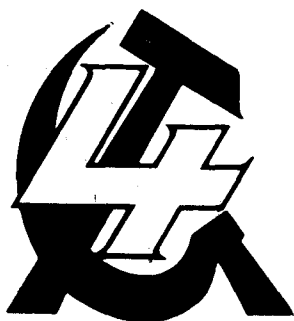


SPARTACIST



No 30

March 1981

20p

BRITAIN

Defence of USSR/Cuba begins in El Salvador! Reagan on the warpath

The Reagan administration threw its El Salvador offensive into high gear last month and its real targets were immediately clear: Washington is challenging the Soviet Union and Cuba to a showdown in Central America. In this anti-Soviet crusade US imperialism has pointed a gun at the head of Sandinista Nicaragua, demanding it cut off aid to Salvadoran left-wing rebels. The Pentagon is already funneling greatly increased military hardware and 'advisors' to prop up the murderous junta in San Salvador. In the name of 'stopping Communist expansionism' Ronald Reagan's Cold War bloodbath has begun in Central America.

The orchestrated campaign led off with closed-door Senate testimony by Secretary of State General Alexander Haig following which Foreign Relations Committee chairman Senator Charles Percy blustered that the United States would not stand idly by while 'outside forces -- outside our hemisphere or within our hemisphere' -- attempted to topple the Salvadoran junta (*New York Times*, 18 February). Next came a State Department memorandum asserting that 'the insurgency in El Salvador has been progressively transformed into a textbook case of indirect armed aggression by Communist powers'. The textbook of course was written not by V I Lenin or even by Castro but by J Edgar Hoover, and on 22 February a top presidential advisor went on national television to threaten a naval blockade of Havana.

Reagan has read the US' European allies the orders of the day and he expects them to stand at attention. But it's not so simple any more. West German imperialism, for example, has the



For imperialist chieftain Reagan, slaughter in El Salvador is the first step on the road to counterrevolutionary war with USSR.

economic basis to pursue a certain independent course. And not unnaturally it does not relish the prospect of thermonuclear war which would be fought largely on European soil -- particularly one sparked off by events in a banana republic. Helmut Schmidt would prefer to 'contain Communism' through continuation of 'detente' policies and use of the Second International as a 'mediator' to head off 'new Cubas'. So 'Bonn spurns US line on Salvador' (*Guardian*, 26 February) is his response. In contrast, the Foreign Office of faded British capitalism, guided by Reagan's Iron Lady ideological soulmate, has backed the US line. But on her recent trip to Washington

even Cold Warrior Thatcher thought it prudent to keep a bit of distance from US bellicosity over tiny El Salvador, adducing the need for an 'internal' settlement.

The *Economist* (28 February) had a reply for the European, and particularly German, skeptics: 'Mr Reagan and Mr Haig are likely to look straight past such criticisms, however, for it is the Soviet Union, not El Salvador, that they have squarely in view.' Indeed the stakes in El Salvador go far beyond the state of the masses in that long-suffering Central American statelet. As it becomes a focal point in Reagan's

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Irish hunger strike: Free them now!

On 1 March another Republican hunger strike began in Northern Ireland, demanding that Republican inmates 'be treated as political prisoners'. The strike was launched in the H blocks of Long Kesh by Bobby Sands, the senior Provisional IRA man held there. Five other prisoners are set to join him soon. The renewal of the hunger strike campaign originally launched last autumn marks the definitive collapse of the pre-Christmas 'settlement'. In December, as one prisoner, Sean McKenna, was receiving the last rites, Northern Ireland secretary of state Humphrey Atkins issued a document on prisoners' conditions as a basis for ending the hunger strikers' action. The Republicans hailed this scrap of paper as a 'victory' -- a claim echoed by most of their partisans on the British and Irish left -- and the strike was over.

Some victory. The implementation of Atkins' 'concessions' could have come straight from Joseph Heller's *Catch 22*. Prisoners would get certain 'privileges' if they first of all recog-

nised them to be that, and not rights. So before they could wear their own clothes they had to first accept prison clothing. Since the prison protests were called off there have been beatings, humiliating searches, medical neglect, lack of heat, denial of toilet facilities and also reductions in the amount of miserable food. And now six more desperate prisoners are prepared to starve themselves to the death if necessary to win their demands.

The Tory Cabinet is determined to press home its hard line stance against political status irrespective of criticism. Even the Ulster establishment *Belfast Telegraph* wished that Atkins had tried to make it look as if it was the prisoners, not the government, who were being unreasonable after the Christmas 'settlement'. And *gombeen* nationalists like Sile de Valera are screaming about the British 'reneging' on their promises. But this is hardly the point, and all except those with the most naive faith in bloody imperialism's 'goodwill' know it. Atkins' strategy was to take the heat out of the situation while giving nothing away -- and this he did, winning a propaganda victory in the process.

The prisoners themselves issued a bitter statement denouncing the politicians and clergy from whom they sought support the last time around and who they now believe betrayed them. But all Republican prison protests have been based on blocs with just such 'respectable' souls, and the thousands mobilised for marches and protests in Ireland and Britain were called on only to pressure imperialism into being more

'reasonable'. This campaign achieved precisely none of its aims -- even though four of its leaders were assassinated and another, Bernadette McAliskey, narrowly escaped death at the hands of Loyalist thugs. Now understandably there is less enthusiasm among Republican supporters over a repeat performance. Even the National H Block/Armagh Committee did not favour the resumption of the hunger strike. Yet the Republicans are set to try the same bankrupt strategy again.

Petty-bourgeois Republicanism inevitably seeks to force concessions from imperialism with such toothless 'humanitarianism' -- or else with the bomb, or a combination of both. The 'physical force' side of the Republican tradition may be more spectacular, but is just as politically bankrupt -- and when it is directed against random innocent civilians, is indefensible.

But the answer is not to criticise Republican 'physical force' activities from a position of servile liberalism, as People's Democracy (PD), Irish sister organisation of the International Marxist Group, now does. PD's *Socialist Republic* (undated, vol 4, no 1) complains:

'In the last days of the hunger strike one central question came to dominate the campaign -- the question of force. It became evident ... that no military solution to the question of political status existed.' PD's nationalist political framework is the same as the Provisionals. They are peeved because they want to construct a mass 'single issue'

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Cold War
peace game
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Miners ...

(Continued from page 12)

our union, who have the ability to go to law to make sure that the union is brought to heel if it acts like this.' (Guardian, 17 February)

But Wales was determined to stay at the head of the fight. If the mines go, Wales goes, and everyone knows it. Already the huge steel works of Port Talbot and Llanwern are virtually decimated. Workers knew Williams was right when he pointed to 'what happened to our brothers in the steel industry' and called redundancy pay 'fools' gold'. Transport workers and railwaymen honoured miners' picket lines and blacked shipments of coal. Flying pickets left the valleys for power stations and other mining areas. By 18 February there were also stoppages in Yorkshire and Scotland, and the whole Kent coalfield was at a standstill. A Kent miner expressed the mood of many: 'I'm a middle-of-the-road moderate turned militant by this. And if Mrs Thatcher and her lily-livered men want a fight they can have one.'

The government had good cause to be scared. Thatcher may see herself as the 'lady not for turning' but she's not stupid either. With rank-and-file miners ready for a political confrontation, and her government if anything more despised in the proletariat than was Heath's, there was nothing to gain through such a showdown, and everything to lose. So she began to talk of 'putting as much money into the future of coal as we possibly can', and Howell urgently brought forward tripartite negotiations with himself as the chairman. At an NUM executive meeting in London on 19 February Gormley put forward the new offer -- increased state aid and control on imports -- securing its acceptance in a 15-8 vote.

The right-wing leaders painted the government's retreat, which they had done precisely nothing to bring about, as a complete victory. But increased subsidies in themselves solve nothing -- workers in Leyland and steel have been getting massive subsidies for years and still seen thousands of their brothers thrown on to the slag heap. And restrictions on imports were no victory at all -- in the aftermath of the strike they can only become a more dangerous, reactionary diversion. Not only don't they save jobs, but as a 20 February special supplement to *Spartacist Britain* (For a national miners strike!) pointed out, the call for import controls is directly counterposed to working-class interests:

'Protectionist' appeals only serve to pit worker against worker and exacerbate nationalist trade war. In the context of a sharpening imperialist war drive against the Soviet Union ... protectionism fuels the nationalist fervour which prepares the way for real war....'

To nationalist protectionism it counterposed international working-class solidarity. It called for 'unified, determined resistance from the entire trade-union movement through a general strike' to repulse any attempt to bring in the troops to break the strike and it pointed to a perspective to spark a class-wide battle: 'For an all-out national coal strike! Shut down power -- bring out steel! For a class-wide struggle on jobs and pay! Send the Tory/employer offensive reeling!'

But not one member of the NUM leadership fought for such a class-struggle perspective.

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SPARTACIST BRITAIN

Monthly newspaper of the Spartacist League, British section of the international Spartacist tendency.

EDITORIAL BOARD: Len Michelson (editor), Caroline Carne (production manager), Judith Hunter, Mark Hyde, John Masters, David Strachan.

CIRCULATION MANAGER: Rob Holt

Published monthly, except in January and September, by Spartacist Publications, 26 Harrison St, London WC1. Address all letters and subscription requests to: Spartacist Publications, PO Box 185, London WC1H 8JE.

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

The 'opposition' on the executive came from the Communist Party (CP) and Yorkshire's 'Marxist' Arthur Scargill. These 'lefts' not only share Gormley's advocacy of import controls and pleas for better government policy, but decisively demonstrated their own political rottenness in the course of the strike.

On 13 February Mick McGahey, Scottish miners leader and CP Chairman, cynically appealed to mass sentiment as he thundered at a rally: 'I want the Tories to be the anvil and I will be the good blacksmith.' But he and Scargill not only offer nothing to replace the Iron Lady but a 'left' Labour government -- in the decisive days they never even called their own areas out on strike! In Kent, NUM CPer Jack Collins went with the action, as a result of what area president John Moyle called 'extreme pressure from its branches'. But in Yorkshire and Scotland the leadership managed to stick to talking about a strike call slated to start 23 February. McGahey's 'left' demagoguery allowed the possibility for the heat to be taken out of the situation. While he spoke of 'a battle in which the dimensions of 1972 and 1974 would fade into insignificance' he was preventing the real battle from getting off the ground.

Lord Gormley? President Scargill?

When Scargill turned up to attend the executive on 19 February, lobbying miners from South Wales and Kent erupted in outrage. A chant of 'Scab, scab!' greeted this *bete noir* of the gutter press. He had failed to bring out his strategic 65,000-strong area and betrayed a proud tradition in the mining industry -- one out, all out! A Welsh miner told *Spartacist Britain*: 'Gormley wants a peerage and Scargill wants the NUM presidency.' He had anyway succeeded in giving the incumbent president time to manoeuvre with Howell and break the momentum of the movement for a national strike. When the settlement was accepted Scargill and McGahey maintained their rhetoric and tried to recapture their 'militant' credentials by threatening to continue with their plans for strike action. 'King' Arthur pointed out that there were no 'firm assurances on the table' over miners' jobs.

But the 20 February Scotland and Yorkshire area meetings voted to keep working and swallow the deal -- and it was not just because confusion and inaction had taken their toll. *The Times* (21 February) had the goods on the manipulated and pre-arranged character of the decision:

'After a series of secret telephone calls between the coalfields, it was decided that the men in Yorkshire should not come out, while Scots and Welsh miners should return to work in line with the recommendation of the National Union of Mineworkers' executive.'

Scargill's threats were bluster and fraud to the last, and the next day he was off to Orgreave colliery, one of two on strike in his area, to sell the agreement to angry miners who had kept up their picket line right through the night before. As their branch secretary, Ron Windle, explained, 'at this meeting on Wednesday between the unions, government and Coal Board we can't trust anybody'. We can only add: least of all Scargill. Already Yorkshire NUM has agreed to return to a class-collaborationist joint review procedure to discuss the fate of 'problem pits' with the Coal Board.

The depth of the betrayal perpetrated by Scargill, and the strength of the weapon he refused to wield, was only highlighted by the fact that Coal Board chairman Sir Derek Ezra, still unaware of the decision not to strike, was planning to offer more concessions to the Yorkshire miners.

The greatest crime of the NUM bureaucrats, including Scargill, is not even that they settled with no 'firm assurances on the table' about jobs, but that this country needs a major national strike -- a showdown against the Tories on the streets which could unlock the stalemate in the class struggle, provide a lead for the rest of the class and open the way for a fight to overthrow this whole system of capitalist exploitation and misery. The miners, with their fighting traditions and still undiminished industrial clout, could have started it.

Within the narrow confines of economist trade unionism and parliamentary reformism delaying the loss of jobs is indeed an unqualified victory -- it's about the most that can be hoped for under capitalism today. The problem is that such a perspective is dangerously short-sighted, solving none of the fundamental problems and thus paving a road to eventual defeat. Yet the fake-revolutionaries share the same dead-end perspective. During the strike the International

Marxist Group (IMG) gave over a half-page of *Socialist Challenge* (19 February) to a speech by Arthur Scargill which was mainly devoted to his crusade for import controls. The IMG has not a word on his failure to call his own men out on strike, and no mention of the cries of 'scab!' from angry miners outside the executive! And they show the same fealty to the Labour Party leaders, becoming press agents not just for Tony Benn, but for Michael Foot. When the miners were going back to work *Socialist Challenge* (26 February) declared that the Tories were 'pulverised' and went on:

'Michael Foot said it all when he commented at the Glasgow [anti-unemployment] rally: "We are many, they are few". He also told unemployed people to "rise up like lions". The forces are there, ready and willing to do just that. But they need to be given a lead.'

The IMG's idea of a 'lead' is a *one-day-strike* and 'the most gigantic protest since the war' on 29 May when a Liverpool jobs hike reaches London to lobby parliament. But the real 'lead' the unemployed need will not come from Michael Foot and his marches but from a revolutionary leadership ready to wage class war against the bourgeoisie. The only alternative for British workers is more pervasive lumpenisation, immiseration and demoralisation -- and if that happens the now palpable threat of fascism will become full-blown.


For a revolutionary leadership of the unions!


The sense of relief at the settlement with the miners was most pronounced and sickening among the Labour parliamentarians. In 1972 Foot expressed gratitude to Tory leader of the House William Whitelaw, for bringing extra cops to stop protesting miners entering the 'hallowed' Westminster chambers. During February Labour MPs berated Thatcher for encouraging 'militants' in the coalfields by not making concessions sooner. And when the deal was announced Foot's reaction was to defuse the atmosphere by swapping jokes about the PM's 'turn'.

Parliamentary laughter today is still nervous. For the worried ruling class it is not mainly the £200 million estimated cost of settling with the miners, nor that the 'lady has turned' again from a strict monetarist course, nor even that she made an exception of the miners -- the Iron Lady's union-bashing strategy has always included avoiding a premature all-out confrontation. Tory backbenchers may be perturbed that she chose to give a couple of per cent more to the water workers in order to avoid another crisis on the heels of the miners. But John Biffen, the trade secretary, remarked to television's *Weekend World* that he never entered politics 'to be a kamikaze pilot'. The problem above all others was that the government had appeared to take a stand and then climbed down, damaging its authority for the future. The *Financial Times* (20 February) opined that 'At the very least, the Government has been incompetent'. The impression had been given that 'In Tory Britain, miners rule.'

Not yet. But we do take heart from the audacity and determination displayed by the men from the coalface. Their fighting spirit must now be turned to the task of ousting their treacherous leaders. A revolutionary leadership must be constructed in the NUM as part of the fight for a mass revolutionary workers party. Then miners will not plead to be treated as a 'special case' by the government -- they will assume their appropriate responsibility as a leading section of the whole proletariat. Then there will be no Tory Britain, but the miners along with other workers will rule, through the iron dictatorship of the proletariat. ■

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IMG: disarm the Soviet Union?

CND - Cold War peace game

Tony Cliff's 'third camp' outfit, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), has recently taken to adorning the masthead of its paper *Socialist Worker* with the slogan, 'Neither Washington nor Moscow'. The Cliffites have always been a reliable weathervane of Cold War winds. Born in a capitulation to imperialist anti-communism during the Korean war, they quietly relegated their anti-Sovietism to the background in the late sixties, when thousands upon thousands of youth were marching through the streets against the imperialist war in Vietnam and in solidarity with the Stalinist-led NLF.

Well, Cold War 'socialism' is back in vogue. Today the 'masses' are marching against missiles -- and the Russians are just as guilty of possessing nukes as the imperialists are. In the past year all and sundry have announced the 'rebirth' of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). The small band of vegetarian ladies who kept the candles of pacifism lit throughout the years are now being joined by thousands of youth who rather understandably would like a chance to grow older and don't relish the prospect of nuclear extermination. As spring approaches, the CND promises a hectic calendar of local marches, carnivals and conferences -- chief among them a Labour Movement Conference Against the Missiles, to be held in Manchester, 28 March.

The group making its bid to become the 'best builders' of this 'classless' pacifist fraud is not the SWP, however, but the supposedly Soviet-defencist International Marxist Group (IMG), self-styled Trotskyists and initiators of the Labour Movement Conference. These days, the 'Anti-missile Action Guide' of CND activities in *Socialist Challenge* dwarfs the IMG's own activities column, and IMG supporters are hardly to be seen except at Labour Party and CND meetings. 'The potential is there to build a massive anti-war movement that can stop the Tory government's war plans', says IMG veteran Bob Pennington (*Socialist Challenge*, 1 January).

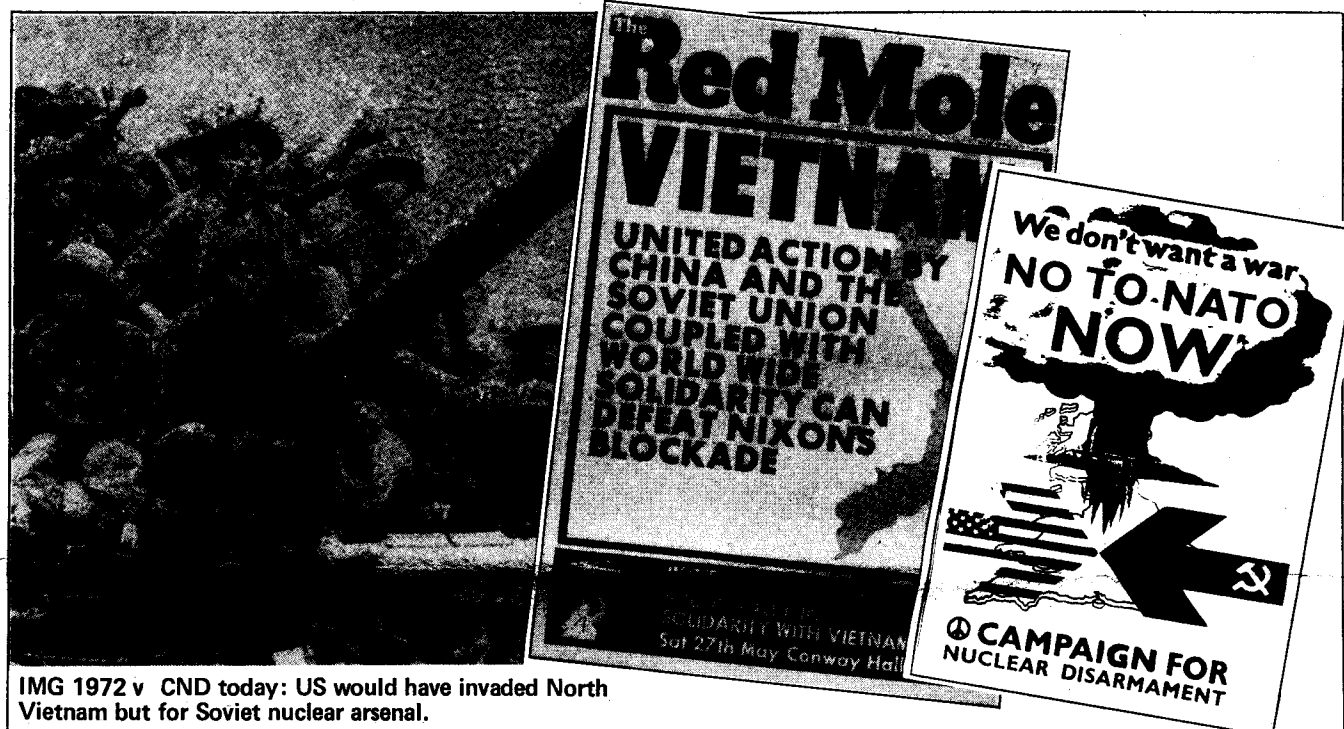
But a campaign to opt Britain out of the world will not stop the 'arms race'. Imperialist Britain -- whether ruled by a Michael Foot (or Tony Benn) or Maggie Thatcher -- will not escape the nuclear crossfire which is bound to come sooner or later if the imperialists are not first overthrown by proletarian revolution. And that requires an understanding that the renewed Cold War atmosphere reflects a class confrontation between conflicting social systems. In the wake of its stinging defeat at the hands of the Vietnamese workers and peasants, the American bourgeoisie set in gear a massive programme of moral and military rearmament aimed at restoring its lost 'grandeur' and buttressing its role as chief imperialist gendarme. Carter's anti-Soviet 'human rights' crusade paved the way for Reagan's naked nuclear sabre-rattling. Once again the nuclear crosshairs have focussed sharply on what has been the primary target of

imperialist revanchism for over six decades: the land of the October Revolution. And even if the military strategists in the Kremlin (thankfully) don't have to lose too much sleep agonising over Britain's nuclear arsenal, the Cruise missile is a deadly component of this renewed offensive to eradicate the historic gains of October.

But for the IMG the problem with CND is not that it refuses to defend the overthrow of capitalism in the Soviet Union against imperialist attempts to restore it, but that it doesn't push its reactionary/utopian pacifism hard enough where it counts: on the streets and in the labour movement. In its perennial hustle for the big time, the IMG has of late thrown everything it's got into CND, hoping to outshine the fuddy-duddy old pacifists and Communist Party fellow travellers who plod along with petitions

mental reason is that such actions could have led to a confrontation with the USSR, which could have had very major consequences for the USA.'

The movement the IMG is building today is aimed at disarming the Soviet Union in the event of such a confrontation. The Vietnamese masses certainly wouldn't find it immensely positive if the Soviet Union shed its nuclear arsenal. But 'nuclear disarmers' do not draw class distinctions. When Clive Turnbull, a leading IMG member and initiator of Sheffield CND, rose to oppose a motion equating Cruise missiles and Soviet SS-20s at a November CND conference, the reception was far from 'anti-imperialist' (as reported, not in *Socialist Challenge*, but the *Sheffield Free Press*). And a recent West Midlands CND flyer depicting a hammer-and-sickle



IMG 1972 v CND today: US would have invaded North Vietnam but for Soviet nuclear arsenal.

and lobbies for peace. A recent fundraising blurb in *Socialist Challenge* (5 February) boasted proudly:

'Our presses have been rolling for a week to produce one leaflet: but it's some leaflet! One hundred thousand copies have been printed of CND's publicity handout for the Labour Movement Conference against the Missiles....'

'Some leaflet' hardly does it justice! Quoting the recent Labour Party conference resolution endorsing E P Thomson's European Nuclear Disarmament (END) and its call 'for the establishment of a European nuclear free zone', it adds that 'the new Party Leader, Michael Foot, has taken a clear stand against the arms race'. Michael Foot? The man who consistently condones imperialist butchery in Northern Ireland, whose new appointment for shadow defence minister is an ardent advocate of the Cruise missile? Another product of the IMG print shop touted in *Socialist Challenge* is a Sheffield CND poster featuring a quote against the nuclear arms race from none other than the late, unlamented Viceroy of India, Lord Louis Mountbatten.

The 'objective dynamic' of anti-Soviet pacifism

To justify its project of building the biggest and best ever pacifist movement the IMG retreats to the familiar Pabloite rationale that the movement has an 'objective' dynamic. In an interview with Fred Halliday, *Socialist Challenge* (23 October 1980) puts the following, rather leading, 'question':

'But wouldn't European disarmament be very much in the interests of the Soviet Union? Despite the neutralist and pacifist rhetoric of the new nuclear disarmament campaign, don't you think it will have an anti-imperialist dynamic? Isn't it immensely positive?'

Halliday answers in the affirmative; but though not a Trotskyist, he is an intelligent and perceptive observer. 'Why did the Americans not invade Vietnam?', asks Halliday. The funda-

ment clashing with the American flag over the 'sceptred isle' reads:

'The U.S.A. and its allies -- NATO -- and the USSR and its allies -- The Warsaw Pact -- have divided Europe into an armed camp for thirty years....'

'Our best defence is not to make ourselves a military target. We must close down all nuclear bases in this country, and if necessary[!], leave NATO. In this "dangerous decade" Britain must give a lead to NATO and the Warsaw Pact by renouncing nuclear weapons -- for the sake of world Peace.'

'Don't support the Russian bomb!'

The IMG's attempt to reconcile its formal Soviet defencism with its opportunist dive into the CND has caused this centrist organisation no small amount of embarrassment and consternation. When the SWP threw the cat among the pigeons and charged the IMG with defending the 'workers' bomb' -- the Soviet Union's nuclear capacity -- it incited a flurry of polemics in the letters column of *Socialist Challenge*. 'Don't support Russian bomb!' was the headline over one by George Kerevan. And another in the same issue (2 October 1980), penned by a supporter of *Socialist Challenge* and END, alibied END's 'demands for a nuclear free zone East and West'. IMG leader Brian Grogan tried to straddle the question in his 9 October *Socialist Challenge* weekly column: 'The call for renunciation of nuclear weapons by the Soviet Union ... would prepare a massive victory for imperialism. It would further aid attempts at capitalist restoration.' But, added Grogan,

'The vast defence spending of the USSR is totally unjustified. Socialists would argue today for its reduction to raise the standards of living of the Russian workers and peasants.'

'A revolutionary government which did this could call imperialism's bluff on arms limi-

continued on page 11)

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Australian SWP balks at Barnes' about-face

Anti-Soviet turn on Afghanistan

In late December 1979, the Soviet Union poured tens of thousands of troops into Afghanistan to prop up the shaky left-nationalist Kabul regime, which was fighting a civil war against imperialist-backed Islamic reactionaries who stand for feudal backwardness, female chattel slavery and mass illiteracy. The international Spartacist tendency (iSt) unambiguously greeted this intervention:

'... the Red Army in Afghanistan is clearly aiding the liberation of the oppressed and the defence of the USSR against imperialism. In the struggle against Islamic reaction we side with the Soviet tanks. Hail Red Army!' (*Australasian Spartacist* no 71, February/March 1980)

The rest of the left in contrast presented an appalling picture of confusion and capitulation in the face of the bourgeoisie's Cold War hysteria. The fake-Trotskyist 'United Secretariat of the Fourth International' (USec) in particular came down all over the map, some on opposite sides, others in between and some taking two, three, many lines within a few weeks time. Sections of the USec's centrist wing around Ernest Mandel, like the British International Marxist Group, came out for Soviet withdrawal, while the reformists in the American and Australian Socialist Workers Parties (SWP) came out on the side of the Soviet-backed PDPA Kabul regime. The Australian SWP initially sounded left wing, terming the Soviet intervention 'an important blow to imperialism's efforts to hold back the advance of the world revolution' (*Direct Action*, 17 January 1980). The group even claimed at first that 'we support the right of the Soviet workers state to take measures necessary to protect itself against imperialist military threats' (*ibid*), a line which put it at odds with its US mentors who absurdly declared 'the issue is not Soviet intervention...' (*Militant*, 18 January 1980). But the apparent difference soon disappeared as the Australians fell into line with the US SWP's insistence that the Russian question was not posed over Afghanistan.

At the time we noted that for the thoroughly social-democratic US and Australian SWPs, their Afghanistan line was 'something of an unnatural political act', given their uncritical groveling before Khomeini, who backs the Islamic rebels the Red Army is fighting, and their long record of uncritical support for pro-capitalist Soviet dissidents -- from Andrei Sakharov, who denounced the Red Army action, to Anatoly Shcharansky, who passed Soviet military secrets in 1978 to the CIA. In order to square these conflicting positions both SWPs massively denied reality, inventing a mythical 'Afghan Revolution' in Kabul in April 1978 as the 'real' target of US imperialism.

SWP joins anti-Soviet chorus

Now the American SWP has dumped its previous line and rushed to join the anti-Soviet chorus. Echoing Cold War ideologues, an SWP resolution on the shift declares:

'Rather than being liberators, the Soviet troops are the foreign occupiers.... The massive Soviet military presence has ... put the vanguard of the toiling masses of Afghanistan in a worse, not a better, position to mobilise mass opposition to their exploiters.' (*Intercontinental Press*, 22 December 1980; emphasis in original)

It then equates the Red Army soldiers with the collection of landlords, mullahs, money-lenders and tribal chieftains who are fighting to restore their barbaric rule in the country: 'Both the Soviet troops and the rightists more and more appear as evils to growing layers of the population.' This 'equal-handed' condemnation gives the lie to the resolution's professed support to the 'Kabul regime in any clash with the imperialist-backed rightist guerrillas': without the Red Army the CIA-funded reactionaries would likely defeat the present 'Kabul regime' and annihilate the Afghan left along with every single progressive reform implemented since April 1978.

The resolution tries to forestall any charge of joining the Carter/Reagan war drive by re-

jecting 'campaigning for Soviet withdrawal' (emphasis added) in the imperialist West. Instead it calls on 'revolutionary Marxists in the Soviet Union' to begin 'denouncing the antiworking-class [sic] policy of the Kremlin and demanding the withdrawal of Soviet troops'. But this is precisely the line being pushed by the more far-sighted State Department types: foment counterrevolutionary defeatism within the Soviet workers state in preference to external pressures and threats!

So far the Australian SWP has refused to follow suit. Since its establishment as the Australian branch office of the US SWP eleven years ago, the SWP here has slavishly followed every twist and turn of its American big brother -- from defending free speech for fascists right over to justifying the expulsion from Nicaragua of their own 'comrades' in the Simon Bolivar Brigade and the current hero-worshipping of Fidel Castro. Last year it put on tour the wretchedly right-wing *chador* 'socialist', Fatima Fallahi of the Iranian HKE, who systematically



Soviet troops march in Red Square.

apologised for Khomeini's slaughter of leftists, national minorities, women and homosexuals in Iran. Since then it has come out with a position of support to Iran in its sordid nationalist war with Iraq. But this time?

Australian SWP: different pressures

At its recent conference in Sydney, the SWP reportedly adopted a political resolution which carried a watered-down version of the pro-intervention line initially taken. Beneath the difference is simple reformist nationalism: the Jack Barnes leadership of the US SWP brought its Afghanistan line into closer harmony with the rest of its politics because of the intensely anti-Soviet political climate in the US. In a country where even sections of the Victorian ALP Socialist Left defend the Soviet intervention, where Fraser's anti-Soviet Olympic boycott campaign was massively unpopular, the Percy leadership feels a pressure to maintain its position -- if only to distinguish it from mainstream social democracy. Although the SWP here operates with the same reformist methodology as the Barnes group, a line change in Australia now would be unpopular and publicly humiliating for a group which claims to defend the USSR militarily.

There is no fundamental barrier to the Australian SWP changing its line, though. In 1979 it followed the American organisation in belatedly discovering that Pol Pot's Kampuchea was capitalist (see *Australasian Spartacist* no 61, March 1979). In 1980, it showed its anti-Soviet colours when it regurgitated *in toto* the US SWP's uncritical enthusing over the Polish strikes, including its support for church access to the media. And in its conference resolution it came out for liquidating the 'Fourth International' into sundry petty-bourgeois nationalist forces in the Caribbean and Central America:

'The task which confronts the Fourth International today is to link up with the Marxist leadership which has come out of the Cuban, Nicaraguan and Grenadian revolutions, to merge our forces together with other emerging revolutionary currents into a common political and organisational framework....' Given this track record of opportunism it is clear that when Jim Percy finds it necessary or expedient, he too will junk the Afghanistan line.

Polish crisis and the line change

The US SWP line change has been in preparation since August, when the Polish events propelled a further rightward shift on the Russian question by most 'left' groups, as they rushed to embrace the clerical-nationalists around Lech Walesa and pooh-poohed the possibility of capitalist counterrevolution in Poland. We noted that 'the Polish crisis created a touchstone of anti-Soviet unanimity extending not merely to avowed third-campists but all the way to the most right-wing, reformist social democrats.... [T]he impulse within the USec to throw away the "outmoded" baggage of formal Trotskyism is likely to emerge more openly' ('The Russian question: Poland, Afghanistan and the left -- An exchange with Paul White,' *Spartacist Bulletin*).

The US SWP line change confirms our analysis. In an August 1980 speech, reprinted in *SWP International Internal Information Bulletin* (IIDB) no 4, 1980, Jack Barnes openly acknowledges that it was 'our experience in carrying out this line through our industrial fractions, in the antidraft [sic] movement, our forums and elsewhere' which changed their minds. 'It wasn't primarily on the basis of new facts.' Translation: the SWP found its 'pro-Soviet' position a barrier to pursuing its social-democratic appetites.

But what also bothered Barnes was the 'tone and approach in the press of our Australian and New Zealand comrades'. Both groups had gone too far, it seems, even letting slip -- once each -- the word 'hail' in reference to the Soviet intervention. For Barnes had also 'read the press of the Spartacist sect. "Hail Red Army!" was the main headline ...' and this made him 'think about the devastating political logic that could be drawn from some of the assumptions we were starting from'. The iSt stood for the Trotskyist program of defending the USSR and Barnes didn't want to risk association with that.

In an attempt to give a 'left' cover to this capitulation to anti-Sovietism, Barnes drags in the Cubans who, he claims, didn't ecstatically acclaim the Soviet action. He also invokes an imaginary 'worldwide shift to the detriment of imperialism' to justify his claim that defence of the USSR is 'a fake issue in the concrete case of Afghanistan'. Here the objectivist method of Pabloism is put to the service of social-democratic anti-Sovietism.

Barnes additionally weighs in against the evils of 'revolution from without', citing as his authority the Castro leadership who 'understand exactly why revolution cannot be extended from one country to another on the point of a bayonet: They are conscious Leninists on this' (IIDB no 3, 1980). On this Barnes is a conscious liar, rehashing stock Stalinist and social-democratic slanders. For even as the Bolsheviks rejected the program of 'revolution from without', they still upheld the principle and perspective of using the Red Army to promote revolutions abroad. The Red Army's unsuccessful invasion of Poland in 1920 was debated tactically but not in principle; and the successful forced Sovietisation of Menshevik-ruled Georgia in 1921 was necessary for defence of Soviet Russia itself (see 'The Bolsheviks and the "Export of Revolution"', *Spartacist* no 29, Summer 1980). The Castroites in contrast oppose a proletarian internationalist foreign policy, and instead serve the aims of the Kremlin, not world revolution. In Angola, they defeated the CIA-backed South African invasion -- with the US SWP scandalously taking a neutral position -- but power remains in the hands of the anti-

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Anti-Soviet feminist on tour

Holy Mother

Russia's daughters



Russian feminists (Mamonova, far right): man-haters, mystics, arrogant 'artistes'.

'Russian women don't talk -- they howl', commented one Parisian journalist on the latest dissident sensations from the Soviet Union, four women (now exiles based in Vienna) who published the samizdat journal *Woman and Russia* last year in Leningrad. These women's 'spontaneous howlings', so 'purely personal, so passionate', have been translated, reprinted and hailed by virtually the entire Western left, feminist and petty-bourgeois radical circles. 'At last, the first real feminists in Russia!' they cheered.

'Feminist' some of these Russian women may possibly be, but there is nothing progressive about the group. They are certainly dramatic though -- blood-curdling even. Here's a few samples from *Woman and Russia* (translated by the 'Women and Eastern Europe Group', Sheba Feminist Publishers, 1980):

'Men ... are destroying themselves with wine, cigarettes and sexual excesses.... The conservatism of this mass of alcoholics, degenerated to the utmost, the unheeding malevolence towards women of this stunted one-celled organism, this gigantic, spineless amoeba -- that is the cruel brake to social progress!' (editorial staff)

'... then she appeared, rescuer of the fallen. Rejoice, the Daughter, our Saviour. Prayer to the Most Holy Queen helped me to discover and resurrect my female self in all its purity and absoluteness.' (Tania Sororeva)

'To fulfill one's destiny as a mother is the greatest blessing nature holds in store for a woman.' (V Golubeva)

These daughters of Holy Mother Russia paint the Soviet Union as a bloody medieval torture chamber for women (significantly they chose to call themselves *Woman and Russia*, not the Soviet Union). In all their (admittedly widely diverse) writings one finds a common theme: women are worse off in the USSR than in the capitalist West; women's true nature as nurturing mother is crippled and deformed by the 'obligation' to do socially productive labour; men are brutal drunken beasts who care only for war and violence.

Is this really the inchoate cry of the imprisoned female soul of Russia? By no means. Where the group comes from is clear from the hysterical Dostoevskian quality of their writing -- in fact they are part of the crackpot fringe of Leningrad's pro-Western dissident intelligentsia. Most are poets and painters, at least one is a theologian, and all are long-time habitués of the smoky little gatherings, excitable and grandiose, of those alienated and arrogant *artistes* and other 'sensitive souls' who despise their grey and repressive homeland, contemptuously ignore its working people, and dream only of glamour and fame in the 'free' West outside.

One of them, Tatyana Mamonova, kicked off a tour of Britain with a London public meeting on 23 February which packed in an audience of 500

(at least some of whom were open to a Trotskyist alternative to Mamonova's reactionary feminism, reflected in the sale of 47 copies of the Spartacist League/US journal, *Women and Revolution*). Mamonova is the only one of the four who isn't ostentatiously medieval and is therefore more palatable to Western liberal/leftist tastes -- she recently and 'painfully' separated herself from the other three, who have gone on to form the 'Club Maria' the better to honour god's mother. Mamonova confessed she finds them 'rather narrow-minded' and 'anti-socialist'. Not for her 'the rebirth of religious feelings', but she was quite prepared to excuse it as 'a moderate reaction to repression' which even 'helps people think!' Challenged by a Spartacist League supporter on the defence of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack, Mamonova could only sigh, 'My policy is feminism.' Two nights later at a meeting in Birmingham she responded to an intervention by another Spartacist comrade with the standard anti-communist ploy that she 'should go to Russia and women in Russia will take your place'.

Marxists do not claim that the USSR today is any 'workers paradise'. But even after the political counterrevolution which consolidated a repressive Stalinist bureaucracy, undermining the great liberating goals of the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917, Soviet women remain closer to legal, educational and social parity with men than women in even the most advanced capitalist 'democracies'. This is by no means the least of our reasons for defending the USSR against capitalist restoration and imperialist aggression; as utopian socialist Charles Fourier observed, the level of women's emancipation is a telling index of social progress. These 'feminist dissidents', however, have nothing but contempt for the efforts of Marxists to replace the oppressive family. Instead, they wish to restore 'feminist privileges' for themselves so their 'true nature' as women may shine undisturbed. That they care not at all for the liberation of the masses of women is quite clear in their attitude towards Afghanistan.

Here you have a shooting war in which the liberation of women from the most backward, feudal oppression is at stake. Mamonova even conceded graciously that Soviet women 'in Central Asia are in a slightly better position' -- but perish the thought for this 'feminist and pacifist' of securing that 'slight' improvement through the use of Soviet tanks. The Red Army's intervention is the only thing preventing the Afghan mullahs from keeping women enslaved, veiled and ignorant -- yet these Russian women call on the soldiers to *desert*, and spit on their 'shameful uniform'. Indeed, several even hid their husbands and sons to keep them out of the army. No wonder they were expelled from the USSR! The very first act of the first three to arrive in the West was to issue a public statement denouncing the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. With the United States making the Red Army's presence in Afghanistan a major justification for its renewed Cold War, these 'feminists' are truly a godsend to the imperialists.

A recent US tour by Mamonova made clear the anti-communist thrust of the group: the sob-stories about 'our Russian sisters' horrible plight are intended to whip up support for the imperialist war drive against the USSR. The *haute bourgeois* Ford Foundation certainly didn't throw away its money sponsoring Mamonova's tour. The real reason for Mamonova's presence in the US wasn't her campus 'ovulars' (the latest feminist word for 'seminars'). Her tour organizer bragged at Rutgers University: 'We are going to Washington DC on Wednesday for a reception in Tatyana's honour by the Congressional Women's Caucus....' And, they are going to really take some action. They will be 'issuing a statement on three points. One, the general condition of Soviet women, calling for an investigation' (as well as demanding the right to publish fem-

inist journals in the USSR and expressing 'concern' over harrassed female dissidents). Meanwhile, Mamonova intends to ask the United Nations to demand that she and her reactionary religious friends be allowed to publish their pro-Western propaganda in the Soviet Union. Obviously an ambitious woman, Mamonova clearly believes she's got a future in the West. After all, she thinks women have almost got it made under capitalism. The editorial statement of *Woman and Russia* explains:

'... in Europe this question [of the position of women in society] is close to being resolved -- particularly in France, where four women are in 'the cabinet.'

The statement goes on to note approvingly the examples of 'Margaret Thatcher'...Indira Gandhi, Sirimavo Bandaranaike! More vicious, anti-working-class demagogues we can't imagine.

Fake left hails reaction--again

That ostensible Marxists should have actually cheered *Woman and Russia's* blasts of confused obscurantism, feminine mysticism, all-sided contempt for Soviet society and blatant pro-Western appetites is genuinely scandalous! Most egregious in their fulsome support have been those so-called 'Trotskyists' around the United Secretariat (USec). The French Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire saluted the journal as a 'fundamental historic event' (*Cahiers du feminisme* no 14), while *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* (February-March 1980), a joint project of the USec and Cliffites, published four of their articles under Alix Holt's enthusiastic recommendation as 'a new and very significant development for the democratic movement in Eastern Europe'. The reformist American Socialist Workers Party, too, thinks they're great; their *Militant* (8 August 1980) hailed the journal's purpose in 'publish[ing] the truth about the day-to-day suffering and humiliation of women in the USSR'. The British Socialist Workers Party, which believes the USSR is 'state capitalist', made clear it really believes the Soviet Union is worse than the imperialists; *Socialist Worker* (5 July 1980) explained the Leningrad group's 'radical feminism' as an 'instinctive, emotional response to the extreme oppression of women in the Soviet Union', stating that 'women's position [in the USSR] is...in some ways worse than that of women in the west'.

These tendencies can't even distinguish between a reactionary and progressive movement. This was clear enough in their support to Khomeini's feudal Islamic Republic, in which women are veiled and homosexuals shot. Given a growing climate of bourgeois warmongering against the Soviet Union, they now find their refusal to defend the deformed workers states against imperialism more useful than ever.

Women in the Soviet Union

None of these 'new Russian feminists' is likely to make inroads into the Soviet population -- and certainly not the 'Club Maria'. Even before the revolution, the Russian intelligentsia despised the barbaric Russian Orthodox church, and today 90 per cent of the Soviet people profess themselves to be non-believers.

The genuine liberation of women in the Soviet Union can only be brought about by those with a vision of a communist future in which the traditional patriarchal family is superceded. Revolutionary Marxists in the Soviet Union would far more effectively combat the ideology of the likes of Sakharov and the 'Russian feminists' than can the ruling Stalinist bureaucrats, who in their own way appeal to traditional Russian chauvinism, anti-semitism and other backward social attitudes. A Soviet revolutionary government would more fully integrate women at all economic levels, especially at the top. It would undercut the reactionary ideology of the family, reimposed by the Stalinist bureaucrats, and make

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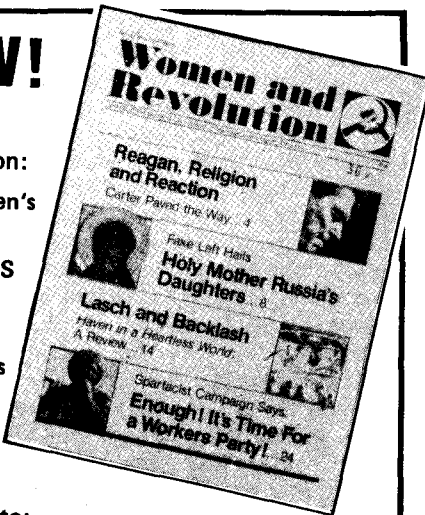
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Six months ago, French Communist Party (PCF) leader Georges Marchais promised a revolutionary, a really 'red' election campaign. Tens of thousands of workers flocked to Bourget last November to listen to the PCF talk about taking new Bastilles. Marchais proclaimed: no alliances, that will be the party's campaign. PCF and CGT (the Stalinist-dominated trade-union federation) workers thought: 'At last, for once the party is not forced to vote for the scheming Mitterrand! Electoral Union of the Left slates composed of dignitaries are over and done with! This time we'll be able to vote for our candidate.'

Marchais took hold of this drive for a class vote ... to drag it in the mud! On 24 December the PCF mayor of Vitry, Paul Mercieca, led a commando of fifty against a hostel where a few days earlier 300 Malian workers had been installed, transferred from a hostel in Saint Maur. Telephone, water, electricity, heating were cut off, while a bulldozer ripped out the entry stairway and blocked the exits. A 2 January communique of the CGT 'deplor[ed] the incidents at Vitry' and a *l'Humanite* editorial the following day likewise recognised that there had been 'regrettable incidents' and some 'deplorable acts'. The start of self-criticism? No, simple manoeuvring. A week later, the PCF gathered together an imposing phalanx of national leaders, including Marchais himself, for a demonstration in Vitry which barely managed to attract 4000 (with few immigrants and many tricolour banners). But the prominent attendance, as *l'Humanite* (12 January) emphasised, 'signified that the whole party will not deviate one inch from its immigration policy'.

Vitry provided the pretext for a violent anti-communist campaign. The bourgeoisie and its social-democratic lieutenants immediately seized the opportunity to feed their Cold War campaign. 'Look at the Communists; in France they use bulldozers, in Afghanistan they use tanks.' Social democrats, Gaullists, Giscardians, not to mention the extreme right (the racist rag *Minute* lambasted 'red fascism!'), even Secretary of State for Immigration Lionel Stoleru, the author of the deportation decrees for immigrants -- all responsible for a lot worse actions against immigrants than Vitry -- took the opportunity to refurbish their liberal image.

The Vitry affair has provoked ripples in the PCF as well, despite the hardening up of chauvinist attitudes by PCF militants (as in the French working class generally), encouraged by the party leadership to stifle its critics in the face of the anti-communist campaign. Thus, for example, on 3 January *Sans Frontiers* published a letter from Hassan Bouakra, a member of the Paris federal committee and a leading immigrant, resigning from the PCF in protest against the racist action at Vitry.

The waves provoked by Vitry and the chauvinist campaign on immigration had barely died down when the PCF leadership threw itself into a noisy campaign for 'moral order' against drugs. Aimed at distracting from workers struggles and winning votes, this reactionary campaign, as with Vitry, tries to present a 'respectable' party which has a 'sense of responsibility'. With the same 'sense of responsibility', as soon as Francois Mitterrand had been named Socialist Party (PS) candidate, Marchais demanded the PCF's 'rightful place' in a Mitterrand government.

When the workers turned on their radios to hear the news of Marchais' latest outburst, they asked themselves: 'Is it really possible that this is our revolutionary campaign? Encouraging racial divisions between French and immigrant workers, demanding more cops to uphold the "moral order", making new deals with Mitterrand? No, that can't be!' But like legions of Stalinist bureaucrats before him Marchais is attempting to sidetrack the workers massive impulse to

Vitry and the French elections



PCF demonstration backs Vitry attack, 10 January.

express their class independence in order to provide the bourgeoisie with guarantees of his attachment to the capitalist order. Not for nothing did Trotsky characterise Stalin as the 'great organiser of defeats'.

As expected the PS insultingly refused to entertain the PCF's demand for Communist ministers. Repeating PS leader Jospin's declaration his colleague Estier wrote in the PS weekly *Unite* (6 February):

'... the demand made by Georges Marchais and his friends is incompatible with the PCF's current policy toward the Socialist Party and its candidate, as with its positions on a certain number of essential problems (Afghanistan, Poland, SS-20 missiles etc).'

Right away the social democrats put their finger on the central question that the Stalinists (like the fake-Trotskyist preachers of unity of the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire [LCR] and Lambert's Organisation Communiste Internationaliste [OCI]) seek to avoid: it is a time of renewed Cold War against the USSR by the imperialist warmongers and under these circumstances the social democrats (like their imperialist masters) hardly wish to compromise themselves with a party linked to Moscow! Instead PS leader Georges Sarre proposes 'forging a multi-class front', a 'third family' with the Gaullists (*Unite*, 30 January). As for Mitterrand, the 'ten commandments' of his election campaign ('Save the Republic', 'France is retreating' etc) are a gross appeal to the Gaullists.

Can PCF members who supported -- correctly -- the Soviet intervention against the reactionary Afghan mullahs and who mobilised against NATO missiles in Europe bear even for a moment the idea of governing together with Mitterrand, who never misses a chance to remind people that he is imperialism's 'loyal administrator', especially in terms of his hatred of the USSR? With a Mitterrand who allows himself to give Giscard lessons in anti-Soviet firmness, calling him a 'Munichite'! Yet this same Giscard speaks of his 'favourable predisposition' towards Reagan just when he has been throwing around open threats against the USSR. The election of the 'Johnny off to the war' should entrance Mitterrand, who last summer was being more Atlanticist than NATO and more warlike than American imperialism, criticising the former for 'its disorganisation' and the latter for 'defaulting on' the USSR (*Le Monde*, 31 July 1980).

Symbolically the PS candidate's first international gesture was a virtually presidential trip to China: among the allies of US imperialism the Stalinist bureaucrats in Peking have shown themselves to be the most virulently opposed to the USSR. As opposed to the privileged bureaucratic caste which has usurped proletarian political power in the USSR (and also the PCF leadership which supports it) imperialism and its social democratic flunkies have not the slightest illusion in so-called 'peaceful coexistence'; the imperialists remain fundamentally hostile to the

USSR for the same reason that we Trotskyists are for its unconditional defence: its bourgeoisie was expropriated by the October Revolution.

The PCF leadership opened its election campaign by declaring that the Union of the Left, just like the 'experiences' of 1936 and 1945, had profited only the bourgeoisie '(a "discovery" that the Trotskyists had made quite some time previously). Today another more usual act occupies centre stage: 'How can we fail to note that the two recent periods of our country's history which have been favourable to the workers are precisely the two periods when the communists were with or in government: 1936 and 1945' (*l'Humanite*, 30 January). Members of the PCF and workers who usually place confidence in it now more than ever have a right to demand an accounting of their leadership.

Today Marchais pretends to be outraged: 'What? Mitterrand stretches out his hands to the Gaullists!' But he 'forgets' that in the 'belle époque' of the Union of the Left around 1974 it was the PCF which came out for 'acting in favour of a rapprochement with the workers, democrats, Gaullists, patriots ... which is indispensable for realising the union of the people of France' (21st Congress resolution).

Marchais kicked off his election campaign by promising his members and the working class that he would be the 'candidate of battles' against the bosses and the government. Glorious battles indeed -- the racist intervention against the dormitory of immigrant workers in Vitry, the public denunciation of a Moroccan family as 'drug pushers' or collecting the names of those who take drugs in Villeurbanne high school! Is this really what PCF members who want to fight the bourgeoisie expected: to play the role of police auxiliaries? With the PCF leadership's anti-immigrant policy encouraging divisions between workers what kind of battle can there be in a bastion of the working class like Renault where a good part of the production workers are immigrants? Instead of strikes against layoffs and factory closures the PCF leadership prefers organising publicity stunts during a televised debate in which bourgeois politicians participated.

With its latest campaign the PCF leadership wants to prove that its desire and capacity to administer capitalist society also extend to defending its 'moral order'. For us Trotskyists taking drugs is not a crime anymore than the other so-called 'attacks on morality' such as prostitution, pornography, gambling, homosexuality, the right to sexuality for minors and any truly consensual sexual behaviour. We are opposed to all laws against these so-called crimes. They can only reinforce the cynical moralism of the priests and expose individuals to arbitrary and gratuitous persecution by the bourgeois state. Cops and priests out of the bedroom!

It doesn't matter that Marchais proclaims his opposition to the repressive Peyrefitte law. His appeals for reinforcing repression against drugs (in particular increasing the number of cops) come precisely at a time when this reactionary law is going into effect and reinforce the repressive apparatus of the bourgeois state.

With his campaign of 'produce French' Marchais presents himself as the defender of French capitalist interests in the context of exacerbated inter-imperialist rivalry. After de-



Fake-Trotskyist LCR kneels before popular-frontist 'unity'.

fending French cars against Japanese cars and French coal against South African coal the PCF leadership is now defending French tanks against German tanks ('kill French') and pastis and other 'home grown' liquor against Anglo-Saxon whiskey ('Down with anti-national cirrhoses! Drink French!'). All these chauvinist excesses would simply be grotesque if they didn't in practise represent lining up with the interests of 'our own' imperialism against the working class.

Vitry—a guarantee to the bourgeoisie

At Vitry the PCF gave a shameful 'guarantee' that it is ready to adopt the basest means to defend the interests of its bourgeoisie. Whereas in the past the PCF has made a pretence of supporting immigrants' struggles -- and participating in some (in a symbolic fashion) -- and declared itself against Stoleru's anti-immigrant measures, with Vitry and its campaign 'against the ghettos', it has explicitly involved itself in a struggle against immigrants. And this particular demonstration of its reformist aspirations was practically gratuitous -- the PCF having precious little chance of finding a bourgeois electoral partner in these days of renewed Cold War on the part of the imperialists.

One must at least give Marchais his due that the PCF position on immigration is neither new nor surprising. With the turn in 1934 toward popular-frontist politics and its corollary, national defence, the PCF definitively crossed over to the side of the bourgeois order, supporting the colonialist and imperialist politics of its own bourgeoisie. In 1937 it stood solidly for the banning by the popular-front government of the L'Etoile Nord-Africaine, the main organisation of Algerian workers. In 1947 the PCF ministers, in the name of 'French unity', voted credits for the Indochina war. The same ministers after World War II acted as a cover for the massacres of Setif and Madagascar perpetrated by French imperialism. The PCF refused to call for the immediate independence of Algeria (only calling for 'negotiations') and to mobilise the French working class in support of the Algerian struggle. On the contrary, in 1956 the PCF deputies voted for the special powers which allowed the government of social democrat Guy Mollet to intensify the colonial repression.

As for its current 'anti-colonialism', it is expressed perfectly in this proposition from the Political Bureau on immigration: 'We must demand from the capitalist countries which export labour a financial contribution to the social problems encountered by their workers in France as well as to the defence of their rights' (*L'Humanite*, 6 November 1980). Not only have these countries been pillaged over decades and decades and continue to be by French imperialism, not only are their workers super-exploited by French capitalism, but in addition they should pay for this 'privilege'! 'Make the poor pay!' -- this is the new watchword of the Stalinists. And by what means should they be obliged to pay if not by utilising the French colonial army!

What the PCF is doing today is administering the crisis of capitalism at the municipal level, while aspiring to manage it at the national level tomorrow. It complains of 'clashes between different nationalities and ethnic groups', of educational retardation, of augmenting local government spending, of unemployment, of the housing crisis etc. For the PCF who is responsible? Capitalism? No, the presence of immigrants reaching 'levels of alarm' -- not to be confused, according to Marchais, with 'the non-scientific and racist notion of an alleged "threshold of tolerance"'. (Nuance?!) Very practical, this 'level of alarm': while saying that the number of immigrants must be limited for fear of racist reaction in the population, it allows the encouragement of racist prejudices under the pretext of opposing them!

Combatting racism means combatting the chauvinist policies of the bourgeoisie for the expulsion of immigrants and the closing of factories, fighting for the rights of immigrants -- above all, for full citizenship rights. In this way they will be drawn fully into the struggles of the rest of the proletariat against capitalist austerity and into the mass organisations of the working class. In this way, in joint struggle against the same bosses and the same power it will be possible to fight the racism existing within the French working class.

But there is no solution to the question of immigration under the rule of capitalism. The solution resides in the overturn of capitalism and the institution of socialism, a society which will liberate the productive forces from the fetters of private property.

In contrast to the preceding years of the Union of the Left the PCF, for its own reasons, has decided to present itself in the 1981 presidential elections independently from bourgeois parties, while the PS strives to constitute a new popular front, notably with the Gaullists. In these conditions we have declared that without any illusion in the tactical and conjunctural character of the posture of independence by the PCF and without any illusion in its reformist programme, which is just as class collaborationist as that of the PS, we would be prepared -- if the PCF pursues this course -- to vote for Marchais, a vote for Marchais being, though in a deformed way, a vote for the representative of the workers camp against the bourgeoisie (see *Spartacist Britain* no 28, December 1980/January 1981).

The 'savagely critical' aspect of our electoral support focussed particularly on the social-chauvinist policies of the PCF (see *Le Bolchevik*, no 21, January 1981). Vitry and the PCF's campaign on this occasion raises the question of no longer envisaging giving critical electoral support to Marchais. Just as before we would say to PCF militants: 'We Trotskyists are for a vote of class against class. If your party maintains its posture of independence, we shall call for a vote for it in April 1981.' We say to them today: 'If your party chooses to focus its election campaign against immigrants we shall refuse to vote for it.' In the CGT (which is covering for the PCF's actions at Vitry) the union fractions of a Trotskyist organisation implanted in the factories might, in such a situation, lead a fight for the union branches to take a position against the racist action at Vitry, against the endorsement given by the confederal/national leadership of the CGT, and to open a debate throughout the unions on immigration, a decisive question for the class struggle in France.

In Britain the fake Trotskyists seized on these events with an enthusiasm reflecting their

from the ardently pro-NATO Mitterrand as an opportunity for critical support.

If between now and the elections Marchais retains a smidgen of class independence which justifies electoral support -- violently critical and with disgust -- it will be despite himself and solely because his competitors in the PS are so fervently anti-Soviet that they are capable even of distrusting someone like Marchais who multiplies the most servile proofs of loyalty towards French capitalism.

'Unity'

Jospin's reply to the PCF did not merely smash the 'unity toy' of the pseudo-Trotskyists of the LCR and OCI it confirmed that today the Russian question is decisively posed, a fact which these capitulators have always denied -- against us -- with the aim of avoiding the question of defence of the USSR against imperialism.

At the very moment when the world is endangered by imperialism's anti-Soviet menaces and when the bourgeoisie redoubles its blows against the working class, the LCR and OCI have chosen to confront each other in a crazy polemic over ... joint PC/PS candidates on the first round versus standing down for the PC/PS on the second round! So that's the decisive stake for the working class!

The LCR may well declare 'that Mitterrand is not the candidate of unity' and criticise the OCI for voting for Mitterrand even on the first round while he is putting out feelers toward the right. What will the LCR do on the second round if not also vote for the candidate of an alliance with the bourgeoisie! A Trotskyist policy on the other hand consists in calling on the workers not to vote either on the first or second round for Mitterrand, who has committed himself to the formation of an alliance with representatives of the class enemy.

The PCF's demand for ministers lays bare the LCR's opportunist line. Wanting to play at mar-



Immigrant miners demonstrate for equal rights.

own Stalinophobia far more than an aversion to reformist chauvinism; they are, after all, by-and-large loyal supporters of a Labour Party whose government presided over virginity tests on Asian women. The most obscene of the lot was the increasingly social-democratic Workers Socialist League, which screeched that the Stalinists are 'now a far more serious threat than the fascists' (!) to immigrants (*Socialist Press*, 18 February). The left-centrist Workers Power (WP) does not sink to such brazen, bizarre Stalinophobia; it merely demonstrates yet again its inability to understand Stalinism. Noting in Vitry 'an example of the depths the PCF leadership will stoop to maintain the flagging morale of the party', it declares 'the task of Trotskyists' to ensure that revulsion with Vitry 'does not serve to bolster Mitterrand or the Eurocommunists but leads to a decisive break with the reformist programme of the PCF' (*Workers Power*, February 1980).

Fine, but how? It is not Vitry that separates the PCF from Mitterrand and the Eurocommunists, but its claim to defend the Soviet Union. Yet in the 'almost instantaneous support given by the PCF to the invasions [sic] of Afghanistan', WP sees nothing so much as 'a headlong retreat back into the arms of the Soviet bureaucracy'. This is only to be expected, because WP condemned that invasion. Thus it cannot possibly see how support for that invasions would have a powerful appeal to subjectively revolutionary members of the PCF. And thus it does not even contemplate seizing on the PCF's pro-Soviet differentiation

riage brokers it criticises Mitterrand on the one hand for not taking Marchais at his word, that is for not wanting to rebuild the bourgeois Union of the Left! And on the other hand it criticises Marchais (when Jospin has been explaining that the condition for unity is that the PCF breaks with Moscow) for not really wanting unity with the PS, that is for not completely lining up with its own bourgeoisie -- a logical position on the part of an organisation which hailed the Eurocommunist current in the CP as a positive phenomenon. With the PCF calling a sudden halt to its Eurocommunist swing a good number of Eurocommunists have sought refuge in the Union dans les Luttes where in a bloc with other decomposing 'far-left' currents the LCR serves as a stepping stone to the political ambitions of these petty bureaucrats.

In addition LCR members should ask themselves questions about the usefulness of an organisation whose headlines read 'Facing the Right One Solution! Stand Down! PC/PS Government!' (*Rouge*, 6-13 February). Let us hope there still exist in the LCR militants who think that the only solution when facing the bourgeoisie is the revolutionary mobilisation of the proletariat on the Trotskyist programme of the vanguard party. We alone defend this programme, in particular by fighting today for the class independence of the proletariat and for the defence of the USSR against imperialism.

--adapted from *Le Bolchevik* nos 22, 23, February, March 1981

Reagan...

(Continued from page 1)

cold war drive a counterrevolutionary invasion of Nicaragua is posed and the defence of Cuba and the Soviet Union are directly at issue. While liberals and reformists talk only of 'self-determination for El Salvador', refusing even to take clear sides in the civil war raging there, revolutionaries place the struggle in its global context. We demand: Military victory to Salvador leftist insurgents! US/OAS hands off Central America! Defend Cuba and the USSR!

Lies and threats

Amid all the war talk of throwing a 'cordon sanitaire' around Cuba and 'refusing to rule out US troops to Central America', on 23 February the administration finally released its 'White Paper on El Salvador', more than a hundred pages of lies and distortions. Even the bourgeois press put the word 'evidence' in quotation marks, as the only 'hard' material in the document talks of promises of arms from East European regimes, Vietnam and Ethiopia. The rest consists of thank you notes to Castro for his 'help' and 'requests' to the Hungarian embassy in Mexico. Offers of 'advice' and exchanges of opinion by Nicaraguan leaders and statements that the Sandinistas view 'the cause of El Salvador as their own' are taken as proof positive of 'indirect aggression'.

Contrary to Reagan's recent comments, cooking up such fictitious 'proof' as a justification for intervention is actually a speciality of US imperialism. Recall the Gulf of Tonkin incident -- which only appeared as alleged blips on a radar screen -- the basis for sending American troops to Vietnam. Or Lyndon Johnson's famous list of fifty-plus 'Communists', most of them in jail or out of the country, in Santo Domingo as the excuse for landing the Marines in 1965. But more than just debunking Washington's lies is called for here. *If there were adequate Soviet, Cuban and Nicaraguan aid to the left-wing forces in El Salvador there wouldn't have been more than 12,000 victims of the junta butchers and rightist death squads there in 1980!*

It is criminal that the Soviet ambassador in Washington can truthfully plead innocent to Reagan's charges and all the more so as it is increasingly clear that US imperialism's real targets are Managua, Havana and Moscow. Already Reagan has cut off \$15,000,000 in economic aid to Nicaragua left over from the \$75,000,000 authorised under the Carter administration, using the excuse of Sandinista arms supplied to the Salvadoran left. He even slapped an embargo on a scheduled shipment of 20,000 tons of wheat contracted for by the Nicaraguan government. If no alternate supplies are found this will mean that bread will no longer be available there by the end of March.

Washington's hard-line message has gotten across to Managua, which is now pushing for some kind of negotiated settlement with elements in the Salvadoran junta. Sandinista leader Tomas Borge told the *New York Times* (16 February):

'In El Salvador the guerrillas cannot defeat the army and the army cannot defeat the guerrillas. Things cannot continue like this. It is convenient neither for the government nor for the guerrillas, neither for the United States nor for us. No defeat and no victory seems possible, so we feel that a political solution should be sought.'

To encourage El Salvador leftists to take a similar stance the Sandinistas recently shut down the Salvadoran 'Radio Liberacion' on Nicaragua's territory.

The 'general offensive' carried out last month by El Salvador's left-wing guerrillas failed to spark the hoped-for popular uprising or to defeat the US-backed military junta's forces. The offensive demonstrated the military capability of the rebel forces, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN), to take on the Salvadoran army throughout the country. But it also demonstrated that the FMLN is still too weak to defeat the junta's forces and that the population was not yet prepared to join in a massive insurrection. After ten days of fighting in which leftist forces briefly held several key towns the rebels called a 'tactical retreat' to regroup their forces and prepare for the next round of battle. Thus the offensive was a failure as measured by the goal of the FMLN. As the leaders said themselves there was no mass rising. The rebels did not succeed in setting up a 'liberated zone' on which to establish a rival government. Since the offensive the guerrillas have been keeping pressure on the junta with hit



Over 400 students at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, joined in a militant united-front rally initiated by the Spartacus Youth League, youth section of the Spartacist League/US, 4 February, to demand 'Military victory to the left-wing insurgents' in El Salvador. Spartacist pickets and contingents in demonstrations around US and elsewhere have emphasised: 'Defence of the Soviet Union/Cuba begins in El Salvador!'

and run tactics.

But the main offensive being waged by the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR) now is diplomatic not military. One *New York Times* (8 February) correspondent reported, 'If they fail in the next push their leaders said privately they hope at least to win a place at the bargaining table.' The liberal wing of the Salvadoran church headed by Archbishop Rivera y Damas is also urging a compromise between civilian junta head Napoleon Duarte and his former associate FDR head Guillermo Ungo.

The 'realistic' perspective of the FDR for a negotiated solution to the civil war poses a deadly danger to the Salvadoran masses. In the first place Reagan -- eager to teach Cuba and the USSR a 'bloody lesson' in Central America -- is interested only in one kind of 'solution' for the Salvadoran left: a 'final solution'. Delaying the day of necessary military reckoning with Reagan's puppets in the hopes of securing a deal is both politically and literally suicidal. Moreover, even if some sort of negotiated settlement were possible the bottom line for the bourgeoisie would be preservation of at least part of the gorilla officer caste. The military and para-military forces are prepared to massacre up to 200,000 workers and peasants to put down 'communist subversion'. Any deal which would preserve even a part of this corps of sadistic murderers would simply prepare **savage repression in the future**. Just look at the actions of the 'reform junta' installed by the US in October 1979! No deal with the butcher colonels! Break with the bourgeoisie!

Which way forward?

The US liberals and fake leftists attempt to avoid at all costs the key question of Russia and Cuba. For the liberals the question posed in El Salvador is what should be the policy of US imperialism. Currently they are focussing their efforts on House Resolution 1509 to prohibit military aid or credit to the junta. They do not oppose economic aid to El Salvador, which junta front man Duarte says is even more vital than guns in propping up the shaky US puppet regime. They are tailed by leftists and Salvadoran nationalists and groups like the US Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES) who have consistently and unsuccessfully tried to exclude supporters of the Spartacist League/US from recent El Salvador demonstrations. The reformists and nationalists object not only to our denunciation of the bourgeois politicians in the FDR popular front, but even to our slogan 'Military victory to the left-wing insurgents' because it might scare off some liberal Congressmen. 'Let the people of El Salvador decide' was the headline of a full-page ad recently placed in the *New York Times* and other newspapers by CISPES.

But self-determination is not the question in El Salvador. In the early days of the anti-Vietnam war movement the liberals called for all 'foreign' troops out of South Vietnam and tried to pose the class war in Indochina as simply a question of national self-determination. But North Vietnamese troops and Soviet aid were key to the defeat of the US in Vietnam, which was also the scene of a showdown between US imperialism and the Soviet-bloc deformed workers states. As revolutionaries we would welcome the maximum in military aid by Cuba and the Soviet Union to the Salvadoran rebels. In the face of Reagan's war threats against Castro we call on the USSR to come to the defence of Cuba with whatever means are necessary.

The struggle in El Salvador cannot be separated from the fate of the Nicaraguan revolution. Reagan has written Nicaragua off as 'lost to Marxism' despite the fact that the Sandinistas have been careful to preserve capitalist prop-

erty and to share the ruling junta with bourgeois representatives. But the Nicaraguan capitalists, already deeply embroiled in coup plots and economic sabotage, are a point of support for a counterrevolution and the FSLN leaders know it.

Just as Eisenhower's turn against the Cuban revolution pushed Castro into the Soviet camp and forced radical nationalisations on the petty-bourgeois '26 of July Movement', Reagan's hard line against Nicaragua may force the FSLN farther than it wants to go on the road to expropriating the bourgeoisie. But if Washington forces the consolidation of a deformed workers state in Nicaragua, it will be because it plans to roll on into Managua with its ex-Somoza mercenaries after smashing the left in El Salvador. This is no abstract danger. The FSLN's attempt to conciliate imperialism and the local bourgeoisie could spell their own doom.

The crisis over El Salvador is not merely a question of US big-stick policies in the Caribbean/Central American region it views as its 'backyard'. For Cold Warrior Reagan El Salvador is the front line in the battle against world communism. The defeat of the guerrillas there would only whet his appetite for attacks and military threats against Nicaragua, Cuba and the Soviet-bloc states (first of all Poland). The military victory of the leftist rebels however would be a stinging blow to Reagan's plans for global counterrevolution.

Reagan has forced a showdown in which the alternatives in Central America are literally victory or death. And victory -- workers revolution -- depends on uncompromising class struggle led by a proletarian Trotskyist vanguard against all wings of the bourgeoisie in El Salvador and Nicaragua.

--adapted from *Workers Vanguard* no 275, 27 February 1981

Ireland ...

(Continued from page 1)

popular-frontist protest movement with the utopian project of making the bourgeoisie see 'reason' -- and for this IRA bombs are a decided hindrance. To the self-defeating liberal/terrorist Republican strategy communists counterpose not whimpering reformism but the mobilisation of the proletariat in both Ireland and Britain against the imperialist bourgeoisie and its repressive schemes. Free all victims of imperialist repression! Smash Britain's torture camps! Troops out now!

With the visible failure of the last hunger strike campaign most of the British left is now rushing to cover its political track record in preparation for the new campaign. Thus the centrist Workers Power (WP) group now says that it's not enough to try 'forcing the government to admit that it is at war' and stipulates 'troops out now' as a basis for united action in defence of the strikers (*Workers Power*, February 1981). Yet last autumn this same organisation rebuffed and sabotaged an attempt by the Spartacist League to initiate a united-front protest in Sheffield, because its proposed basis included the demand for immediate troop withdrawal, then considered 'sectarian'. But even now Workers Power does not know where to turn. On the back page of the same issue a member of WP's sister Irish Workers Group calls for a 'campaign to be built explicitly around the demand for political status -- while not excluding those who wished to participate for humanitarian reasons'. And a front page piece on Bernadette McAliskey reaches the nadir with a call for a campaign for a 'labour movement inquiry' of 'official representatives of the British labour movement' -- a notion so pitifully do-nothing

No platform for Hitler-lover David Irving!



Redbrick

Over seventy students and leftists demonstrated at Birmingham University on 5 February against the obscene presence of Hitler apologist David Irving. Only by sneaking through the back door disguised as a student did this admirer of the Third Reich escape the wrath of the anti-fascist protesters who picketed the Union building with militant chants of 'No platform for fascists!' and 'Throw David Irving off campus!' After being escorted to the microphone by an 'honour guard' of right-wing 'democrats' who trooped up to the strains of 'God save the queen', Irving spent a futile ten minutes attempting to speak against a noisy exchange of chants of 'Fascists out' and 'Free speech, free speech'. In their defence of Irving's 'free speech', these stalwart 'democrats' had locked the building to prevent the militant picketers getting in at all.

The Debating Society's invitation to Irving to 'lecture' on the subject of 'Hitler and the Holocaust' was a scandalous affront to every working-class, Jewish or minority student, to every leftist and trade unionist at the university. The united-front Throw David Irving Off Campus Committee was initiated by the Spartacist Society -- and supported by others, including Workers Power and the International Marxist Group (IMG) -- as soon as it heard of the plans to invite Irving on campus. There was no question of 'free speech' here, for Irving is not just some crackpot, racist academic who wants to air his pseudo-historical cover-up absolving the Nazis of the Holocaust. He is out to repeat the Holocaust himself, committed to the same action 'programme' as the Nazis -- genocide! As a leaflet distributed by the ad-hoc committee made clear:

'He is a central figure in the Clarendon Club, an organisation with active connections to such fascist groups as the League of St George and currently involved in an attempt

to build a new action party from elements of other fascist groups in Britain, some of which he considers too "soft" like the National Front.'

That Irving was able even to appear on campus and later claim at least an 'encouraging' draw was in large measure the responsibility of the cowardly sectarianism and liberal pacifism exhibited by the Communist Society, supporters of the Communist Party (CP). CPers sabotaged the possibility of the most effective, united action to prevent a platform for Irving with the spurious but revealing excuse that the united-front committee had refused to accede to their absurd demand for a 'no violence pledge'. Instead they concentrated on getting Irving disinvented through motions and manoeuvres in student bodies, and then led some sixty people to 'occupy' the room where Irving was scheduled to speak and take part in the heckling and slanging match. The Anti Nazi League (ANL) likewise refused to support the demonstration, reportedly even telling its supporters to boycott -- though several individual ANLers did, to their credit, show up. One of the CPers who did turn up at the pre-picket rally did so only to attempt its disruption -- trying to drown out the speakers with his bullhorn. 'Haven't you ever heard of workers democracy?', snapped one outraged IMG'er. In their own little way, these CPers demonstrated yet again that the 'anti-fascism' of the 'people's front' is in practice counterposed to effective united-front mobilisations to stop the fascists.

The Debating Society has a long and notorious record of inviting speakers who can only be seen as a provocation to the oppressed and exploited. Thus they recently hosted colonialist butcher Hill-Norton, and a year ago featured a 'debate' with top cop Gordon Meredith even as his men were bashing and arresting steel strikers. On that occasion, however, the IMG was not on the

Spartacist-initiated protest picket but inside listening to its leading light Tariq Ali debating him.

Yet the student powers-that-be not only defended Irving's presence but launched a vicious, anti-communist campaign against his opponents. An editorial in *Redbrick* sought to equate the fascists and their victims with such rubbish as, 'Maybe fascism and socialism are different names for the same thing' and featured a cosy interview/photo session with Irving. *BUGS* went much further, however, publicising an anti-communist petition and running a column by one 'Noneton' which capped off lines of mealy-mouthed admiration for Nazi-lover Irving with a provocative and blatantly libellous attack on the Spartacist Society -- lying that 'armed' Spartacists were on the picket. After *BUGS* refused to print a letter by the Spartacist Society demanding an immediate retraction of this outrageous lie the Spartacist Society issued an open letter to all students denouncing this smear campaign in defence of the propagation of race-terror, pointing out:

'Not only could any eyewitness on the night attest that this is false, but given the well-known laws of this country, "Noneton's" statement can only be a provocative set-up inviting repressive action.'

In a subsequent issue *BUGS* finally issued a mealy-mouthed retraction. But their slandering and setting up of anti-fascists and defence of platforms for Hitler-loving scum is a small taste of the class polarisation which will continue to deepen even as the rampant decay of British capitalism deepens. To deflect a proletarian challenge to its class rule, the bourgeoisie will not only tolerate fascist terror but actively encourage it. The task of stopping Irving and his dangerous ilk rests in the hands of the working class. ■

and reformist in its implications that it is worthy of the Labour Party's house-'Trotskyist' Militant group.

But WP's utter confusion pales beside the hypocrisy of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). In *Socialist Review* (19 January) Chris Harman criticises the prisoners' demands for being 'posed in humanitarian terms as if they were something different from political status'. But the SWP's Charter 80 campaign was explicitly aimed at seeking support on 'humanitarian grounds' and set out to 'not even ask its supporters to support the prisoners' right to political status'. From 1969 when their forerunner supported the sending in of British troops, through to Paul Foot's declaration that 'socialists must be the best republicans', to the current attempts to take distance from the IRA, the only 'consistency' in the SWP's approach to Ireland is a search for some solution short of proletarian revolution. Thus Harman blathers:

'Of course, if the British troops were to withdraw, the Protestants would be forced to face the reality of being on their own alongside a majority in Ireland as a whole who represent their privileges, and would eventually change their tune.'

Just like that. Presumably Derry's Apprentice Boys will switch from 'The Sash My Father Wore' to 'Kevin Barry' as the army transports take off. Has the SWP never heard of the Israelis and Palestinians, or Lebanese Christians and Muslims, or of any bloody intercommunal pogroms by those who feel their small privileges and way of life are threatened?

Troop withdrawal in itself will not solve the question of Catholic oppression, merely create a precondition for solving it by re-

moving imperialism's direct armed fist. There must be no concessions to Orange privilege or anti-Catholic discrimination in Northern Ireland. But Ulster's decaying economy cannot offer even Protestant workers any kind of decent future or social progress, let alone provide housing on a non-discriminatory basis or jobs for all. Within the framework of capitalism, for the Protestants each dwelling rented or job given to a Catholic means one less for them. And the prospect of reunification with the Catholic South offers no hope for better conditions, only the reversal of the terms of oppression onto the backs of the Protestants.

The reactionary Loyalist leaders are able to tap this fear among the Protestant masses, as Ian Paisley has recently been at pains to demonstrate. Exploiting Protestant nervousness over London-Dublin diplomacy, Paisley's latest bellicose warnings to Westminster are not just a stunt to help the Democratic Unionists in May's elections. When 500 men stood on a cold, wind-swept hill in the dead of night to wave their firearms certificates at news reporters, it reflected and evoked a felt mood in large sections of the Protestant population.

The British state rushed to reassure the Paisleyites of their 'constitutional guarantees' while attacking the provocative theatrics. But Paisley quickly followed up with an 'Ulster Declaration' modelled on William Carson's 'Ulster Covenant' campaign against Home Rule in 1912. The similarity is obvious -- but if anything the situation today is more polarised and dangerous than 69 years ago. Carson started his campaign with far fewer guns than the 110,000 legal guns in civilian hands in Northern Ireland today, overwhelmingly in Protestant hands --

Bernadette McAliskey was refused a permit three times before she was shot! In the grip of fear of a British 'betrayal' and 'papist' Green victory, the Protestants have both enough social organisation and enough firepower to launch a bloody civil war which they might well win.

If Protestant workers are not won to the banner of class war alongside their Catholic brothers then they will always be the potential footsoldiers of reactionary Loyalism -- with the entire working class the loser. And if the Catholics are not broken from the dead-end of Republicanism they too will be unable to cut the chains of their oppression. Only socialist revolution can offer them a future -- not the sectarian Orange statelet, not forced reunification with the capitalist South. The road forward for the exploited and oppressed in both communities lies through forging a Trotskyist party with a programme to smash imperialist repression and transcend the communal divisions. Not Orange against Green but class against class -- for an Irish workers republic in a socialist federation of the British Isles! ■

Defend Digbeth 12!

Public meeting

Birmingham University Guild of Students,
Committee Room 4, Tuesday 3 March, 1.00pm

Speakers from

Communist Society, International Marxist Group,
Labour Club, Spartacist League, Workers Power

Labour ...

(Continued from page 12)

class traitor as Michael Foot blathers about 'fundamental socialist transformation'. But it is the international situation which is key to understanding the goings-on in the Labour Party. The imperialist uproar over the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan signalled that the Cold War was back with a vengeance; Reagan's inauguration made it official. Behind all the furore over trade-union control over the future heads of Her Majesty's Government lies a divergence between NATO 'internationalists' and Little England 'socialists'.

Above all the 'Gang of Three' know that capitalist Britain has no hope except as a junior partner of US imperialism. Their 'Limehouse Declaration' establishing the Council for Social Democracy (CSD) sets out for Britain 'a full and constructive role within the framework of the European Community, Nato, the United Nations and the Commonwealth'. Its only significant open support thus far within the trade-union bureaucracy has come from virulent anti-communist Frank Chapple of the EETPU -- and Williams, Owen and Rodgers are themselves all ardent anti-communists and ideological Cold Warriors. Way back in 1960 Rodgers was leading a 'Campaign for Democratic Socialism' after the Scarborough conference voted in favour of unilateral nuclear disarmament. Williams, while relaxing from her toil as a minister in Jim Callaghan's strike-breaking government, produced a pamphlet attacking Trotskyism. Owen, prior to the downfall of the Shah of Iran, utilised his foreign policy expertise to engage in a spirited defence of that bulwark against 'Soviet expansionism' in the Middle East.

But the gang they intend to leave behind are at root no less committed to the preservation of capitalism in Britain. And not just Healey/Hattersley and their new 'Solidarity' group. Dennis Skinner, the 'leftest' of them all, froths about the 'Common Market League' -- but thinks that it is 'proletarian' to boast that he doesn't have a passport. Tony Benn and the Tribune group he has just joined have at the centre of their policies opposition to the EEC -- not because it is the economic adjunct of NATO, which they do not oppose -- but because they stand for import controls and economic protectionism. The social-patriotism of these gentlemen and ladies differs from that of the CSD only in so far as it reflects a narrow-minded 'little England' mentality.

No choice for Trotskyists

In this split between stridently pro-NATO 'internationalists' and anti-EEC protectionists there is nothing to be gained by the workers. What British workers sorely need is a socialist revolution which opens the road to a Socialist United States of Europe and a rational economic plan. And despite the dreams peddled by a host of self-styled revolutionaries, that will not come about by pushing Labour to the 'left'. Pervasive disgust with Thatcher's hated administration has been driving workers back into the Labour fold -- for the first time in years, membership is climbing. But the tens of thousands who converge on Liverpool and Glasgow are not drawn to Foot, nor even Benn, per se, much less to constitutional rules changes or capitalist salvage schemes -- but to the prospect of a reversal in their plummeting standard of living and their rising fear of redundancy. Indeed the bourgeois press' preoccupation with Labour's recent factional squabbles is not merely a thirst for sensationalism. What worries the bourgeoisie today is the prospect of an unstable and divided Labour government borne to office by a proletariat chafing under the yoke of Thatcherite austerity -- and unable to contain militant working-class expectations.

Britain still stands on the verge of a class explosion -- the proletariat has neither suffered decisive defeats nor been ground down into submission. Such a development would almost certainly spark a significant shift to the left within a section of the Labour Party, reflecting a split inside the trade-union bureaucracy. And in that context the current bout of shadow-boxing could prefigure a far more deep-going programmatic differentiation, as happened in the French social democracy, the SFIO, when the expulsion of the right-wing Neo-socialists in 1933 precipitated in short order the formation of a centrist current in opposition to the remaining leadership.

Even the relatively insignificant split of the CSD, which at this point boasts of only a handful of MPs and no substantial trade-union

backing, puts a question mark over the Labour Party's historical pretence as a 'broad church' for all socialist currents. Unlike the major continental parties of the Second International, the British Labour Party did not even undergo a decisive split in the wake of the Russian Revolution of 1917. Thus its claim to being the unitary political representative of the working class remains effectively intact. And this myth is a substantial obstacle to the strategic Trotskyist perspective of splitting Labour's working-class base away from its reformist misleadership -- one which infects the bulk of the ostensibly revolutionary left with an almost universal reluctance to upset the sickening chumminess that goes under the name of 'the unity of the movement'.

Without the perspective of posing an independent revolutionary pole for the working class, the reformists and centrists operate within a framework limited to making the Labour Party and the unions more accountable to the membership, in the hope that this is sufficient to push the leadership consistently to the left. The absence of any recent sustained and powerful working-class upsurge -- exemplified in last quarter's strike figures being the lowest since 1941 -- has accelerated their trajectory into the Labour Party. Thus fixation on the minutiae of party conferences provides them with a substitute for real struggle. Their perception of a headlong rush to the left by the Labour Party is in large measure an optical illusion created by their own rapid motion to the right.

'Broad church' or Leninist vanguard?

The Workers Socialist League (WSL) summed up its perspective with the *Socialist Press* (28 January) headline: 'Now Let's Democratise the Unions!' Even if the outcome of Wembley had included some significant reforms inside the Labour Party -- like the elimination of all remaining bans and proscriptions -- this would still be light years away from Trotskyism. The fundamental question, as always, is one of programme. Democratizing the Labour Party in and of itself does nothing to bring socialist revolution nearer to fruition; it is of value only insofar as it allows a communist vanguard the ability to reach out to and win over the masses of workers still in Labour's grip. And the key to that struggle is the construction of a revolutionary alternative within the trade unions which counterposes to the pro-capitalist Labourite bureaucracy the transitional programme of Trotskyism.

Even while attacking the trade union block vote as a 'democratic absurdity', the *Times* (2 February) noted that it is 'an absurdity on which the forces of sanity and moderation within the party have relied through much of its history'. They want 'to get rid of the block vote without removing the influence of trade unionists from the party'. They are quite clear on that which the opportunists refuse to see: with or without the block vote, between the Labour Party and the trade-union bureaucracy there exists a division of labour aimed at channelling the workers' aspirations into the reform of capitalism. That is why bureaucratism is a necessary aspect of reformism: it must police the working class for the bourgeoisie.

While Chapple marshals EETPU branches to swamp London constituency parties with right-wing affiliations, 'left' Arthur Scargill secures his power base in the Yorkshire Labour Party by mobilising droves of NUM members in a fight against Roy Mason in Barnsley. And these replays of the tactics tried out by both sides in the fight over Reg Prentice's seat in Newham North-East before his defection to the Tories are small game compared to the bureaucratic power plays and manoeuvres at national level -- including the ones that resulted in that glorious day at Wembley.

The precondition for a genuine regime of workers democracy in the trade unions is their transformation from what Trotsky called 'concentration camps' for the proletariat into revolutionary instruments of class struggle. And a key element of that is the demand for the complete independence of the unions from the capitalist state. But the WSL can hardly be expected to understand that, since it saw the use of High Court injunctions by the 'lefts' at Wembley as the 'right wing hoise [sic] for once from [sic] their own petard'.

The International Marxist Group (IMG) simply crowed, in the words of Brian Heron, 'What a day at Wembley' (*Socialist Challenge*, 28 January). Heron quoted approvingly from IMG idol Benn:

'Today's decision ... will help bridge the credibility gap between what we promise in opposition and what a Labour government ac-

tually does.'

Clearly not for the IMG, but the task of Trotskyists is to help exacerbate the 'credibility gap' between the promises Labour makes to retain allegiance among its working-class base and its role as sometime administrator of the bourgeois state. And if, as seems likely given Labour's current facelift, the tactic of critical electoral support which is a powerful weapon in carrying out that task again becomes operative for the next general election, it will be used by Leninists as it always has been -- not to support a Labour-controlled capitalist government but to support Labour in the elections the way a rope supports a hanged man!

The extent to which the IMG is mesmerised by Labour's left reformists is revealed in IMG National Secretary Steve Potter's belief that the 'right wing ... haven't got the ability to carry out any sort of purge of left-wing activists inside the party' (*Intercontinental Press*, 19 January). That probably depends on Potter's definition of the 'right wing', but only days after Wembley, Foot launched a vicious attack against the Militant tendency. The selection as prospective parliamentary candidates of two Militant supporters poses the highly unpalatable prospect of a 'Trotskyist' in Parliament -- even if they are Labour house-trained, like the Militant variety, and a purge of potential leftist 'troublemakers' could very well be in store as Labour looks to the next election. And though Benn has appealed for 'all socialists' to join the Labour Party, he has not hesitated to rule out 'disruptive entrism' -- ie revolutionaries.

But for the lot of these self-styled 'Trotskyists', Labour is 'our party' -- whether they are in it or out of it. No! Labour is *their* party -- the party of the trade-union bureaucracy, the party of the parliamentarians. Our party is the Leninist vanguard, which aims not to win Labour to 'socialist policies' but to win workers from Labourism. The left-centrist Workers Power (WP), for all its occasional abstractly correct analysis of Labour, betrays its obvious affinity with the more open tailists of the social democracy when the 'action' heats up. So today it embraces Tony Benn's demand for 'an oath of loyalty from all MPs and councillors' (*Workers Power*, February 1981)! To what? *The Second International?* Is Workers Power loyal to Labour? What about Karl Liebknecht, who as a deputy of the German SPD used the parliamentary platform to preach class war amid the imperialist carnage of World War I? Should he have sworn an 'oath of loyalty' to the SPD?

A workers Labour government?

In a separate article in the same issue WP poses a 'workers Labour government' (three paragraphs after denouncing Benn's 'reformist programme'):

'Of course -- at any point of the struggle a Labour Government might take office with or without an electoral mandate... The task for revolutionaries would be to mobilise the working class to push such a government to a break with the bosses over fundamentals -- the control of industry and finance and control over the state forces. In that way and that way only, could it be a stepping stone to working class power -- a workers and not a bosses Labour Government.'

Nowhere in this schema is there the Leninist axiom that the bourgeois state must be *smashed* on the road to working-class power. On the contrary, it is effectively denied -- if a Labour government 'with or without an electoral mandate' can be transformed into a 'stepping stone' to the dictatorship of the proletariat. This line is qualitatively similar to that of the now reformist Labour-loyal Workers Action (WA) group which WP polemicised against only eight months ago. Then an article by Charlie Shell denied even that Trotskyists would use the 'workers government' formulation in their 'agitation', so tainted was it by Labourite connotations (*Workers Power*, June 1980). The only difference is that for WP it reflects not so much the consistent appetite to adapt to Labour reformism that finally led WA to reformism itself as the congenial inconsistency which makes WP an epitome of centrist crystallised confusion.

For Trotskyists the workers government slogan is a popular formulation for the dictatorship of the proletariat. But Workers Power makes a false distinction between the two which theoretically allows for the latest call for a 'workers Labour government'. Thus the June article claims:

'Such a government would be a workers government to the extent that, based on workers councils, it aided the working class itself to transfer power entirely to these councils.'

The call for a workers government may, at certain times of acute political crisis, be concretised in relation to mass workers parties -- as Lenin called for the Mensheviks and SRs to break with the bourgeoisie and form a workers government based on the soviets which were ready to take the power (the slogan was withdrawn when this situation no longer prevailed). Lenin talked about the possibility of a peaceful transfer of power within the Soviets in such an eventuality because the formation of such a government presumed the destruction of the bourgeois state. WP's notion of a 'workers government to the extent that ...' is a Kautskyite one, projecting a government that is neither bourgeois nor proletarian, which oversees the 'transfer' of power from the capitalist state to the workers. And from this we get today a 'workers government' of Benn, Foot & Co. A Labour government is a bourgeois government, pure and simple -- and the hypothesis of these dyed-in-the-wool parliamentarians taking office 'without an electoral mandate' is mind-boggling, reflecting a felt urge to share in the illusion-mongering which the same article denounces elsewhere.

When the possibility of a split with genuinely revolutionary implications opens up inside the Labour Party, it will provide the opportunity for a qualitative leap in the size and influence of a Trotskyist vanguard. Indeed it is a strategic task of the proletarian vanguard on the road to socialist revolution to split the Labour Party, removing the albatross of Labour reformism from the neck of the British working class. But that requires an intransigent revolutionary programme counterposed to all stripes of reformism. ■

CND...

(Continued from page 3)

tation and expose who are the real warmongers.

Had Grogan 'discovered a cheap way of making atomic bombs' shot back Kerevan. Grogan's formal disclaimer notwithstanding, this version of 'Jobs, not bombs' for the Soviet proletariat is dangerously reactionary. A revolutionary workers government which was foolhardy enough to slash military spending in the midst of imperialist encirclement would thereby only be exposing itself to a nuclear onslaught.

But even this tepid stand in defence of Soviet nuclear capability stood in sharp contrast to the welter of letters clamouring for Soviet disarmament which flooded the pages of *Socialist Challenge*. In practice that is the IMG's line today, the line of the CND it is building. Grogan's defence of Soviet nuclear weapons never finds its way onto the placards the IMG carries in CND demonstrations; nor do IMG contingents so much as breathe a mention of defence of the Soviet Union against attempts at capitalist restoration. Consistent support for CND means calling for Soviet disarmament! The IMG's capitulation to Stalinophobic pacifism reflects the United Secretariat's continuing abandonment of all but the most formal defence of the USSR in the face of prevailing anti-Soviet winds.

'They duped themselves'

A decade ago the IMG made its name through building the Vietnam Solidarity Campaign (VSC), which rallied thousands of radicalising youth behind its banner to demonstrate for victory to the NLF. *Red Mole* (15 May 1972), the IMG's paper then, carried banner headlines demanding 'united action by China and the Soviet Union' to aid Vietnam and argued:

'Even if we accept the fact that the Soviet bureaucracy is too timid to allow its air force or navy to be used directly to help the Vietnamese the least that can be expected is that they will mount a massive military airlift to keep the North Vietnamese supplied with the latest military equipment....'

Unlike the Spartacist tendency, which consistently fought for such military support to the NLF -- including the call for the Soviet nuclear shield to cover Hanoi -- for the IMG this was part and parcel of its tailing of the NLF's Stalinist leadership. It hailed them as 'revolutionaries', explicitly denying the necessity for a political revolution in North Vietnam. But at least it fell on the right side of the class line in the war.

At the time, the IMG attacked its reformist American cousins, the US SWP, for refusing to fight for solidarity with the Vietnamese among the 'vanguard'. But the 'vanguard' the US SWP was appealing to was capitalist politicians, so

it built a 'classless' antiwar movement consciously tailored to drawing in the liberal wing of US imperialism. As could be expected, that movement soon evaporated into support for the Democratic Party. Veteran anti-communist social-democrat Michael Harrington astutely observed:

'... to the extent that the Trotskyists [ie the SWP] did influence the event, they carried out one of the most remarkable exercises in dupery in our political history: they duped themselves. For they are sworn enemies of the "class collaborationists" in the Kennedy and McCarthy movements and bitter foes of the notion that Democratic Congressmen can end the war -- and yet they helped assemble a gigantic audience which demonstrated in favor of just such an approach. What happened was that the Trotskyists ... so successfully adapted to the position of the masses they were supposed to be manipulating that they did yeoman work pushing views they regard as dangerous and illusory.' (*New York Times Magazine*, 30 May 1971)

The sight of a well-armed Soviet tank corps moving into Afghanistan against a ragtag band of feudal reactionaries who barter women and shoot teachers does not have the same romantic appeal for petty-bourgeois youth as the pyjama-clad Vietnamese guerrillas did. In imperialist eyes, solidarising with Vietnam could be excused as youthful exuberance; solidarising with the Soviet Union is clearly seen as an act of unforgivable treason. So unlike the hundreds of thousands who demonstrated for an NLF victory, the numbers who demonstrate today in solidarity with the Soviet Union are sparse indeed. And the opportunists, as always, go with the numbers.

In the course of pursuing its opportunist appetites, the US SWP made its definitive passage into the camp of reformism in 1965. After years of sharp rightward decline, the IMG is moving toward recapitulating its footsteps. And when CND evaporates, the IMG too will only have duped itself, doing 'yeoman work' for those who would (if they could!) disarm the Soviet workers state in the face of hostile imperialist powers armed to the teeth. ■

Feminists ...

(Continued from page 5)

fully available state child-care services, community household service institutions, etc to liberate women from their tedious 'family hearth' drudgery.

To accomplish all these things requires a political revolution against the deeply conservative Stalinist bureaucracy. What forces will lead it? Certainly not the decayed, reactionary Russian Orthodox church -- and certainly not these would-be liberated ladies who want to work only if it's being an artist or a prime minister. It will be the working people of the Soviet Union, defending their socialised property forms, who will reestablish the revolutionary traditions of Bolshevism. A key aspect of the platform of a workers opposition in the USSR today is support of the Red Army's intervention into Afghanistan. It is no doubt a profoundly radicalising experience for many of the young Soviet soldiers to compare conditions in Afghanistan today, with Uzbekistan or Tadzhikistan in Soviet Central Asia -- areas liberated by the Russian Revolution from the social control of the mullahs.

Even some bourgeois commentators have recognised the historic gains made by women of the Soviet East in comparison to feudal Afghanistan. Jill Tweedie in the *Guardian* (31 July 1980) admitted that women in Afghanistan needed the Red Army:

'Whatever the reasons for the Soviet presence ... one fact seems rather certain: one half of the population can only benefit from the continued presence of the Soviet troops and has everything to lose if the rebels win.'

These 'Russian feminists' who say 'Carrying the Red banner is really no different from wearing the veil' ought to try living the life of a veiled Afghan woman, enslaved to the religious obscurantism they hail (and too bad if they're Great Russian chauvinists who don't happen to like Muslims).

Soviet women can expect nothing from such a feminist movement, allied to one of women's worst enemies domestically, the Church, and to imperialism internationally -- except maybe counterrevolution. The emancipation of Soviet women will be completed only when the proletariat throws out the Stalinist bureaucracy in a political revolution and reestablishes the proud and liberating traditions of the Bolshevik Party of Lenin and Trotsky. ■

Afghanistan...

(Continued from page 4)

working-class MPLA nationalists. In Ethiopia, they propped up Mengistu's bloody tyranny, against the just Somali and Eritrean national struggles.

Barnes also cites the revolutionary Fourth International's (FI) 1946 call for Soviet troop withdrawal from Eastern Europe as 'precedent'. But this too is hopelessly off the mark. In Eastern Europe there was a substantial proletariat capable of overthrowing capitalism. At the time, Stalinist parties were selling out revolutionary upsurges in Italy, France, Greece etc; and the Red Army was promoting national antagonisms and coalitions with capitalists in Eastern Europe. The FI, weakened by the decimation of its cadre in World War II and disoriented by the post-war events, expected the Stalinist armies to behead proletarian upheavals in Eastern Europe. Their call for troop withdrawal was designed to further the cause of international proletarian revolution. In Afghanistan today there is hardly a proletariat to speak of: the Red Army intervention poses the possibility of a social revolution in this wretchedly backward country, a possibility which did not exist before.

Barnes caps this wholesale cynical revisionism with an outrageous call for the USSR to unilaterally disarm:

'Think of the stupendous impact it would have on people throughout the world, the vast majority of humanity, if Brezhnev were to go on television and announce that the USSR is destroying a big part of its nuclear arsenal and propose to Washington a schedule to destroy the rest at short intervals. Wouldn't that put Washington on the spot? Wouldn't that clearly put the spotlight on the US imperialists as the true warmakers in the world?' (*IIDB* no 4, 1980)

In 1977 the late Joseph Hansen treacherously called on the USSR to challenge the US to mutually dismantle their nuclear stockpiles. Barnes' call is for the Soviet Union to surrender to imperialism by wilfully throwing away its means of defence.

Afghanistan and Poland have become the acid test for those who claim the heritage of Leon Trotsky. The American SWP said the Russian question was not an issue at the time of the China/Vietnam war; they repeated this line over Afghanistan and Poland. Having long since abandoned defence of the USSR, the group is now found marching to Reagan's anti-Soviet battle hymn. One step behind them all along the line has been the Australian SWP; when the occasion warrants, it too will find its rationalisations for openly joining Reagan's war drive. The international Spartacist tendency alone has shown that it is prepared to uphold the program of Trotskyism. The Fourth International of Trotsky and Cannon will be reformed only in opposition to reformist traitors of the Barnes/Percy ilk. Hail Red Army in Afghanistan! Smash the Reagan/Fraser war drive! Defend the Soviet Union!

reprinted from *Australasian Spartacist* no 81, February 1981

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SPARTACIST

BRITAIN

What the miners could have done

For a week in February Britain teetered on the brink of all-out class confrontation. As the headline of *Now!* magazine put it, the 'Shadow of '74' was cast over the Tory government. That shadow was the threat of the first national miners strike since the one which finished Edward Heath's term as prime minister. And it was enough to force a humiliating retreat by Margaret Thatcher, the first in the face of a workers struggle since she took office nearly two years ago. The escalating unofficial strike wave in the pits, and the vague formula agreed as the basis of a settlement, also underscored the bankruptcy of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) leaders -- 'moderate' and 'left' alike. The Coal Board withdrew its immediate closure plans, but the miners have no guarantee of jobs -- rather the NUM recognised in principle the 'need' for closures.

Though the miners may have won a little time in the war of attrition against their livelihoods, much more was at stake than pit closures. For the first time since the betrayal of the 100-day-long steel strike by Bill Sirs & Co in 1980, a key and powerful section of the proletariat was in a position to act as the spearhead of a counterattack by the whole workers movement against the Tory/employer offensive. And this time it was the miners -- the industrial powerhouse and shock troops of the labour movement. The bureaucrats, union and Labour Party alike, did their utmost to make sure that confrontation didn't happen -- and they succeeded.

Get the Iron Lady!

From the moment the Coal Board put fifty pits and thousands of jobs under the axe, the question of a national strike was posed. On 12 February the NUM executive voted unanimously for a ballot of the membership and a mandate to call industrial action should the threats not be withdrawn. For president Joe Gormley, such a posture was a bargaining counter in negotiations with energy minister David Howell, from whom the union demanded a ban on coal imports and increased state subsidies for the mining industry. But the pressure for real action was revealed by 'moderate' Tommy Callan, NUM area secretary in Durham: 'Our lads are itching. If talks go on too long I cannot hold our members back.'

As the first pits marked for closure were named, five in South Wales, 425 Welsh miners at Coegnant spontaneously walked off the job. Others in the region followed and the threat of an uncontrolled wildcat forced the hand of the area leadership. Within three days, on 17 February, every one of 25,500 miners in South Wales was out on official strike. Yet while area president Emlyn Williams spoke of staying out 'until the threat of closure in all parts of Britain has been withdrawn', Gormley was begging the government to change course and avoid 'a lot of grief that none of us wants'. And he made a scarcely veiled threat against the 'unconstitutional' strikers:

'I want to remind them that there are many people in the country today, even members of

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Angry Wales and Kent miners surround Arthur Scargill at NUM Executive meeting, 19 February. Placard reads: 'No sellout! Stay out!' Needed classwide confrontation frustrated by bureaucrats' sellout.

Labour split

NATO 'internationalists', Little England 'socialists'

Much can be said about the decisive impact of the Wembley Labour Party special conference on the character of the class struggle in this country with the simple observation that when an all-out miners strike was posed last month the Labour shenanigans receded deep into the shadows. The decision to give the trade unions a forty per cent say in the election of the party leader (with thirty per cent going to the constituency parties and another thirty remaining in the hands of the parliamentarians) has provided Fleet Street with endless reams of copy. The all-but-consummated split by the right-wing 'Gang of Three' and others has sent the adrenalin streaming through Labour's variegated fake-revolutionary boosters who see in this the fruition of their countless calls to 'Make the lefts fight'. And it has fuelled considerable speculation about a significant third-party challenge to the Tories and the 'socialists'. So what is Wembley all about?

It is not the left-wing 'takeover' that the union-bashing 'red scare' stories in the gutter press have been going on about. Nor is it the challenge to the mother of parliaments and the constitutional monarchy implied by such headlines as, 'Memo to the Labour Party: prime ministers are chosen by the Queen' (*Times*, 2 February). It is certainly true that formalising the ratification of the party leader by the trade union bureaucracy is perceived as an insult to the staid traditions of Britain's parliamentary institutions. But the ratification process has

always been there -- through the instrument of trade union dues flowing into the party treasury. And in any case, who but the most starry-eyed reformist or crackpot conservative believe that any candidate anointed by Len Murray & Co will attempt anything that even hints of what Cromwell pulled off three hundred years ago, much less challenge capitalist class rule. So when Shirley Williams lamented, upon quitting the NEC on 10 February, that 'the party I loved and worked for over so many years no longer exists', it was more than a bit self-serving.

If Williams, David Owen, Bill Rodgers & Co feel the urge to bolt today it is not because the Labour Party has been radically transformed. They have all lived through Labour's out-of-office facelifts before. Conference motions against Cruise missiles per se are not more significant than those passed against Polaris in bygone days. And they stuck around before when official Labour policy was for withdrawal from the EEC. Nor did they complain in the period of 'left' talk under Edward Heath's Tory government, when even Denis Healey said he wanted to 'squeeze the rich till the pips squeak'.

The fragility of the capitalist economy today manifestly leaves no room for reformist manoeuvres and fooling around with social-democratic 'reflation' policies; and dissatisfaction among the working class leads to nervous jitters in the bourgeoisie when even as proven a

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