

An Entebbe planned by an Idi Amin: Crazed Carter drives towards World War III

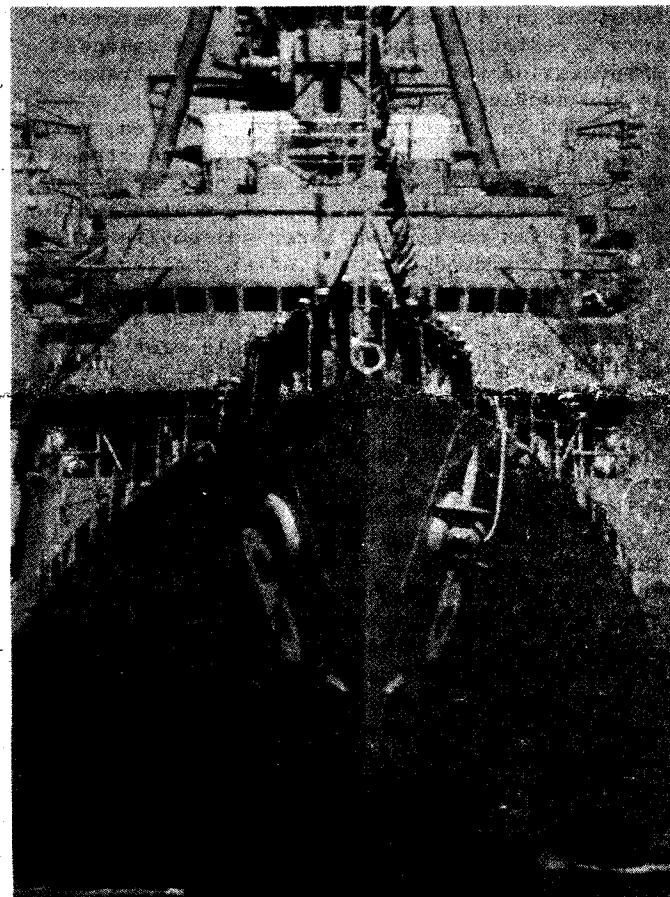
Helicopters and imperialist humiliation: the flaming wreckage of Carter's panicky fiasco at a remote spot in the Iranian desert at the anniversary of the fall of Saigon in April 1975. Five years ago, a defeated US imperialist army cut and ran in embarrassed retreat, scrambling to get out, losers dangling from the skids of helicopters that couldn't wait. That victory for the heroic workers and peasants of Vietnam was,

London embassy imbroglio ... p 5

for US imperialism, 'not merely a humiliation but a defeat of historic importance, setting the stage for the present melodramatic debacle in the desert.

'Bold mission', says the capitalist press, 'daring commando raid' or at worst 'brave blunder'. Brave? This was a cowardly act that left equipment, secret documents and above all the bodies of the dead behind, abandoned on the sands of the Kavir. After the panicky flight, the White House blustered rightly about the 'moral depravity' of displaying the charred bodies for TV cameras at the US embassy compound. But it was the American government and military that displayed their own cowardice, a special kind of cowardice bred in imperialist

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Behind the charred bodies and wrecked helicopters of Carter's Entebbe stunt nuclear-armed Sixth Fleet stalks the Persian gulf

Forward to the British October! Leninist fusion

Three months after being expelled from the Workers Socialist League (WSL) for its defence of the Trotskyist programme, the Leninist Faction (LF) met in joint national conference with the Spartacist League (SL), where the two organisations resolved to combine forces in the struggle for a Trotskyist party in Britain and the rebirth of the Fourth International. The deep-going character of this fusion was reflected not only in the extent of prior political agreement, tested through intensive programmatic discussions and a period of joint work, but in the full role played by the comrades in debating tasks and perspectives for the fused organisation in the coming period.

After months of factional struggle by the LF (and its predecessor, the Left Tendency) against the WSL's enthusing over Islamic 're-

volution' in Iran, unprincipled manoeuvres with revisionist fake-Internationals and shameless support to scabbing, the WSL leadership had only one 'political' reply to these comrades -- bureaucratic expulsion. The WSL's loss was Trotskyism's gain. Though substantially smaller than the Trotskyist Faction which preceded it in leaving the muddled centrism of the WSL for the intransigent Trotskyism of the iSt, the LF brings to our tendency a wealth of experienced and tested cadre with acknowledged authority and prior histories in the International Marxist Group and the International Socialists (now Socialist Workers Party). The calibre of this fusion was evidenced in the election of three of the LF comrades to the Central Committee of the SL.

Speaking as co-reporter for the LF on the

fusion, Comrade Mark Hyde pointed to it as further 'vindication of the perspective of fighting hard to polarise the opponents on the key programmatic questions of the day'. The hard polemical orientation which our opponents slander as 'sectarian' is in fact the opposite. As one comrade observed during the discussion, ingrown sects do not in general win fully formed political leaders from other tendencies -- *interventionist, revolutionary propaganda organisations do!* This is particularly apt in the case of the LF, who were among the hardest and most serious fighters *against* the politics of the SL before going into opposition; indeed Hyde co-authored the only serious *political* reply to the Trotskyist Faction during that faction fight. 'I remember being in this room about two years ago' he recalled, 'screaming during the first SL public meeting ... about how the SL would never build anything in this country.'

So the SL has built something in this country, and this fusion promises to lead to even greater future growth. Comrades noted that with the expulsion of the LF, the anti-LF 'united front' which has provided the WSL with a semblance of coherence in the recent period would fall apart, opening the possibility of yet another clarifying split and fusion, perhaps culminating in a third, 'Sverdlov Faction'. Drawing on his own experience, Comrade Phil

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Racist cops routed in Bristol

When scores of cops descended on the Black and White Cafe in Bristol's St Paul's district on the afternoon of April 2, they got more than they bargained for. For the predominantly black inhabitants of this decaying inner city ghetto this was just one police outrage too many. And fed up with the constant harassment, the unconcealed racialism of the thugs in blue, the endless 'sus' arrests, the everyday brutality of 'routine enquiries', they exploded in protest.

The bourgeoisie was thrown into consternation -- above all because police had humiliatingly been forced to withdraw for hours, licking their wounds, and unable to re-enter the St Paul's square mile. But the victory over the cops was predictably short-lived. As soon as the dust had settled, they began to seek their revenge. Forty-two people have been arrested, and over 1500 questioned on 'suspicion of looting' -- many of them picked up in early-morning, Gestapo-style raids.

The 'St Paul's revolt' began at about 3.30 on the Wednesday afternoon, when two plainclothes cops entered the Black and White. Cafe owner Bertram Wilkes had lost his drink license two years ago for the 'offence' of allowing after-hours drinking, in violation of the outrageous licensing laws. So when the cops spotted patrons sitting around drinking cans of beer, one of them went to the door and gave the thumbs-up signal for the dozens of uniformed policemen waiting in nearby Campbell and Brighton Streets to storm in. Wilkes and a number of customers were arrested, including one who had demanded compensation when the cops ripped his trousers in the course of a 'search'.

By 5pm an incensed crowd had gathered, watching, on the green opposite. Bricks and stones were thrown at the cops and a Panda Car set on fire. Police reinforcements were routed, while a police van containing lager seized from the cafe was surrounded and -- after the lager had been removed -- overturned and also set on fire. The cops in their arrogance then made a basic military error: entering a hostile area with insufficient forces. When Avon and Somerset Chief Constable, Brian Weigh, led a hundred-man column of the hated Task Force, the local version of the SPG, into the foray they were driven back and driven out -- in spite of their riot shields, shin pads, batons and dogs.

Until the cops, with reinforcements from as far away as Cornwall and Wiltshire, finally re-entered the area at 11pm to impose what amounted to a state of emergency, St Paul's was a Derry-style 'no-go' area. Lloyds Bank, a bookie's, a dress shop and the Post Office were burnt down. When the (Asian-owned) APC supermarket was hit, even old-age pensioners joined the black, and white, youth in the looting. The local chemists' shop was spared when older black residents came to its defence. In the meantime, Wilkes had been released without charges.

A 'Carnival of the Oppressed'?

Bristol is the fastest growing industrial area today in Britain, but the 7000 people of St Paul's inhabit one of the most decaying, degrading slums in the country. It is not uncommon to see streetwalkers 11 or 12 years old. The unemployment rate is twice that of the rest of Bristol. In its death agony, British capitalism condemns a growing population of lumpen youth to

a bleak future: no decent housing, no jobs, nothing. In these surroundings, to which young West Indian youth are disproportionately condemned by racial oppression, police harassment adds insult to injury. Bristol's Quaker virtue, built on the bodies of black slaves whose sale made it rich, is a fitting symbol of the imperialist racialism which deems it proper to subject young Asian women immigrants to vaginal examinations to test virginity.

The cops in Bristol got a richly deserved taste of the sort of treatment these guardians of capitalist class rule mete out daily, systematically and with sadistic relish to the black youth whose communities they patrol -- as well as to demonstrating leftists and striking workers on picket lines. But more 'St Paul's revolts' are not the answer to cop brutality and



Racist 'law and order' in action

racist oppression, not even a partial one. It is no victory for the people of St Paul's that the only supermarket and post office within a one-mile radius have been destroyed.

But that, predictably enough, is what the inveterate opportunists of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and International Marxist Group (IMG) hailed it as. *Socialist Worker* (12 April) enthused over 'A Black and White Revolt' against bourgeois property and bourgeois authority, and exalted about the feeling that 'things can never be the same again'. It uncritically lauded the looting, printing in bold type one SWP member's comment, 'It was just like shopping -- except you don't pay.' In its workerist determination to paint this as some sort of class battle akin to the steel strike, the SWP even sought to deny that St Paul's is a black ghetto. One SWP member was quoted explaining to his workmates how it is a 'joy to live' in this crumbling slum.

The IMG's Tariq Ali, on the other hand, dis-

confronted head-on by a lockout has become a political test. The NGA must beat this attack! Already important breaches have been made in the bosses' lines. But the Newspaper Society is wealthy and has previously shown determination in long disputes.

Mass pickets must be built to stop the scabs and extend the action. The NGA must cut across the craft divisions in the industry by appealing to the members of the other unions to honour picket lines and join the struggle. So far the national leadership has refused to unleash the union's real power -- on Fleet Street. The occasional disruption of one national daily or another by NGA members in solidarity is not enough. Call out all of Fleet Street until the lockout is broken! And produce a workers daily newspaper to explain the union side of the battle. Through such militant class-struggle tactics print workers can go forward and smash the bosses' attacks.

played the Pabloites' proclivity towards 'Third World' vanguardism with his rose-coloured description of rasta culture and ghetto-imposed lumpen lifestyle. Yearning to find some underpinning in social reality for its ludicrously bizarre call for 'self-determination for blacks' in Britain, the IMG proclaimed it a 'carnival of the oppressed': 'the black community of St. Paul's fought back against police brutality and won'. Ali's entirely vicarious enthusiasm for ghetto life and ghetto struggles is all the more hypocritical given that his method of 'fighting' police brutality is by having chummy Oxford Union-style debates with the cops on the question, including, as he boasts in his article, with 'the Assistant Chief Constable for Bristol and Avon, a Mr Shattuck'. Presumably this was an out-of-town rehearsal for his recent dinner and debate with a Midlands police spokesman.

The answer to ghetto oppression cannot be found by denying that it exists and is racially rooted, nor by enthusing over it. Even in those few instances where it is the cops who get a thrashing, life in the ghetto is no 'carnival', nor are ghetto rebellions a road forward. The *Times* (5 April) quotes a 'university-educated black man' expressing the hope that St Paul's-style revolts will at least wring some concessions for blacks from the bourgeoisie: 'It happened some years ago in cities in the United States and seems to have done them some good.'

But did it? Even in the US, where blacks have a qualitatively greater social weight, what remains of the explosive ghetto uprisings of the 1960s today is little more than shuttered-up shops and burnt-out buildings. The few concessions in terms of black employment, housing and education were either so token as to be meaningless or passed with the first sign of recession. It is only the organised working class, including black workers, which has the social power and class interest to lead a successful struggle against all manifestations of racial oppression and racist cop victimisation. Unlike Britain, in the US the role of blacks in the proletariat makes the black question strategic to the American socialist revolution. But the proletariat and its revolutionary vanguard must be a tribune of all the oppressed.

'Rocks against racism' and pleas for parliamentary reforms will not stop the oppression of blacks and other minorities. It is necessary to fight for an end to all discrimination in employment, housing and education. The trade unions must demand special training and recruitment programmes to give minority youth access to jobs. But that is only meaningful in the context of a struggle against redundancies, to fight for jobs for all -- black and white -- through work sharing on full pay. Down with the racist immigration quotas -- stop the Whitelaw proposals! Full citizenship rights for all foreign workers! Organise trade union defence guards to repulse fascist attacks!

The rage and combativity of black youth, if it is not to be spent in at best fruitless outbursts, must be channelled toward the only solution to racist and ghetto oppression: workers revolution. The specially oppressed in Britain, with the least to lose and few if any illusions in British 'fair play', may well provide disproportionate forces for the communist vanguard. And that is their only hope. ■

SPARTACIST BRITAIN

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Victory to the NGA!

The lockout of over 40,000 National Graphical Association (NGA) members from provincial newspapers and commercial printers is a vicious attack on hard-won union rights. The NGA wanted an £80 minimum wage and a 37½ hour working week. It got a vicious counteroffensive from the Newspaper Society and the British Printing Industries Federation which threatens jobs, conditions and centrally the union-controlled call book -- an effective job guarantee for NGA members. Newspaper and printing workers have fought back -- the mass pickets outside Wolverhampton's *Star and Express* fighting to stop the scabs despite many arrests, have made national headlines.

With the Prior Bill's assault on the closed shop and picketing in the background the spectacle of an important union being

San Francisco unions mobilise 1200 demonstrate against Nazis

San Francisco, California -- No little gang of Nazis went goosestepping into Civic Center Plaza to 'celebrate' Hitler's birthday April 19. The Nazis were on the run because a solid 1200 people were occupying the spot where they had planned to stage their provocation. And behind them stood the power of the organized labor movement. If there weren't more -- the 5000 earlier predicted by the police -- it was because the Hitler lovers and their protectors in blue had already taken fright at the snowballing support for the April 19 Committee Against Nazis (ANCAN) rally and canceled their race hate march.

"This rally is a victory", declared ANCAN convenor Bob Mandel, a General Executive Board member of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) Local 6. Not only was it one of the largest recent demonstrations in the Bay Area, it was the first time in dec-

Report from San Francisco—excerpted from
Workers Vanguard no 255, 2 May 1980

ades in the United States that socialists and labor had linked arms in a joint political demonstration. This is what swept the Nazis off the streets and ensured that swastikas were not flaunted at City Hall. Dozens of signs said it: 'San Francisco Is A Labor Town, Not A Nazi Town'. Endorsed by more than 35 union officials and nine local unions, the demo was attended by hundreds of union members. In addition to the several local presidents and executive board members who addressed the crowd, there were contingents of phone workers with their official Communications Workers of America (CWA) local banners from both sides of the Bay Area and up from Los Angeles, and another of militant ILWUers.

So Hitler's birthday was no holiday in San Francisco. But elsewhere in the country the fascists did 'celebrate' the mass slaughter at Dachau and Buchenwald -- and their own bloody terror here at home. In Benson, North Carolina, 50 KKKers and Nazis showed up for their 'Hitler fest'. In brown shirts and white sheets they came to establish a 'United Racist Front' and to defend the fourteen cold-blooded murderers who last November shot down in broad daylight five anti-fascist demonstrators in Greensboro. Even as ANCAN speakers in SF Civic Center Plaza declared 'There is no "free speech" for fascist killers', in downtown Chattanooga Ku Klux Klan

Excerpts from speeches to April 14 rally

'SF is a labor town. SF is a black town. It's a Jewish town, a gay town, an Asian town. Labor and the minorities were going together and make sure that fascists did not march on our streets, that every decent person in this town has a right to be here.'

-- Bob Mandel, ANCAN convenor; General Executive Board member, ILWU Local 6

'Brothers and sisters, the Democratic Party has Kennedy, Carter. Tom Metzger is the statewide chairman of the KKK, and in Southern California he is running on the Democratic Party ticket. So we say labor must have its own political party that fights for the power of all the oppressed.'

-- Jane Margolis, Executive Board member, CWA Local 9410; leader of the Militant Action Caucus of the CWA

'When these Hitler-loving creeps of the National Socialist White Workers Party -- Nazis -- announced their intent to celebrate Hitler's birthday right here in the Civic Center, a celebration of genocide of 24 million people by Hitler's Nazis, we thought something had better be done, and done fast. Not a confrontation between the Nazi hoods and small groups of militants, but a massive demonstration of organized labor, blacks, gays, Latinos, Jews, Asian-Americans, socialists -- all anti-Nazis to stop these Nazi creeps in their tracks.'

-- Al Nelson, Bay Area Spartacist League



'Stop the Nazis!': Anti-fascist demonstrators fill San Francisco Civic Center plaza

night riders were blasting shotguns into a group of blacks, wounding four women.

Previously holed up in rural southern backwaters, protected enclaves of reaction, the KKK/Nazi killers have been emboldened by the present rightward-moving political climate. They are still moving gingerly, sticking out their tentacles from the lily-white suburbs and relying on police protection. But when they seek to penetrate the proletarian centers with their race terror the fascists can be interdicted. The Spartacist League (SL), though numerically a relatively small communist propaganda group, has twice taken the lead in doing so -- as an initiator and organizer of the April 19 Stop the Nazis demo in San Francisco and earlier in Detroit. When following the Greensboro massacre the Klan threatened to march in the heavily black center of the auto industry, the SL was instrumental in mounting a demonstration of 500, mainly blacks and auto workers, proclaiming: 'The Klan Won't Ride in the Motor City'.

The alarming growth of fascistic terrorist groups does not occur in a political vacuum, nor is it a reflection of an atmosphere of random 'hate' as many liberals assert. It is a direct reflection of the mushrooming economic crisis and international policies of American imperialism. With Carter calling for going on the warpath against Communism overseas, the KKK/Nazis feel it's open season on leftists, blacks, labor, Jews here.

Break with the Democrats! Build a workers party!

It was notable at the San Francisco rally that union leader after union leader stated that you can't rely on the police or the Democratic or Republican parties to stop the fascists. The April 19 labor mobilization to stop the Nazis came in the context of an all-sided war on the West Coast labor movement. And this was reflected in the wide receptivity to the ANCAN call among Bay Area trade unionists. The link between militant support for strike struggles and the Stop the Nazis demo was vividly expressed in an incident at the rally: when a camera crew of struck TV station KRON approached the gathering, the chairman announced that they were not welcome, that their way would be blocked by a line of monitors and protesters chanting, 'Scabs Out!' Upon hearing the announcement, the scabs turned around and left, as the crowd applauded.

The April 19 Stop the Nazis protest was built through a tenacious battle against the San Francisco rulers. Supervisor [city councillor] Quentin Kopp urged people to 'eschew attendance' (ie stay home and watch the Hitlerites on TV). Marching in lock-step with the strikebreaking supes [Supervisors], the press imposed a black-out up to and even after the 1200-strong anti-fascist rally.

But it was not just the ruling class that wanted to see the demonstration sealed off by a wall of silence. The reformist left formed a veritable popular front stretching from the mayor's office to the Communist Party, united by their common opposition to mobilizing labor to stop the Nazis. The Stalinists traditionally justify every opportunist sellout by the need to maintain 'anti-fascist unity'. But in the face of this genuine united-front action against the fascists, initiated by socialists and based on the power of the working class, they became the biggest splitters of all. The 'unity' which these phony Communists seek is not unity in mass action against the KKK/Nazis, but rather the chains which bind the slaves to their masters and the working class to its exploiters.

The decay of capitalism -- its exploding inflation, mass unemployment and deep economic depression, and imperialism's drive toward nuclear

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WORKERS VANGUARD
Hitler-Lovers Turn Tail
San Francisco:
All Out
on the
19th!
**STOP
THE
NAZIS!**

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Spartacist League/Leninist Faction Declaration of fusion

1. The Spartacist League (SL), British section of the international Spartacist tendency (iSt), and the Leninist Faction, formerly of the Workers Socialist League (WSL), have fused on the basis of the decisions of the first four Congresses of the Comintern, the Founding Conference of the Fourth International, the Declaration of Principles of the SL/US, the nine points for international Trotskyist regroupment of the iSt, and the LF document, 'The Fight for the Proletarian Programme'. This fusion represents an important acquisition of cadre and strengthens the iSt's fight to forge the Leninist vanguard internationally. That LF cadres were among the most bitter opponents of the Trotskyist Faction (TF) which split from the WSL in 1979 to fuse with the London Spartacist Group and form the SL, is a powerful vindication of the Spartacist tendency's fight to polarise opponent organisations by hard programmatic combat on the key issues of the class struggle, and achieve qualitative growth through a process of splits and fusions. The ability of the SL to win these cadres must also be contrasted to the failure of our centrist opponents -- such as Workers Power and the International-Communist League -- to even respond seriously to the LF's approaches for discussions following its expulsion from the WSL.

2. The Left Tendency (LT) -- forerunner of the LF -- was formed in May 1979 in opposition to the ever more rightward drift of the WSL, on the basis that a democratic-centralist international Trotskyist tendency must be built on clear programmatic agreement. It sought a road to international regroupment quite alien to the unprincipled lash-ups seen in Mandel's United Secretariat, Lambert and Moreno's Parity Committee, and today in the WSL's efforts to form an international pressure group on the larger fake-Trotskyist blocs -- and a counterweight to the iSt -- through its wretched Liaison Committee. Yet the LT was a left centrist grouping because it had no consistent revolutionary programmatic alternative to the WSL leadership.

It maintained an antipathy to the Trotskyism of the iSt, both on certain key programmatic questions, and in failing to understand the need for a fighting propaganda perspective in the struggle to reforge the Fourth International through the tactic of revolutionary regroupment. LT comrades, trained in the fake 'mass work' methods of the WSL, only found their way towards the iSt's programme in the course of the factional struggle itself. Particularly in fighting the WSL's lumping together of Khomeini's Islamic reaction in Iran with the anti-Somoza upsurge in Nicaragua under the rubric of the 'forward movement of the working class', and in the struggle against Alan Thorne's scabbing during the national engineering strikes, the LT comrades were forced to confront and recognise the unique correctness of iSt positions as varied as proletarian opposition to Islamic reaction, the role of petty-bourgeois guerrillism and the creation of deformed workers states, and how the picket line is the class line and means don't cross.

3. It was after such experiences and subsequent re-examination of the iSt programme on

such critical questions of proletarian class strategy as unconditional opposition to popular fronts, the application of the Leninist position on the national question to Ireland, and the revolutionary struggle against Labourism, that the LF was formed. It was a faction equipped with the basic elements of a programmatic critique of the WSL, and an understanding that the struggle to consolidate a Leninist vanguard involves centrally the fight to remove the centrist and reformist obstacles in its path by head-on programmatic combat. The transition from the LT to the LF was consequently not simply a question of reaching abstract agreement with a revolutionary programme. It was the beginning of the LF comrades' opportunity to learn concretely the meaning of *Leninist functioning* -- a mode of functioning antithetical to the Menshevik and semi-Healyite methods in which they had been previously trained. The fight for the Leninist conception of the party took place not only against the WSL but within the LF itself. The fight against one LF member -- who, unwilling to face a sharp political struggle against the WSL and harbouring principled disagreements with the LF beneath a guise of votes for its political positions, rapidly responded by defection -- was an important step towards consolidation of the faction.

4. In the period since the LF's bureaucratic expulsion from the WSL further programmatic discussion and joint work -- particularly in the steel strike and in interventions against opponents on the issue of Afghanistan and the defence of the USSR -- have prepared the ground for a deep-going fusion. The attendance and participation of LF members in SL internal meetings, and vice versa, has been valuable preparation for the task of forging a collective leadership in the fused organisation -- evidenced in the fact that disputed questions were not debated simply along the old organisational lines. This was the case in the discussions on the need to break with elements of libertarianism in the LF's past organisational methods, on the fight for Bolshevik membership standards (which led to the dropping of one young member), and the many discussions on the precise content of and tactics for a communist propaganda intervention into the steel strike.

The challenge now confronting the SL is to integrate these new leading cadre in the process of forging a collective leadership. The accumulation of experienced cadres from our opponents will always be central to our further development and consolidation. Our success in Britain has so far largely been in winning forces from the WSL -- since its formal 'orthodox Trotskyism' and 'anti-Pabloism' have left little choice for active left oppositionists but to seriously consider the authentically Trotskyist struggle of the iSt against centrist and reformist liquidationism. But the SL now goes forward strengthened, confident in the knowledge that oppositions in other opponent tendencies will in the future follow the road of the LF.

FORWARD TO A BRITISH TROTSKYIST PARTY, SECTION OF THE REFORGED FOURTH INTERNATIONAL!

Spartacist League/Leninist Faction fusion meetings

Trotskyists stand with the USSR Crazed Carter drives towards World War III

Speaker: Mark Hyde

SNEFFIELD

7.30pm, Thursday, May 15
Station Hotel
Wicker Road

OXFORD

7.30pm, Tuesday, May 20
Oxford Committee for
Community Relations (OCCR)
Princes St/Cowley Rd

LONDON

7.30pm, Friday, May 16
Room S421
St Clements Bldg
London School of Economics
Houghton St WC2

BIRMINGHAM

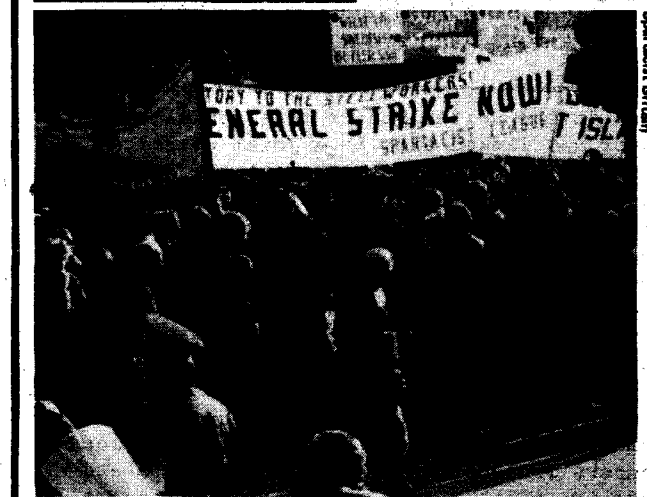
7.30pm, Thursday, May 22
Carr's Lane Church Centre
Carr's Lane
Birmingham 4

For further information phone (01) 278 2232 or (021) 472 7726.

Leninist fusion

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Moore, former National Secretary of the WSL's youth group, explained that when 'I started studying the politics of the Spartacist League seriously I knew I didn't particularly like the Spartacist League.... But I'll tell you one thing I did know, outside the WSL I'd two choices. One was to go out of politics and one was the Spartacist League.... And we want that feeling to be reflected on the rest of the left.'



Spartacist League intervened with revolutionary proletarian line against Khomeini's Islamic reaction, and fought for a general strike during the steel strike

The opportunities for Trotskyist regroupment through programmatic splits and fusions such as the two which have already taken place are manifold, as are the openings for principled communist intervention into the mass struggles of a highly combative working class literally fighting for survival. But the concomitant pressures towards over-extension and substitutionism -- sharply amplified by the palpable decay of British capitalism and the evident crisis of proletarian leadership -- are inimical to the construction of a Leninist vanguard. Thus the Healyites in the 1960s, as one comrade remarked, though starting with a fundamentally more correct formal programme, tended away from the necessary task of political combat with the revisionists and the Labour Party and ended up careering wildly between sectarianism and opportunism before finally leaving the workers movement entirely.

Opportunities and obstacles

Befitting a gathering of the highest body of a Leninist organisation, the National Conference (and a subsequent extended plenum of the new Central Committee) devoted a good deal of attention to a critical assessment of the opportunities as well as the obstacles. The fusion capped off a period of intense and fruitful activity in which the organisation strained its modest forces to intersect the three-month-long steel strike. The 140 new subscribers to *Spartacist Britain*, at least 90 of them steel strikers, the receptivity to our propaganda among thousands of militants who had never encountered the SL's politics before, were tangible evidence of the impact of a hard communist line. The main conference resolution noted the opportunity for a breakthrough:

'Since the last national conference the organisation has made a marked advance in its capacity for effective, living communist intervention, reflected most clearly in our work around the steel strike and BL, and some advance in its internal functioning. The impact of this intervention and the general political crisis affecting many of our centrist opponents poses the possibility of significant breakthroughs in the coming period.'

A number of comrades noted that the respect

we had accrued from serious steel worker militants, like the modest authority gained by several BL militants sympathetic to Spartacist politics during the course of the recent BL strike, could not be confused with the necessarily long and arduous struggle to establish authority as *communist militants* within the trade unions. The mass work fakery of the WSL et al leads only to opportunist betrayals and demoralisation. Likewise, as one comrade from the French section said, exemplary mass work in itself will not stop the cynical revisionists from continuing to peddle their false claims that the iSt are 'abstentionist, passive propagandists' in order to evade our programmatic fire:

'Thornett, you know, is not a very bright man ... On the other hand he was in San Francisco and he did see the fifty trade unionists that came to the meeting and he had to suspect somewhere in the dark recesses of his mind that at some time that would be replicated here in Britain... That's not why his eyes go buggy when he sees us walk in... It's a political struggle, perhaps sooner than he wanted.'

It is the Leninist perspective that revolutionary parties are built from the top down that underlies the importance of the acquisition of cadres, like those of the LF, through regroupment. A central theme of the discussions was the role which these comrades will play in helping to forge a central leadership collective, a particularly crucial task in a section as young and relatively inexperienced as the SL/B. Referring to the endemic, social-democratic chumminess of the British left which serves only to obstruct political clarification, one comrade recalled Lenin's dictum: 'Better a good quarrel than a bad peace.' Our opponents typically allow public expression of differences while suppressing or stifling internal debate; we in contrast recognise that internal political struggle is key to hammering out a correct line to guide the activity of the entire organisation. Central Committee member Alan Holford reminded comrades of James P Cannon's admonition of the price paid for failing to cohere a collective leadership in the early years of the American CP and the early Trotskyist movement because of the lack of *clear, programmatic* struggles. A leading representative from the more experienced American section added,

'Now I know that this is truly a deeply ungelied section. And comrades, there's nothing to be done about it, except a struggle-filled see-saw five or ten years. And you're going to feel pistol-whipped. You're going to be over the mark or under the mark. It's going to take a lot of fighting.'

The contributions of the delegations representing other sections and the International Executive Committee of the iSt represented the invaluable experience of comrades coming from different national terrains -- particularly given 'little England' parochialism, which must necessarily have its effect even on the communist vanguard -- but united around a common programme. This is in sharp contrast to the congenial and shifting factional line-ups along national lines of the revisionist rotten-bloc United Secretariat. Affiliation to a genuinely democratic-centralist International is crucial to combatting the corrosive effects of every sort of national parochial pressure.

The task before our modest forces around the world is posed starkly against the backdrop of Carter's anti-Soviet war drive and the threat of nuclear holocaust that hangs over humanity. Either we go forward to the rebirth of the Fourth International and world socialist revolution or the future holds the prospect of fascism and barbarism more terrible than ever before. Seen in this light this fusion represents a small, but real, step forward. ■

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Leninist Faction Bulletin

**FROM
CENTRISM
TO
TROTSKYISM**

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Leninist Faction of the WSL

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SAS hitmen end London seige

Embassy imbroglio

Five days after it began, the seizure of the Iranian Embassy in London came to an end in a series of explosions that rocked the posh district of Kensington on the evening of May 5. What came to an end with it was the lives of three of the five Arab nationalists who had seized the embassy and of two of the more than twenty people they had taken hostage. What will not end is the brutal oppression of the Arab people in the southwestern province of Khuzestan by the Persian-chauvinist regime of the Ayatollah Khomeini against which the seizure was directed.

As Home Secretary William Whitelaw put it in a press conference several hours after it had ended, the commando raid which freed the nineteen hostages remaining in the embassy was carried out 'with particular proficiency and very great skill'. It was indeed. Moments after the dead body of an Iranian embassy official, the first of what the terrorists threatened would be a stream of corpses at the rate of two an hour if their demands were not met, was dumped out the door of the embassy, a crack Special Air Services unit moved into action. The crowd of reporters and curiosity-seekers standing outside heard four explosions and the rattle of machine-gun fire. According to the subsequent police report, three of the terrorists had been killed, one was in hospital and the fifth in custody.

The five days of polite negotiations by the cops, the deliveries of specially prepared Arab take away meals, the occasional hostage release, had to end at some point. And if the end was bloodier than what the British public is normally used to, it is only because this level of expertise in efficient terror is normally reserved for the Empire's colonial subjects. Had it been left to Scotland Yard, there can be little doubt it would have been bloodier yet. The SAS certainly proved to be far more 'proficient' than the commando unit Carter sent flying into the Iranian desert. Then again, they get plenty of practice against Irish Republicans and the working people in the Catholic communities of Ulster.

Piled atop the recent mini-wave of assassinations of Libyan strongman Qaddafi's opponents and the months of feuding between pro- and anti-Khomeini Iranian students and Iraqis, this latest affair will only lead to an increase in the sort of anti-'camel jockey' frenzy which gripped the US following the takeover of the American embassy in Tehran. 'Iranians are Barmy -- Send in the Army' read one of the placards held by a right-wing demonstrator. He was only one among the thousand students who marched to the embassy from Imperial College -- significantly, heavily populated by Iranian students -- to sing the national anthem and jeer at the Iranians. Iranian students are already finding it much more difficult to renew their visas. While students who hail the ayatollah should have no complaints about returning to join the 'Islamic Revolution', a wave of deportations will inevitably include those Iranians who opposed both the shah and Khomeini. The latter would face 'revolutionary tribunals' no less sinister than the shah's vicious Savak. And a reactionary chauvinist backlash will be directed against non-English-speaking 'foreigners' in general, not just the Islamic fanatics. The workers movement must fight any attempts to whip up chauvinist hysteria as a backdrop to targeting 'undesirable aliens' for deportation.

The greater tragedy in this whole affair is not the death of a handful of desperate nationalists who were seemingly prepared to roll one body every thirty minutes onto the footpath. It is the plight of oppression suffered by the Arab national minority under the yoke of Persian chauvinism. The terrorists' demand for the release of 91 Arabs held prisoner in the Imam's dungeons was eminently supportable. The way they attempted to get it, holding to ransom anyone who happened to be in the embassy when they seized it, was not. And in this case it was particularly futile and stupid. Khomeini may be a crazy old fanatic who seeks to reverse thirteen centuries of civilisation, but he is not a phoney. Unlike 'born again' Baptist, Jimmy Car-

ter, this religious nut truly believes in apocalyptic justice. The Iranian consul-general was *happy* to see his compatriot die for the Imam: 'He wanted to be a martyr for Islam. We do not mourn his death. We are happy his wish was granted.'

The despair to which the oppressed are driven is understandable. But despair is not a strategy. The Arab masses of Khuzestan will gain nothing from this desperate act, and the 91 may yet face Khomeini's firing squads, as President Bani-Sadr threatened they would if any of the embassy staff were harmed. The Koranic code is the code of tribal retribution. What makes this hostage-taking all the more criminal is that, unlike the South Moluccans who went down in flames attempting a similar adventure several years ago in Holland, the Arabs in Khuzestan do have access to social power. It was the wave of strikes by Arab oil workers which posed the first significant threat to the reactionary Islamic regime after it came to power.

In the midst of the embassy seizure, a London US embassy official gloated that, 'The irony of the situation is not lost on anybody.' The difference should not be lost on anybody either. The seizure of the Tehran embassy was carried out by the Khomeini regime in an attempt to deflect growing popular dissatisfaction with his 'Islamic republic'. This seizure was a desperate act by desperate men. Whatever the truth of a London Moslem Students Society leaflet claiming that the occupation was 'probably instigated by the government in Baghdad', it would make little difference. It is certainly the case that the origins and identity of those who style themselves the 'Group of the Martyr' and the 'Mujahedeen al Nasser Group' remain unclear, and that Radio Baghdad provided facilities to three Arab groups to make radio broadcasts which said that this was only the first of 'dozens of similar operations'. If this is the case then crazy acts of individual terror will only have been multiplied, and with them the wrath of the Imam against the Arab minority.

In hailing the victory carried out by the imperialist shock troops of the SAS, the 'anti-imperialist' Bani-Sadr warned the Iranian people yet again of the need to 'preserve our unity -- our domestic enemies are all around us'. In the name of this Islamic unity, Khomeini has wreaked vengeance upon *all* his 'domestic enemies': the Arabs, the Kurds, the Turkomen, the women, the homosexuals, not to mention the leftists and the workers. Last month, twenty-seven leftist university students were slaughtered by the clerical hoodlum gangs of Khomeini's 'Party of God' in Tehran.

It is cruelly ironic that a key factor in overthrowing the tyranny of the shah last year was the strike wave in the oil fields of Khuzestan. Had there been even a small revolutionary vanguard steeled in the Trotskyist programme and prepared to swim against the stream of popular support for the 'Islamic Revolution', those who are today counted as the 'domestic enemies' of that 'revolution' -- including the Arab oil workers -- who do not figure in the 'unity' of Persian chauvinism and Koranic feudalism, might well have broken once and for all the chains of their oppression.

There was no Trotskyist party however. Instead there was a cacophony of 'Marxist' ho-sannas to a 'revolutionary mass movement' whose programme included 'Death to Communists!' And even today, the fake left continues to apologise for this clerical tyrant whose ascension to power they enthusiastically boosted. The Iranian HKE, whose mentor the American Socialist Workers Party is more craven in its opportunism than most, even justifies the pogroms against the leftist students. So because of this sort of treachery, nationalists despairing of any effective recourse to justice commit crazy acts against a crazy self-styled prophet presently locking horns with an equally crazy 'born again' preacher in the White House who just happens to have an itchy finger within reach of a nuclear trigger. There is only one way out of this cycle of madness and destruction: workers revolution. ■

The steel strike and the Class war and

For the first hundred days of this year, Britain teetered on the edge of a major social explosion. The steel strike never, in the final analysis, left the terrain of a simple wages struggle. But it objectively posed much more than that from the first day to the last. It came after an unprecedented attack on shop-floor organisation signalled by the sacking of Derek Robinson and the imposition of a horrific redundancy scheme at British Leyland, followed by the introduction of Prior's Employment Bill. And it intersected a growing wave of outrage throughout the working class and oppressed against the incessant downward spiral in living standards engendered by the collapsing economy and the Thatcher government's search for a hard-line austerity 'solution'. It posed the possibility and necessity of a *general strike* to crush the Tories' attacks, break the stalemate in the class struggle and the stranglehold of the Labour and trade union bureaucrats, and point the proletariat on the road to the seizure of power.

Stabbed by their misleaders, disowned by the Labour Party traitors and left isolated by the TUC, the heroic steel strikers were finally sold out. But Thatcher and British Steel management didn't get the sweeping victory they wanted either. The *Economist* (5 April) lamented that this 'strike could have marked a milestone for Mrs Thatcher's government.... The signs say otherwise.'

The steel workers' fighting spirit turned the first national steel strike into the longest national post-war strike. Even at the last minute, through nothing but sheer determination, they almost stopped Bill Sirs' sellout. They were lacking in neither will nor militancy. But, as we warned early on in the strike, 'Simple economist trade union struggle -- however militant -- is not enough' (*Spartacist Britain* no 18, February 1980). What was lacking, and what the Spartacist League fought for throughout, was an alternative leadership with a perspective of extending the strike outside BSC to the miners, dockers and other key sectors, waging a joint struggle against the Tory/employer attacks and forcing the TUC to call a general strike. A leadership which broke decisively from narrow economism and craft parochialism, which counterposed to the chauvinist cries for import controls a campaign for active international working-class solidarity, which brooked no illusions that putting Labour back on the Treasury Benches was the answer but had a perspective of fighting for proletarian power.

Betrayed but not broken

After thirteen weeks on the picket lines the steel workers returned to work on the basis of a humiliating arbitrated settlement barely one per cent higher than what management had conceded midway through the strike. Fearful of being trampled by their members if they took direct responsibility for this deal, Bill Sirs and the other misleaders opted for the creation of a three-man 'committee of inquiry' headed by Lord Lever. Instead of the 20 per cent with no strings for which they had fought so bitterly, the steel workers were handed an 11 per cent basic wage rise -- nine per cent *less* than the current rate of inflation -- tied to sweeping redundancies and productivity bonuses of up to 4.5 per cent subject to local negotiation. With more than 50,000 job cuts projected already, BSC announced plans for sacking yet another 12,000 workers to pay for this 'self-financing' deal.

When the ISTC negotiating committee arrived at Swinton House, ISTC headquarters in London, to vote on the Lever proposal the day after it had been announced, they were met by over a hundred angry pickets demanding a 'no' vote. As the delegates left following their 41-27 ratification, cheers rang out for the dissenters; while those of the rest who dared show their faces were kicked, spat at and assailed with cries of 'sellout', 'you're out', 'you're fired' and 'that's it for you, you won't get re-elected'. Scuffles broke out between cops and enraged militants who were attempting to stop cameramen from taking their photographs -- though a *Spartacist Britain* photographer was left alone. 'She's okay, she's from "Spartacus"' said one picket to his mates. Elsewhere in London, at Transport House, TGWU steel delegates also voted 68-13 in favour of the sellout.

The strikers had been expecting this from the day the inquiry was announced. At 'Red Rotherham' and in various other strike headquarters in South Yorkshire the initial reaction was bitter but subdued. Not one of the strikers at a previously-scheduled social (held, iron-



Rotherham's Clifton Park, April 2: Angry steelmen ordered to return to work by local misleaders

ically, at the Sheffield Victory Club) saw Sirs' deal as a victory. 'It's a load of rubbish' was the common reaction. But the chief local union leaders, who had garnered a reputation for militancy through their organisation of flying pickets and their opposition to Sirs, were all set to call for swallowing the sellout and a return to work.

The following day more than 3000 strikers poured into Rotherham's Clifton Park for a mass meeting jointly called by the Rotherham and Sheffield strike committees. Hundreds took the new *Spartacist Britain* emblazoned with the headline 'Steelmen: Stay out and win!'

As the speeches started rolling from the podium pointing the finger of guilt at the top but pleading for a return to work nonetheless, the strikers' fatigue and disappointment turned to white-hot anger. When ISTC divisional officer Keith Jones swore, 'We were not party to the settlement in London, but we've got to live with it. And we will -- and you will!', the crowd erupted in a deafening chorus of 'Twenty per cent! Twenty per cent! Twenty per cent!' Rumours that flying pickets from Wales were heading for Yorkshire to keep the strike going were enthusiastically and almost universally acclaimed with pledges that the picket lines would be respected.

The officials had an easier time of it at the Stocksbridge mass meeting later that afternoon. Jones, still visibly shaken from what was described as the 'little bit chaotic' Rotherham meeting, was even applauded. But this meeting too exploded in fury at a bureaucrat's argument that any picket lines set up the following morning should be crossed. Brian Molyneux, long touted by the Socialist Workers Party's *Real Steel News* (RSN) 'rank and file movement' echoed from the podium: 'if there's a picket line you are honour bound not to cross it.' But Molyneux's own sense of honour was short-lived. Seconds later he reverted to the plea for unity -- around the sellout! -- with which he had several days earlier justified his scandalous vote at an ISTC divisional meeting against South Yorkshire staying out: 'We're going back united. Unfortunately the decision has been made that we

return to work Thursday at 6am and Thursday at 6am we will return with the rest of the country.'

The steelmen did go back -- but within hours they were out again, 25,000 of them, first in Sheffield, Rotherham and Port Talbot, then Stocksbridge and Teeside, with Scunthorpe and Scotland poised to join them. The Port Talbot plant was surrounded by a thousand pickets, 700 of whom stormed and briefly occupied the pay office. BSC had provocatively disciplined two workers in Rotherham and another in Port Talbot for refusing to unload lorries blacked for their scabbing during the strike. But the militant steelmen made it clear to BSC that their fighting spirit had not been broken by marching right back out of the plants. The possibility was there of scuttling Sirs' sellout entirely, spreading the strike and reopening the claim.

Now it was the turn of the local officials to demonstrate their own capacity for betrayal. After several hours of discussions with BSC, Rotherham officials announced to a score of waiting pickets that the wildcat strike had been ended by BSC's agreement to reinstate the victimised workers and a meaningless promise to 'investigate' the question of the blacklisted lorries. As two days earlier they had screamed 'sellout' at Sirs & Co, so now the militants muttered that their local misleaders had sold them out. Port Talbot followed suit with a similar settlement and returned to work the next morning.

Thus did the great steel strike of 1980 end, in betrayal -- a betrayal signed, sealed and delivered by every section and every level of the reformist leadership. What is so galling is that it came so close, closer indeed in its final hours than at any point prior, to turning into the generalised working class offensive needed to beat back not only the BSC attacks but the Tory juggernaut behind it.

Sentiment for a general strike was rife, particularly among the militant Wales and Yorkshire steelmen, and the Liverpool dockers had been out for nearly two weeks over the blacking of steel shipments. In a bitter twist of irony for which Moss Evans and his gang must never be forgiven,

The crisis of leadership class treason

TGWU dockers were voting for a national dock strike in solidarity with the steelmen at the same time -- and in the same building -- as the steel delegates were voting to return to work, *deliberately kept ignorant of the dockers' decision.*

False lessons from false friends

So Sirs, Evans, Murray & Co openly betrayed, with the help of the 'militant' local officials. The reformist Communist Party too did its part, helping to knife solidarity strikes like the walkout of 8000 Sheffield engineering workers in early March, and making secret deals with management to allow scab steel through the strikers' picket lines, as at Ford Dagenham. And the various ostensibly revolutionary organisations -- from the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) through the International Marxist Group (IMG) to the small centrist Workers Power (WP) organisation -- also failed utterly to offer a programme for victory. They called for a general strike either belatedly or half-heartedly or not at all. They either crossed picket lines themselves or apologised for scabbing by others (see 'What Road Forward for Steel Workers?', *Spartacist Britain* no 20, April 1980). The IMG and SWP rushed into print with obituaries for the strike even before the strikers had returned to work, echoing Sirs' claims that now the unions could 'gird our loins for the next struggle in which we will fight the case for jobs'. ~~And predictably their strike post mortems drew all the wrong lessons from the defeat.~~

In his major strike obituary (*Socialist Worker*, 12 April), aging SWP guru Tony Cliff offers the following gem of wisdom: 'The truth of the matter is that the steel strike went much better than it would have done if Bill Sirs had full control over it, and not as well as it would have under rank and file control.' 'If', says Cliff, 'the Liverpool dockers had come out in the second week'; 'if' the national dock strike had been called 'the third or fourth week'; 'if' the demands of the strike had been different ... things might have gone a little better.

What hypocrisy! If the SWP had fought to use what influence it has to bring the dockers, miners and others out; if *Real Steel News* had fought to broaden the demands of the strike, then Cliff's words might be worth a bit more than the paper they're printed on. But the SWP never fought for any of these things. It opposed the fight for a general strike, and it shares the same economist perspective as Bill Sirs, with a bit more militancy tacked on. Cliff's

perspective of 'rank and file' control by the likes of Brian ('We're Going Back') Molyneux and *Real Steel News* would still have led the steelmen to defeat.

The IMG attacks the SWP's 'rank and file' perspectives in its strike analysis by Brian Grogan (*Socialist Challenge*, 10 April) -- but from the right. Grogan criticises the SWP for building its own opposition grouping rather than the 'unofficial national strike committee' which he sees as the way forward. This body was *not* an authoritative strike committee of elected delegates, but an ad hoc, invitation-only committee pulled together under the aegis of some South Yorkshire strike leaders. Moreover it was flatly *opposed* to challenging Sirs for the leadership of the strike. A fight for a real, elected national strike committee, and for a militant class-struggle programme within it were clearly necessary. But the IMG's championing of this 'unofficial strike committee' was no more the alternative to betrayal than *Real Steel News*.

And the same *Socialist Challenge* article makes clear the IMG's real reason for hailing this 'strike committee' -- to suck up to some of the militant-posturing South Yorkshire strike officials. Thus it *uncritically apologises* for the South Yorkshire strike leaders' call for a return to work -- in the IMG's kind words, 'local leaders generally took the view that a united return to work was the best way to preserve fighting capacity.' Shades of Bill Sirs! The *real* way to 'preserve fighting capacity' was to turn the mass meetings around by demanding an official vote against accepting the settlement and *staying out to win!* The sentiment to keep fighting was clearly there, particularly at Rotherham, and it could have happened if an authoritative militant opposition had intervened to fight for such a course of action.

For all its more left-wing rhetoric, the Workers Power group shares the same fundamental perspectives as the IMG and SWP. At an April 2 Sheffield public class on 'Lessons of the Steel Strike', WP spokesman Steve McSweeney claimed that a key lesson was that 'the strength of the rank and file has been proved wanting', and argued that a stronger 'rank and file movement' was the way forward. But what was found wanting in the steel strike was emphatically *not* rank and file strength. Of that the workers had plenty.

What was lacking was *revolutionary leadership* -- which meant not only that the steelmen went down to defeat but that an historic opportunity to crush the Tories' attacks on the working class and open the road to working-class power

was frittered away. The fight to build such a leadership must begin now -- not by cobbling together amorphous 'rank and file' blocs or relying on militant-talking local officials, but by building union opposition groups based on a full programme of revolutionary class struggle to battle for leadership against the union misleaders, right and 'left'.

British capitalism down the drain

Writing on the eve of World War II, Leon Trotsky wrote: 'The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership.' The continued truth of that statement was evident during the past thirteen weeks of class war.

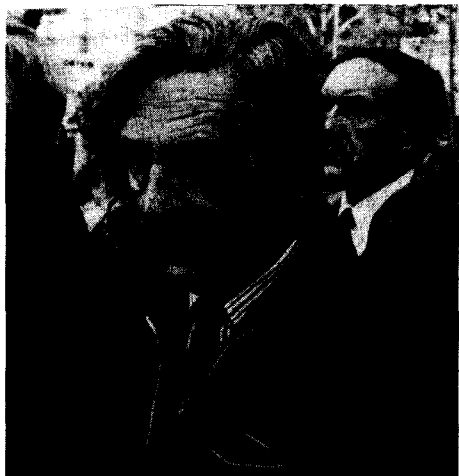
In capitalist Britain 1980 the fight for a revolutionary leadership, a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party, is an urgent necessity. The country is rapidly going down the drain. As the economy becomes more and more marginal to the world market Thatcher is going for the throats of the unions and consciously aiming for two million unemployed by next summer. At the same time she is helping Jimmy Carter whip up World War III fever against the USSR, boosting defence spending to the sky while education and social services are slashed. And propping up the whole rotting edifice of capitalist Britain is the Labour Party, strangling the workers' class struggle and channelling hatred for bourgeois class rule into dead-end parliamentarism.

When the lorry drivers' and public employees' strikes confronted the Labour government with its winter of class war in 1979, the Spartacist League campaigned for the obviously essential general strike. For the rest, keeping the Labour strikebreakers in office loomed larger than mobilising a working class defence against the ruling class attacks. As Workers Power spokesman McSweeney put it in Sheffield to justify this parliamentary-cretinist outlook, 'What would we have had a general strike against the Labour government for?... You only get the Tories back.' Even in the wake of Labour's flagrant strikebreaking, coalitionism and wage-slashing, they all hit the hustings last May to campaign for another five years of rule by Callaghan & Co..

The perspective of the Trotskyist Transitional Programme is antithetical to the Labour loyalism of the SWP, IMG, Workers Power et al. The independent mobilisation of the working class in defence of its own interests and in the struggle for its own state power necessarily demands a struggle to break the iron grip of Labourism -- the illusion that restoring a Labour government will save social services, that a more left-wing Labour Cabinet a la Tony Benn is the answer to anti-union laws.

Through the experience of their heroic class battle literally thousands of steel workers have now for the first time begun to seriously consider a revolutionary alternative to Labourism. It is crucial that the lessons of the Great Steel Strike of 1980 be learned and assimilated if steel workers are to ensure that they did not fight in vain. To steel militants who really want to find the road forward, we say: read our publications, study our programme, fight for the Trotskyist programme of socialist revolution upheld by the Spartacist League. It is the only way for the working class to defend its livelihood and go forward to power. ■

The faces of betrayal...



Len Murray: 'I don't think the British people would like that [a general strike] for one moment. If we did that we would not know what to do with the power we had got.'



Bill Sirs, April 1, day of the sellout: 'a momentous day ... a tremendous situation for us.'



Keith Jones: 'We were not party to the settlement ... but we've got to live with it. And we will -- and you will!'



Brian Molyneux: 'We're going back united. Unfortunately the decision has been made that we return to work Thursday at 6am and Thursday at 6am we will return with the rest of the country.'

WW III...

(Continued from page 1)

desperation and demoralisation, conditioned in the dirty war in Vietnam, the school of imperialist losers.

Moral depravity? What bourgeois hypocrisy. The dead ought not to be treated like dogs either by panicked American commanders or by sadistic mullahs. In Afghanistan the Russians gave decent burials to the Islamic reactionary enemies, while the rebels flayed their victims alive. These maiming rites, however, are hailed by the bourgeoisie as 'freedom fighting'.

What kind of 'heroes' leave the bodies of their fallen comrades behind? The kind trained in Vietnam, like Charles Beckwith of the Special Forces and his 'elite', 'Blue Light Team'. The kind programmed for computerised mass terror bombing, for spraying fiery hell over peasant villages, habituated to the My Lais, and the thrill of the 'free fire zone'. Beckwith, who led the raid with the gang of 'angels', is a creature midway between Watergate 'plumber' Gordon Liddy and the *Apocalypse Now* character who is exhilarated by 'the smell of napalm in the morning'. It is no wonder that the Beckwiths are the 'heroes' in an army trained in desperate counterrevolutionary war against the workers and peasants of the world, from the Bay of Pigs to the jungles of Angola.

World losers threaten Armageddon

Humiliation is certainly the word for what US leaders felt last weekend. As the *Washington Post* (27 April) wrote:

'For want of just one helicopter, President Carter's first attempt to use military force blew up on the pad... What does that admission say about the overall readiness of the American army, navy, air force and marine corps to go to war?'

A lot. No one missed the fact that the Israelis did it at Entebbe, the West Germans did it in Somalia, but the United States -- the 'technological giant of the world' -- couldn't even make it to Tehran before botching the job, because of a helicopter stuck in the mud. This was an Entebbe planned by an Idi Amin!

Carter accepts 'full responsibility' for the fiasco. Of course he does. If he had any choice in the matter you can bet he would have opted for a Nixon-style 'plausible denial', no doubt blaming it on Reagan, Kennedy, Brezhnev etc. But for various reasons (only some of them known) Washington found it necessary to scrub the mission publicly. (Note that when the Russians intervene militarily it is always an 'invasion'; when the US does it the media snaps to attention and refers to a 'rescue mission'.) All the American military leaders considered it 'eminently feasible'. Sure, that's what they said about the Bay of Pigs, too, said the CBS television White House correspondent. As for a commando divorced from any command structure, drawn from all three branches of the US military, it's bound to fail -- and great for spreading the responsibility.

In the US, Secretary of State Vance finally resigned, confirming the long-since established ascendancy of his rival Brzezinski, only to be



Brzezinski meets Afghan reactionaries at Khyber Pass. Russia in his sights

succeeded by the equally ineffectual liberal 'dove' Muskie. But crazy Carter and his mad anti-Russian Doctor Strangelove are embarked on a frenzied drive to a nuclear World War III against the Soviet bloc.

What is in the mind of the American bourgeoisie as they anticipate such a global conflagration? First, they foolishly believe that as in the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 (where military disproportions profoundly favoured the US), in a crunch the Kremlin will back down. Second, they are banking on the deep yearning for peace among the Soviet peoples, the result of their enormous losses and sacrifices in the Second World War. Third, they harbour the egregiously chauvinist assumption that the non-Russian peoples of the Soviet East will betray the USSR on behalf of 'Islam' (which even the *New York Times* admits is a myth).

Above all, the Americans are made to face the loss of global hegemony. It's no longer a little adventure in Saigon -- now they have strong impulses to bring the whole world down with them. True enough, Carter's Iran bungle is demented. But it only indicates the folly he is capable of with the imperialists' mega-death arsenal. It is deadly dangerous to underestimate the irrational responses of world losers.

Mission Impossible

Carter's attempt to prove that the US could make a military intervention into Iran showed the opposite, indicating a lot about the degenerate state of the US military. It seems to have bothered the imperialist chieftain not at all. Carter's weakness is so striking that above all he cannot abide appearing weak or paralysed. In a *Newsweek* interview as reported by Martin Schram (*Washington Post*, 27 April) Carter made this incredibly revealing statement:

'I have a very real political awareness that at least on a transient basis [the] more drastic [the] action taken by the president, the more popular it is. When President Ford expended forty lives on the Mayaguez [a ship seized by the Cambodians in 1975] to save that many people who had already been released, it was looked

upon as a heroic action, and his stature as a bold and wise leader rose greatly.'

'A bold and wise leader'? Carter's Iranian adventure was so ill-conceived that the plan seems like an adaptation from the script of those TV shows based on the low-level technocratic fantasies of failed CIA operatives. Someone forgot to tell Carter and Brzezinski that those missions really are impossible. And then the script became a Mel Brooks scenario.

As on the 'Mission Impossible' shows, nobody seemed to ask even the most basic questions. For instance: why weren't there more helicopters? What kind of plan for the operation in the desert takes no account of sandstorms? Why such haste in retreat that the team left bodies behind? When 'Defense' Secretary Harold Brown was asked how such a large force could expect to roll into downtown Tehran unopposed and how it thought it could get the hostages away from 150 armed guards, Brown replied: 'Oh, that's the easy part.'

The plan as presented was so harebrained that all manner of speculation is in order. The Russians charged that the action was just a cover for a coup attempt that didn't come off. The Iranians say the raid was only one part of the plan and there are more troops out there in the desert. The more conspiratorially-minded speculate that the plan was never intended to 'liberate' the hostages, but to get them all killed either by their guards or in an Attica-style kamikaze attack killing everyone at the embassy.

While the White House press corps lectures about how hard it is to operate in the desert, we can't resist a comparison with the Russian intervention in Afghanistan. Whereas the Americans apparently couldn't land a few aircraft on vast expanses of desert without getting sand up their turbines and gyroscopes, culminating in having their planes go bump (and bang) in the night, the Russians landed a plane every couple of minutes in Kabul, took the tanks right in and put down the reactionary *jihad* of Islamic fundamentalists with speed and efficiency. No wonder everyone recognises that the Russian presence on the Afghan border of Iran is one of the few stabilising features in a dangerously unstable situation.

Hands off Iran! Defend the Soviet Union!

In the aftermath of Vietnam, the US in its weakness and decay has found the leader it deserves in Jimmy Carter. In the smoke of the spectacular failure, some things have become blazingly clear -- first of all, as one 'hostage mom' said of Carter after his stunt failed: 'He's off his rocker!' Yes indeed. That Carter is a wimpy and incompetent political cynic was already broadly understood, but this event more than any other has placed his personal stability in question. This is a theme that the Russians have been sounding for some time. A special Tass statement (*New York Times*, 26 April) said that Carter had the US 'balancing on the brink of

1200 demonstrate against Nazis...

(Continued from page 3)

war on Russia -- gives rise to dangerous lumpen elements on the fringe of the increasingly desperate petty bourgeoisie. This social garbage sees itself as the concentrated, 'strong' version of the racism and union-busting emanating from the highest sources of power. While the fascists' crude call for 'white power' was only a minor element in the mid-seventies anti-busing mobilizations such as Boston, it was a strand in the lynch rope of racism -- stretching to Congressional liberals and Carter's 'ethnic purity' White House -- which defeated school integration and other token gains of the civil rights movement. And when Jimmy Carter's private band of thugs can yank Jane Margolis, a San Francisco CWA leader and an initiator of the ANCAN rally, from the floor of her union convention, small wonder that the Klan in Oceanside wades into a crowd of anti-KKK protesters with baseball bats, knives, guns, chains, mace,

police dogs. The Klan/Nazis certainly sense their growing acceptance among the ruling class. Every time the cops protect them from an outraged population; every time the courts protect their so-called 'right' to 'free speech'; every time the media 'even-handedly' equate the racist terrorists with their victims.

In America a fascist movement will be built on white supremacy; it is the flip side of racism. This demands from the labor movement in response a commitment to fight against the oppression of blacks and other minorities. In this period of capitalist crisis and brutal fiscal 'austerity' for the cities, of 'guns not butter', minorities are on every capitalist politician's hit list. Cuts in hospitals, schools, jobs, housing, all hit the ghettos first, as Democratic and Republican politicians openly dismiss their black constituents as 'expendable'. Although minorities have never been in worse shape economically, even in the Great Depression, they make a convenient scapegoat for capitalists who want to direct the workers' anger over factory closings and mass layoffs into a racist frenzy. The Klan and Nazis have the same strategy; they only claim they can do the job more thoroughly with their fiery race terror. Behind the growing bourgeois acceptance of

the fascists in 1980 is the as yet dim perception that these 'silly men' in their storm-trooper uniforms and hooded robes, these Hitler nuts and no-brow Kluxers, may become necessary for the preservation of capitalism.

While promoting race war against blacks and nuclear war on the Soviet Union, the bosses will direct their strategic blows at the workers movement -- the one social force with the power and the clear class interest to smash the capitalist onslaught of depression and war. For this job the bourgeoisie will need armed shock troops of race terror, union-busting and anti-communism. This is why the capitalist politicians will not and can not 'ban the Klan', why it is necessary to fight not only the Nazis but also the racist capitalist politics which spawns them. That is why, as a number of class-struggle unionists and the Spartacist League pointed out at the April 19 rally, the struggle against the fascists must be part of a fight to build a workers party. Not a mushy reformist parliamentary party, but a workers party that mobilizes the power of the union movement in its fight for survival. If labor and blacks are to have a future, in this country and on the planet, the time to wake up is now! Keep the Nazis/KKK on the run -- this is the message of San Francisco, April 19. ■

Berserk Thornett assaults scab-hating strikers

IMG scabs on BL strike

In the midst of the BL strikers' determined, though ultimately unsuccessful, effort to overturn the bureaucracy's treacherous sabotage and make their strike a solid national one, there was an ignominious display of open scabbing by self-styled revolutionaries. Pat Hickey, a deputy senior steward at the Rover Solihull SD1 plant and a leading supporter of the International Marxist Group (IMG), blithely crossed picket lines set up by other Rover workers for three days until SD1 workers finally voted to strike. Cynically dismissing the basic trade union principle that *picket lines mean don't cross*, Hickey thumbed his nose at strikers who demanded to know if he was going to cross their picket line: 'What do you think I'm going to do, fly over it?'

In a front-page article in *Socialist Challenge* (17 April) entitled, 'Union's future at stake, Leyland -- It's now or never', Hickey and the IMG produced for their readers the heart-wrenching 'explanation' that 'International Marxist Group members at the SD1 plant made the difficult decision to cross the picket lines to fight inside SD1 to win action against the company's plants [sic]. What *Socialist Challenge* didn't tell its readers was that AUEW stewards at Drews Lane made the far more difficult decision -- and the correct and principled one -- to openly defy orders to scab by Terry Duffy and respect the picket lines. If they had been IMG supporters, they would have had to defy the IMG's orders to scab as well!

And the Workers Socialist League (WSL) of BL Cowley shop steward Alan Thornett -- himself well-practiced in scabbing during the national engineering strikes of last summer -- enthusiastically echoed the IMG's apology for scabbing, adding that the unnamed 'militant stewards from the SD1... were successful in this struggle, and three days later the plant was out'. This retrospective excuse for scabbing -- which appeared in a hysterical *Socialist Press* (23 April) attack on the Spartacist League (SL) entitled 'Sparks Set Opponents Up for the Sack' -- is false on two counts. First on Friday morning (SD1 went out that afternoon) the TGWU made the strikes official, the signal many workers had been waiting for to stop crossing the picket lines, especially since they had begun to experience first-hand the effects of Edwardes' anti-union package on the shop floor. Second, and more important, many of the SD1 workers, both AUEW and TGWU, who initially crossed the picket line -- and not *all* did -- said they would have respected it if only their stewards were doing the same.

But the excuses are beside the point. A recent *Daily Mail* (29 April) piece on a small strike in the United States in which the cars of 'non-union workers' 'have been fire-bombed' and their homes 'riddled with shotgun fire', notes whimsically, 'The mind boggles at what would happen if British Leyland workers had access to arms.' The fact is that the picket line is not a matter for polite debate -- in the final analysis either the strikers repulse by any means necessary those who intend to cross, or the picket lines are broken up by scabs, cops and company stooges.

And in the final analysis, the only real defence the IMG and WSL have offered for their pro-scab positions is a frenzy of slander, exclusionism and even *despicable violence* and cop-and-company-agent-baiting against those who have exposed their treachery. At an 'open meeting' of

the Leyland Action Committee (LAC) -- an opposition bloc involving the IMG, WSL and Workers Action -- in Birmingham on April 14, several militants from Rover including Spartacist League supporters were excluded after one of them had denounced the scabbing of Hickey and other IMG supporters at BL. As these militants were escorted from the room, a demented-looking Thornett sat staring wildly at them, shouting 'company stooges, company stooges' over and over.

At another meeting a week later, Thornett went even further. When one of the Rover militants rose to protest against Pat Hickey's attempt to motivate their exclusion from the meeting, Thornett lunged across the room, grabbed him and tried to push him out the door. Another Rover militant tried to intervene to stop this outrage -- and the berserk scab-lover assaulted him too. By the time the affray was over, five militant Rover workers had been excluded, while a Longbridge worker (sympathetic to the Workers



Alan Thornett

Power group) left in protest at the violent exclusions. Thornett's actions were what militant strikers expect from scabs. But Thornett had better understand that such militants won't tolerate Healyite thuggery, any more than scabbing!

The so-called 'company stooges' Thornett assaulted had been among the most militant picketers and fighters for a class-struggle perspective throughout the strike. It was they who initiated the motion adopted by the TGWU no 5/357 branch calling for a national BL strike to link up with the then-striking steelmen and for the TUC to launch a general strike. And during the strike they won the endorsement of dozens of workers -- the majority of picketers on the main gate -- on petitions calling for a militant strategy and class-struggle demands.

Socialist Press of course fails to mention the record of these 'company stooges', or Thornett's berserk attack. Not surprising. The purpose of this shoddy piece full of lies, evasions and Healy-style innuendo about how the SL is a 'provocative' organisation -- like the purpose of Thornett's assault -- is to draw a blood line between the WSL and SL. Written in a red-baiting 'expose' style worthy of the *News of the World* ('... BL's Rover factory in Birmingham -- where several Sparts have managed to obtain jobs...'), this lurid piece makes the truly amazing charge that by fighting to defend the authority of the picket line we are calling on the company to victimise and sack those like Hickey who cross it!

Both the WSL and IMG try to defend scabbing by claiming that crossing a picket line is only a 'tactical' question. Is that why Trotsky wrote that 'Strike pickets are the basic nuclei of the proletarian army' in the *Transitional Programme*? The picket line is the *basic* weapon of the day-to-day class struggle against the capitalists, which hinges on the ability to withdraw labour. As for the rubbish that the IMG's 'difficult decision' was motivated by a desire to bring out

the rest of the plant, every supporter of the LAC knows this to be the lie that it is -- because one of Hickey's IMG friends, an AUEW steward in Rover, *continued to cross picket lines and work until the end of the strike*, even after SD1 came out! This particular working-class hero actually had the audacity to stand on the picket line urging other workers to stay out before himself going in. (So much for the WSL's merciless and ludicrous maligning of one 'Spart', an SD1 worker who stood on the picket line, for procuring a sick note to protect against possible victimisation. Also, while we accept as a compliment the WSL's labelling as a 'Spart' every worker who is intransigently opposed to scabbing, this particular militant 'managed to obtain a job' at BL long before hearing of the SL, though we certainly hope to win such people to our politics.)

The decision of the 'revolutionaries' of the IMG and WSL to flaunt basic class principles and cross picket lines stems from their programmatic bankruptcy and consequent cynicism and defeatism. Unable to present a *revolutionary* perspective to workers confronted with the difficult situation of a bankrupt employer, they are reduced to crossing picket lines -- and to distributing pessimistic, defeatist propaganda to the workers. Thus the LAC leaflet issued to the workforce at key meetings which were voting whether or not to go on strike began with the stirring call to action, 'It now seems certain that Edwardes has won another battle with scarcely a shot been [sic] fired by the T.U. side.' With a line like this, no wonder they think scabbing is correct, even after the workers showed themselves to be far less defeatist than these 'vanguard' types and went on to wage a struggle.

Reduced to scabbing, violence and slander, the WSL (and, no doubt, the IMG) would dearly like to believe that, in the words of *Socialist Press*, the SL is full of 'demoralised forces' who are 'hated and despised by workers wherever they make an appearance'. (Haven't we read this one before? Perhaps in *News Line*...?) Messrs Thornett, Hickey and Co may rest assured that our fight for a revolutionary programme in the working class -- including a fight to expose scabbing and slanders and enforce workers democracy -- is only at a beginning. ■

Leyland strike ...

(Continued from page 12)

later, angry body line workers stopped work and forced convenor Joe Harris to call a mass meeting which voted overwhelmingly and enthusiastically to strike.

Six thousand TGWU men came out to begin the strike on the morning of April 9. Slowly the action began to spread as flying pickets were dispatched to parts depots and militants attempted to link up the strikes in the various plants and extend them to others. AUEW stewards at Drews Lane in Birmingham gave an important lead by defying Duffy's orders to scab and joining TGWU men on the picket lines. But scabbing by members of both unions was still widespread, including at Rovers where most workers from the SD1 plant, which had narrowly voted against striking, crossed picket lines each day. Scandalously joining them were SD1 stewards who support the fake-revolutionary International Marxist Group (IMG), who blithely waltzed across picket lines to go to work even as dozens of workers called on them to stop scabbing and join and help build the strike. Joe Harris did his bit for scabbing too, by organising a stewards meeting *inside* the struck plant despite a protest petition signed by virtually everyone on the picket line.

On April 12, the TGWU was finally forced to make the strikes official -- and immediately they spread to Rover SD1 and other plants in the Midlands. By midweek, nearly 20,000 had downed tools, while thousands more were laid off because of components shortages. Delegations of strikers were being dispatched to try and extend the strike to the key Longbridge and Cowley plants. The Tory press began to worry that maybe Michael Edwardes' strategy wasn't working so well after all. Then Edwardes winged back from a

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insanity'. It went on to say that the 'abortive provocation' proves that Carter 'could not care less' about the hostages 'and is prepared to sacrifice their lives for his election interests'. In this observation, the Russian news agency is joined by everyone from the families of some of the hostages to European statesmen. But weak, musclebound, incompetent madmen are dangerous, especially when humiliated.

Khomeini, of course, is delighted with Carter's disastrous adventure: once again the ayatollah can whip up anti-American sentiment to prop up his shaky regime, beset by Iraqi border skirmishes, Kurdish nationalist insurgency and leftist dissent in the universities. When he launches a 'cultural revolution' to cries of 'death to communists', he really means it. And Khomeini's executioners are the very same 'students following the Imam's line' whom the left has uncritically hailed for seizing the US embassy. Marxists, while upholding the norms of diplomatic immunity, are essentially indifferent to the fate of the CIA spies, Marine Corps volunteers and veteran imperialist diplomats being held captive. But the fact that Khomeini has insulted Carter and the US does not make the Iranian Muslim patriarch an anti-imperialist hero. For the workers movement, the Islamic fanatics' embassy seizure was a diversion to bolster the clerical-reactionary Iranian regime.

Under Carter and Brzezinski (a manifestly mad irredentist who waves his rifle at the Russians at the Khyber), events have taken such a dangerously bizarre turn that even Khomeini makes sense when he declares that 'by this act Carter has proven that he has lost rational thinking and that he is unable to govern a big country like the United States' (*New York Times*, 26 April). In the same speech, Khomeini boasted that he leads a country of '30 million martyrs'. So here are two sets of dangerous nutcases, each with his own obsessional concerns. Carter will do anything to get re-elected and the old ayatollah will gladly sacrifice all the people of Iran to oppose 'the great Satan'. But these dangerous nuts are not equally dangerous! Only one of them is the chief of the largest imperialist power in the world. Only one of them has his itchy finger on the nuclear trigger of an arsenal pointed at the Soviet Union.

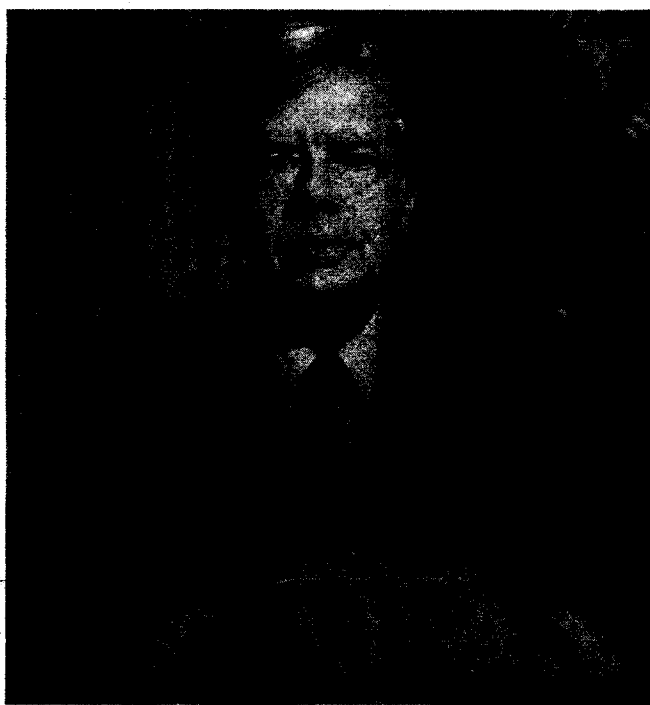
It is becoming widely recognised that Carter may indeed drive to thermonuclear war with Russia over Iran or even Afghanistan. Even before the 'rescue' fiasco West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt observed, 'This looks more and more like July 1914.' Even now Carter continues to threaten more military action against Iran, and there have been reports of jet fighter planes exchanging fire in the Straits of Hormuz. Carter says he will not blockade the harbour. He says he will not bomb. But for months the administration insisted an Entebbe-like mission was militarily impossible and would be foolish. Carter must not be allowed to run his gangsters around the world like some kind of international night riders. In a military confrontation between Iran, even under the leadership of the reactionary mullahs, and US imperialism, workers must demand: Hands off Iran!

Just as Khomeini used the hostage crisis to refurbish his fake 'anti-imperialist' credentials among the Iranians who hate the role US imperialism played in the Shah's regime, Carter used the crisis to whip up domestic chauvinism and promote an atmosphere of imperialist war-readiness. The media played along as Americans counted the days of captivity, learned the names of the hostages and followed the political conflicts among their families (how many Americans could name even one member of the crew of the Pueblo spy ship held for eleven months by the North Koreans?). But while Carter was happy to foster a crisis atmosphere in which the patriotic would feel constrained to rally around the president 'in our nation's darkest hour', he soon began to come under pressure for doing 'nothing'. What finally set him off was Khomeini, who said the one thing that was sure to get the imperialist chief reaching for his gun: that he would probably keep the hostages until after the election. So Carter decided to get rid of the hostages crisis by any means necessary.

Whipping up an atmosphere of chauvinist war-readiness is fundamentally an anti-Soviet ploy. But the more Carter threatens Iran, the more difficult it becomes to bring the Iranian mullahs into the strategic anti-Soviet military alliance. This simple fact more than anything else deters Carter/Brzezinski from an all-out war course. And the Iranians are well aware of the power of threats to play the 'Russian card'. When Carter talked about mining Iranian ports, Ghotbzadeh replied with a threat to set fire to

the Persian Gulf and to seek 'foreign aid' to remove the mines. Regarding economic sanctions the foreign minister said pointedly: 'If the whole West wills that a country like Iran will be totally dependent on the East because of the question of the hostages, we are not going to certainly starve to death' (*Washington Post*, 25 April). And the USSR has made it clear it is prepared to help break a US blockade.

Imperialists are quite right to see the mullahs' Iran as potentially as hostile to the Soviet Union as was the Iran of the Shah. But the hostage crisis threw a spanner into their works. The US had its chance to make an anti-Soviet hostage deal at the time the Russians intervened in Afghanistan, when the Iranian rulers were upset over the fate of their reactionary fundamentalist brothers in Kabul. But the deal fell through, whether because the US did not keep the Shah cooped up in Panama or because Khomeini could not afford to lose his 'anti-imperialist' trump card under conditions of turmoil at home. So although there is good reason to believe Bani-Sadr when he promises the Islamic Republic will resist the Russians 'to the last drop of blood', there is for the moment a dramatic failure of the reactionary rulers of the US and Iran to come together in an anti-Soviet alliance. As revolutionaries committed to the defence of the USSR against imperialism, we recognise that the present inability to forge a global anti-Soviet alliance is profoundly a good



Crazed Carter: his hand still on the trigger

thing. Defend the Soviet Union! Hail the Red Army in Afghanistan! Down with Carter's anti-Soviet Olympic boycott!

'My superpower, right or wrong!'

Carter's misfire midst the talk of war has produced an expected initial spirit of no criticism. Even Kennedy has learned that gloating over Carter's impotence in the hostage crisis tends to backfire. Now that Cyrus Vance has resigned in protest the mask of bourgeois unanimity is beginning to slip. In fact there's plenty of anxiety over Carter's war course -- not because there is any significant difference in capitalist circles over the need to build up an anti-Soviet nuclear arsenal, but because some elements think Carter might blow up the world out of ambition or pique. Even Barry Goldwater has been flipping around as a 'dove' critic:

'Let me remind my colleagues that if we mine the harbor, if we blockade that is an act of war and either Iran can retaliate or they can very rapidly find an ally in the Soviets, who can really retaliate. I would beg of my president to take a long, long time before he decides to perform an act of war that could drag this country into war at a time when we are not ready to go to war.' (*New York Times*, 25 April)

Of course there is the usual congressional bellyaching about the lack of 'consultation' (though why they want to share the responsibility for this one is beyond us). This takes the form of appeals to the 'War Powers Act' passed in 1973 when Congress was looking for paper resolutions to appease mass anti-war sentiment. But the 'War Powers Act' will never apply. The military adventure in Iran is being called not military but 'humanitarian' -- and what war is not deemed 'humanitarian' by its leaders? And remember Korea, which was not officially a war but a 'police action'.

With Vance bailing out, what has been true for some time is now officially stated: Brzezinski is in control. Formerly, the bour-

geois press and liberal detente-lovers could console themselves with the notion that Vance was a great moderating influence on Carter/Brzezinski. But as Brzezinski said recently, 'The National Security Council is not a democratic body.' Vance is the US's Bani-Sadr, the man who makes more rational deals only to find out later what the real policy is.

For the European leaders, Vance's resignation will scare them even more. And they are scared. When Schmidt talks about July 1914 he isn't kidding. And the Germans know that the nuclear war Carter wants to start will be fought on German soil. There is growing sentiment for neutrality in West Germany, reflected particularly in the pressure the Chancellor is under from his own Social-Democratic party. In France, *Le Monde* editor Andre Fontaine writes of the 'unanimity' of 'low esteem' for Carter and describes the election between Carter and 'cowboy' Reagan as a choice between maniacs.

For the 'allies' are dragging their feet on Carter's Cold War, generally offering up symbolic gestures. But Carter has adopted a curious form of blackmail to compel at least token compliance. Basically he uses his own instability as a threat. So, he implies, you think I'm a warmonger? So you want 'peaceful' economic and diplomatic pressure? Then you had better do what I say. This 'stop me before I bomb again' game seems to have limited success in Europe. But it is a very dangerous game.

Carter has whipped up a 'crisis' of East and West within which he can demand allegiance from the 'allies'. The policy of the British government whose rotting economy makes it particularly loyal to US imperialism, was caught by the *Economist*, which takes the attitude that Carter wasn't very good but he was the only president 'we have'. The line of 'our superpower right or wrong' has now been echoed by the French and somewhat more reluctantly by the Germans. Meeting in Lisbon on April 10, the Common Market declined to vote for sanctions against Iran, but on April 22 they came around for it far enough to vote to impose sanctions by May 17 'if the hostages are not released'.

But it is not sanctions but missiles that matter in the last analysis. In their present mood, the Europeans might be willing to trade the US some economic sanctions against Iran for a less war-hungry policy towards the USSR. But at present the two have become inseparable. At bottom, the resistance stems from the weakened position of American imperialism as hegemonic 'world policeman'. The European imperialists have their own interests that cut against the US attempt to impose the old postwar Cold War 'leadership'. Trade with the Soviet bloc is too important to sacrifice for Carter. Japan needs oil to survive.

The dread threat of nuclear annihilation hangs over the entire world. The US, no longer the hegemonic imperialist power it once was, is still trying to act like it. This is the political ideology of Carter's apparent insanity, of the unguided irredentist missiles of Zbigniew Brzezinski. Just as the bourgeoisie as a whole will never passively accept that it has outlived its function, so Carter/Brzezinski refuse to accept the fall of Saigon and what it meant for US imperialism. This is one good reason why the Soviet bureaucracy's illusions in detente and appeals to European capitalism not to 'appease' America will literally go up in smoke unless the working class saves civilisation from impending historic catastrophe. After two world wars and a great depression in this century, never has world revolution looked more like the road of peace and progress.

—adapted from *Workers Vanguard* no 255, 2 May 1980

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Belfast hospital strike

Catholics/Protestants unite against British Army

For five days in April, 1200 Catholic and Protestant workers at Belfast's Royal Victoria Hospital (RVH) struck, demanding that British troops be removed from the hospital. The occupying army has effectively converted the strategically located and massive RVH complex into a surveillance post for observation of the heavily-Republican Catholic ghettos of West Belfast. Soldiers arrogantly patrol the corridors with loaded weapons.

The strike began on Easter Monday when soldiers rushing down a corridor dropped a machine gun which discharged, narrowly missing two patients and two porters. Thirty-nine casualty department ancillary workers immediately walked out in protest at the army presence, and were suspended. Four days later a mass meeting of National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) members at the hospital voted to strike in defence of those suspended and unanimously demanded that all troops get out of the hospital.

The pro-imperialist London and Northern Ireland regional NUPE leaderships viciously denounced the strikers and refused to make their walkout official. Other trade union bureaucrats, church leaders and politicians of every hue branded the strike an 'IRA plot'. But Catholic and Protestant workers stood shoulder-to-shoulder on the picket lines, stopping not

only supply lorries but also army vehicles. A young woman ward orderly was quoted as saying, 'Both sections of the community are on strike. This isn't a Brits out thing -- we're on strike because there are thirty-nine workers who are suspended without pay. Because when one's out, we're all out, and they had good reason to go out' (*Irish Times*, 16 April).

However the RVH strike did objectively pit Catholic and Protestant workers against the British army. And the resemblance of the shrill politician/clergy/union bureaucrat campaign against the strike to the attacks on the 1932 Protestant/Catholic Outdoor Relief battles in Belfast was certainly not accidental. This was one of those crucial moments when an organisation armed with an anti-imperialist, anti-sectarian proletarian revolutionary programme could have had a sharp impact, posing in a concrete way the communist alternative to the imperialist terror and bitter nationalist deadlock which grip Northern Ireland.

A communist nucleus could have combined the call for the immediate withdrawal of the troops -- not just from one hospital but from the entire Six Counties -- with a call for *integrated anti-imperialist, anti-sectarian workers militias* in an extremely powerful and evocative way. In contrast, the strike leadership offered only a perspective of 'demilitarising' the hos-

pital by replacing the troops with RUC patrols, something which was clearly no alternative at all. The strike was finally defeated when a section of Protestant workers drifted back to work under massive Paisleyite pressure and the rest voted to return the next day to await a sellout 'inquiry' arranged by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

As in 1932, there was no communist organisation with the programme to intersect and transform the situation. The bankruptcy of the green-and-red nationalists who typify the left in Ireland was shown by the response of the centrist Irish Workers Group (IWG -- co-thinkers of the British Workers Power group), who managed to write a full-page article on the strike for the *May Workers Power* without even mentioning that Protestant workers were involved. The IWG saw this only as a failed opportunity to organise Catholic ('anti-Unionist') workers against the army. The depth of their nationalist opportunism can be measured by the simple fact that this put them to the right of the paper position of Provisional Sinn Fein. An article on the strike in the 19 April *An Phoblacht/Republican News* at least manages to note it as an instance of Catholic/Protestant class unity, while speaking of the supposed 'impossibility of holding together such united action for anything but a short period'.

So long as the oppressed Catholic minority remains trapped within the framework of Republican nationalism and the Protestants remain under the tutelage of the deeply reactionary pro-imperialist Paisleys, class unity can only be ephemeral. But the only way the special oppression of the Northern Catholics and the exploitation and poverty of *all* Irish workers can be fought is through a struggle for proletarian power involving the working class of the two communities. This means forging a communist vanguard party which, while opposing the imperialist presence and all manifestations of Loyalist oppression and privilege, upholds the democratic rights of *both* communities and opposes the Green nationalist project of forced unification of the North with the Catholic Republic. ■

BL's decay *requires* that he inflict severe defeats on the workers if the company is to survive in a capitalist world. Similarly, the Thatcher government's drive to save bankrupt British capitalism and restore competitiveness on a world scale requires the Iron Lady to cripple the entire trade union movement. They must be stopped! The plight of Leyland workers today shows in particularly graphic form the need for a new revolutionary leadership of the workers movement and a communist vanguard party to lead the struggle for proletarian power. The road forward for BL workers was presented during the course of the strike by the Spartacist League through leaflets, special strike supplements, discussions on the picket lines and public meetings. And several militants in Rover also fought for such a perspective -- for the initiation of strike action and a link-up with the steelmen, for fighting demands and a fighting way forward in the strike.

Evans claimed that he had to give in because BL simply had no more money and was in danger of going under. The next morning he won the apparently unsolicited support of the Communist Party (CP), which incredibly tried to portray his climbdown as a 'trade union victory'. The prospect of challenging Edwardes' plan to 'save BL' at the expense of the workers proved too daunting to the CP, which is highly influential in the BL union leadership on the local level. Thus the *Morning Star* (April 19) claimed Evans' deal could help 'save the company that Britain needs'. And while the *Star* had to admit that 'many workers will be unhappy and worried with the agreement', it went on in super-social-patriotic style to point out that 'their worries reflect the difficulties the company is in on British and world markets'.

For the CP, as for Evans, Duffy and Edwardes, the bosses' need to make a profit and the 'national interest' come first. So they said: Tough shit, Leyland workers -- get back to work, take your five per cent, and if you're fired or they speed up your line, just remember the difficulties of the company and keep the Union Jack flying!

How it could have won

The BL strike could have been won, but only through a class-struggle strategy which did *not* start from defending the capitalists' interests but from defending the workers' jobs and livelihoods. At the point of the sellout Leyland workers had moved forward from a few isolated strikes to a point where they at least had a fighting chance. But there was no leadership with the authority and strategy to point the way forward.

It was necessary first of all, as a petition endorsed by the overwhelming majority of the Rover pickets demanded, to fight to bring out all of Leyland around demands worth winning -- at least the original £24 claim, with no redundancies, victimisations or productivity strings

-- and to make the picket lines as solid as brick walls and send delegations to the non-striking plants. At every step full membership control of the strike -- through strike committees being responsible to regular strikers' meetings -- was vital to prevent attempts at bureaucratic sellouts. And moves by Edwardes to implement closures or mass sackings should have been met by *plant seizures*, not ignominious Evans-style capitulations.

But that is not all that was necessary. We wrote last autumn, in the context of Edwardes' mass redundancy/closure scheme, that 'a series of militant plant seizures could be a clarion call for a massive class upsurge of the entire British proletariat' (*Spartacist Britain* no 16, November 1979). Similarly, during the April strike the absolute *key* to victory was extending the battle beyond BL into other, more strategic sectors of the labour movement.

BL is so bankrupt and at root inessential to the British economy that Edwardes and Keith Joseph aren't *just* bluffing with talk of hiving off the profitable bits to the private sector and junking the rest. BL workers have been one of the most militant, organised sections of the proletariat, with influence beyond their present enfeebled economic muscle. But BL strikers cannot now have the *economic* power of the dockers, steelmen or miners. Victory in a major BL strike would require sparking or joining with a strike movement in strategic industrial sectors. That is why the BL union leaders' constant refusal to seize the time and link up with the embattled steelmen -- combined with Moss Evans' sanction of scabbing by TGWU lorry drivers -- was so criminal a class betrayal.

For Duffy, Evans and the CP the state of BL is a reason for swallowing all the 'save BL/save Britain' poison and telling workers to accept Edwardes' attacks. And for the would-be 'far-left' opposition, the so-called Leyland Action Committee supported by the IMG, Workers Socialist League and Workers Action, the same inability to offer a programme which defends proletarian class interests within a *perspective for power*, led to the distribution of defeatist propaganda and crossing picket lines throughout the strike (see article, page 10).

Forge a revolutionary leadership!

It is not only Michael Edwardes' South African training which allows him to act as chief industrial henchman and advance guard for the attacks of the Tory government and the whole capitalist class today. The advanced state of

BL's decay *requires* that he inflict severe defeats on the workers if the company is to survive in a capitalist world. Similarly, the Thatcher government's drive to save bankrupt British capitalism and restore competitiveness on a world scale requires the Iron Lady to cripple the entire trade union movement.

They must be stopped! The plight of Leyland workers today shows in particularly graphic form the need for a new revolutionary leadership of the workers movement and a communist vanguard party to lead the struggle for proletarian power. The road forward for BL workers was presented during the course of the strike by the Spartacist League through leaflets, special strike supplements, discussions on the picket lines and public meetings. And several militants in Rover also fought for such a perspective -- for the initiation of strike action and a link-up with the steelmen, for fighting demands and a fighting way forward in the strike.

While BL workers have been defeated again, there will undoubtedly still be at least shop-floor 'guerrilla' resistance as Edwardes proceeds to implement his package. And there will be other large battles to come. Disciplined communist opposition groups, based on the Transitional Programme of Trotskyism, must be cohered to take on the task of sacking the traitorous union leaders and providing BL workers with a new leadership which can give them a future. ■



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SPARTACIST BRITAIN

Bury the Prior Bill! Stop Murray's sabotage!

May 14: All out - and stay out!

Tory gutter rags have portrayed the TUC's May 14 'Day of Action' against the Prior Bill as some kind of ominous showdown in order to whip up anti-union sentiment. But 'Lenin' Murray (as he was ludicrously dubbed by the *Daily Express*) has done everything to ensure that the event is a half-blind, half-deaf flop. He has even used the excuse of no transport on the day to disperse any real show of strength into small, potentially demoralising local rallies.

Murray must not be allowed to succeed in his continual attempts to sidetrack an effective struggle against the Tories' union-bashing. All out on May 14 -- and the labour movement must not stop there! Murray wouldn't even use the words 'general strike', but no-one believes that the Prior Bill and other anti-working class plans of the Iron Lady can be stopped by a token action. The Tory government has already declared its contempt for such feeble efforts by seizing on Murray's wretched refusal to call strike action and stating that workers absent should be liable for victimisation. Let's have what's needed to knock these arrogant union-bashers for six! Shut everything down -- but keep enough trains and coaches going to take strikers to powerful mass demonstrations! And start making the banners now: 'TUC -- All-Out

General Strike to Smash Thatcher's Attacks!
One day in May is not enough!

The 'Day of Action' must be the first day of an indefinite general strike. If not, it could well mark the end of a round in Murray's efforts to prevent any militant and concerted working class struggle. While the Prior Bill threatens to hamstring the unions by outlawing secondary and flying pickets, attacking the closed shop and setting a precedent for legal state intervention through government-funded secret ballots, Murray dismissed out of hand the prospect of a general strike against the Tories, saying: 'I don't think the British people would tolerate that for one moment. If we did we would not know what to do with the power we had got.'

The TUC hit on the whole idea of its 'Day of Action' as an exercise in betrayal when the powerful steel strike was in full swing. As militant steelmen lobbied for a general strike and Liverpool dockers walked out in support, and as other sections such as BL were poised to strike, a one-day protest action in the future was a treacherous diversion away from the burning urgency of a general strike call. To their eternal discredit the fake-lefts from the Tribunites and the Communist Party (CP) to the

International Marxist Group and Socialist Workers Party gave enthusiastic support to Murray's diversionary schemes by focussing whatever paper appeals -- if any -- they made for a general strike onto May 14. And CP Scottish miners' leader Mick McGahey summed up the basic attitude of them all -- from Tony Benn to Tony Cliff -- when he called for a protest action to 'ensure the earliest possible general election ... and the return of a Labour government'.

May 14 can now be of use to fight such recipes for do-nothingism and betrayal! The labour movement cannot afford to sit around waiting for the next gang of Labour strike-breakers to get on the Westminster benches while the Tories run riot. And it cannot forget that the Prior Bill is little more than a formalisation of the 'guidelines' agreed between Murray and Callaghan in 1979. Force the TUC to call an all-out general strike from May 14 -- and away with all the reactionary nationalist chatter from labour fakers 'left' and right about import controls and 'preserving the economy'. Oust the Murrays, Callaghans and Benns and forge a revolutionary vanguard which can lead the workers to power. We will know what to do with the power once we have it. ■

Duffy/Evans: Edwardes' lackeys

Leyland strike stabbed

When Moss Evans bowed to Sir Michael Edwardes' 'work or be sacked' ultimatum and ordered an end to the rapidly spreading strikes against BL's union-bashing pay-and-conditions package on April 17, TGWU members on the picket lines were outraged. 'Sold down the river? We never got on the bloody boat', said one angry picket outside the Rover plant in Solihull. Others called for Evans to be sacked and not a striker could be found who didn't think this was the biggest sellout in years.

When demoralised workers voted to comply and the strikes slowly ended over the following days, it capped the biggest union defeat inflicted so far in Edwardes' industrial-brinkmanship anti-union offensive. Not only did Evans accept the insulting 5 per cent pay 'rise'; he gave Edwardes *carte blanche* to implement his 92-page productivity document, a slaves' charter which at a stroke downgrades thousands of workers, allows unlimited speed-up, and wipes out shop-floor mutuality and other union rights and working conditions won as long ago as the 1920s. And Edwardes' imposition of the package over the heads of the unions was a body blow to collective bargaining.

The BL boss wants to keep the bankrupt company alive by shedding thousands of jobs and driving the remaining workers like maniacs with 'American' line conditions (but Hong Kong pay). To achieve this he has begun to break the historically-strong Leyland shop-floor union organisation. And so far Evans, Terry Duffy of the AUEW and their cohorts have let him get away with murder. The provocative sacking of Long-bridge convenor Derek Robinson and the

Spartacist Britain



Militant pickets outside Rover Solihull main gate, April 9

management-orchestrated 'ballot' which shoved plant closures and 40,000 redundancies down the unions' throats last autumn were the prelude to the imposition of Edwardes' latest slave-labour package.

The strike they didn't want

It was not until late March, as the steel strike was grinding towards a sellout, that the Leyland Cars Joint Negotiating Committee ended its five months of 'negotiations' and called for a national strike after Easter. The call came when Edwardes said he would unilaterally impose his union-bashing package -- yet there was retreat to come even on this. The TGWU announced that it would leave each plant to decide

separately on strike action, while arch-traitor Duffy went even further, scandalously ordering AUEW members to cross picket lines and scab on any strikes that did take place.

Nonetheless, TGWU members at the Rovers Four-by-Four plant, Jaguar in Coventry and Common Lane in Birmingham all voted to strike. Rovers proved to be a centre of militancy in the strike; it was there that on March 30 a meeting of the TGWU no 5/357 branch called for a national strike to link up with the striking steel workers and fight for a general strike to smash the Tories' attacks. The motion was endorsed by numerous workers and copies of it were passed from hand to hand, reflecting the widespread pro-strike sentiment in the plant. Four days

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