and whose largest organisation, the International Marxist Group (IMG), is obviously experiencing internal turmoil over its anti-Soviet line on Afghanistan. Indeed the hardest advocate of “Russian Troops Out”, Tariq Ali, is also campaigning for liquidating the IMG lock, stock and barrel into the state capitalist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) of Tony Cliff. At its 16-19 February national conference, the IMG was badly divided on what attitude to take to the SWP: some 50 percent of the delegates supported the Tariq Ali-led Tendency 1 in voting for immediate fusion with the Cliffites. The rest of the vote was divided among Tendency 2, which argued for a “battle to fuse with the SWP” — but not “in the next few years”; Tendency 3, which wanted a “party based on programmatic agreement” — while maintaining “fraternal relations with the SWP”; and a “fourth grouping”, known as Current 4, which idealises the American Socialist Workers Party (see *Spartacist Britain* no 19, March 1980 for further details).

At a London forum held by the LF on 8 February, Mark Hyde told an audience of 60 that in contrast to the traditional philistinism of the British left, the Faction began with the international questions, notably Iran and Nicaragua. The main LF speaker, Di Parkin (former convenor of the WSL’s women’s commission), emphasised the necessity for a perspective of revolutionary regroupment around the Trotskyist program. The meeting was attended by WSL leaders Tony Richardson, who attempted to justify the suspension and expulsion of the LF solely for its political positions, and Alan Thornett, who was driven to frenzy by denunciations of his scabbing at British Leyland last year.

The LF had its origins in the Left Tendency (LT) which was formed in May 1979 initially around the question of the fight to reforge the Fourth International. In late June two WSL Executive Committee members, Alan Clinton and John Lister, attacked the LT for “echoing” Spartacist positions. Utterly belying its pretence of “fighting Pabloism”, the WSL believes there is a



Mark Hyde and Di Parkin: ‘Program is a here and now question’ (left). Alan ‘the scab’ Thornett (right).

broad family of Trotskyism, and in their attack Lister and Clinton explicitly repudiated the International Committee’s fight against Pablo’s liquidationism in the 1950s and early 1960s, claiming that the 1953-54 split in the Fourth International featured “centrists on all sides”. Throughout the summer and autumn the WSL leadership pursued the logic of their embrace of the “world Trotskyist movement”, making increasingly brazen manoeuvres aimed at getting in with the “big-time” fake-Trotskyists — first Mandel’s United Secretariat and then the rotten-bloc Lambert/Moreno Parity Committee.

To date the end product of all these opportunist gyrations has been nil. Instead the WSL is left stuck in a “Liaison Committee” with its traditional minuscule sub-reformist partners in the US Socialist League (Democratic-Centralist), an even smaller Danish group, and the Italian GBL, who have endeared themselves to Thornett by providing a more “sophisticated” cover for capitulation to popular frontism than the WSL can manage by its own efforts.

Scabbing at Cowley

A decisive turning point for the LT was WSL leader and Cowley deputy convenor Alan Thornett’s scabbing during last summer’s national engineering strikes when faced with a reactionary anti-strike mobilisation by backward workers in his plant (see *Spartacist Britain* no 15, October 1979). In fact, information given by the LF makes clear that Thornett’s role was, if possible, even more despicable than it appeared at the time. For Thornett’s usual allies in the plant leadership, including senior shop steward Bob Fryer, wanted a picket line to stop the scabs and Thornett had to fight

against them in order to turn them into scabs. Fryer and others, who were at the time rightly more concerned about maintaining a national strike than heading off threats to their trade union positions, were characterised by Thornett inside the WSL as “syndicalists” who did not understand that it was all a “question of leadership”!

Initially Thornett’s scabbing met with widespread resistance in the WSL (including among other Cowley workers). But even though some Cowley WSLers had to face being denounced by long-time trade unionists (and even by elements in the bureaucracy who saw a good opportunity to blast away some of Thornett’s richly undeserved kudos), most restless WSLers fell back into line. However, for the LT Cowley showed definitively for Britain what the leadership’s support for Khomeini’s movement in Iran showed internationally — that the WSL was quite capable of flipping right over the class line and betraying on an occasion when the need for principles clashed with its opportunist appetites.

The formation of the Leninist Faction came when the WSL leadership tried to mount a witchhunt by giving the LT an ultimatum to come up with their “areas of agreement with the WSL and areas of disagreement with the iSt [international Spartacist tendency]”, or else. The LF’s founding document “Centrism or Bolshevism — The Choice Facing the WSL” stated that the Faction was “as yet in no position to make a finished assessment of the politics of the iSt” but solidarised with the basic thrust of Spartacist positions on Iran, Ireland, opposition to popular fronts, and the need for a fighting propaganda perspective. For the first time the oppositionists presented a rounded programmatic critique of and alternative to the centrism of the WSL majority.

The leadership reacted by forcing through the LF’s suspension, and for the next six weeks they were systematically excluded from all WSL internal activities (and even some ostensibly “public” ones). Finally on 12 January after first excluding two members of the youth organisation who were sympathetic to the LF, and then denying the right to any discussion, the leadership summarily pushed through its purge at a Special Conference.

The WSL’s descent into such political witchhunts reflects well the frenzied state of a doomed current. According to the LF, the organisation recruits on an increas-

ingly apolitical basis with the percentage of inactive paper “members” on the climb. The leadership itself is increasingly unstable and frenzied (both Alan Clinton and Alan Thornett have dropped out of all disciplined political activity for several months at a time in the past year and a half). Anti-Spartacist paranoia is rampant, as the leadership strives desperately to seal off the organisation from the influence of our Trotskyist program.

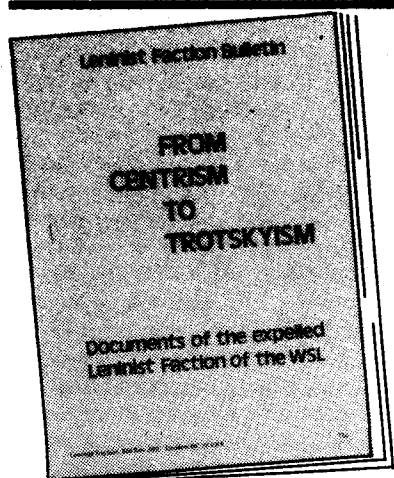
Thus Thornett and company’s only attempt to “reply” to the LF’s political arguments is a shoddy few pages circulated at the expulsion conference, full of slander and even disgraceful cop-baiting against the iSt. Scraping the bottom of the Healyite barrel, the document states:

“The iSt now acts as provocateurs in the Trotskyist movement in order to justify its existence. It plays this role as usefully as any state agency would by trying to break up any organised resistance to the reformists and Stalinists.”
— *WSL Internal Discussion Bulletin*, new series no 4, January 1980

Such filthy slander will not save Thornett’s parochial-workerist WSL from further internal crisis and strife, however. As the LF explicitly recognised in its final document:

“Should the threats of expulsion that have been made by leading members be carried out the WSL will not wait long before it faces another struggle (perhaps the Sverdlov Faction!), and another. The reason for this prognosis is straightforward — unstable and degenerating centrism must find itself repeatedly assaulted by the Bolshevik politics which it finds itself unable to politically answer.”
— “The Fight for the Proletarian Programme”, 11 January 1980

The road taken by the Trotskyist Faction, and now being pursued by the LF, is the only one for members of the WSL who seek the road to proletarian revolution. The LF’s struggle also has lessons for would-be revolutionists internationally. The final LF document solidarises with the iSt’s nine points for international Trotskyist regroupment (see “Document of the First Delegated Conference of the iSt”, in *Spartacist* no 27-28, Winter 1979-80). The LF has stated its intention of fighting for these programmatic positions. Currently, while the faction has also stated its eagerness to discuss with other groupings in order to test further its positions and familiarise itself with other views, the LF and SL/B are preparing discussions on outstanding questions. ■



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"Carry a glad", urged a placard. Reclaim the gladiolus from Barry Humphries and Dame Edna Everage and carry it to show you're glad to be a woman. Thus ran the official theme of International Women's Day, 1980, feminist-style, in Sydney.

The fine weather contributed to the fairground atmosphere as the crowd of nearly 2000, including many feminists making their once-a-year cameo appearance in the struggle for women's liberation, assembled. There was no shortage of strange sights: two women whizzed along chanting "Women on roller skates will never be defeated"; a knight of olde marched alongside a three-headed symbol of something or other; and at the end of a meandering march up one street and down another, the parade ended in Hyde Park to the strains of an off-key rock band which had decided to leave out its male performer on the grounds that it might have been "politically inappropriate" for him to have shown up!

But where in all this *utter trivia* was the question of women's oppression or the fight for women's liberation? The relatively small Melbourne IWD march was in comparison a dull affair, but it too was a parody of the struggle for women's emancipation. Who would have believed that International Women's Day was founded, under the sponsorship of the Second International, as a *socialist holiday*, a day of struggle of women and men workers?

Before the demonstration started in Melbourne, a motion was passed by the crowd assembled at the Bourke Street Mall excluding men from "intervening in any way" in the day's activities. Then just to ensure that the women who marched were politically of the right persuasion too, the IWD Executive circulated a leaflet limiting participants on the march to supporters of the aims of the United Nations "Decade for Women"!

At the pre-march rally in Sydney's Town Hall Square, march organiser Pat O'Shane spoke to objections to "certain slogans" being carried by men which had "no relation to women's rights", and added that "IWD is a day when women assert *their* demands for women's rights". Though O'Shane didn't have the political courage to state openly the organisation she was attacking, it was clear her attack was aimed at the SL contingent.

But the banners and placards we carried had *every* relation to women's rights. While raising demands from free abortion on demand and free 24-hour child care facilities to our call for women's liberation through socialist revolution, our contingent focused in particular on the barbaric oppression of women in Afghanistan and Iran. To parochialists like O'Shane whose vision seems to be limited to the shores of this South Pacific island, Afghanistan may not seem to have much to do with anything, but in truth the current crisis there is probably the first instance of a shooting war in modern history *which was ignited specifically by the question of women's liberation*. And in this conflict revolutionists take the side of the Red Army, because a victory for the mullah-led rebels would mean a victory for the

Gladioli and anti-communism

Feminists trivialise IWD, women's oppression



Spartacist League contingent on International Women's Day, Melbourne.

ASp photo

bride price, for the veil, for *purdah* (segregation within the home) and the custom of levirate, whereby a woman whose husband dies becomes the property of her husband's brother. In short, victory for the Islamic bandits means the continued enslavement of women.

A glance at Khomeini's Iran next door shows the decisive centrality of the woman question there as well. Here the holy ayatollah of Qom says that it is a great honour for a girl to get her first menstrual period in her husband's home. And it is still vital to have blood-smear sheets to show the morning after a wedding, too.

Yet there are no demonstrations by feminists or the fake-left in defence of Afghan or Iranian women. Both the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the International Socialists (IS) uncritically hailed Khomeini's rise to power. The SWP still considers the "Iranian revolution" to be progressive and calls the veil a "symbol of liberation"! As for the IS, they are wholeheartedly backing the mullahs in Afghanistan. No wonder then that both groups on IWD said nothing about women's oppression in these countries but only carried minimal slogans calling for abortion rights and the dole for all sacked women.

In Sydney a score or so of rabid men-haters tried to provoke the SL contingent,

saying that "Afghanistan had nothing to do with women". Letting out a series of war whoops and chanting "Not the Sparts, not the state, women must decide their fate", these unsavoury anti-communists systematically — but unsuccessfully — tried to force us out of the march.

Likewise in Melbourne, when an SL speaker addressed the rally at the end of the demonstration on the subject of women's oppression in Islamic societies, a clot of lesbian-feminists using a bullhorn started chanting "Boring! Boring!" in a futile effort to drown us out. What cynical, self-contented, parochial contempt for the lives of women in Iran and Afghanistan! What price "sisterhood" now? When it comes down to it, these women care only for themselves.

But a woman who had lived in Central Asia and who spoke after the SL comrade confirmed the Spartacist position on the degree of oppression suffered by women in these countries. She described how she had seen with her own eyes twelve-year olds sold in exchange for cattle and the tremendous gains which the women of the Soviet East had made in comparison. Shamefaced, one feminist then tried to explain that they had attempted to shout down the SL because of our opposition to an "independent women's movement" and feminism.

But in reply another SL comrade pointed out that for all the feminists' talk of "autonomy", on this demonstration they were politically tied to that imperialist den of thieves, the United Nations. Moreover, in Afghanistan there is no room for so-called "independence". The Spartacist League, she said, was proud to be partisan in that struggle — for the Red Army and against Islamic reaction.

Women's oppression is a class question. In Iran and Afghanistan, the struggle for liberation is not a question of who does the dishes but a life or death issue. Only a victorious proletarian revolution in those countries can establish women's democratic right even to be considered a human being. But in doing so it will also open the road to the eradication of all oppression facing women.

An SL supporter, Linda Menzie, who refused to cross Fairfax printers' picket lines during their recent strikes, also addressed the question of women's oppression and the class struggle at the IWD Sydney Town Hall rally:

"Feminism doesn't take a class line... It leads to walking through picket lines like Anne Roberts, prominent feminist and CPA supporter who went through the [Fairfax] lines every day, as did Anne Summers during the 1976 strike. Presumably because they didn't see either strike as an issue for women."

Her scabbing exposed, Roberts later approached Menzie and all innocent-like asked for advice on what she should have done during the strike! But Roberts knew full well what she was doing and during the strike was explicitly told in *Menzie's presence* that crossing the picket line meant scabbing.

Women's liberation can only come through the smashing of the capitalist system so that the nuclear family, which chains many women to a daily grind of domestic labour and is the material basis of women's oppression, can be replaced with the socialisation of household work. The only force capable of accomplishing this task though is the working class, led by its revolutionary party; the only program adequate to the task is that of socialist revolution. Feminists of every hue have rejected that program, but in rejecting it they also reject the only road to women's complete emancipation. ■

Feminists march against sin and smut

One week before IWD, about 250 women marched through Sydney chanting the now familiar banal slogan of the Reclaim the Night marches internationally: "However we dress, wherever we go, yes means yes and no means no". This was no simple protest against rape and criminal sexual assault. The placards carried by sections of the marchers made clear what they stood for: "Death penalty for rapists", "Curfew for men", "Porn is violence against women". And as the march passed the Pleasure Chest sex shop in George Street the women stopped and whooped to show their opposition.

Two weeks later, at a session on pornography held on 16 March during the Women and Violence conference in Sydney, a number of women tried to

distance their anti-pornography stance from that of the Festival of Light, by shifting their attentions away from the grubby little sex shops of Kings Cross to such downright evil movies as... *King Kong* and *Jack the Ripper*! But twist and turn as they may, the anti-porn feminists will find themselves time after time in the same camp as the avowedly reactionary Festival of Light, playing the same role as self-proclaimed moral arbiters and censors.

Marxists do not defend the right of women or anyone else to set themselves up as censors. We oppose *all* bourgeois censorship as well as all interference by the capitalist state in sexual activities between consenting individuals. We recognise that any morality legislation of

the bourgeois state such as the banning of gambling, pornography or prostitution only provides the state with a licence for harassment and the perpetration of its own norms of permissible behaviour. The first victims of such legislation would be the already discriminated against: homosexuals, transvestites and anyone else whom the state cares to describe as "sexual deviants".

Pornography is not the source of women's oppression. The hate-filled, violent capitalist system with its rigid family structure and straitjacket morality is. And in their virulent anti-pornography crusade, the Reclaim the Night marchers merely help to shore up the deadly reactionary forces which keep women oppressed. ■

Afghanistan: No to detente

Left can't escape

The bourgeois media have virtually blacked out the national strike of 150,000 British steel workers, but they have plenty to say about Afghanistan. Occasionally a piece of truth slips out, as in the headline of a report in *Newsweek* (24 March): "Rebels on the Run". But most of it consists of the endless romantic descriptions of steadfast "freedom fighters" holding out against overwhelming odds; the fanciful horror stories of Russian atrocities and inflated figures of Russian deaths, which all turn out to emanate from "rebel sources"; the patriotic mumbo-jumbo of the notorious Murdoch yellow press on the Olympic boycott ("no medals for Kerala", etc).

The imperialist war propaganda machine has not lurched into gear because it is overly concerned about the prospect of land reform, literacy programs or the reduction of the bride price by a left-nationalist Kabul regime, nor even about the Red Army intervention into an unimportant country long since in the Soviet orbit. Jimmy Carter and the imperialist gang in Washington have launched a war drive aimed at the Soviet Union, and Afghanistan was the pretext.

Carter's hopes to rally the capitalist world in a new anti-Soviet cold war crusade may prove ill-fated. The US emerged from World War II with the raw superiority in industrial and military power to dominate the capitalist world without challenge. For over two decades it was the hegemonic force in the imperialist camp; today it has slipped to the position of merely the strongest among a number of competing capitalist powers who are more economic rivals than dependable "allies". But it is for this very reason that the US ruling class, the most dangerous in history, now desperate to regain its position of world dominance, is driven toward war with the Soviet Union. The threat of holocaust behind their military preparations will not go away.

There is no evading the decisive issues for the world proletariat posed by the Afghanistan crisis. It is the duty of every labour organisation to stand with the workers of the USSR in defence of the gains made in 1917, the first great workers victory in this epoch of wars and revolutions. It is their duty to stand with the Red Army in Afghanistan against reactionary bands, armed by the CIA, who shoot schoolteachers because "reading is Communist", and who fight to preserve the particularly barbarous enslavement of women.

"More anti-Soviet than thou"

But with varying degrees of apology, the bulk of the Australian left and workers movement has come out for Fraser and against the Soviet Union, despite the absence of much patriotic, anti-Soviet pressure in the country. That the social democratic ALP should do so is no surprise: ever since Lenin and the Bolsheviks took power, social democracy has been the bitter enemy of the Soviet workers state. Hayden now reaffirms the ALP's loyalty to the bosses with his "more anti-Soviet than thou" policies. After attacking Fraser for insufficient funding of the armed forces, he then pathetically bleats that Fraser has abandoned an "independent" foreign policy through dog-like servility to Washington. Having swallowed the camel, he strains at gnats, for the consumption of workers who are understandably less than enthusiastic about the prospect of a nuclear holocaust started by a ruling class turned into insane mass murderers by the blind alley of their system.

This "independent policy" is a fake from top to bottom. Hayden just wants a slightly longer leash. But it is also a demagogic illusion long enshrined in the Australian social democratic tradition, a kind of reformist version of racist, isolationist xenophobia, the folk chauvinism of Jack Lang. Yet while the illusion of independence may be empty, the spectre of White Australia jingoism retains a

venomous potency. It is no accident that even one fascist outfit, the National Alliance, has seen no profit (for now) in promoting anti-Russian hysteria. After all, Russians are white, and it distracts attention from the "yellow hordes" of Asia, hatred of whom the NA scum hope will do for them what anti-semitism did for Hitler and Strasser.

Hayden's anti-Sovietism is outdone only by the Maoists, who have followed Peking unhesitatingly into the arms of Fraser and the NCC. Now they are having to learn to like it also, as the leading voice of Maoism in Australia, E F Hill, makes clear in his comments on NCC guru B A Santamaria: "I warmly welcome his opposition to Soviet social imperialism... What does it matter that he remains vehemently anti-Communist...?" (*Vanguard*, 6 March). It's not just words, either. At Melbourne University recently, Maoists openly led a rightist counter-mobilisation against a Spartacist League-organised rally protesting Army Reserve recruiters and calling for victory to the Red Army in Afghanistan. *Vanguard* (27 March) subsequently brazenly boasted of leading the "Rifle Club, Basketball Club, other sports clubs and religious groups" in "shout[ing] down the Trotskyites". In their current pro-Pentagon frenzy these Peking Stalinists are quite capable of the kind of murderous attack carried out by their counterparts and Afghan reactionaries in Frankfurt against West German Spartacists (see article page 2).

The International Socialists (IS) finds its de facto bloc with assorted rightists, including Nazis, embarrassing. But the group's claim to be "against imperialism, East and West" is only a cynical fig leaf. When the reactionary rebels brought off a shopkeepers strike in Kabul, the *Battler* rejoiced: "Now the REAL Afghan revolution" (8 March). Sure; and the pope will be the liberator of Poland from totalitarian Communism, right? For what the *Battler* didn't mention is that the battle cries of these "revolutionaries" mobilised in support of the mullahs and khans and put down by Red Army troops were "Death to the Soviets" and "Allah O Akhbar" ("god is great"). Although mealy-mouthed, the IS has not shrunk from the basic reactionary conclusions of its pro-imperialist "third campism".

Aside from the open allies of Fraser, however, the overwhelming drive of the reformist left — both those ostensibly for



Spartacist League rally outside US consulate in Sydney, January 17. Fake-lefts refused to demonstrate in defence of Red Army's Afghan incursion.

ASp photo

and those against the Soviet intervention — is to bury the Russian question. The aim is to deflect potential class-conscious opposition to the war drive into a bloc with those elements of the ruling class who differ with the degree of heat Carter is currently putting into the cold war, a war which has persisted at varying temperatures ever since October 1917. Under the guise of "fighting Fraser's war drive" or advocating "peace" and "detente", they prepare the way for future patriotic mobilisations of the workers behind a bosses' war.

SWP's "Afghan Revolution"

The Communist Party (CPA) echoes Carter/Fraser's call for "Soviet troops out" because it aspires to emulate the "success" of the Italian Communist Party's "historic compromise" with the Vatican and NATO — or failing that, at least to ingratiate itself with Hayden's ALP. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP), on the other hand, defends the Red Army intervention — in the name of its mythical "Afghan revolution". SWP leader Jim McIlroy even denounces Hayden for standing "to the right of Fraser" on Afghanistan (*Direct Action*, 5 March). But this ostensible pro-Soviet incursion position doesn't prevent them from approving the sentiment that "common agreement" with the CPA

"could be reached around opposition to the boycott of the Olympic Games, trade bans on the USSR, and Fraser's war drive" (*Direct Action*, 20 February). So much for the class line!

The SWP's Afghanistan line is a complete fraud. While claiming to oppose the reactionary mobilisation of the Afghan mullahs, they continue to grovel before the regime of the mullahs in Iran. Khomeini's mass movement, too, chanted "god is great"; they too said "death or the veil". And the SWP loved it, hailing it as *progressive*. They even attack the leader of their "Afghan revolution" as "sectarian" because he had the temerity to attack Khomeini as a reactionary (SWP pamphlet *The Truth About Afghanistan*, p 29). Now this fraud is exploding in their faces.

Only three months ago, when Carter held back his Persian Gulf flotillas in the face of mounting popular "nuke the ayatollah" jingoism over the Teheran embassy hostages, we pointed out: "Carter's 'moderation' is motivated not so much by concern for the hostages as by anti-Soviet strategic calculations. The fact is that the U.S. desperately wants an anti-Soviet Iran" (*Workers Vanguard* no 245, 7 December 1979). Now the hostages have become an obstacle to a budding anti-Soviet alliance; and so now, "Hostages' freedom means millions in aid for Iran" (*Daily Mirror*, 24 March), and



Soviet arms: Trotskyists defend the USSR and say no to disarmament fraud.

Detente, pacifist illusions!

Russian question

"British arms sales to Iran are likely to resume as soon as the hostages are released" (*Guardian Weekly*, 2 March). And on 21 March the imam reciprocated by denouncing yet again the "brutal intervention in Afghanistan by looters and occupiers" (*London Times*, 22 March).

One small grouping centred on the Trotskyist Study Group (TSG) made its public political debut in Australia with an explicit attempt to mobilise a "movement" "against Fraser's war drive" based on a deliberate refusal to take sides in the Afghan conflict or to mention defence of the USSR. In Sydney they called what they spawned the Anti-Imperialist Coalition (AIC). Three of the AIC's key activists who claimed to stand with the Red Army in Afghanistan and for defence of the USSR — Janet Burstall, Craig Johnston and Tony Brown — laid it out plainly in a leaflet explaining that they nevertheless "oppose the introduction of slogans giving a more general expression of support to the Soviet Union, because this would unnecessarily preclude people from acting against Fraser's immediate efforts" ("Stop the Carter-Fraser war drive", 14 February).

But just what is that war drive directed against? It is absurd to pretend to be fighting Carter/Fraser without mentioning the defence of their target or taking sides in the actual struggle going on. This imaginary distinction was in fact invented for the sole purpose of justifying unity with those who stood on the other side of the class line.

United fronts and rotten blocs

At a Spartacist League (SL) forum on Afghanistan in Sydney on 22 February, Burstall defended the AIC as a "united front" against imperialism, quoting Trotsky on the need for united front action against Hitler by the mass German workers organisations in the early 1930s. But the communist tactic of the united front requires that the class line is drawn, not obscured. It requires furthermore a Leninist organisation standing on a clear program and capable of seizing leadership away from the misleaders of the working class through common action and exposure.

The TSG, however, has neither program nor organisation. In any case, the AIC is far from being a temporary agreement for a common, concrete action. It is an ongoing bloc with a political program — a rotten bloc for common propaganda, composed of elements with counterposed positions on the most central programmatic questions. Thus at Sydney University supposed defencist Tony Brown publishes joint leaflets on Afghanistan ("Campus Partisan", February 1980) with scab Gary Nicholls, who wants Soviet troops out. And in Melbourne the AIC counterpart is dominated by Paul White, a key figure in the TSG, who openly declares his opposition to the Soviet intervention.

The Spartacist League is for utilising the tactic of the united front, but what about the AIC and TSG? When we united-fronted a TSG-backed demonstration in Melbourne on 8 February, and raised our slogans calling for "Victory to Red Army in Afghanistan" and for defence of the USSR, small time demagogue White later denounced us at a 20 February meeting for "disrupting" the rally. White was no doubt peeved because we exercised a basic tenet of the

united front — freedom of criticism — and criticised *him* as well as the Socialist Left ALPer he had managed to get along for the day.

Likewise in Sydney, the AIC accused us of organising a "counterdemonstration" to the one they had organised on 20 February on the Olympic boycott issue outside the Commonwealth Bank in the City. Why? Because we mobilised our own separate contingent (which was larger than the total AIC forces), marched separately and effectively overshadowed the wretched AIC turnout. As proof of the fact that this was not a counterdemonstration we even offered the use of our loudspeaker to an AIC representative to address those in attendance. As it was, they declined.

That both White and the AIC were irked by our interventions is as it should be; opportunists aren't supposed to like being exposed in action. But at the same time as denouncing the SL, the AIC has been obsequiously flattering the hardline "Russians get out" AICD with a view to getting it into the rotten bloc. Thus in practice the AIC has made it clear that it does take sides on the Soviet incursion: those in the camp of the class enemy are welcome; those who say "Victory to Red Army" are not.

TSG/AIC types look back with longing to the Vietnam anti-war movement of the late 1960s-early 1970s. White was a Maoist then; but at the 20 February meeting he repudiated what may have been one of the better periods of his political life by "self-criticising" his former support for victory to the NLF as "ultimatic", in retroactive solidarity with the SWP (then a youth group). The SWP stood clearly to the right of the Maoists and struggled determinedly for the hegemony of pro-imperialist liberals, on the grounds that to take sides with the oppressed against US imperialism and to issue calls for labour strikes to end the war, would "alienate" Gordon Barton's Australia Party and the ALP tops.

The character of the movement the SWP consciously helped to build was spelt out by Moratorium hero, ex-Special Branch cop and "left" ALPer Jim Cairns, who wrote in 1965 that "The 'advance of Communism' by force must be stopped. It cannot be stopped... by a mainly military campaign" (*Vietnam — Is It Truth We Want?*). The SWP's anti-war work was tailored to the program of an anti-communist, defeatist, but patriotic wing of the bourgeoisie, for which the main vehicle was Cairns' ALP. Their line, now embraced by White and the AIC, meant an abandonment of the class-struggle opposition to the war which could have provided the basis for a class-conscious fight today against the Carter/Fraser anti-Soviet war drive, in favour of social patriotism which has instead helped Fraser muster support for his campaign. To fight imperialism a Leninist party with a conscious strategy and program for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism is needed. The AIC program is a pale imitation of the CPA, an obstacle to the building of such a party.

For those pro-Moscow Stalinists who take seriously their political allegiance to what they see as the Soviet bastion of world socialism, there must have been an overwhelming urge to proudly defend the Kremlin's action. But this is precisely what their political allegiance to the Soviet bureaucrats forbids them from doing. The plain fact is that it was only the Trotskyists of the Spartacist League

who were able to say "Hail Red Army!"

Despite the new cold war atmosphere, Moscow still bases its entire policy on the desperate pursuit of detente with US imperialism. Its lackeys in Australia therefore doggedly continue their search for a non-existent "peace-loving" wing of the ruling class to ally with. The bureaucracy headed by Brezhnev can "defend" the socialist property forms on which it rests only by seeking an understanding with the imperialist bourgeoisie. It mortally fears the victorious revolutionary overthrow of imperialism since that would spell its own downfall by giving a mighty impetus to a Soviet workers political revolution aimed at the restoration of genuine soviet democracy.

This contradiction has sharply confronted a small group of young

forces withdrew from Greece. The Stalinist-led partisan movement ELAS (National Popular Liberation Army) had at the time some 50,000 people under arms yet, in accordance with Stalin's policy of ceding Greece to British imperialism, they welcomed British troops into the country in October. On 3 December a month-long battle broke out in Athens between the working class and Greek monarchists backed by the very British forces ELAS had originally welcomed in. During the fighting, the Stalinists coldly murdered 31 Trotskyists, including 2 Central Committee members of one of the groups, Demosthenes Bouzoukis and Nicos Aravantinos, to prevent the Athenian masses from moving in the direction of socialist revolution. In Salonika, far from the fighting, a further 230 revolutionists were executed by the Stalinists. To cap this, ELAS then agreed in February 1945 to disarm in exchange for a promise of legal recognition.

These events in Greece were the direct product of the politics of detente and "peaceful coexistence". Elsewhere the story has been the same: Spain 1936-37, Vietnam 1945, Italy and France in the immediate post-war period, right over to Chile 1973. Detente is a fraud and necessarily leads to betrayal. Writing in



Spartacist League/US drew class line in anti-war movement, calling for victory of Indochinese workers and peasants. Reformists, US liberals said "bring the boys home".

Workers Vanguard

Stalinists in Melbourne, supporters of the pro-Moscow Greek Progressive Youth Alliance (GPYA). Four of them joined the SL contingent on International Women's Day and marched in support of the Red Army's defence of the rights of women against feudal reaction in Afghanistan.

At an SL forum on 15 March, one of their comrades attacked the Trotskyist analysis of the Soviet bureaucracy. His argument was that if there is such a privileged stratum which "has more power than the other people, it is a class. And then if you believe there is a bureaucratic class there, then the Soviet Union is a capitalist state; it cannot be a workers state". To this an SL comrade replied that we Trotskyists are not going to

"turn our back on the greatest revolution that history has seen, that was made by our class, by a party which we identify with, because of the monstrous bureaucratic deformations that do exist there.... You argue the arguments of the Eurocommunists.... And I get the feeling that if perhaps you were convinced that something was wrong with Russia, maybe you would turn your back on Russia too."

The other GPYA supporter defended detente, arguing that this did not mean you could not wage revolutionary war against your own bourgeoisie. Her comrade in particular claimed that to say Stalin betrayed the Greek Communist-led masses after World War II is "a big lie".

The truth however is that the Stalinist policy was one of outright treachery. In September 1944 the Nazi occupation

November 1920 Lenin remarked that "As long as capitalism and socialism remain side by side we cannot live peacefully — the one or the other will be the victor in the end. An obituary will be sung either over the death of world capitalism or the death of the Soviet Republic" (quoted in Leon Trotsky, *The Third International After Lenin*).

How true those words are today! Those who pretend otherwise necessarily undermine the struggle for socialist revolution. So it comes as no surprise to us to discover the GPYA supporters recently attacking our raising of the slogan "victory to the Red Army" at an anti-Fraser rally at Monash University on 27 March as causing "disunity".

The Spartacist League will not jettison the Soviet Red Army and the defence of the USSR for the sake of fictitious "unity" with those on the other side of the class line. As SL spokesman David Grumont put it in his summary at the Melbourne forum:

"We defend the Soviet Union better than the Stalinists. The Stalinists ultimately cannot defend the Soviet Union, because it cannot be defended by peace offensives, by blocs with one bourgeois state or another, by propping up the Ethiopian dictators, by turning the Communist Parties into anything but revolutionary organisations, but only through the struggle for social revolution in the capitalist world.... What we need is a social revolution in the West, and a workers political revolution in the East. And there's only one organisation fighting for that." ■

Britain...

Continued from page 1

the Trades Union Congress (TUC) through to "left" bureaucrats like Yorkshire miners leader Arthur Scargill and Communist Party (CP) officials in the motor and engineering industries. With one or two exceptions earlier in the strike, these cowards have refused to mobilise their ranks to beef up the beleaguered pickets; they have looked the other way as lorry drivers belonging to Britain's largest union, the Transport and General Workers (TGWU), have scabbed; and they have refused to join the steel workers on strike. Despite verbal directives to respect picket lines and black steel shipments, the TUC hasn't the slightest intention of implementing such policies.

At most the union tops have called token 24-hour "days of action", the next of which is scheduled for 14 May, almost seven weeks away! The union leaders well understand that if they called out other sections of the working class in support of the steel strikers, the British economy would quickly grind to a halt, and a political class confrontation with the bosses would rapidly be precipitated. And that is the last thing they and their social-democratic brothers in the Labour Party want.

What is posed most urgently in Britain today is a general strike to smash the Tories' anti-working-class offensive and open the road to a real struggle to put a final end to decaying British capitalism. The Spartacist League/Britain (SL/B) has been actively intervening in the strike with such a perspective and program — and gaining a hearing from steel worker militants looking for a road to victory. But the fake-lefts have capitulated to the bureaucracy's attempts to isolate the strikers, refusing to call for a general strike, and going so far as to apologise for and even participate in the scabbing. The following account of strike action has been compiled by the SL/B from reports from South Yorkshire and other strike centres throughout Britain.

4 March: "What do we want? Twenty percent! How do we get it? General Strike!" chant 2000 steel workers as they march through the streets of Sheffield, Yorkshire after a strike rally. Storming and occupying the local British Steel Corporation Raw Products headquarters, they show what they think of management's latest attempt — widespread distribution of return-to-work ballots to strikers — to force an end to the strike.

5 March: A nervous TUC has intervened in the wake of the Sheffield march to produce a "compromise" union initiative. This sellout deal was drawn up at a delegate conference of union representatives. But at the conference, several delegates from Wales demand that the union claim be extended to halt BSC's planned elimination of 50,000 jobs, while others call for a general strike. But the bureaucrats beat a hasty retreat. The ISTC paper, *Steelworkers Banner*, admits the new claim "will mean negotiating away many jobs". The pay claim too has been reduced to a base rate of about 15 percent over 15 months.

7 March: The TGWU finally instructs its drivers not to cross picket lines, nine weeks into the strike! At strike committee headquarters in South Yorkshire there is great excitement: if they picket key factories and the TGWU men follow directives, the country would grind to a halt. Plans are made to step up picketing at car factories and other major steel users next week.

But later that day a meeting of British Leyland convenors in Coventry votes against calling a strike at the nationalised motor company, even though the workforce had voted down the company's 5 percent offer by two to one. Coachloads of steel workers join Leyland workers to lobby the meeting, but to no avail. The next morning the CP's *Morning Star* endorses the no-strike decision.

9 March: More than 100,000 workers march through London at a TUC demonstration. The union tops are

seeking a diversion. The insipid official banner reads, "The Government Must Change Course Now". Symbolic of the whole exercise, the organisers put the spirited ISTC contingent last among the trade union contingents. But the steel workers still make their presence felt. Every time their struggle is referred to over the loudspeakers, cheers ring out from the crowd. TUC chief Len Murray almost gets booed off the stage by strikers and miners heckling and shouting "General Strike". Most of the "far left" organisations do not mount contingents, while the reformist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) of Tony Cliff refuses to demand a general strike. In contrast, SL supporters march behind a banner reading "Victory to the Steelworkers, General Strike Now". More than 500 copies of *Spartacist Britain* are sold at the demonstration.

10 March: Strikers fan out across the country to step up the picketing. About 20 arrive at Oxford to picket Leyland Cowley, expecting promised assistance from assembly plant deputy convenor and Workers Socialist League (WSL) leader Alan Thornett. A few students appear to help on the picket line as do Spartacist supporters and a couple of militant seamen visiting from the United States. But not Thornett. Much to the disgruntlement of several strikers, this pseudo-revolutionary "leader" is nowhere to be found.

The strikers also discover just how hollow are the TGWU's new instructions. There are far too few pickets, and the vast majority of Cowley workers and TGWU drivers either don't see them or ignore them. The picketers call the local TGWU chief official, David Buckle, who claims he's received no instructions from his national union headquarters. The picketers are furious.

But in Sheffield the same day 400 engineering stewards vote to instruct their members not to cross picket lines. Soon 8000 engineering workers in 16 plants are out, with many joining the picket lines. Finally the strike is spreading!

12 March: The South Yorkshire strike committees try to throw up a mass picket at Hadfields scab private steel plant. One month ago 2000 strikers and Yorkshire miners did manage to shut it down. But this time there are only 700 steel workers and no miners. The pickets are trapped and outmanoeuvred by an equal number of police, who make 73 arrests. After the mass arrests the strikers are marched around for a few hours and finally sent home with nothing accomplished.

These strikers in South Yorkshire bitterly hate the private sector scabs. Yet one "socialist" organisation, the International Marxist Group (IMG), has apologised in its paper for the scabbing at Hadfields (see accompanying article this issue). The IMG has belatedly called for a general strike, but in a subsequent issue of *Socialist Challenge* it proposes that this be held on the 14 May TUC "day of action"!

14 March: A special miners' conference convenes to discuss the question of import controls. The meeting is quickly polarised between delegates advancing diversionary and reactionary protectionism as a way to save jobs and others who seek strike action alongside the steel workers as the only way forward. But the conference passes the official resolution calling for import controls. Left-talking miners' leader "King Arthur" Scargill places himself on the reactionary side of the debate, and doesn't even mention the steel strike in his speech for protectionism.

The same afternoon in Sheffield the CP-dominated district committee of the engineering union votes to call their members back to work across the steel workers' picket lines. But in Manchester 70 delegates from the local strike committees demand that there be no more negotiations until BSC puts 20 percent without strings on the table. They are clearly not ready to give in yet.

21 March: Dockers and shoreside workers at Liverpool vote overwhelmingly to go on strike. The action began the previous day when 100 dockers were

laid off by management for refusing to load scab steel on a ship. Treating this as a lock-out, the 5000 workers on the waterfront vote for immediate all-out indefinite strike action and call for a national docks strike. A Spartacist leaflet distributed to a 23 March mass meeting calls for spreading the action, linking up with the steel workers and for a general strike. The response of the workers is enthusiastic, but the union leaders nationally sit on their hands and do nothing.

Later this evening, Sirs and the BSC management agree to refer the strike to a three-man committee consisting of veteran sell-out union bureaucrat Bill Keys, former Labour government Cabinet member Harold Lever, and a representative from BSC. The committee is to report back before Easter.

22 March: At a public meeting in Rotterdam, SWP leader John Deason is

confronted by SL supporters over the fact that members of his organisation are scabbing on the strike. Deason denies all knowledge: "I don't want to hear allegations about SWPers crossing picket lines. It's in our code of practice not to cross picket lines", he says, referring to the "Rank and File Code of Practice" on strikes. But the allegations are perfectly true, as strikers from Warrington, Teesside and Jarrow who picketed the massive Ford plant at Dagenham, London can testify. For on at least one occasion there, SWP and IMG members went to work in the factory after distributing a Ford Workers Group leaflet which pledged "100 percent support" for a strike victory!

Socialist Worker (1 March) has also come out against the ISTC's correct expulsion of the hardened scabs who work the Sheerness steel plant: "The decision to expel Sheerness workers

As steel strike rages - IMG hobnobs with cops, scabs



Tariq All shoots his mouth off.

"No debate with the Labour Club raiders!" was one of the chants raised by twenty supporters of the Spartacist League/Britain (SL/B) at a protest picket outside the Birmingham University Student Union on 29 February. What was going on inside was a "debate" between Gordon Meredith, chairman of the West Midlands Police Federation, and Tariq Ali, a leader of the International Marxist Group. The topic? "Are the police unnecessarily brutal in enforcing the law?", with Ali, for the affirmative, presumably arguing that the bosses' law can be enforced with only necessary brutality.

Only ten days before, thirty of the cops Meredith represents broke into the Birmingham Labour Club in order to seize files and ransack the offices being used by the Birmingham steel strikers as a co-ordinating centre. Meredith is also the spokesman for the thugs in blue who dragged Kevin Casey, a picket outside the British Leyland plant at Castle Bromwich, off the picket line and beat him unconscious.

The exchange of pleasantries over dinner before their "debate" and the friendly handshake afterwards contrasted sharply with the usual methods employed by these scum — lead truncheons, Alsatian dogs, boots and fists. And as Kevin Casey and numerous other steel strikers, and possibly even two IMG supporters who refused to cross the SL/B picket, could have told "socialist" Ali — who actually wants these professional strikebreakers in the trade unions — the cops are of necessity viciously brutal in enforcing capitalist "law and order". And those "Marxists" prepared to debate them are beneath contempt.

But "discussing" with strikebreakers is no individual quirk of the notoriously opportunistic Ali. The IMG subsequently printed an article on the steel strike in its paper *Socialist Challenge* entitled "Hadfields — The View From Inside", purportedly written by "a Hadfields worker".

Hadfields is none other than the

private steel firm in Sheffield, Yorkshire which has been running a massive strikebreaking operation throughout the course of the strike. Every section of the capitalist class has looked to Hadfields and the other scab private operators as the key to smashing the steel workers' heroic struggle. In response, the militant strikers have fought a whole series of bloody battles with the cops and employers in a bid to shut Hadfields down. Up to two thousand pickets, including miners from nearby coalfields, have regularly turned out to stop the scabs getting into the plant. These clashes and the ensuing mass arrests have graphically underlined that the meaning of the picket line is simple: Don't Cross! The class line in the British steel strike has been drawn very powerfully at the Hadfields factory: those who go in are nothing but scabs and company stooges.

Only a blackleg could know, therefore, what Hadfields looks like "from inside". Yet this scab writer has the gall to implicitly blame the steel strikers for the fact that Hadfields is still working with his insidious call for the strikers to "put out leaflets explaining the need for solidarity"! As if mass pickets fighting to shut Hadfields down wasn't a clear enough call "for solidarity"! By printing such an article, the IMG shows not only that it welcomes scabs as correspondents, but that it endorses the policy of working in a struck plant.

But the response of the strikers who enthusiastically bought every available copy of the last issue of *Australasian Spartacist* being sold by our British comrades — the issue with the article "Picket Lines Mean Don't Cross" — shows that the working class respects those who know which side of the class line they stand on. The IMG's disgusting activity shows convincingly in contrast that it is no friend of the working class but a cynical, opportunist outfit which openly tolerates scabs and strikebreakers in its midst. ■

from the ISTC is nothing but an admission of defeat".

27 March: Sensing a sellout in the works, steel strikers are angry and frustrated. The capitalists show no sign of halting their offensive, however. Michael Edwardes, top executive of British Leyland, announces that he is imposing a 5 percent wage "increase" — complete with strings — on the workforce. This is too much even for the bureaucrats who voted *not* to strike three weeks before. A national strike is called in response ... but not to begin until 8 April. Between now and then, the union leaders are clearly hoping to cook up some compromise deal.

Edwardes' response? To declare that anyone who works 8 April will be deemed to have accepted the 5 percent, whereas those who don't will be considered to have broken their contracts with the firm. In addition he is offering 200 pounds [\$400] to anyone who shows up for work.

These massive assaults on the working class of Britain can be beaten back. But only through all-out militant strike action. The future of the union movement in the country could well depend on the outcome of the steel battle — either defeat and an open door for ever deeper Tory attacks, or a sweeping victory which could open up a perspective for a struggle for proletarian power. Step up the picketing, bring out the miners, the rest of the dockers and the car workers. Demand that the TUC call a general strike! Sack Sirs and other union traitors! Forge a revolutionary leadership, a communist, Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party, to lead the working class to power! ■

Anti-union laws...

Continued from page 12

down, most of the state in support of a longstanding claim for a 35-hour week.

The workers won no victories, sold out, as usual, by timid, servile officials like the Storeman and Packers' Simon Crean. The concessions these reformists accepted were pretty paltry — a few dollars for the storemen; an evasion of the Trade Practices Act, which only prompted Fraser to redraft the law and plug up the loop-hole; a semantic shuffle in Hamer's compo law; nothing more than an agreement from Joh Bjelke-Petersen to talk, period, to union negotiators. If the Socialist Workers Party thinks this was a great "Blow to Fraser's anti-union drive!" (*Direct Action*, 26 March), what must they think is a defeat? But despite this, under pressure from members suffering from recession and Fraser's austerity, the unions dared to act against the anti-union legal arsenal; and while Fraser stormed, nothing happened. Even Petersen never implemented state-of-emergency measures against the power workers and after only two days agreed to what he vowed never to do only last November.

Even the bosses are getting fed up. "Where was the IRB [Industrial Relations Bureau] when the woolmen hit?", asked *Australian* columnist Malcolm Colless (24 March), pointing out that the storemen had defied an Arbitration ruling and therefore this putative industrial police force could have acted. If Fraser won't bite the bullet and act on his

threats he should quit provoking the unions, the capitalists grumble. What good are anti-union laws if they can't be used?

The would-be stern patriarch Fraser must envy Khomeini. The ayatollah of Nareen can't get away with it. In the bourgeois-democratic, "softly-softly" system of class rule, Arbitration Commissions invested with the myth of "neutrality", and a deeply rooted, treacherous union bureaucracy, not "Islamic revolutionaries" with automatic weapons, are the day-to-day instruments for keeping workers in line. And the recession/austerity have not yet generated a social crisis in this country deep enough for the capitalists to want to give up the advantages of such institutions and methods. So when Fraser went after Moore for sanctioning the TWU-Amoco deal, Moore let him know he was out of line, as did "highly placed advisers, some outside the Government" who according to Colless talked Fraser into the "realisation that [he] has to live with the commission".

The fact remains that the labour movement has just seen a fleeting and muted instance of its potential social power, and caught a glimpse of how Fraser has used the anti-union laws to bluff. The union bureaucrats have used them too — to awe the rank and file out of determined strike action. The class enemy is vicious, but the laws themselves are not the real threat; if it becomes necessary to defend their profits, they will shoot first and pass the laws later. Rather than being intimidated, it is necessary to be prepared.

The Trade Practices Act, the IRB and the rest are an attack on the democratic right of unions to defend workers, and as long as they remain on the books they remain a palpable threat. Had they been crushed in the egg as they could have been by a general strike, the workers movement would not now have to confront this threat in every important strike before their demands even get on the table. By letting them get by, Hawke and

his ilk committed a crime; but then, if they had acted for victory it would have become a lot harder to hold the workers back.

It is this fear which compels the union tops to refuse a serious fight even when it is clear they could easily win. A solid general strike in Victoria could have stopped Hamer — who managed to offend practically everyone in the state by attacking widows and orphans — in a couple of days; but Ken Stone and the Trades Hall crew, including the Socialist Left (where were they?), knew that things wouldn't have stopped there. It took only two days for the power workers to bring Queensland close to a total halt; they had Petersen, only the bureaucrats let go without gaining a thing.

In the wool strike, the storemen were hamstrung by Crean's insistence that 1350 out of 1800 wool stores workers in the union go back to work after the first few weeks. While the bosses have been aggressive with the growing phenomenon of paramilitary strikebreaking squads like the graziers', the bureaucrats refuse to organise mass picket lines to stop scabs. The conservative TWU officials tried to pretend the petrol strike was really not an attack on Section 45D; it was only to protect the jobs of Amoco drivers.

The Australian labour movement has the strength to smash the anti-union laws and beat back Fraser's austerity. But if it succeeded, things could not stop there either. The recession with its lengthening dole queues is rooted in capitalism; and the Frasers would bide their time and strike back. And then they will succeed in taking back the gains, as long as labour is saddled with a leadership committed to defend "free enterprise". Bill Hayden, if he ever gets in, will not put things right; from his ilk workers can expect only what Queensland power workers got from state Labor leader Ed Casey, who demanded that they return to work immediately: a stab in the back. The working class cannot stop short of state power, and that struggle requires a revolutionary workers party. ■

Postal militant breaks with dead-end rank and filism

Letter to APTU members

During the recent election a leaflet was distributed bearing my name. I now have some very basic disagreements with the policies outlined in that leaflet. As it was the "stated" basis for my election even though I was unopposed I now feel that it is necessary for me to resign.

The leaflet presented strategies such as lightning strikes and bans, addressed the question of rights and conditions in a random "single issue" manner and neglected to address the key questions such as the defeat of the Mail Network Plan.

Such an approach can only lead to more defeats of postal workers. The tactic of lightning strikes, bans and partial "strikes" is not one that has or will win anything worthwhile for the trade union movement. The last dispute was a prime example of this. That dispute was derailed from the very beginning by the defeatist attitude of the leadership who were unwilling to call for or organise support from other sections of our union, even when it was offered. The drivers committee pinpointed most places that bypassing was occurring and offered to stop it. A Newcastle Mail Centre representative said he was willing to move to ban mail bypassed to them — in both cases they were told not to bother. The fact that some workers were on full pay, some stood down because of action of others and some working with no pay, allowed AP to pit worker against worker.

Australia Post is systematically wrecking our union and our conditions with the introduction of the MNP. What was needed was a united statewide strike action led by elected strike committees to smash the MNP, defend and extend our conditions and unite our union.

Not only our union, but the entire trade union movement is now faced with a government bent on destroying the trade unions' ability to defend the workers of Australia; a government well armed with

a vicious array of anti-union legislation such as the CEEP act and Section 45D which makes illegal any industrial action which is directed against anyone except your immediate employer; the TWU was recently threatened with fines of up to ¼ million dollars for merely blackbanning a scab petrol supplier. If Section 45D had been in existence in 1976 when the APTU gave support to a PKIU strike by blackbanning Fairfax mail our union could have been financially crippled.

The CEEP act has been repeatedly threatened or used to smash unions' struggles in the ATEA, PSA and against our union only last year. This legislation and the government behind them must be defeated and replaced by a workers government. The present leaders of the working class — Hawke, Hayden and their lap dogs such as Kanan and Hawkins will always divert and sell us out, by their constant retreats to the conciliation and arbitration commission, and the law courts of Australia.

An alternative must be posed to these people. It is not just a question of who is the better labour bureaucrat ie Hayden rather than Hawke or Hawkins rather than Kanan, which is the only solution many of the "left" in our union sees — but it is instead a question of finding a leadership whose interest is in the victory of the workers and not in the creation of cushy jobs for themselves or in who is going to win the next election. With the ever increasing attacks by the bosses the only way permanent gains will be made by workers will be by building a workers party dedicated to the eventual overthrow of capitalism.

This is a brief statement of the positions I now hold and if in the future I run for a position in this union it will be on this basis that I ask for support.

Jenny Murray
20 March 1980

Redfern...

Continued from page 12

"campaign" which centred on a log of claims for the IMSOs! For these two, support to Hawkins' sellouts is par for the course.

At the same time, elections to the Mail Branch executive were taking place, contested by several tickets differing mainly over which bureaucratic faction to line up with. Boland and Carey's "United Postal Action Team" of Hawkins/Battese loyalists, which deserved no support from postal militants, won on a program of minimal shop floor reforms well within the framework of the MNP. They celebrated their "victory" with a party ... the night after the bureaucrats' RME "meetings" accepted the surrender.

The "Rank and File Group" also issued no call to smash the MNP, either at the meetings or in the elections. Some members stood on a ticket for shop floor delegate positions. Their election platform called for "short, lightning stoppages and work to rule campaigns: tactics which maximise the effect on Australia Post but minimise the sacrifice of members" to defend conditions. In fact, such tactics have virtually no effect on the bosses, merely demoralising the workers in an endless series of useless short strikes. They are the tactics of bureaucrats designed to let off steam and to give the impression of doing something while in reality doing nothing. Only an all-out strike can defeat the MNP, the central question at the moment. This ticket of "Rank and File" office-seekers ignored this burning need and all other programmatic questions in favour of demands to get rid of polypropylene bags and for a shoe allowance. No worker

should have cast a vote for this grossly inadequate, sub-reformist program.

Writing in 1936 to British socialist Hugo Dewar, Trotsky accurately foretold the fate in store for those individuals of the Rank and File Group who won in the elections:

"The fact that many comrades from your group occupy positions in the Labour Party or the trade unions is without revolutionary significance, because these comrades represent no definite program, but have been elected only on the basis of their individual activity. All historical experience teaches that this is the shortest way to get absorbed into the reformist bureaucracy."

— *Writings*, 1935-36, p 265

One candidate, Jenny Murray, came to recognise the truth of this position and broke with the ticket, issuing a "Letter to APTU members" reprinted in this issue.

Even though the APTU tops have forced through acceptance of the MNP, there is still significant disgruntlement with and opposition to AP's wholesale assault on working conditions. The MNP can be halted even yet, but only through all-out state and nationwide strike action. But to mount such militant action Redfern workers need a new, revolutionary leadership within the union, one which won't meekly turn the other cheek when the AP bosses slap workers around, but which will fight for a program of demands which meet postal workers' needs. Smash the MNP — down with the bypass system! End induction-type shifts — full union rights for all mail workers now! 30 hours work for 40 hours pay — jobs for all! End the indexation freeze — for across-the-board wage increases now with full automatic, monthly indexing! And to win these demands all-out strike action to be led by elected rank-and-file strike committees. Oust the bureaucrats — for a revolutionary Trotskyist leadership! ■

Rhodesia...

Continued from page 1

Nothing could illustrate more graphically our pre-election characterisation of Mugabe and his erstwhile rival Joshua Nkomo as "aspiring black bourgeois bonapartes who, in power, would quickly reveal themselves as vicious enemies of the working masses" (*Australasian Spartacist* no 71, February/March 1980). With the "Marxist" mask now ripped away, the true face of Mugabe's neo-colonialist commitment to capitalist property and stability is plain for all to see.

On every question the ZANU boss has gone out of his way to reassure world imperialism and the Rhodesian white settlers that he has no "socialist" designs up his sleeve. "Those people who talk about nationalising or seizing property have not read us correctly. We will proceed to bring changes but in a realistic manner", he proclaimed on the morrow of his victory (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 5 March). The character of his "realistic" changes can best be gauged by the fact that on the key question of land reform, Mugabe has appointed as Minister of Agriculture none other than the president of the 5300-strong white Rhodesian Commercial Farmers Union! The only "reform" mooted so far is a proposal originally advanced by former front-man for the white regime, Bishop Abel Muzorewa, to purchase 11 million acres of land underutilised or abandoned by whites who took the "chicken run" and got out during the guerrilla war.

To cap this Mugabe also confirmed Walls as commander-in-chief of the new army. And in a disgusting display of servility towards his imperialist overlords, he recently ordered the racist "security forces" to "place under military discipline" 600 of his own ZANU followers for allegedly "terrorising" white farmers east of Salisbury.

Imperialists back Mugabe

Far from being "a day of joyous celebration" and "a severe blow for the imperialists" as the fake-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party disgustingly claimed (*Direct Action*, 12 March), the imperialists welcomed the Rhodesia elections as the last chance for a relatively peaceful transition to a neo-colonial Zimbabwe, safe for capitalist exploitation. And while the diplomats in the London Foreign Office and the Pentagon may have privately preferred "moderate" nationalist Nkomo, who only held on to his tribal homeland of Matabeleland, they know they can deal just as well with the latter-sounding Mugabe. As the London *Economist* noted in its 8 March issue:

"Some men who used the rhetoric of the left while working for their countries' independence disavowed it when they came to power. Jomo Kenyatta and Hastings Banda were once African socialists. Lee Kuan Yew, of prosperous, capitalist Singapore, was once widely thought to be a communist."

There is a reason why the imperialist press is now lauding Mugabe, who used to be denounced as a terrorist monster, as a great statesman. As *Newsweek* (24 March) frankly explained, "The West's stake in Mugabe extends beyond Rhodesia's borders. Over the long term, a stable, majority-ruled Zimbabwe could eventually encourage South Africa's rulers to negotiate with their own black moderates, thus heading off a possible civil war." The US and British imperialists have always been preoccupied with the need to stabilise South Africa as the reactionary imperialists bastion in the

region, and their more far-sighted representatives have long perceived that the defence of Rhodesia's thin caste of white colons was secondary to this.

Can Mugabe pull it off for his imperialist masters? The imperialist-sponsored elections, held under a constitution which guaranteed the 4 percent white minority 20 percent of the parliamentary seats and a virtual 10-year ban on amendments, could only have been a fraud for the black masses who voted. The fundamental conflict between the toiling masses and the white colonialist caste still exists and cannot be held in suspension indefinitely. Twice in the immediate post-World War

system. Aghast at the electoral annihilation of Bishop Muzorewa in the February poll, the pro-government newspaper *Vaderland* has also drawn the lesson and is urging Botha to jettison the existing policy of talking only to the "traditional leaders" of the black community, and to start talking with the "true leaders" instead.

But though these measures are denounced by the *verkrampste* (hardline) wing of the party led by former premier John Vorster as pernicious "reforms" which will spell the end of apartheid, the proposed policies are in fact simply an attempt to overhaul the mechanisms



Robert Mugabe, neo-colonialist "Marxist", reassures the white minority he has no socialist designs up his sleeve.

II period, the black workers paralysed Rhodesian industry — once in the 1945 railway strike and again in the 1948 general strike. Now earning *one-eleventh* the wages of whites, these workers are not going to be fobbed off with a handful of empty promises. What Mugabe fears most of all is a repetition of the 1945/1948 events — hence the speed with which he moved to curb the recent strike wave.

On the other hand, the 230,000 armed white settlers who stuck out the war are not going to suddenly, and without a struggle, relinquish their land, their servants and their lifestyle just for the sake of imperialist *realpolitik*. The widespread fears of a white-led coup following the elections could easily materialise, although for the time being whites are adopting a "wait-and-see" attitude. Within the black guerrilla camp, there remains as well the tribal enmity between Nkomo's Matabele base and the Mashona followers of Mugabe which could lead to the sort of conflict which erupted into tribalist war in Angola in 1975. And with the British imperialist forces still directly involved — with Mugabe's blessing — in their attempt to establish a stable neo-colony, the stage is set for a bloody, many-sided civil war.

In the face of a white-led coup attempt Marxists would stand for the military victory of the black nationalist forces. We want to see the blood-drenched racialists crushed, but not one iota of political support to the proven traitors Mugabe and Nkomo. Unlike these petty-bourgeois misleaders we say, get the imperialist troops, cops and colonial administrators out now! Down with General Walls — smash white supremacist rule!

South African black workers key

Reacting with alarm to Mugabe's victory, South African prime minister PW Botha and the so-called *verligte* ("enlightened") elements within the ruling National Party are stepping up their efforts to streamline the apartheid

of apartheid *the better to control and exploit* the black working class. Witness the hardline approach taken to the guerrilla struggle in Namibia, and the recent rounding up of hundreds of blacks in Johannesburg for violating the iniquitous pass laws.

Black labour is the Achilles heel of the apartheid system. It is the one area where blacks have a social power the white rulers cannot suppress purely and simply through police-state terror. In early 1973, for example, the black workers of Durban went out on strike and won a series of wage demands. Despite the fury of the capitalists, the government was simply unable to drown in blood the Durban strikes. To have done so would have required a level of violence close to civil war.

In the wake of the 1976 Soweto uprising and the protests which followed the torture-killing of black nationalist leader

Steve Biko in autumn 1977, the Pretoria government fears acutely a repetition of the Durban events on a larger, better organised, more politically conscious level. And with the morale of the black masses undoubtedly bolstered by what they see as the imminent fall of white supremacism in Rhodesia, the apartheid rulers are desperately trying to create a black labour aristocracy, co-opt a black labour bureaucracy, and thus control black militancy. The various "liberalisation" proposals advanced by the government-established Wiehahn and Riekert commissions have as their purpose the creation of an economically and legally privileged caste among urban blacks analogous to the bantustan bureaucracy (see *Workers Vanguard* no 248, 25 January 1980).

Mugabe's ZANU was able to achieve its current position in part because the white settler caste in Rhodesia, massively outnumbered 24-to-1, was too thin and brittle to hold on to political power. Always precariously placed at the very top of Rhodesian society, the imperialists knew that this stratum could be removed from a position of political dominance without fundamentally altering the capitalist character of the economy.

But a neo-colonialist option which gives blacks governmental power while preserving intact capitalist property relations is not open to the imperialists in South Africa. For here the system of apartheid rule is inextricably bound up with an economic infrastructure of super-exploitation and totally militarised and segregated black labour. The 5 million whites (in a population of 23 million) will not be toppled by bantustan revolts and guerrilla attacks on white farms scattered across the veld. It is the black proletariat which works the mines of the Rand and the docks of Durban and Capetown which has the capacity to break the chains of apartheid and overturn the capitalist state through the struggle for a black-centred workers and peasants government.

Their victory would signal the emancipation of all the oppressed masses of the area, opening up the road to a socialist federation of southern Africa. But this goal will not be accomplished by black nationalists whose only aspiration is to be the neo-colonialist political houseboys of world imperialism. Only a revolutionary Trotskyist party, section of a reformed Fourth International, which bases itself on the program of permanent revolution can lead the oppressed masses to liberation. ■

Letter from APTU militant

Sydney
26 March, 1980
Comrades,

Last July postal workers suffered a great defeat. Led by the Hawkins/Battese officials of the NSW Australian Postal and Telecommunications Union (APTU) and supported by such "militants" as Lynda Boland, supporter of the SWP and Brian Carey, supporter of the CPA, Redfern workers were led into a slaughter. The union defend our conditions but instead a tactic of bans on the running of mail to Wollongong and Canberra. This allowed Australia Post to stand down more than two-thirds of the Redfern workforce while the others still worked. Not only were some Redfern members still working but all the country mail centres along with the suburban post offices continued sorting mail.

The leadership of our union condoned the handling of banned mail by-passed from one section of the union to another. At this time Joe Kanan was a member of this leadership and he offered no alternatives. In the subsequent union elections Kanan ran an opposition ticket to the officials. Disgust at the do-nothing, scabbing Hawkins officials led me to vote against them and for Kanan, but I now see that this was a mistake. Kanan has shown over these past few months that he has nothing to offer APTU members

except speed-up of the MNP, and dismantling of Redfern. What is needed is a class struggle opposition within the union that will fight for postal workers' jobs and conditions. An opposition that will fight the bosses' government whether Liberal or Labor, and the arbitration system and struggle for a workers government.

From reading your paper I find that yours is the only one that offers a fighting analysis of the postal workers' struggles and of the broader political questions facing the working class.

Fraternally,
Peter Tiernan

Revolutionary Literature

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Union militant sues US Secret Service

Agents of the US Secret Service, Jimmy Carter's personal palace guard, invaded the floor of a national union convention last July and dragged off screaming an elected woman delegate, Jane Margolis. She was taken to a back room where she was handcuffed, interrogated, threatened with arrest and held incommunicado while the convention proceeded. This outrage was more than an unprecedented attack on the democratic rights of all delegates and members of the one-million strong Communication Workers of America (CWA), the union of US telephone workers. It was an attack on the entire labour movement, a Gestapo-like attempt to silence this well-known militant and union leader's criticism of the anti-labour policies of the "Human Rights" president when he appeared at the convention that day.

Carter's Secret Service thugs thought they could get away with it, making intimidation and suppression of political dissent and criticism easier next time. But they underestimated Jane Margolis and misjudged the temper of the labour movement. Margolis has a long history as a militant labour leader. Currently a steward and Executive Board member in CWA Local 9415, the San Francisco branch of the union, she has also served on the Executive Board of CWA Local 9410 in Oakland, California. She has been a leader of the Militant Action Caucus (MAC), a class-struggle opposition grouping in the CWA, for seven years, and this was the second CWA national convention where she served as an elected delegate. Immediately after she was seized by Secret Service agents, over seven hundred phone workers signed telegrams of protest. They were joined by other unionists and labour organisations, including the South Coast Labor Council and the Newcastle Waterside Workers Federation in NSW, which both sent telegrams denouncing the assault on Margolis (see *Australasian Spartacist* no 66, August 1979).

Retaining noted trial lawyer Charles Garry, Margolis has launched an unprecedented lawsuit against the Secret Service which, in the words of her legal complaint, "challenges in principle the government's interference with, and attempt to politically control, the trade-union movement". In its preliminary statement the complaint points out that "Governmental invasion into the union movement has become routine.... But this case concerns a special form of governmental intervention, intended to control the political climate of the trade unions in order to achieve specific ends. This case concerns governmental intervention designed to influence and predetermine the outcome of deliberations of the unions, to secure political advantage for particular government programs, and to stage a show of political support for government officials, in the present case for the President."

Carter was appearing at the CWA convention in a desperate attempt to shore up his popularity ratings which had just hit an all-time low (lower even than Nixon's after Watergate) in the wake of the oil monopolies' ripoff "energy crisis". The night before he had preached on nationwide TV that the answer to recession, inflation and petrol queues was more austerity ... and prayer. Margolis

was on the list of delegates to speak during the allotted "question time", and Carter had no intention of allowing embarrassing questions.

His thugs singled out Margolis for good reason. As she explained at a November press conference announcing the court suit, her intentions to speak out against Carter's policies were

"known and expected, since at last year's convention I had spoken against his use of the Taft-Hartley law in an attempt to break the miners strike and about his threats to use Taft-Hartley against a national phone strike. In my campaign literature ... I had talked about how we must smash Carter's wage freeze and that the workers should not have any confidence in what I consider to be the anti-labor, strikebreaking Democratic and Republican parties, and why we need a workers party."

It is the commitment of Margolis and MAC to such a clear program of uncompromising class struggle that has enabled her to win the confidence of the thousands of phone workers she represented at the convention, and to fight against the pro-capitalist, pro-Carter, pro-imperialist policies of the bureaucrats who mislead the CWA.

State out of the unions!

Aside from its unequalled brazenness, the assault on Margolis was no isolated incident. Only a few weeks after the CWA convention the Secret Service mobilised to forcibly prevent members of the International Association of Machinists (a US metal workers union) from confronting Carter over his energy policies. And state intervention into organised labour to suppress workers' militancy has a long and bitter history, reaching back in the US to the 19th century frame-up executions of the "Molly Maguires", Pennsylvania coal mining militants, by the same notorious strikebreaking Pinkerton agency that also founded the Secret Service. Australian workers are all too familiar with such attacks by the bosses' state, from Billy Hughes' deportation of communist union leaders in the 1920s right through to the jailing of Clarrie O'Shea and Fraser's anti-union legal arsenal.

After Watergate, the voices of liberalism cried out for "reform" of capitalism's secret police — though never to get rid of them, of course. The resulting cosmetic "restraints" on the CIA and FBI, the better-known cousins of the Secret Service, have already proven a worthless deception. Under the impact of the Afghanistan and Iran crises Carter has introduced legislation not only freeing the spy agencies from previous minimal restraints, but for the first time legally shielding the scum who staff these agencies from exposure (just as Fraser has done for ASIO).

UCASSH needs cash

The Margolis case takes on added importance in the context of these calls to return to the days of the McCarthy era. And it forms a sharp contrast to the rose-coloured reformism of the US Socialist Workers Party (SWP), whose "Socialist Watersuit" against political police harassment is grounded in liberal worshipfulness toward the institutions of bourgeois authority. Only months after their own exposure of massive Secret Service spying (eg taping and photographing an entire convention of the SWP's youth group! — *Militant*, 4 June 1976), the SWP's 1976 candidate in the presidential elections, Peter Camejo, was demanding Secret Service protection!

Outraged members of CWA Locals 9410 and 9415 have formed the Union Committee Against Secret Service Harassment (UCASSH) to support the

Jon P. Fishback



August 1979: Secret Service thugs drag Jane Margolis off floor of her union convention.

suit. UCASSH has already generated significant support and numerous endorsements from CWA locals and other unions throughout the country and from many prominent individuals committed to the defence of democratic rights. One Oakland official of the United Electrical Workers union, in endorsing the UCASSH campaign, said that the Secret Service's ham-fisted repression brought to mind the 1950s McCarthyite anti-labour witchhunts. Executive Board members of Teamsters Local 9 in the San Francisco/Oakland area told UCASSH supporters they were not surprised; their own local union is currently suing the FBI for illegal breaking and entry!

This is no ordinary lawsuit: the independence of labour from coercive state

control is at issue. But where does a phone worker get the money to sue the government? The federal government can mobilise enormous resources, including legions of Justice Department lawyers paid for at taxpayers' expense. They can render any legal action — no matter how just the cause or clear-cut the issues — a long and costly battle. Whether or not the Secret Service gets away with its outrage against labour depends on the Margolis suit receiving broad financial support from the workers movement. We call upon all those committed to the defence of the fundamental democratic rights at stake in this case, and all those committed to the defence of the independence of the labour movement, to endorse UCASSH and send a contribution.■

Support the Margolis case

Enclosed is my contribution of \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Organisation: _____

Affiliation: _____

Make cheques/money orders payable to:

Union Committee Against Secret Service Harassment or UCASSH

Send endorsements and contributions direct to

UCASSH,
PO Box 12324,
San Francisco, CA
94112 USA

Spartacist League

MELBOURNE.....(03) 62-5135
GPO Box 2339,
Melbourne, Vic, 3001

SYDNEY.....(02) 235-8195
GPO Box 3473,
Sydney, NSW, 2001



Down with the Arbitration system!

Smash all anti-union laws!

Worldwide, they're "perhaps the greatest single threat to economic health and the economic and political freedoms of individual citizens", ranted Malcolm Fraser. This time his candidate for enemy of the "free world" was the unions, not the Red Army troops defending women's rights in Afghanistan. He was speaking at Monash University, where he was the target of eggs, tomatoes and bread rolls as 500 students held back by 450 cops demonstrated against his government's savage education cutbacks. And he was in a rage because in a recent spate of strikes his labour-hating government had come off looking bungling and indecisive, instead of generating the union-bashing election issue he hoped for.

When the Arbitration Commission Full Bench slashed a \$12.50-to-\$15.90 wage rise granted to grossly underpaid (\$166 per week) wool industry storemen by the "maverick" Justice Staples to a flat \$8, they went on strike and stayed out for 9 weeks. But the greedy bosses held out, looking to Fraser who has been telling employers that they could count on him to back them up. He gave them nothing but words, and the woolbrokers threatened to break the strike themselves. Grazier Ian McLachlan, who organised the scab army of farmers which smashed picket lines during the live meat export dispute two years ago, was preparing to try it again to "move the wool" out to irate overseas

buyers. Only then did Fraser take over the dispute, and talked them out of "direct action"; in the upshot about half of the Arbitration pay cut was restored.

In the midst of the "wool crisis", Sydney petrol tanker drivers struck, shutting off all petrol deliveries in the urban areas of NSW. Here the strike was provoked by a court action against the union under the notorious Section 45D of Fraser's anti-union Trade Practices Act prohibiting "secondary boycotts" — ie, all sympathy strikes and black bans. Last July small-time boss Leon Laidely, who runs a contract trucking business, had tried to take over some petrol deliveries traditionally carried out by company drivers employed directly by Amoco. The Transport Workers Union (TWU) retaliated by black banning all deliveries from Amoco to Laidely, who went to court (with the bosses' Petroleum Agents and Distributors Association footing the bill) and got an injunction.

The Amoco drivers walked out in protest. While Labor traitor Wran promptly banned all petrol sales in order to give police the power to regulate distribution to "emergency" cases, Fraser blustered and raged. But Amoco caved in and bypassed 45D by refusing to sell Laidely the petrol — a deal worked out under the auspices of Sir John Moore, head of the Arbitration Commission. Next Fraser tried to force Moore to renege on



Independent truckies' anti-union picket at Amoco to defend Laidely.

the deal and reopen the hearings — and was turned down flat.

These were only the two most significant nationally of a series of struggles constituting something of a strike wave. In Victoria one and two day stoppages organised by the Trades Hall Council against Hamer's attempt to cut workers

compensation awards successively cut power supplies, paralysed transport, and spread into some sections of white collar workers who had never been on strike before. At the end of March a shortlived strike by Queensland power workers blacked out, and threatened to shut

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APTU tops on their knees

Mail Network Plan surrender

Nine months after selling out last July's struggle by postal workers at Sydney's Redfern Mail Exchange (RME) against the Mail Network Plan (MNP), the NSW state executive of the Australian Postal and Telecommunications Union (APTU) have come out and openly accepted this union-busting scheme. The way is now open for Australia Post (AP) to break up and disperse the most militant and powerful concentration of postal workers in the country, eliminating many of their rights and conditions and cutting their take-home pay. Dropping all pretence of opposition to the MNP, the APTU tops did what AP could not do alone, forcing its acceptance through a series of stop-work meetings held at RME in mid-March.

The capitulation was precipitated by AP's threat to begin transferring out 800 to 1000 mail officers by March this year. The bosses asked every RME mail officer to complete a form stating their choice of future location under the MNP, threatening that all would have to apply for transfer by 1983 when RME would close. Until the construction of its Permanent Mail Centres, AP has set up "Interim Mail Sorting Offices" (IMSOs) at which workers will be forced to "work as directed" — a form of speed-up to replace the present roster system. Basic amenities will be lacking as well and pay

will be cut by the removal of Sunday overtime and the reduction of annual recreation leave. More workers will have to work the unpopular late afternoon shifts, and the IMSO network will also permit the immediate downgrading of the RME to little more than another IMSO itself.

Should RME workers mount a struggle against its attack on the militant centre of their union, AP is much better prepared to bypass it than it was last July. To beat this scab bypass system the APTU would need to call an *all-out nationwide postal strike* drawing in every driver, postman and mail officer to smash the MNP lock-stock-and-barrel and defend and recoup conditions.

But nothing strikes fear into the hearts of cowardly pro-capitalist trade-union bureaucrats more than the prospect of real struggle. The union leadership's lack of action had made a joke of their previous verbal opposition to the MNP. What could they say to demoralised mail officers who applied for out-transfers? So on 4 March assistant state secretary Paul Watson issued a circular announcing that "the APTU will not oppose the introduction of permanent mail centres as previously stated by AP in various areas of the Sydney Metropolitan Area". In return they meekly asked AP not to proceed with the introduction of IMSOs,

but the bosses were not interested and gave them nothing to sell to the ranks except a couple of minor crumbs and a worthless promise of further discussions.

When it came to informing those who had to pay directly for this sellout — the Redfern workers themselves — the bureaucrats announced that they were adhering to the AP policy that the meetings would be paid ones only if they were purely "informational", with no discussions or motions allowed. Both the Hawkins/Battese "lefts" and the rival Kanan/Watson clique on the state executive believed "we are fighting a losing battle" and predictably had no proposals to put to the ranks other than surrender. Neither had their various "leftist" camp followers who, with just a couple of exceptions, were unable even to get up and oppose the fact that acceptance was being grossly undemocratically forced through, without a vote being taken.

After the sellout last July we warned:

"the APTU ranks must recognise that every brand of labour reformist, no matter how 'socialist' or 'militant' in name, is fundamentally committed to a program of class collaboration". (*Australasian Spartacist*, no 66, August 1979)

Only those militants armed with this understanding and rejecting support to any faction of the bureaucracy were able

to provide a coherent opposition from the floor, moving that the meetings be opened up for motions and discussion, with pay. Said one,

"Our leadership talks a lot about unity, but they want unity to do nothing. Last year when Newcastle workers wanted unity the state executive sat on their pleas. I want unity in strike action state-wide to smash the MNP and win and extend our conditions."

Despite gaining significant support, these motions were lost. The feuding cliques always claimed lack of "unity" between the various sections of the union prevented any action against the MNP, or to defend the Newcastle workers, whose abandonment this paper exposed (*Australasian Spartacist* supplement, 7 February). But at least they have found "unity" among themselves on one point — betrayal. Slater, Hawkins, Kanan etc — all the betrayers must go!

The night before the RME meetings, Hawkins, at a joint council meeting of drivers, postmen, country centres and mail officers, opposed continuation of the moribund ban on the IMSOs in favour of an Arbitration hearing. Socialist Workers Party supporter Lynda Boland and Communist Party supporter Brian Carey also accepted the MNP but instead of the Arbitration hearing proposed a

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