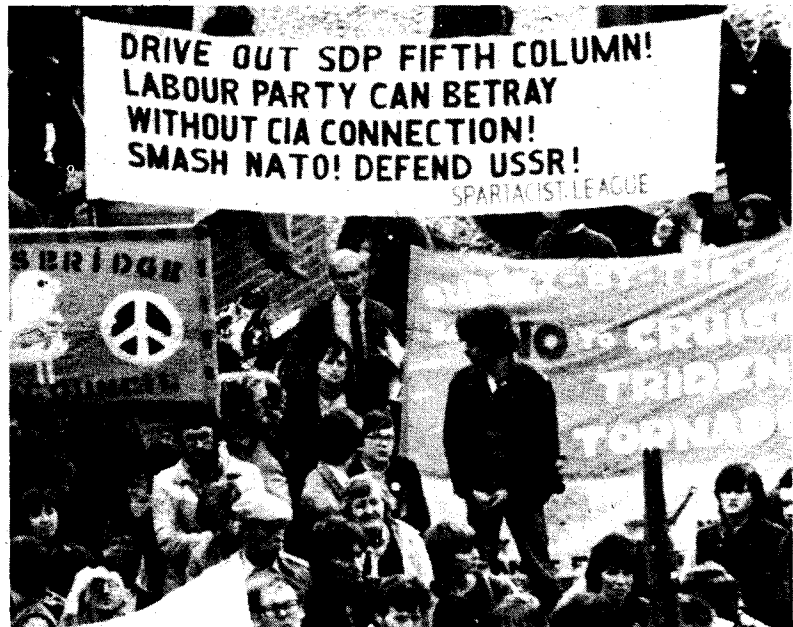




Benn wins Chesterfield as Labour Party rallies to Cold War 'unity'



Has Tony Benn bowed to Labour's Cold War right? We say: Drive NATO/CIA lovers out of the Labour Party!

Workers action can bring down Thatcher!

'The man is a defender of freedom and I think there are many respects in which we have a common definition of freedom. There are important details on which we would differ, but I am sure that anyone who is a sustainer of parliamentary democracy ... is bound to be a man with whom I have a great deal in common.'

-- Neil Kinnock on Ronald Reagan

'Tony without Denis is like Torvill without Dean.'

-- Denis Healey on Tony Benn

With the selection of Tony Benn to replace retiring Labour right winger, Eric Varley, for the traditionally safe Labour seat of Chesterfield, the by-election in this Derbyshire engineering and mining community assumed national significance. Here was the most prominent spokesman of the Labour 'left' acting as the party's standardbearer in the first by-election since the installation of the Kinnock/Hattersley 'dream ticket'. Benn won. What does his victory mean?

In his victory speech, Benn proclaimed it proof that 'the passionate advocacy of socialism ... is a way of winning'. This is what Benn's cheering supporter's wanted to hear. Then he told them he looked forward to putting Neil Kinnock into 10 Downing Street, Roy Hattersley into Number 11 and Denis Healey, 'that great singer, photographer and friend', into the Foreign Office. Singing and photography isn't what Healey, arch representative of NATO, architect of the Social Contract and chancellor for the IMF, will be doing at the Foreign Office.

Is this what the thousands of Labour militants who placed their hopes in Tony Benn as the chief representative of their socialist aspirations have fought for over the past years of the Labour Party's internal struggle? Last month we wrote:

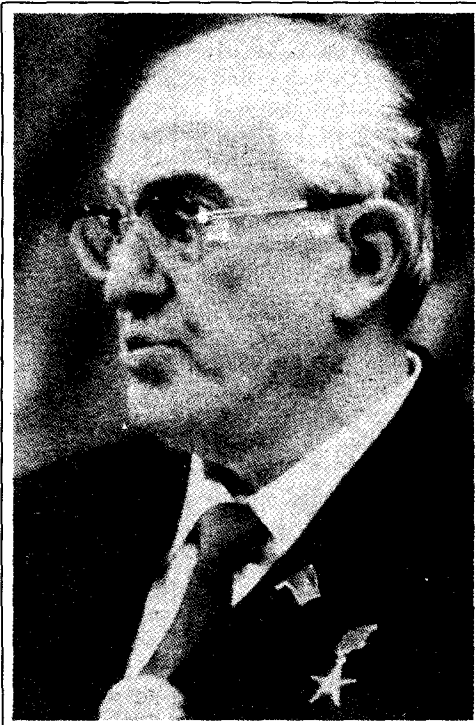
'Under the impact of the renewed anti-Soviet Cold War a distorted and uneven class line has been created inside the Labour Party between NATO loyalists and "little England" "socialists". Benn is the most prominent representative of this second trend which is out of step with the ruling class's drive to anti-Soviet war....
'Is Tony Benn a reformed and chastened figure, eager to show that he is "fit to govern" and a suitable candidate to crawl before the queen some day? Whether he likes it or not Benn will have to make a choice in this election. If Tony Benn does not simply stand as the dupe of the Hattersleys and Healeys, then we would welcome the opportunity to extend him critical support....'

A Benn victory on these terms would have helped drive the hard NATO/CIA-lovers like Healey and Hattersley out of the Labour Party, placing the Bennite 'left' in a position where his 'socialist' rhetoric would be put to the test and leaving at the base thousands of workers broken from the stranglehold of the Labour/TUC Cold War rights. We offered Benn our critical support, under our own communist banners. Benn refused; acquiescence to Labour's Cold Warriors meant rejection of any taint of association with Soviet-defencist communists (see

leaflet and letters, p6, 7).

Under Kinnock and Hattersley, Labour has been hoping to reestablish the party's tattered credentials in the eyes of their ruling-class masters as being capable of stewarding a government of Cold War austerity a La Mitterrand in France and Hawke in Australia. In Chesterfield Benn acted as 'socialist' frontman for the Cold War 'realists', replaying his role in the 1974-79 Callaghan/Healey government of betrayal. It was the seething discontent among tens of thousands

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YURI VLADIMIROVICH ANDROPOV 1914-1984

He sought to curb the worst excesses of the bureaucracy.

He sought to increase the productivity of the Soviet masses.

He made no overt betrayals on behalf of imperialism.

He was no friend of freedom.

Protest murder of Kurds!

'Bloody Evren get your hands off Kurds' was the rallying cry of a fifty-strong protest picket outside the Turkish embassy on 10 February. Following after a 1000-strong protest action in Stockholm, this picket was called by the Kurdish Solidarity Campaign (KSC) and attended by supporters of the Association of Kurdish Students Abroad, the Turkish Solidarity Campaign and a spirited contingent from the Spartacist League.

Anger erupted among Kurdish exiles when they received news from their families that Kurdish prisoners (mostly political leaders) had been burned alive in Diyarbakir prison. Over the last three months Kurdish political prisoners have been staging a hunger strike against the atrocious conditions and treatment they receive. A KSC statement (25 January) reports that the Turkish authorities

'reacted in their usual brutal way, against this peaceful protest, by attacking the prison and setting fire to three of its dormitories, on January 6 1984 in order to break the strike. Consequently, twenty prisoners were seriously burned and wounded, and were transferred to Diyarbakir's military hospital. The suspicious element in this development is that all the wounded were among the leaders of the different Kurdish political organisations, kept in prison at the time. On January 24, 1984, the families of four of these leaders were informed to come and collect the bodies of their relatives, from the military hospital, who had allegedly died as a result of their burns.'

The Turkish junta has tried to make much of the so-called return to 'civilian democracy', but as the *Guardian* (22 February) reports: 'Contrary to widespread belief that conditions would ease with the installation of a civilian government prison authorities increased torture and stopped weekly visits by families'. And martial law remains in force in the Kurdish areas.

The darkness of oppression and repression has never stopped for the Kurds in Turkey, be it under military or civilian regimes. At the picket our chant aptly characterised this historical fact while pointing out the only alternative: 'Evren butchers Kurds, Ataturk, Ecevit did too! Kurds will be truly free under workers

rule!'

Turkey is not the only country in which Kurds face genocidal attacks. Turkey has been cooperating with Iraq to hunt down Kurds, and in Iran and Syria the Kurds face a similar bloody threat (see 'Stop genocide of Kurds', *Spartacist Britain* no 51, July/August 1983). Almost all the participants in the picket joined our chant: 'In Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria: stop the genocide of Kurds!' Kurds live in the Soviet Union too, but no Kurd wanted to add it to the list. When we chanted 'Kurds are not butchered in the USSR! Defend the Soviet Union!' several Kurdish militants enthusiastically joined us. The only objectors were the Stalinophobic miserables of Socialist Organiser behind the banner of the Turkish Solidarity Campaign, who preferred to discuss their differences on the USSR and Poland with a policeman. Again the Spartacist chant pointing at the international context of the situation was picked up by several Kurdish militants, at least one of whom enthusiastically asked us to lead it again: 'Reagan, Thatcher love bloody Evren, smash the anti-Soviet war drive! Defend the Soviet Union!'

The demand 'For the right of Kurds to self-determination' coupled with 'Fight for workers and peasants governments' rang all through the

picket as the Spartacist contingent continually initiated it. Other SL chants included the calls for the defence of Kurdish and left-wing prisoners and for a socialist federation of the Middle East. At the end of the picket the Kurds sang their national anthem, followed by the SL contingent leading the singing of the Internationale with its apt last words 'the international soviet shall be the human race'.

In our review of the film *Yol* ('Güney's Yol: A Review', *Women and Revolution* no 27, Winter 1983-84) we wrote:

'The large and militant proletariat of Turkey including its Kurdish component is the social force which, mobilised under the leadership of a Leninist vanguard party whose banner is emblazoned with the perspective of permanent revolution, can elevate the women and Kurds of Turkey from beneath their subjugation.'

That is our goal, and part of that struggle is the necessary and elementary duty of the international proletariat and defenders of democratic rights to come to the defence of Kurds facing all-sided attacks. Free all Kurdish and left-wing prisoners! Stop genocide of Kurds in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey! Down with Evren's bloody bonapartist regime! For the right of self-determination for Kurds! For a socialist federation of the Middle East!



Spartacist contingent demands right of self-determination for Kurds.

Workers to power: For workers militias and soviets!

End of the road for Bolivian popular front

LA PAZ, 26 February -- Bolivia today is a classic case of the bankruptcy of popular frontism. The government of Hernan Siles Zuazo's Unidad Democratica y Popular (UDP) flounders from crisis to crisis, satisfying no one and infuriating everyone. After numerous reshufflings, Siles' cabinet is made up of representatives of his own bourgeois Revolutionary Nationalist Movement-Left (MNRI), the pro-Moscow Communist Party (PCB), Christian Democrats and military officers. Faced with urgent social and economic problems deriving from Bolivia's backwardness, 18 years of plunder by military despots and the capitalist world economic crisis, during its year and a half in office the UDP's incapacity has been total. In this, the poorest country in Latin America, social contradictions are posed with razor sharpness, and cannot be assuaged by sermons of class peace, nor by the MNRI's sten-

cilled wall slogans: 'Strikes and work stoppages -- No! Democracy and productivity -- Yes!' 'A democracy without order perishes in disorder' and 'Down with ultra-left demagoguery!'

The social contradictions are not merely explosive -- they are exploding everywhere. Public employees' strikes paralysed many government functions; unions prevented even some ministers from entering the ministries. Telephone workers and employees of the Central Bank of Bolivia are out. The country's doctors, employed by the government or social security agencies, went on strike for higher salaries; their average monthly pay is less than US\$40! For a week all ground transport to and from the capital city of La Paz was cut off by a road blockade of peasants protesting rising transport costs, low prices for their produce, and the government's peasant affairs minister. In the south, angry peasants held a train with 2000 passengers hostage. Inside La Paz, slum-dwellers associations -- which hold large outdoor meetings of women dressed in the traditional garb of bowler hats, multi-coloured shawls and multiple skirts -- have organised marches through the streets and blocked traffic to protest transport costs. In Potosi miners' cooperatives blocked highways and roads with stone barricades and trucks. Meanwhile factory workers' organisations in La Paz and the industrial centre of Cochabamba officially declared Siles an enemy of the working class. All this follows the miners' seizure of the state mining trust COMIBOL last spring, 'resolved' by a decree establishing 'majority workers co-management' of the mines.

The Central Obrera Boliviana (COB), the powerful labour federation, centred on the militant tin miners, threatened a 48-hour general strike to force Siles to live up to the January

29 COB-government agreement that ended a seven-day hunger strike by 1000 union leaders. The COB bureaucrats, led by class traitor *maximo* Juan Lechin, repeatedly 'postponed' the general strike, making a mockery of the 'final' ultimatum to the government. After dumping his minister of industry and commerce, Siles finally pulled the decrees out of his pocket and granted a miserable 57 per cent raise in the minimum wage (to 47,000 Bolivian pesos, or US\$23.50 a

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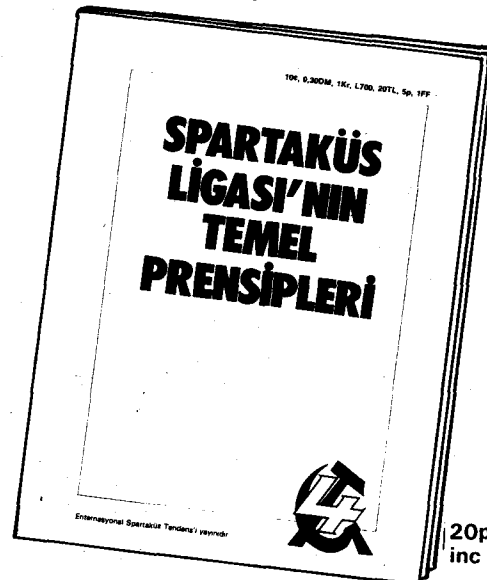
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SPARTACIST BRITAIN

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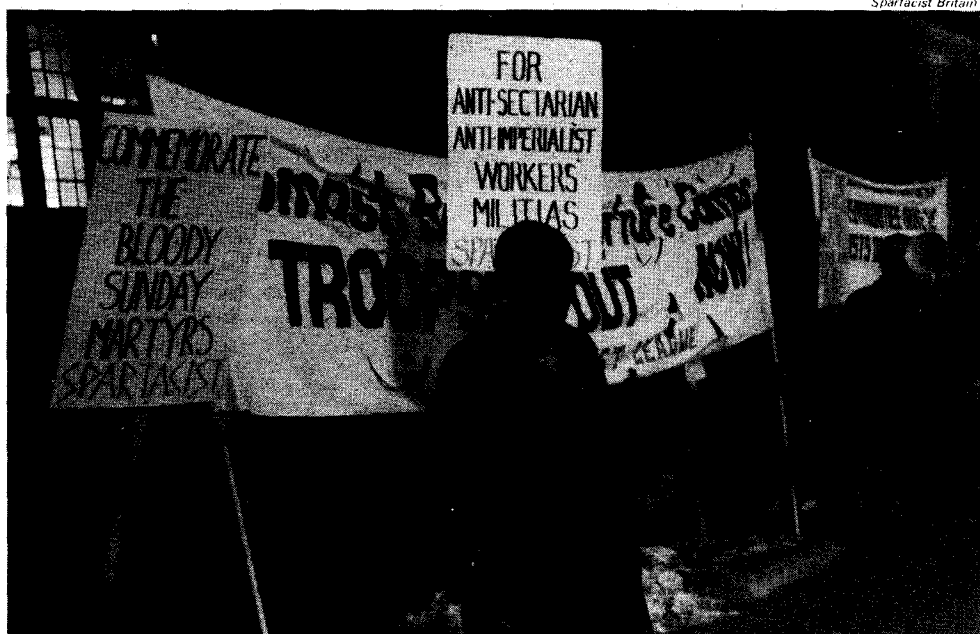
IFM, SCAR let NF roam in Sheffield

Workers, minorities must crush the fascists!

On 3 March a gang of National Front fascists were allowed to stage a racist provocation in the streets of Sheffield's east end. Surrounded by lines of cops on either side, carrying huge Union Jacks and a banner emblazoned, 'Hang the IRA', these lowlife publicised their programme of racist genocide against Irish, Asians, blacks -- all minorities and working-class militants -- while scores more roamed the streets looking for an opportunity to terrorise.

The crime is they could have been stopped so easily, and taught a lesson that would have made them think twice the next time they tried to invade a solidly trade-union city like Sheffield. Even as these murderous scum were parading their racist filth, two -- yes, two -- supposedly 'anti-fascist' demonstrations were taking place which did not even have the *intent* of trying to stop the NF race-terrorists. While the Communist Party-dominated Sheffield Campaign Against Racism (SCAR) attracted some 250 people to its 'peaceful protest' in the city centre, the Irish Freedom Movement/Revolutionary Communist Party pulled together around 350 for its liberal-nationalist 'Speak out for Irish freedom' diversion. As the leaflet reprinted below details, both these outfits opposed and indeed had done their best to sabotage the needed mass trade union/minority mobilisation which could have stopped the fascists cold.

Protected only by police lines from gangs of fascist youth egged on by NF heavies, the IFM (with the centrist Workers Power in tow) marched pompously down the street in military formation. While these posturers cared nothing for stopping the fascists -- and even sent lone women paper sellers out onto the footpath to risk fascist ambush -- they did their damndest to prevent our leaflets being distributed to their supporters. One of their stewards even started ripping leaflets out of marchers' hands, and when some returned for another copy, one RCP'er grabbed a stack from one of our woman comrades and threw them to the ground. RCP hack Phil Murphy then told us, 'If you keep doing this you'll be arrested.' At least the RCP is even-handed: they rely on the cops for protection



SL protests anti-Irish ban, 27 January.

against the fascists and to threaten leftists. As for SCAR, not only did it explicitly oppose trying to stop the fascists marching, but it pandered to the very same anti-Irish racism the NF seeks to exploit to fuel its race-hate terror. At their rally *Straight Left* Stalinist Steve Howell denied the NF -- at that moment marching to 'Hang the IRA' -- had any 'interest in the Irish question', while SCAR stewards were instructed to 'liaise [!] with the police' if necessary to stop anyone carrying slogans related to Ireland. Not only were anti-imperialist slogans banned, but anti-fascist ones as well. At the rally SCAR stewards stopped an Asian youth who wanted to chant 'Smash the National Front!' One Asian woman speaker rejected the claim 'that the fight we had to get rid of the British isn't the same as the Irish fight to get rid of the British'. But then the Stalinists opposed the struggle for Indian independence as well when it conflicted with their support to Churchill during World War II.

For the second time in a month the fascist National Front threaten to stage a race-hate provocation in the solidly trade union city of Sheffield. For the second time in a month they have targetted an Irish solidarity march, called by the Irish Freedom Movement (IFM) for 3 March. And for the second time in a month, the IFM and their parent Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) and the Sinn Fein nationalists they idolise are setting up workers and minorities with their criminal 'ignore the fascists' line.

climate, fostered by the anti-Soviet war drive, in which the fascists hope to fester and grow. What's needed to stop them, what the Spartacist League (SL) fought for last month, is 'Irish, blacks, Asians, an army of Scottish workers storming out of their Clydeside bastions across the border like Wallace and the Black Douglas did -- all behind the power of organised labour'.

But that's the last thing the IFM/RCP and their allies wanted to see last month or on 3 March. The IFM's call for the demo, while bemoaning the ban on the Bloody Sunday commemoration last month, does not even mention the fascists! When the SL contacted the IFM/RCP last week to propose the perspective of mass anti-fascist mobilisation, leading spokesman Keith Tompson replied it 'might serve as a sort of diversion'. For these wimps, stopping fascist rampage is deemed a diversion -- from their heroic task of vicariously enthusing over IRA nationalism. In fact their proposed 3 March demo is a diversion from their rotten betrayal around the Bloody Sunday commemoration. Now they have taken to claiming that their demo is also aimed 'against the NF'. And now the liberal/Stalinist Sheffield Campaign Against Racism (SCAR) announces yet another 'anti-fascist' demonstration on the day.

Both these marches are planned to be well away from where the fascists intend to be. What both march organisers are talking about is not a powerful mobilisation of labour and minorities to stop the fascists but a cosy deal with the Town Hall in which squadrons of cops protect the NF marching in one direction while the 'anti-fascists' are allowed to parade the other way.

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Murderous racist stabbing in East London

As Ala Miah Azad sat up in his bed in a London hospital, he vividly described what happened when he and his friend Siddique Miad were brutally assaulted by two white thugs on the steps of a derelict GLC council flat in Bethnal Green: 'I didn't see the knife coming,

but when my shoulder felt hot I knew something was wrong. Then I saw the blood coming... I thought it was certain they would kill us. They started talking about a gun and whether they would shoot us' (*Guardian*, 20 February). Azad who lost four pints of blood was left to die;

the Bengali man who found him on the evening of February 7 and telephoned the ambulance in time to save his life was even afraid to let his name be mentioned in the paper for fear of reprisals. The attackers made their motive perfectly clear: as the knife sank in, one shouted, 'You black bastard, why did you come to this country?'

For Asian communities in London's East End, even more than most of Britain, mur-

derous racist attacks are an everyday occurrence. And to see what happens when they try to defend themselves, just look at the case of the Newham 8. Late last year eight Asian youths were put on trial for organising to defend Asian schoolchildren against repeated attacks by skinheads. Three whites had attacked them, and naturally they defended themselves. But the whites turned out to be plainclothes cops who beat, arrested and charged them with 'conspiracy'. Only a strong protest campaign led to the acquittal of four of them, while the others got off with fifty hours 'community service'. Even this is a vile insult! These youths deserved a medal for performing a real community service in trying to defend young schoolchildren against racist thugs. And according to the Newham 8 Defence Committee, the defendants continue to be a target of police harassment. The other day when one of them went in to report his car stolen, he was held for four hours.

The new immigration laws, stepped-up deportations, the draconian Police Bill, the frame-up racist show trials of the Newham 8 and Bradford 12: all point to the deep-going racism in

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Cable Street, East London, 1936: mass workers mobilisation stopped Mosley's fascists.

An exchange: Yuri Andropov and Soviet defencism

We reprint below an exchange from Workers Vanguard no 348 (17 February), press of the Spartacist League/US (SL/US).

When the SL/US initiated the Labor/Black Mobilization which stopped the Ku Klux Klan from staging a race-terror provocation in Washington, DC on 27 November 1982, we never imagined that one result would be an interesting hot debate with some of our ex-members on the question of Stalinism. But when the charter busload from Norfolk, Virginia took the name 'Nat Turner Bat-

alion' and the New York comrades followed suit with the 'Yuri Andropov Brigade' the self-styled 'External Tendency' (ET) in Toronto said it was a new low even for us. In our reply to their first letter, we observed that our Stalinophobic critics, who claim that the 'Yuri Andropov Brigade' means we have sold out to Stalinism, evidently have no objection to the 'Ulysses S Grant Division' named for a Republican capitalist politician. We publish below the second letter on the subject from the Toronto 'External Tendency' along with our reply.

Dissidents denounce 'Andropov Brigade'

ET letter

Toronto
October 28, 1983

Dear Comrade Robertson:

Thank you for being so good as to send us a copy of your reply to our letter of 13 December, 1982. Please be assured that we have given it our most careful consideration.

Frankly we were a bit disappointed with your letter. You defend so adamantly (but so poorly) what is so clearly a mistake. Perhaps it is a mistake that you feel some personal responsibility for. We sympathize with the inherent difficulties of attempting to develop a coherent defence of the 'Yuri Andropov Brigade' within the programmatic framework of Trotskyism, but even so we were disappointed. We had somehow expected more from you.

You quote a line from our letter that 'On the most general level Andropov and the bureaucrats he represents are counterposed to everything that Trotsky fought for.' We would have thought that this was a fairly unobjectionable statement among Trotskyists. Leon Trotsky throughout his life fought for international proletarian revolution; Stalin was the 'gravedigger' of revolutions.

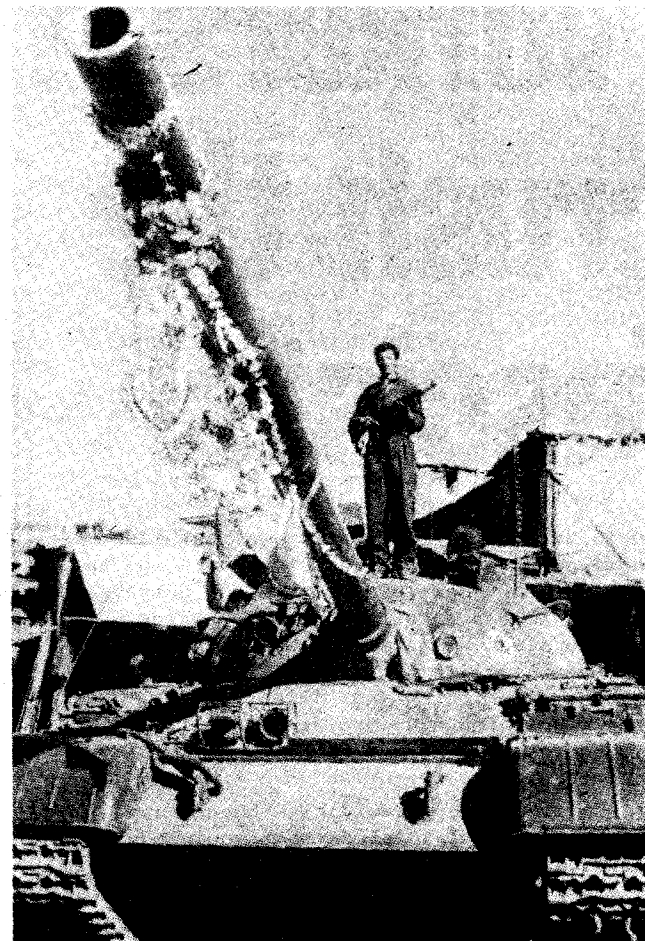
But after quoting the above line you choose not to take it up at all. Instead you attempt to substitute a position which we do not hold which, you assure us, is only a 'more poetic version' of the same thing. But it is not. We reject the erroneous position of the Dobbs-Cannon SWP majority in 1952-53 with which you

attempt to saddle us ('Stalinism is counterrevolutionary through and through and to the core'). We reject adulation of Yuri Andropov for the same reason -- because it negates the contradictory character of the Stalinist bureaucracy and thus constitutes a departure from Trotskyism. Of course, from your point of view the position has the advantage of being considerably easier to knock down -- an attribute it shares with other straw men.

If all you are searching for is a more lyrical rendering of the idea which we were seeking to convey, you might wish to consider the following passage by Trotsky:

'Stalinism originated not as an organic outgrowth of Bolshevism but as a negation of Bolshevism consummated in blood. The process of this negation is mirrored very graphically in the history of the Central Committee. Stalinism had to exterminate first politically and then physically the leading cadres of Bolshevism in order to become what it now is: an apparatus of the privileged, a brake upon historical progress, an agency of world imperialism. Stalinism and Bolshevism are mortal enemies.' ('A Graphic History of Bolshevism', 7 June 1939)

Not merely 'counterposed' but 'mortal enemies!' He puts it so nicely. Of course despite this assessment Trotsky remained, as do we, firmly Soviet defensist. The two positions are mutually exclusive only in the minds of Stalinist sycophants. Surely we could agree that 'on the most general level' Glenn Watts and Lane Kirkland are counterposed to class-struggle militants in the unions? Yet is it not easy to



In late 1979, when Soviet forces intervened against US-backed Afghan feudalists, Spartacists said: Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!

imagine situations where we would both find ourselves in a military bloc with these treacherous parasites? Same thing.

Of course the Soviet bureaucracy has a dual nature. But your reply dodges the key point that we made in our original letter: 'You can't defend the Soviet Union with Yuri Andropov.' You claim to continue to recognize the 'inextricable' connection between military defense and political revolution in the Soviet Union. But, those who adulate Stalin's heirs act to undermine the defense of the Soviet Union. Let us refer you once again to comrade Trotsky:

'... I consider the main source of danger to the USSR in the present international situation to be Stalin and the oligarchy headed by him. An open struggle against them, in the view of world public opinion, is inseparably connected for me with the defense of the USSR.' ('Stalin After the Finnish Experience', 13 March 1940)

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In defence of Trotskyism

SL reply

3 January 1984

Dear Comrades,

Your reply of 28 October 1983 regarding the 'Yuri Andropov Brigade' collapses the contradictions inherent in the Soviet bureaucracy and Soviet degenerated workers state, thereby vitiating the Trotskyist position of unconditional defense of the Soviet Union when that question has become most urgent.

You consider the key point made in your original letter your paraphrase of our slogan 'You Can't Fight Reagan with Democrats' as 'You Can't Defend the Soviet Union with Yuri Andropovs'. Our slogan is based on the fact that there is no class difference between the twin parties of the American imperialist bourgeoisie. Do you mean to imply that there is no class difference between imperialism and the Soviet bureaucracy? Then you thereby reject Trotsky's analysis of the Soviet degenerated workers state as well. 'Oh, no', you protest. But your all-too-clever and very revealing paraphrase of our slogan is ambiguous at best. Can the Soviet Union be defended with Marshals Ustinov and Ogarkov, who are also part of the bureaucracy and who helped engineer Andropov's rise to power? Is the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan then not to be hailed and the Soviet handling of the KAL 007 provocation to be condemned?

Your position is reminiscent of the statement: 'We have never supported the Kremlin's international policy.' Before you grow too enamoured of that formula let me remind you that

its author was Max Shachtman in the 1939-40 fight over the Russian question. About it Trotsky observed:

'In its present foreign as well as domestic policy, the bureaucracy places first and foremost for defense its own parasitic interests. To that extent we wage mortal struggle against it, but in the final analysis, through the interests of the bureaucracy, in a very distorted form the interests of the workers' state are reflected. These interests we defend -- with our own methods.' ('From a Scratch to the Danger of Gangrene', *In Defence of Marxism*, p 127)

Trotskyism provides a coherent worldview in which the contradictory character of the Stalinist bureaucracy is reflected. Your assertion, 'On the most general level Andropov and the bureaucrats he represents are counterposed to everything that Trotsky fought for', is both undialectical and very distant from Trotskyism.

Do you not believe that under the gun of Reagan's anti-Soviet war drive the Soviet bureaucracy may be compelled to take certain measures, albeit deformed and partial, to defend the state power from which they reap their privileges? It is no accident that in this hour of grave peril the bureaucracy has placed at its head Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov. An interesting account of Andropov's character and rise to power can be found in Zhores Medvedev's recent book *Andropov*. There is no love lost between this Soviet biologist and dissident and the former head of the KGB who incarcerated him in a mental hospital and exiled him. Nevertheless, Medvedev contrasts Andropov to Brezhnev, who

'was not a real leader in 1964, but the representative of the bureaucracy which sought a quieter, safer, more secure, privileged life' (p 196). Andropov is known as a decisive and efficient administrator who used the KGB not only to persecute dissidents but to fight crime and corruption in the highest levels of the bureaucracy, including Brezhnev's immediate family. Confronted by Reagan's nuclear Armageddon, the bureaucracy evidently felt the need for a leader who would shake out the sloth, corruption and mismanagement of the Brezhnev years.

Of course the bureaucracy cannot reform itself as neo-Bukharinites like the Medvedev brothers believe. It will take the restoration of soviet democracy through proletarian political revolution to unleash the productive resources of the Soviet workers state. And as comrade Robertson wrote you, in our view, that political revolution is inextricably linked to the unconditional military defense of the Soviet Union against American and other imperialisms.

Your comparison of Andropov with Stalin and Beria, the mass murderers of tens of thousands of Communists and Red Army officers, is an obscene amalgam worthy of the pages of *Commentary*. Andropov's entire political career was shaped by a more tranquil period domestically. To hold him personally responsible for the psychopathological mass crimes of Stalin reflects the methodology that holds the bureaucracy to be a homogenous reactionary mass counterrevolutionary through and through ie, a new exploiting class. Given this methodology there is no distinction between a Guevara heroically fighting for social revolution arms in hand and a Corvalan who disarmed the workers in the face of counterrevolution, since they both were Latin American Stalinists. It is worthy of those who make no

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Stop vicious harassment of Greenham women!

Cold War

'peace' women

no answer

In the two years since a handful of women pitched their tents outside Greenham Common air base, this women-only 'peace camp' has become the focus of attention for feminists and pacifists throughout the world. The frightening escalation of the imperialist anti-Soviet war drive has galvanised hundreds of thousands to join protests against the spectre of thermonuclear war. The Greenham women -- with their colourful tactics, evident determination and bizarre variant of non-violent direct action -- have become the much acclaimed vanguard of the so-called peace movement.

It is a measure of their popularity that 30,000 women came out to demonstrate yet again at the cold and muddy camp last 11 December. They brought along their entire 'peace arsenal': tin whistles, saucepan lids, teaspoons, wire cutters and mirrors 'to reflect the evil back into the base'. On the wire fence surrounding the base, some women hung silver woollen webs and posters saying 'God save the queen and the rest of us, please'. Others used their teaspoons (a 'women's instrument') to dig under the fence.

More than fifty were arrested that day -- a small taste of the endless stream of arrest, imprisonment and sexist physical abuse these women have suffered. They have been urinated upon by soldiers and denied trial by jury. Local pubs, shops and restaurants ban anyone who looks like a 'Greenham woman'. The government harasses them with constant eviction attempts and now has threatened to shoot anyone crossing the barriers into the camp. We demand: Drop all the charges against the Greenham women! Stop the harassment!

The Greenham women have become both an irritant and an embarrassment to the Cold Warriors in Whitehall, compelling the NATO warlords to postpone dispersal exercises with the new missiles. But as we headlined last year, 'Holding hands won't stop World War III', nor will mirrors. Indeed, even as the protesters reflected 'evil back into the base', US Air Force transport planes were flying in the first shipment of Cruise missiles. And these first-strike weapons will soon be joined by the more ominous Pershing IIs in Germany, putting Moscow within six minutes flying time of NATO's nuclear-armed madmen.

The popularity and acclaim of these women is a measure of the treachery of the Labour Party leadership and the wretchedly servile parliamentary pressure politics of CND. 'Left' luminary Tony Benn applauds Greenham women for bringing back detente -- giving them credit for



forcing Thatcher to talk to Moscow when she attended Andropov's funeral -- even as he subordinated himself to Cold Warriors Healey and Hattersley in Chesterfield. Thinking that you can stop Cruise by digging under a fence with teaspoons is absurd but so is looking to the Labour Party whose spokesman for 'defence' is Denis Healey, MP for NATO and the CIA. As for Msgr Bruce Kent's CND, after years of impotent peace crawls and petitions, it has shifted even further to the right. Effectively accepting the presence of Cruise, CND has been busy staging anti-communist purges in its youth organisation and shifting its focus of opposition to the Trident missiles which even the SDP and sections of the Tory establishment oppose.

Against the fake revolutionaries of all stripes who hail the Cold War 'peace' women as a step on the road to peace, we reassert on the occasion of International Women's Day 1984 that the road to peace and women's liberation lies

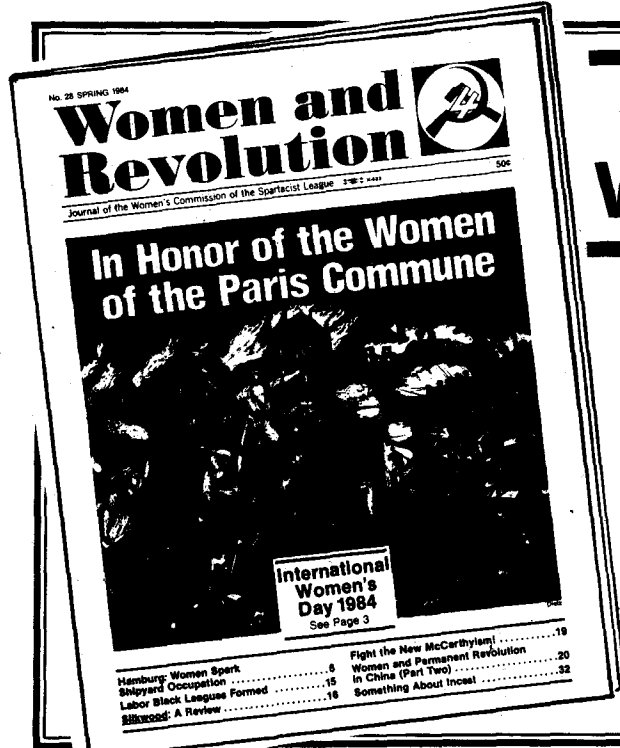
only through international workers revolution. The imperialist war drive is not a matter of 'male violence', as the Greenham feminists would have it. It is a class question and its driving force is anti-Sovietism. Ever since the Russian Revolution of 1917, the dominant goal of imperialism has been to overturn this greatest victory for the international working class. Despite the USSR's Stalinist degeneration, the social gains of October -- collectivised property and the planned economy -- remain and must be defended. The drive towards war is as inextricably rooted in the capitalist system as the drive to increase profits. The only movement that has the social power to disarm the capitalists is the struggle of the working class, led by a communist vanguard party at the head of all the oppressed, to overthrow them through socialist revolution. Class war, not bourgeois pacifism! Defend the Soviet Union against NATO imperialism!

'Greenham model' against Salvadoran death squads?

'You can't kill the spirit, she is old and strong; like a mountain, she goes on and on.' So goes the Greenham women's hymn in praise of a mangled old tree trunk at the camp baptised the Mother Goddess. The fact that many of them have taken refuge in mysticism and religion, one of the original and archaic instruments of women's oppression, reflects the despair of these mainly middle-class women. Many of them have left family and home to come to Greenham. Yet they see little hope other than glorification of women's role as 'nurturer' and 'caring' child-bearer, which chains them to the nuclear family and provides ideological succour to Thatcher's reactionary offensive to drive women out of the workplace and back into the isolation of the kitchen. The nuclear family is the fundamental social institution of women's oppression under capitalism. Communists understand that women's oppression is class-based. We struggle to create a society where women will not be tied to home and hearth. Women will be mobilised under the banner of socialist revolution precisely because only this can lay the material basis for women's full emancipation by allowing unrestricted entry into social production through socialisation of housework and childcare.

At the 11 December demo, one van sported a sign reading, 'No men, no Americans'. This is the sort of rhetoric which the fake-Trotskyist cheerleaders of the Cold War 'peace' women try to palm off as feminist 'autonomy' and 'anti-imperialism'. Autonomy is not an option: under capitalism no social movement stands outside the class divide. And feminism, always at base anti-working-class, is made particularly virulent by the Cold War. Shortly after 4000 members and supporters of the NGA -- men and women alike -- had just faced a night-long battle with 2000 rampaging cops outside Eddie Shah's scab printworks at Warrington, Helen John (one of the most prominent Greenham women) echoed the anti-union lies of the Tories and Labour's Cold War right wing. John defended male exclusionism on the eve of the Greenham demo: 'If men take part it will become violent -- look at the NGA pickets at Warrington' (*Guardian*, 10 December). Earlier that year, challenged by a Spartacist League supporter at a Labour CND rally in London to take a side with the leftist fighters in El Salvador, she advised them to look to the Greenham 'peace' camp as a model. Teaspoons and mirrors against 'Blowtorch' D'Aubuisson's death squads? This would be black humour at its worst were it not a disgusting insult to the thousands of heroic rebels martyred in struggle!

continued on page 8



International Women's Day 1984

This year on International Women's Day, March 8, we salute the revolutionary women of the 1871 Paris Commune, whose fierce dedication to fighting for the workers' Commune inspired Marx to propose creating women's sections of the First International.

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First Afghan women paratroopers.

Labour Party rallies to Cold War 'unity'

(Continued from page 1)

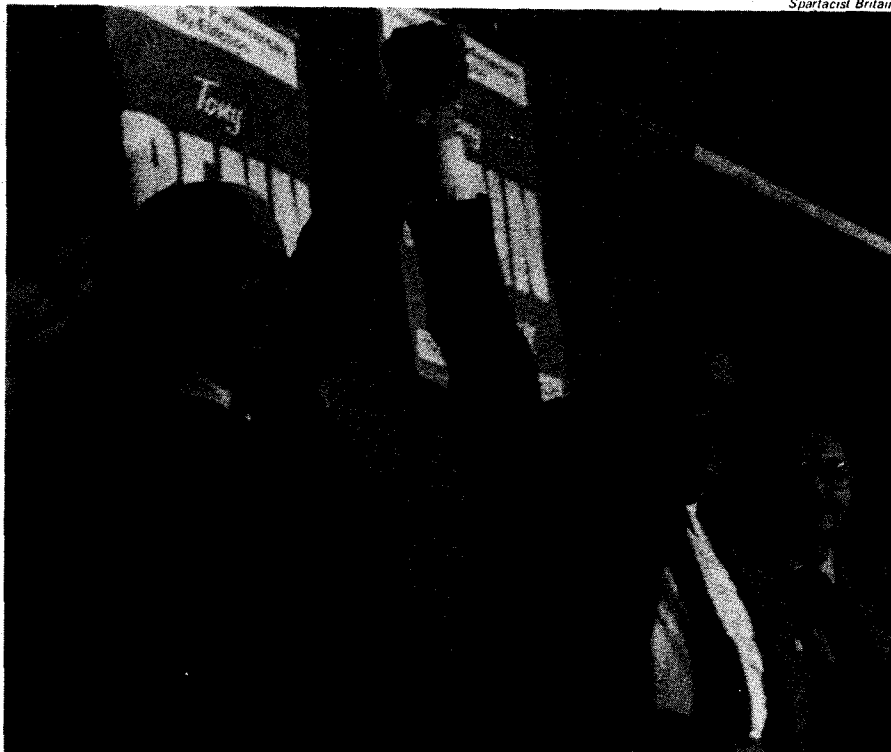
of Labour's working-class base with the contemptible old guard exemplified by Healey that fuelled Benn's bid for power in the Labour Party after 1979. Then working-class audiences were booing Healey off the platform. Now Healey has been given the 'left' seal of approval by Benn in Chesterfield.

What price unity?

There is certainly a felt resonance within Labour's working-class base for a unified struggle to take on the Tories. From the giant Ford Dagenham complex to the pits of Scotland to the Arkwright colliery near Chesterfield, one closure threat follows another. Thatcher's trampling over basic democratic rights of trade unionists has escalated at such provocative tempo that it has chagrined even her own supporters. Since her reelection, the volatility of the class struggle in this country has been demonstrated numerous times, not least in the potentially explosive confrontation over the NGA. But the unity which Benn preaches, as we said in our leaflet, is 'a unity of treachery' forged most recently over the corpse of the NGA struggle. Having stabbed the NGA in the back Len Murray and his cohorts proceeded to strike a disgusting sellout deal with the Tories over the political levy, agreeing to themselves implement the Tories' dictates. The Labourite misleaders offer the workers no strategy other than to lie down and die. This is what was termed at Blackpool the 'new realism' of Murray and the Cold War rights. And this is what Benn and the 'lefts' cover for with their 'socialist' speeches. Windbagery in Parliament and sellouts at the negotiating table -- that's what the social-democratic division of labour offers the workers. What's needed is some hard class struggle to turn back the attacks of this vicious Tory government and bring it down, to break the will of the bosses in struggle. And that requires the forging of a new revolutionary leadership, a Trotskyist vanguard party committed not simply to the 'radical democratic reforms' of the eighteenth century Benn talks about, but to revolutionary working-class power.

Kinnock: I come to praise Reagan...

The pressures and tensions of the Cold War schism in the Labour Party are still there, reflected in the flap over Kinnock's statement that he would not launch a nuclear retaliatory attack. More significant was Kinnock's pilgrimage to Washington, fully aware that to get back into Downing Street he'll need the approval of the White House. The Welsh windbag could truly



Benn goes along with Healey's Cold War tune.

say he came to praise Caesar, not to bury him. Meanwhile the SDP/Liberal alliance remains, as reflected in its significant showing in Chesterfield, as a possible replacement for Labour as the alternative party of government. But what the Labour leadership sought to do in Chesterfield, with Benn's willing assistance, was to demonstrate that Bennism was headed for suppression. With all their arrogance the bourgeoisie says it wouldn't mind Benn in parliament as a lonely Labour equivalent of Enoch Powell, but not as a leader of any movement. At the opening press conference, Cold Warrior Roy Hattersley announced that Chesterfield would prove the Labour Party had 'ended the years of self-destruction' and had 'rejected forever the cliques and caucuses' (read: the Bennite 'left'). Benn said nothing. Three days earlier, at a CND meeting (appropriately chaired by a vicar, who talked of that 'great peace movement' 2000 years ago) Benn had given his customary 'detente' pitch. Then a Spartacist supporter intervened, arguing for defence of the Soviet Union and driving the NATO/CIA-lovers out of the Labour Party. Benn replied limply to her question as to whether he was for unity on the terms of the 'member for NATO' with, 'in all parties there will be debate'.

But there was no debate to be heard when Benn shared a platform with Healey on 29 Feb-

ruary. Our comrades distributed over 600 leaflets outside the meeting under a banner reading: 'Drive out the SDP fifth column! Labour Party can betray without the CIA connection! Smash NATO! Defend USSR!' When it came to question time, the chair pointedly warned against 'professional meeting attenders', to which Healey added, after a friendly whisper, 'Oh yes, I saw them outside'.

That was Benn's 'broad political spectrum' -- CIA-lovers on the platform, communists outside the door. And to defend this crawling to Cold War 'unity', Benn descended into the gutter. In reply to an SL supporter at a 15 February public meeting, he not only defended the CIA-lovers in his party's leadership, but attempted to raise a smoke-screen of scurrilous innuendoes (see leaflet, p6). The 'Big Lie' that communists are some sinister 'outside' force is the tried-and-tested method of reformists seeking to defend their collaborationist treachery, a necessary part of the filthy baggage on the Cold War express, (see box, p7).

Benn's friends got theirs, too. Challenged by a reporter to defend Joan Maynard for her honourable refusal to echo imperialist anti-IRA hysteria, Benn despicably ducked the question by claiming it was not an issue in Chesterfield. When the *Times* reported that Peter Tatchell had been told not to canvass for him, Benn denounced it as a lie. But while Tatchell got an honourable mention and Ken Livingstone was allowed to wander the streets of Chesterfield for a day, it was the Healeys and Hattersleys who made the running. They ran the press conferences and sat on the platforms, not Livingstone or Tatchell.

Fake Trotskyists tail Labour's Cold War unity

Virtually without exception the fake revolutionaries prostrated themselves to this drive for unity with the Cold War right. While *Spartacist Britain* (with the headline, 'Labour fakers bow to Tory union-bashers -- Class struggle can bring down Thatcher!') sold briskly at Chesterfield's marketplace and our comrades distributed thousands of copies of our leaflet, *Socialist Action*, *Socialist Organiser* and the

Spartacist leaflet

Why is Benn bowing to Labour's Cold War right?

We reprint below a letter from the Spartacist League (SL) to Tony Benn, offering him our critical support in the Chesterfield by-election. Many workers see in Benn the representative of their socialist aspirations within the Labour Party; he has been the most articulate spokesman of that wing of the party out of step with the Cold War austerity right wing exemplified by Denis Healey and Roy Hattersley, whose rightful place is in the SDP. Benn's voice should be heard in Parliament. We offered to mobilise our supporters for a Benn victory, under our own communist banner. After considering our proposal for five days, Benn replied to an SL spokesman at a public meeting in Chesterfield on Wednesday, 15 February with the following sharply worded rejection:

'I think I ought to explain that our friend is a member of a small society, the Spartacist society [sic], which has a few members and his desire is to damage the Labour Party by encouraging it first of all to repudiate itself and its members. And I'm very much opposed to that. And I don't want help from people who are not honestly and seriously in support of the labour movement, which is a broadly based movement and is the instrument of the British working class and always has been. And I don't think people who go around and spread gloom and despondency about the role of the labour movement are helping. I think they're harming and I wonder where their support comes from and why they should come here to this by-election to try and make people think that the labour movement is not an instrument capable of achieving its

objectives.'

Tony Benn rejected the support of the communist Soviet-defencist Spartacist League with the reason that we oppose unity with the SDP fifth column inside the Labour Party. Benn places unity with open advocates of anti-working-class Cold War austerity above even his own reformist 'little England' notion of socialism. The deep division cleaved within the Labour Party under the impact of Cold War has not gone away, but at least for the moment Benn has chosen to be the dupe of the 'nightmare ticket', to bow before the Cold War right wing in the name of unity. Is Tony Benn making his peace, like Nye Bevan did, with the Cold War Gaitskellites? The Labour Party was founded and rests on the trade unions, but it is not equal to the labour movement. History has shown it polices for the bosses when in power.

Benn says, 'I don't want help from people who are not honestly and seriously in support of the labour movement'. Who are the people he thinks are? Roy Hattersley, who made it clear at the opening press conference that it was he and not Benn speaking for the Labour Party in this campaign, denounced NGA strikers as 'violent law-breakers' and wants to loosen Labour's ties to the trade unions, the better to accommodate the ruling-class union-bashers. Neil Kinnock, the other half of what Benn now calls a 'balanced ticket', prostrated himself before the world's foremost imperialist warmonger, Ronald Reagan, as a 'defender of freedom' and 'a man with whom I have a great deal in common'. And then there is Denis Healey, for decades the arch NATO/CIA-loving Atlanticist of the Labour Party leader-

ship who a half dozen years ago was overseeing strikebreaking and IMF austerity as part of the Callaghan cabinet and who now, riding high once more, vows to be the Labour Party's 'Gromyko' for the next thirty years. Unity with the likes of these acts against the interests of the labour movement and oppressed minorities. Yet this is what Benn is propounding. In this context we cannot call for support to Benn as we would have liked.

And what about Benn's 'I wonder where their support comes from' jibe, in the tradition of the worst McCarthyite red-baiting? Is it any accident he was sharing the platform at the time with Sheffield Council leader David Blunkett, who CIA-baits left-wing opponents like the Spartacist League and most recently linked arms with the Tories to ban Irish solidarity marches? Anthony Wedgwood Benn: you were at least supposed to be an honourable element in the Labour Party if nothing else. Will you now roll in the gutter because you cannot make a break with the CIA-lovers in your party? 'Left' verbiage notwithstanding, are Benn's smarmy 'Big Lie' innuendoes another way of signalling his willingness to bow before the Cold War consensus demanded by NATO, the CIA and the ruling class? Such unity is a unity of treachery which can only spread gloom and despondency within the working class. True unity of workers and oppressed requires the forging of a mass revolutionary party through winning Labour's working-class base to a programme for the overthrow of capitalism. It is to this task that the Spartacist League is dedicated.

19 February 1984

The 'Big Lie'

We reprint below extracts from the article, 'The Big Lie', in Workers Vanguard no 305 (14 May 1982), which refutes the Big Lie attacks that followed the successful anti-fascist mobilisation organised by our comrades in Ann Arbor and our anti-imperialist contingent at an El Salvador solidarity demo in Washington DC. The American fake lefts' apologetics for the Democratic Party are analogous here to the defence of Labour's Cold War 'unity'.

'The very necessity of having to "justify" oneself against the charge of being in league with Hitler and the Mikado indicates the full depth of reaction....' (Closing speech of Leon Trotsky at the Dewey Commission hearings on the Moscow Trials slanders, *The Case of Leon Trotsky*)

The modern technique of the 'Big Lie' was developed by the Nazi propaganda chief, Doctor Goebbels, given status on the left by Stalin's Moscow Trials frameups, and recently embellished by General Haig. In its inherited form the Big Lie must be self-evidently false, be often repeated, and preferably have the force of state power to make it stick. It does not have to be widely believed so much as accepted as an excuse for a witchhunt. It is, in short, a set-up for repression.

When we were singled out for an ominous warning by the *Wall Street Journal* because of our opposition to Solidarnosc counterrevolution in Poland, the rad-libs and fake-lefts were encouraged to 'get the Sparts'. The reformist and centrist pseudo-socialists, in rapid rightward motion since at least the mid-

rest of the fake-Trotskyist Labour-entrism papers were scarcely to be seen. Militant supporters reported that their bags were searched for literature every time they went into campaign headquarters, and for one week they voluntarily did not sell their rag at all. Any mention in public of the right-wing witchhunt against Militant was taboo -- including at a Militant public meeting. And at one of Benn's public meetings they were excluded.

Socialist Organiser could do little better than quote one of its supporters canvassing for Benn: 'It's fantastic, phenomenal!' *Socialist Action* (17 February) summed it up with the front-page headline, 'All hands to Chesterfield' plastered over a huge photo of Westminster Palace. The 2 March issue tried to put a pollyannish gloss on Benn's kowtowing to the right by claiming, 'the Labour leadership has gone out of its way to be seen to be doing everything possible not to sabotage Benn's chances'. Not a word do they say about Benn's

seventies, are seized with Reagan-fear. They are desperate for a popular front over El Salvador, a bloc with the liberals to 'fight the Reagan right'. They hate the Spartacist League for our counterposed programme of working-class independence, not Democratic Party apologetics. No longer content with trying to make their demonstrations politically respectable to Democratic 'doves' by excluding reds, they now want to set up the Spartacists as a pledge of loyalty to the bourgeoisie....

It reminds us, on a small scale, of the uproar and crackdown against the Bolsheviks after the July Days in 1917. Trotsky was jailed, Lenin had to go underground, the right wing began circulating fabrications about the Bolsheviks receiving gold from the Kaiser. And Kerensky and the Mensheviks were circulating the slanders along with the most sinister tsarists, frothing at the mouth over Bolshevik violence and demanding their suppression....

The anti-Soviet war-drive now dominates every aspect of US political life. In Poland, Ronald Reagan sees his best chance to 'roll back' Communism. And in Poland the fake-lefts can show that they 'stand up to Russian totalitarianism' -- together with the CIA and the Meanyite union bureaucracy. It is their support for Polish Solidarnosc that tame socialists hope will give them respectability with the 'progressive' bourgeoisie. The [state-capitalist] RSL is hardly alone on the left with its anti-Sovietism. With the exception of the Moscow-loyal craven reformists of the CPUSA -- who think they're getting in on the ground floor of a new New Deal -- virtually the entire US left is part of the anti-Soviet consensus....

Our sharp-edged defence of the Soviet Union in this period of Cold War II, particularly over Afghanistan and Poland, has put us in the sights of the ruling class precisely when the rest of the left is in full flight to the

bowing to the right, indeed they applaud Labour's unity. So gross is their capitulation to Labourism that their organisation is disintegrating and splitting, a large minority preferring the bizarre reformism of Jack Barnes's American Socialist Workers Party.

The CP, true to form, acted as mobilisers for Labour within the trade unions. Their position was best expressed by the *Morning Star* (11 February) headline, 'Spirit of unity boosts Benn campaign'. But not all CPers were so happy with this unity with NATO's frontmen. When Hattersley made his appearance with Benn at a rally, one older CP supporter shouted out, 'Get him out of here!' But that sentiment was not reflected in the approach of any wing of the deeply divided and declining CP, all of whom kowtow to Labourism. A month before the campaign got under way, the pro-Moscow *Straight Left* featured an article by Benn entitled, 'Rediscover class politics', a vague expression of Clause Four 'socialism'. There is nothing vaguely resembling the Leninism

right, into the Democratic Party anti-Reagan opposition. Seeking respectability with the Democratic liberals, the reformists try to duck the Russian question and search for a strain of Cold War pacifism. No wonder they go into convulsions whenever the Spartacist League appears with its slogans: 'Defence of Cuba, USSR begins in El Salvador!' and 'Stop Solidarnosc counter-revolution!' To prove their political reliability to the Teddy Kennedys, they will do everything in their power to remove the offending, 'Russki'-loving 'Sparts'....

Because we denounce Polish Solidarnosc as a company union for the CIA and the bankers we are labelled agents of the Kremlin. Because we say El Salvador is the hot spot of the Cold War, calling for military victory to leftist insurgents, we are called agents of Reagan. (So far no one has accused us of being agents of the pope, and the Mikado is very old now.) Do they really believe we are simultaneously agents of the CIA and the KGB? Do they care at all? We are reminded that in pre-Nazi Germany the Jews were accused of being the agents of the bankers and the Communists....

They threaten to do anything to 'get the Sparts'. But we don't intend to be 'got', not by the little finger-men whose Big Lies are aimed at setting us up for Reagan repression. California's right-wing Republican attorney general Deukmejian labelled us 'terrorist', so that we could be cut down like mad dogs. Haughty Harvard University tried to frame us and jail one of our comrades on assault charges after a right-wing pro-Solidarnosc demonstration against the SL/SYL. Deukmejian and Harvard couldn't make their witchhunting smears stick, and neither will their miserable surrogates. Our party is precious to the cause of socialist revolution. We will take the measures necessary to defend it, because it is a defence of the interests of all working people.

which led the Russian workers to power. While the Bennites and Stalinists dream of 'detente' and utopian unilateralism, Trotskyists say: Defend the Soviet Union! And against their nationalist/racist schemes for bolstering British capitalism through protectionist import controls, we fight for class struggle for jobs for all and international working-class solidarity.

Trying to stand apart from the other left reformists and centrists, the 'third-campist' Socialist Workers Party (SWP) of Tony Cliff attacked Benn's 'Unity on Roy's terms' (*Socialist Worker*, 18 February). Their 3 March issue said: 'The Chesterfield campaign was not a victory for the left. It was a sign the left had given up any attempt to win the Labour Party to socialism. The Kinnock leadership is in firm control, and Benn has meekly gone along with them.'

The SWP is like a clock without a spring. In the interest of organisational self-preservation it

continued on page 8

Exchange with Benn

9 February 1984

Dear Tony Benn,

I am writing to ask if you will accept the critical support of the Spartacist League in the Chesterfield by-election.

The past few years have seen some hard fights inside the Labour Party against the SDP traitors, and you have been the target of witchhunting attacks from the Tories, their press and the Labour right wing. In the 1981 deputy leadership election we supported you and the wing of the party you represent against the right wing, because we want to see the hard NATO/CIA/IMF lovers, Denis Healey & Co, driven out of the Labour Party. The renewed predominance of the Healeys and Hattersleys under the Kinnock leadership makes us fearful of present developments inside the party. Much of the leadership is clearly unenthusiastic (at best) that you are the candidate for Chesterfield, and some elements like Sid Weighell say openly they'll oppose you. (We also hear that the US ambassador of the Cold War Reagan regime was upset on hearing you had won the nomination.) Under these circumstances, and without minimising the political differences we have with you, we would like to support your campaign, calling for a class vote against the Tories and the Alliance.

The SL's positions on certain key issues of the day include the following. We oppose the NATO alliance and its economic adjunct, the EEC, and say No Cruise, no Trident! US bases out of Britain -- For unconditional military defence of the Soviet Union against imperialism and internal counterrevolution! We give no political support to CND, which is anti-Soviet and peddles



Labour's Cold War role: Attlee's troops in Korea.

the dangerous 'little-England' illusion that there can be peace and 'disarmament' without the overthrow of capitalism. In Poland we say that Solidarnosc became a counterrevolutionary movement seeking to restore capitalism which had to be stopped. We demand the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Northern Ireland. We oppose all bourgeois immigration laws and demand full citizenship rights for all workers and their families in Britain. Against racist and fascist attacks we call not for bans or more 'democratically accountable' police but for mass trade-union/minority mobilisations to sweep the race terrorists off the streets. We are against the exclusion of all working-class tendencies from the Labour Party, and in particular oppose the witchhunt of *Militant* supporters. We oppose the Alternative Economic

Strategy/National Economic Assessment for their nationalist protectionism and as a new wage-cutting social contract in all but name. We are for worksharing on full pay and jobs for all. We call for mass strike action to smash the attacks of the Tory government and to bring it down.

As well, four small steps which would help make Britain a decent place to live would be the abolition of the House of Lords, monarchy, established church and licensing laws.

We believe that to undertake the necessary renewal of British economic life and to vastly increase the present pathetic quality of life for British working people is to pose point blank the need for a workers state, part of a socialist federation of the British Isles, within a Socialist United States of Europe.

If you accept our endorsement, we are ready to give practical support to your election campaign. Would you inform us as soon as possible whether you are willing to accept our critical support.

Yours fraternally,
John Masters
for the Spartacist League

16th February 1984

Dear Mr Carlyle,

Mr Benn has asked me to acknowledge your letters.

As he made clear to your[sic] personally on Monday and at his public meeting on Wednesday, he is not prepared to accept support from organisations which do not support the Labour Party and is hoping that those who come to help in the campaign will be fully committed to the success of the Labour Party, its policy and leadership.

Yours sincerely,
Jenny Bristow
Secretarial Assistant

Cold War 'unity' ...

(Continued from page 7)

seeks some distance from the Labourite milieu. But this hard anti-Soviet outfit which peddles the bourgeoisie's lies about Afghanistan has no explanation for the deep division in the Labour Party, because they have Labour's line on the Cold War. Left social democrats themselves, for the SWP the question is reduced to whether the Labour 'lefts' have stopped fighting for 'socialism'. Three years ago we dubbed them 'shopfloor Bennites'. With their 'downturn' pessimism, they have no alternative. And, curiously enough, through all its articles on Chestfield, the SWP never once clearly says what its position is on a vote to Benn.

Contrary to the SWP, the split within the Labour Party is not yet fully over; the anti-Soviet war drive which fuels it continues to grow in intensity. Tony Benn still has some crawling left to do once he gets to Westminster if he wants to be fully accepted. Nye Bevan had

to get up and repudiate his followers to be accepted by Gaitskell. Leon Trotsky noted in 1926: 'The road of the Communist Party, as the future great mass party, goes not only via irreconcilable struggle against the agents of capital in the form of the Thomas-MacDonald [today read: Murray-Kinnock] clique, but also via the systematic unmasking of the muddleheads of the left through whose support MacDonald and Thomas are able to preserve their positions.' ('On Tempos and Dates')

Six decades later, the need for a genuinely communist mass party, forged on the anvil of social struggle through winning Labour's mass working-class base, is if anything more palpably obvious. All electoral tactics including critical support must be conceived in the light of this strategic goal, the precondition for workers revolution. Drive NATO/CIA-lovers out of the Labour Party! 'Unity' with Healey and Hattersley means Cold War austerity! No to Bennite reformism -- Labour can betray without the CIA connection! For a Trotskyist party, part of a reformed Fourth International! For a soviet Britain in a socialist united states of Europe!

Peace women...

(Continued from page 5)

Anti-Americanism does not equal anti-imperialism. We oppose Cruise and Trident missiles and US bases in Britain as part of our opposition to the entire imperialist war arsenal and say: 'Down with all imperialisms, not just American -- The main enemy is at home!' But nuclear weapons in the hands of the Soviet Union have not only defended the world's first workers state against imperialist nuclear blackmail but bought the world proletariat precious time to resolve the question of socialism or nuclear annihilation. Who can doubt but that for the Soviet nuclear arsenal Vietnam would have been bombed into oblivion. Yet the CND-style 'pacifists' scream for Soviet nuclear disarmament and directly appeal for an alternative imperialist military strategy with the plaint, 'Nuclear weapons are no defence'.

The resurgence of European-centred 'anti-superpower' nationalism has been a central thrust of the 'peace movement', particularly in West Germany but also here. In the uproar that followed Heseltine's 'terrorist' amalgam threat to shoot intruders at Greenham, all the protest focussed on the possibility of American soldiers doing the shooting. Somehow many of the Greenham women and their Labour and liberal apologists pointedly ignored the fact that British soldiers who regularly gun down unarmed civilians on the streets of Northern Ireland can do likewise here. Indeed one Greenham women supporter's letter to the *Guardian* (3 January) presented 'proof' of the American threat by repeating the words of a British soldier on guard at Greenham: 'we are here to protect you from them'. In cheering such anti-Americanism, the fake revolutionaries serve only to amnesty their own bourgeoisie.

The Greenham 'peace' camp is a movement of despair, of and for the white and the middle class. The fact that many minority women find little appeal in this middle-class, 'little England' pacifist feminism came through strongly in some interviews in the feminist journal *Spare Rib* (February 1983). One Iranian feminist expressed her amazement at spotting 'writings in praise of God and how he loves peace'. An Irish woman noted, 'there was no room to voice anger at the brutality and ruthlessness of the British police and army, and no memory of its history ... when one woman couldn't bring herself to shout only "Peace" but "Peace with justice" someone commented "What a nice Irish slogan"'. Irish women militants remember well and bitterly the pro-imperialist role of the 'women's peace movement' in Northern Ireland a few years ago.

Russian Revolution — beacon for peace and women's emancipation

The fake-revolutionary left, galloping rapidly rightward under the impact of the anti-Soviet war drive, not only hail this Cold War women's movement but through their capitulation before their own bourgeoisie have helped to create it. Almost without exception, they have sided with counterrevolutionary Solidarnosc in its imperi-

alist-backed bid to overthrow the Polish deformed workers state, contemptuous of the reactionary consequences it would have had for Polish women. And they condemn the Red Army's intervention in Afghanistan, where it acts to defend Afghan women from CIA-backed Islamic feudalists. Unlike the Cold War feminists and fake revolutionaries, we applaud the fact that Afghan women may finally have open before them the liberating opportunities experienced by their sisters in Soviet Central Asia as the Red Army mops up the rag-tag reactionary 'freedom fighters'.

Leading Communist Party (CP) Eurocommunist Sally Davison, replying to a Spartacist League intervention at the CP's 'Marx with Sparx' rally last summer, explained, 'I believe in the CND as a broad alliance ... people are interested in peace from a wide range of interests and backgrounds -- feminists, Christians ...'. But it is not just the openly anti-Soviet Euros dominating the CP who support this sort of 'broad alliance', but the supposedly pro-Soviet 'tankies', with their Stalinist programme of 'peaceful coexistence'. While the Trotskyist SL says, 'Defend the Soviet Union', the *Morning Star* walls 'Defend Britain, Ban the Bomb'.

The fake Trotskyists hail the Greenham women precisely because they're part of a Cold War 'peace' movement. *Socialist Organiser*, which has recently taken to claiming that workers in Reagan's America have it better than Soviet workers, thinks they mark the end of the 'male bonding system' (24 November). *Socialist Action*, which pretends the imperialist nuclear arsenal is targeted at the 'colonial revolution' in order to deny Trotskyist defence of the USSR, acts as press agent for the Greenham women, with some 'sisterly' advice thrown in. And the openly 'third camp' Socialist Workers Party merely complains that not enough men and trade unionists are involved in this charade for 'peace'.

The Spartacist League has intervened in the anti-missiles movement with a clear, sharp Trotskyist alternative. Our comrades sold more than 1100 papers on a clear Soviet-defencist line at last October's anti-missiles march and two comrades alone sold 180 papers, including 50 copies of *Women and Revolution*, our communist journal for women's liberation, at last December's Greenham demo. There are many activists looking for a revolutionary alternative to Cold War 'pacifism'. Our banners, 'Smash NATO -- Defend the Soviet Union!' and Lenin's injunction to 'arm the proletariat to defeat, appropriate and disarm the bourgeoisie', have polarised CND demos, drawing to our side those who recognise the Cold War is a class war and wish to defend the workers' gains. In Germany, our comrades fought to intersect widespread sentiment within the working class against their country becoming the battlefield for anti-Soviet nuclear war with the demand: 'Stop NATO first-strike weapons with workers strikes!'

We celebrate International Women's Day this 8 March as a proletarian holiday, remembering particularly that a mass demonstration of women for peace and bread triggered the revolutionary upheaval which, under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky's Bolshevik party, overthrew capitalism in Russia 67 years ago. To this day the Russian Revolution remains the beacon for the road to peace and women's emancipation. Unconditional military defence of the Soviet Union and the other workers states remains the unwavering duty of the international proletariat, as part of an internationalist programme for socialist revolution to smash capitalist imperialism in the West and proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracies. Like the Russian Bolsheviks, we seek to build a party which will create special transitional organisations, in the words of the Bolshevik

women's journal *Rabotnitsa*, to draw 'the working women into the struggle against every kind of civil peace and in favour of war against war, a war closely connected to civil war and socialist revolution'.

ET letter...

(Continued from page 4)

Of course, one cannot rule out in theory the possibility which you raise that a Stalin or an Andropov might throw in his lot with the insurgent proletariat in the course of a political revolution. (We imagine that such a development is somewhat less probable than the prospect of you declaring for the External Tendency.) Obviously, openly pro-imperialist elements, like Sakharov, are even less likely to support the workers than Andropov. So what? The necessity for an 'open struggle against' the Stalinist oligarchs is in no way obviated by that.

As for the hypothetical glee experienced by blacks in DC upon hearing of the advent of the Yuri Andropov Brigade, would they have been any less happy about a John Brown, Frederick Douglass or Leon Trotsky Brigade? As a matter of fact, we have our doubts as to whether any of the 'ground-down black people of DC' actually ever heard of the Yuri Andropov Brigade. How could they -- it wasn't among the endorsers of the demonstration. If any of Washington's black population *did* feel gleeful about that name on a bus from New York, imagine their pleasure had the Yuri Andropov Brigade ventured a little further out of the closet and paraded down Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House holding aloft pictures of its namesake! But of course to do that, the 'semi-facetious' semi-disclaimer would have to be discarded and you would no longer be the leader of a Trotskyist organization.

We can only imagine that the final 'illuminating' red herring that you toss our way regarding a united front with the Kremlin for Soviet defensism is intended to distract the attention of the unsophisticated readers of your internal bulletin. (Just to be absolutely clear, let us assure you that we entirely agree with the point which Trotsky makes in the quote you cite.) Or are you perhaps trying to suggest that parading around Washington as the 'Yuri Andropov Brigade' would somehow constitute a military bloc with the Kremlin for the defense of the USSR? If that's what you mean why not come out and say so?

Calling yourselves the 'Yuri Andropov Brigade' was a mistake. All of your very considerable political experience as well as the talents of the capable and devoted Marxists who produce *WV* can't change that. If we were to offer you some advice it would be this: don't try to defend the indefensible, it can only produce bad results.

For several decades you played a critical role in preserving, defending and even developing the Trotskyist program. But you didn't thereby acquire proprietary rights to it. Adulation of a Stalinist bureaucrat can neither be squared with fidelity to Trotskyism in general nor with Soviet defensism in particular. We doubt that you would even have tried ten years ago.

The fact that you find it so necessary to cling to this error, indeed the fact that it could occur in the first place, is evidence that the leadership of the SL/US, with you at the apex, is losing its political bearings. This can only be a reflection of the atrophying of confidence in the possibility of building a mass Bolshevik party capable of leading the seizure of power by the working class.

There is a necessary and reciprocal relationship between the loss of communist cutting edge and the destruction of internal democracy in a revolutionary organization. For a Bolshevik tendency, especially a small propaganda group in conditions of bourgeois democracy, a vigorous and democratic internal life is not a desirable option but a *vital necessity* if the organization is to be able to respond effectively to the changing developments of the class struggle. Unfortunately the SL/US is no longer an organization which has a healthy internal life -- a development for which you more than any other individual must be held accountable.

Bolshevik greetings,
External Tendency of the iSt

SL reply...

(Continued from page 4)

distinction between a Ramon Mercader and a Leopold Trepper, between a Mark Zborowski and a Kim Philby, since they were all agents of Stalin's murderous secret police. This methodology can never account for, much less attract, an Ignace Reiss. He served as an officer of the GPU at the very height of Stalin's terror, and

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declared for the Fourth International at the cost of his life precisely because he saw in it the unstained banner of revolutionary Soviet defensism. To paraphrase comrade Robertson's reply to you: sitting at the summit of the Soviet bureaucracy, Andropov is unlikely to follow the path of Ignace Reiss. But it is infinitely easier to see him in that role than (if you will not have Sakharov) the Douglas Frasers of the world who have placed themselves countless times in the direct service of the imperialist secret police.

Truth is concrete; therefore it is hardly surprising that there is not a word in your letters about the concrete conditions in which the Russian question is posed today: the crisis of US and other imperialisms finds no other escape than thermonuclear Armageddon against the Soviet Union, imperiling not only the working-class gains of the Russian October but the very survival of humanity. This is manifestly a period of enhanced dangers for our small revolutionary party. It is as well a time of enhanced opportunities for us, as shown for example by our demonstrated capacity to lead large numbers of blacks and other working people in mass struggles against the fascist race-terrorists. A number of our softer and weaker members intimidated by the dangers (and often equally intimidated by the obligations posed by our new opportunities), have departed the Spartacist tendency, including yourselves. But when the KKK threatened to march on 27 November 1982 the issues posed prompted many ex-members from New York to head for DC with us. We were pleased to have so many former members turn out (without of course making any political concessions to them). Fascists are the domestic shock troops for Reagan's anti-Soviet war drive; therefore it was entirely appropriate as well as ironic to dub this contingent in the Labor/Black Mobilization the 'Yuri Andropov Brigade', which was appreciated by most if not all of its participants. The only protest has come from the 'External Tendency', which while capable of traveling all over the country to attend SL functions (and speaking without hindrance) were at this historic victory conspicuous by their absence.

And no one in Washington that day would have



Ignace Reiss, GPU officer who declared for Fourth International.

mistaken the Yuri Andropov Brigade as a concession to Stalinism. The real Kremlin sycophants and Stalinoids, the Communist Party and its various satellites (Marcyites, Guardianites, Trendites, CLP, CWP etc) were busy in the service of the anti-Soviet popular front building a Democratic Party rally at McPherson Square. Or, not wanting to confront the Democrats in Congress and City Hall, they were, like yourselves, absent.

Finally, we note -- and your puerile affectation of superciliousness does not disguise -- that despite yourselves you must pay the Leninist democracy of the Spartacist League its due. For as you attest, this exchange, as with any serious (and even not so serious) criticism or polemic against the SL, will find its place in an internal bulletin or some other suitable format. What other tendency is so solicitous of healthy internal life and education of its membership as to publish a series like *Hate Trotskyism, Hate the Spartacist League?* No, comrades, we esteem that rich party democracy necessary to forging centralized revolutionary clarity and determination in action, that democracy which you voluntarily placed yourselves outside of in this period of urgent revolutionary tasks.

We know what our duty is and we stand at our posts. As Trotsky wrote on the eve of the Second World War:

'The workers' state must be taken as it has emerged from the merciless laboratory of history and not as it is imagined by a "socialist" professor, reflectively exploring his nose with his finger. It is the duty of revolutionists to defend every conquest of the working class even though it may be distorted by the pressure of hostile forces. Those who cannot defend old positions will never conquer new ones.' ('Balance Sheet of the Finnish Events', *In Defense of Marxism*, p 178)

Fraternally,
Reuben Samuels

MARCH 1984

Bolivia...

(Continued from page 2)

month). In a country where inflation is over 300 per cent and is expected to reach 1000 per cent this year (*Presencia*, La Paz, 26 February), Siles' decrees represent a huge wage cut. The UDP well deserved the sobriquet 'starvation democracy'.

With the PCB acting as hatchmen for Siles, with the Lechin union bureaucracy dissipating militancy through repeated marches and demagogically playing with the general strike, the crying lack of coordination among the struggles of different sectors poses the danger of demoralisation of the combative Bolivian proletariat. The urgent need is for a revolutionary, Trotskyist leadership to smash the popular front of starvation through a revolutionary mobilisation of the exploited for a workers and peasants government. A principal obstacle to the construction of such a genuine Trotskyist party is the centrist Partido Obrero Revolucionario (POR) of veteran revisionist Guillermo Lora. While denouncing the Siles regime and calling for 'proletarian revolution and dictatorship' in its press and in slogans painted on walls all over La Paz, the POR sows suicidal illusions with its demand for 'Bolivianisation of the armed forces', and 'an army at the service of the working class', and the 'formation of a revolutionary tendency' in the officer corps.

The stridently anti-internationalist POR has twice helped destroy enormous revolutionary opportunities: in the 1952 'National Revolution' with its support to the 'left wing' of the MNR government, and in 1971 with its capitulation to left-nationalist president General Juan Jose Torres. In the period before Siles came to office, the POR blocked with his bourgeois MNRI in the unions and sought an 'anti-imperialist front' with parties of the UDP. In contrast, genuine Trotskyists would emphasise that the arming of the proletariat (workers' militias) and the formation of soviets (organs of workers power centralising the struggle against the bourgeois government) are the only defence against Siles' attacks and the ever-present threat of a new military dictatorship. Proletarian revolution is today posed point blank as the only conceivable way out for Bolivia's exploited masses!

And the danger of a right-wing takeover looms larger each day. The petty bourgeoisie is at its wits' end. On the streets one hears the lament that at least under the military there was order and bread. Chaos is Bolivia's other name today. As in Weimar Germany, the repeatedly devalued currency is virtually worthless; people must carry huge bundles of bills around to purchase necessities. And necessities are often unavailable. 'No hay pan' -- there is no bread -- is a common sign in restaurants and shops. (The US government has cut off wheat donations until the UDP government lifts subsidies on bread and other products.) Housewives get up at dawn to stand in huge lines for cooking oil and other commodities. The black market flourishes and dollars sell for four times the official rate.

Large sections of the heterogeneous urban petty bourgeoisie could be won to the side of the proletariat by a resolute struggle for workers state power, under the leadership of a Trotskyist vanguard. But today, in the absence of that leadership, enraged by a social crisis without apparent solution and a government drowning in its own impotence and perfidy, much of the petty bourgeoisie is being driven to the right, and yearns for the return of a 'caudillo' strongman like the blood-soaked Banzer. In addition to the never-ending coup conspiracies within the officer caste, talk abounds of a 'constitutional coup' by Banzer and his ally, 'historic' MNR leader Victor Paz Estenssoro, head of the nationalist government formed in 1952, and participant in Banzer's 1971 coup. This 'constitutional coup' would consist of the ejection of Siles by the parliamentary majority and the formation of a right-wing bonapartist regime to crack down on social unrest, without relying solely on the narrow base of an officer corps apparently somewhat hesitant to retake government power alone right away.

Thus the popular front not only steals the masses' miserable crusts of bread to serve the International Monetary Fund and the Bolivian bourgeoisie; it imperils the very existence of the workers movement and the difficult survival of thousands of militant proletarians. For the vast majority of the population of this landlocked Andean country, liberation from a life of incredible poverty (and prevention of another bloody 'cocaine coup') requires the forging of an internationalist revolutionary vanguard party, part of the struggle to reforge Trotsky's Fourth International, to lead the workers to power.

Racist stabbing...

(Continued from page 3)

British society, where attacks by fascists and muggers in blue on blacks and Asians are accepted as normal, right, part of the process of 'law and order'. In their press release on the attempted murder of Azad, the Federation of Bangladeshi Youth (of which Azad and Siddique are members) protested 'the fact that the Police and other establishments have always tried to minimize the true significance of such vicious racist attacks'. Remember about a year and a half ago when a young Asian boy died after a nail-tipped spear was thrown into his head. They took no x-rays when he was rushed to hospital. In fact, his skull was penetrated and he died ten days later of infection. It was in the first place murder by the racist attacker and in the second involuntary manslaughter by the doctors -- but this outrage was covered up in the normal way and a verdict of 'death by misadventure' was returned. Such is 'justice' in Thatcher's Britain. Black militant Kwame Toure is summarily detained and deported, while the paragons of polite, respectable society can barely hide their glee at the release of 'our boys', the racist, mass-murdering pig-mercenaries recently returned from black Angola. If you're not 'true-blue British and proud of it', you'd better watch out: soon, you too may be a target.

And what of Labour's so-called alternative? Labour pushes nationalist protectionism, whose racist logic is expressed in the fascists' slogan 'British jobs for British workers'. Labour in power introduced virginity tests -- vile racist and sexist harassment -- for Asian women immigrants, and drew up the blueprint for the Tories' Nationality Act. And look again at the East End: the Labour Council in Tower Hamlets incarcerates Bangladeshi immigrant families in prison-like hotels managed by racist thugs. At the Maryland Hotel the Rahman family was beaten and evicted after the father had obtained a receipt for a week's stay. And the hotel owner then declared the eviction of 106 families (600 people in total).

This is the racism of British social democracy. Those 'leftists', from the Communist Party to fake Trotskyists like Socialist Action, who hail GLC schemes to co-opt minorities into campaigns for more 'democratically accountable' racist police, only underline their own miserable capitulation to social-democratic racism. The police are part of the armed fist of the capitalist state and will remain 'accountable' only to the ruling class. It is the working class, particularly in East London the integrated and heavily minority workforces in Ford Dagenham and London Transport, which has the social power to stop racist attacks and clean out the fascist scum through mass union/minority mobilisations and integrated workers defence squads.

From the Mosleyites against the Jews in the thirties to the NF scum against Bengalis today, the East End has long been a centre for both vile racist attack and resistance from oppressed minorities and their allies. Nearly fifty years ago, a mass outpouring of 100,000 workers and Jews stopped the fascist blackshirts in their tracks in the battle of Cable Street. We can do the same today. An example of what is necessary was the 5000-strong labour/black mobilisation, initiated and organised by our comrades of the Spartacist League/US, which stopped the fascist Ku Klux Klan from marching in black Washington DC in November 1982. Smash the fascist scum! Stop the deportations -- Full citizenship rights for all foreign-born workers and their families! The liberation of oppressed minorities in this country requires a socialist revolution, led by a multi-racial Leninist vanguard party which breaks the working class from pro-capitalist Labourism and sweeps the fascist race-terrorists and racist British imperialism away forever. ■

Correction

In the article 'Benn and Chesterfield' in *Spartacist Britain* no 54, February 1984, we state that 'Contrary to the "democratic socialists" of *Socialist Action* we do not think that on the outcome of this by-election "depends quite literally the future of democracy, peace and social justice in Britain"'. In fact *Socialist Action* (20 January) said 'On whether the Labour movement wins or loses its struggles depends quite literally the future of democracy, peace and social justice in Britain'. That our distortion of their quote is utterly consistent with their position on the Chesterfield by-election is no excuse for this lapse from scrupulous accuracy.

Sheffield...

(Continued from page 3)

SCAR spokesman Steve Howell, a supporter of the Stalinist Straight Left tendency of the Communist Party, talks about 'anti-racism' but wanted nothing to do with any mobilisations against the fascist NF and Blunkett's anti-Irish ban -- which which is racist! -- last month. And now the CP again seek to cover for Blunkett with a 'peaceful protest' explicitly intended to allow the fascists to stage their racist provocation undisturbed. Instead of this 'anti-racist' procession the CP should be calling out is battalions of trade unionists to stop the NF scum. The SCAR call despicably panders to the anti-Irish hysteria by talking about how the 'National Front is trying to exploit people's feelings about the activities of the Provisional IRA'. What SCAR and the IFM are proposing are not what workers and oppressed can look to stop the fascists.

We think that the steelworkers and colliery workers in Scotland, the miners of the Fife coalfields, the Welsh miners and class-conscious militants in Yorkshire should be mobilised against the NF scum. But since the IFM/RCP and the nationalists and reformists are so polite and like so to be in the pockets of the Labour Party politicians who step on them and like so to keep things as they are in Ireland, they may well end up getting the hell beat out of them by a gang of racist stormtroopers who they deny to be a threat. The responsibility rests on their shoulders, and their supporters might do well to question the criminal strategy which prepared it.

The behaviour of the IFM/RCP and the Sinn Fein nationalists in Sheffield last month was of the most disgusting, collaborationist sort. They tried might and main to demobilise any effective

cap-in-hand to the agents of the bosses within the workers movement, seeking to pressurise Labour 'left' spokesmen for the liberal wing of British imperialism.

At the time, when it counted, when the SL mounted the only protest action against the Blunkett/Brittan ban before Bloody Sunday outside Sheffield Town Hall on 27 January, the IFM/RCP and their friends fled to the shelter of their pubs. Now they claim to be protesting against the Labour Council's anti-Irish ban of a month ago. In fact this march is aimed basically at conciliating the Labourite spokesmen for British imperialism, centring on opposition to the 'Tories' new Prevention of Terrorism Bill'. What about Labour's PTA? What about Labour's despatch of the troops in 1969? The IFM say, 'Speak out for Irish freedom!' Their vision of Irish 'freedom' is pretty sick. These vicarious nationalists boost the IRA dream of a unitary bourgeois clericalist Irish Catholic state, which would continue the vicious exploitation of Irish workers, deny the rights of the Protestant people in Northern Ireland as a distinct community, deny the rights of women throughout Ireland to abortion and divorce.

It will take a revolutionary working-class mobilisation to combat the deep-seated, all-sided oppression of the Catholic people in the North. We demand the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of imperialist troops from Northern Ireland. We seek to mobilise opposition to the pervasive discrimination against Catholics in the North through a struggle for decent housing, education and jobs for all; to tear down communal barriers through the mobilisation of integrated, anti-sectarian workers militias to combat imperialist rampage and communal terror; to struggle against the national oppression of the Irish Catholics not at the expense of the Protestants but through the creation of an Irish workers republic within the framework of a socialist federation of the British Isles.

for the Soviets, while the Maronite Christian Phalange are supposedly the true defenders of Western-style democracy. The fake left, on the other hand, presents the squalid communal fighting in Lebanon as a war of national liberation in which the entire people rises up against Yankee invaders. Thus Sam Marcy's Workers World Party in the US wrote:

'Different religious and ethnic groups, different political parties ranging from conservative to revolutionary, have united in their opposition to Gemayel and his U.S., French and other imperialist backers.' (Workers World, 17 November 1983)

Similarly in Britain, Workers Power, the least rightist of the fake Trotskyist centrist groups, advocates 'a military victory of the Druze over the Lebanese army and the imperialist "peacekeepers"' (Workers Power, October 1983) and 'unfettered aid to the forces of the Lebanese left who are struggling against imperialism' (Workers Power, January 1983).

All sides squalid

The reality looks considerably different from these fictions. The myriad ethnic/religious/communal groups in Lebanon, far from being united, have every one of them been in treacherous, murderous alliance with and against every other one. Let Lebanon be Lebanon and this is what you get. Take supposed Lebanese 'progressive' leader Walid Jumblatt, a vice president of the Second International. His 'Progressive Socialist Party' is actually a communalist party of the estimated 350,000 Druze (an esoteric sect derived from Shi'a Islam) in Lebanon. In the 1860s some 10,000 Maronite peasants were massacred when they rose up against Druze landlords; and last fall the Druze besieged some 20,000 Christians in the town of Deir al Qamar. In the mid-seventies Walid's father Kamal Jumblatt was head of the largely Muslim National Movement, allied with the Palestinians in the 1975-76 Lebanese civil war. With the Israeli invasion in June 1982, however, the younger Jumblatt declared, 'The PLO [Palestine Liberation Organisation] as it used to be in Lebanon is finished', and told PLO fighters to lay down their arms. The Druze chieftain established friendly relations with the Israeli occupying army, and last summer promised to keep Palestinian guerrillas out of his feudal fiefdom in exchange for Israeli withdrawal from the Shuf. Due to Phalangist president Gemayel's refusal to make a deal, Walid is currently aligned with Syrian president Assad, who, however, was responsible for the assassination of the elder Jumblatt.

The estimated one million Shi'ites are at the bottom of the social scale in Lebanon, but the notion that they are agents of an international Communist conspiracy run from Moscow (or alternatively a patriotic leftist force) is even more absurd. In the 1975-76 fighting the Shi'ite 'Movement of the Dispossessed' (which later became the Amal) was loosely associated with the Palestinian-Muslim bloc. Yet on the eve of the June 1982 Israeli invasion the Amal was engaged in bloody battles against the PLO and the Lebanese Communist Party. They were pushed into opposition by the Zionist army terrorising their stronghold in southern Lebanon. Only when Gemayel's army began indiscriminately shelling the Shi'ite suburbs of Beirut at the end of January did they finally 'unite' with Jumblatt and Co. Shi'ite militiamen celebrated their 'liberation' of West Beirut by smashing all whisky bottles -- shades of Khomeini! Any Soviet KGB agent who fooled around with this gang of reactionary Islamic fundamentalists would probably be skinned alive.

The half million or so Palestinian refugees have been largely out of the current fighting, having been disarmed by the imperialists (at the request of the PLO leadership, which chose to run rather than fight the Israelis inside Beirut). Though PLO chief Arafat has long been a hero of Western leftists, in his shifting alliances the nationalist leader has embraced some of the most reactionary forces in the region; in October 1983 Arafat sided with a local sheik in Tripoli as the latter was massacring Lebanese CPers. Currently lacking any military muscle, Arafat is trying to work out an arrangement with the Israelis together with Egypt's Mubarak and Jordan's Hussein, two of Washington's main Arab clients.

On the other hand, the Christian Maronite Phalange is an openly fascist force whose militias have nothing to learn from the Salvadoran death squads when it comes to barbarity. Yet the Phalange hardly represents the whole of the Maronite population; former Maronite president Suleiman Franjeh (whose son was murdered by the Phalange) is currently in Damascus with Jumblatt seeking Syrian favour. And the 500,000 Maronites are only a third of Lebanon's Christian population (which includes Greek Orthodox,



Chicago, June 1982: 3000-strong union/minority mobilisation stopped Nazi provocation against Gay Pride demo

attempt to counter the Sheffield Labour Council's anti-Irish ban, which gave the fascists their green light. After seeing their planned Bloody Sunday demonstration become a focus for fascist attack, they rejected and sought to sabotage the Spartacist League's attempts to stop the fascists through mass mobilisation, in the end precipitously calling off their own march when the state banned it and leaving a thin line of racist cops between the genocidal NF thugs and the threatened Irish, Asian and black communities of Sheffield. Perhaps this time too the South Yorkshire cops will act to save the IFM/RCP's skins, but reliance on the racist cops of the bosses' state is a dangerously bankrupt strategy.

The vicarious nationalists of the IFM/RCP oppose the perspective of mass mobilisation of the working class and oppressed. So they end up endorsing irresponsible barbarous acts of terrorism aimed against random civilian populations like the Harrods bombing, which act as an obstacle to mobilising the working class against its chauvinist bourgeoisie. And they go begging

With this country as clapped out as it is, the choice ultimately comes down to communism or fascism. If you think the Labour Party leadership are a bunch of windbagging swindlers and the Tories vicious anti-working-class bastards, just wait until you see what English fascism looks like. The fascists must and can be nipped in the bud, as they seek to ride the wave of anti-communism and racist chauvinism accompanying the preparations for anti-Soviet imperialist war. There are thousands of workers -- fed up with having the Iron Lady's heel ground in their faces, frustrated by the Labourite bureaucrats' sabotage of any effective struggle against the Tory rampage against jobs, social services and union rights -- who would surely welcome an opportunity to give the jackbooted vermin of the NF a taste of their own medicine. But it will take a revolutionary leadership to make it happen. What's needed is mass trade union/minority mobilisations to stop the fascists before they grow -- as part of a perspective for workers revolution to overthrow the rotting capitalist system that spawns them. And that, above all, means fighting to build the mass revolutionary party this country needs. ■

Near East...

(Continued from page 12)

reconciliation' conference in Geneva last fall: 'To compare this week's conference of Lebanese faction bosses in Geneva with a gathering of Mafia godfathers might be unfair to the Mafia, because it has never eliminated several hundred victims in a single day. There can seldom have been so many delegates around a table who were directly and personally responsible for killing the followers of fellow delegates.'

Today in Lebanon the Reaganites present the Druze and Shi'ites as nothing but surrogates for the Syrians, who are in turn labelled surrogates

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Greek Catholics, Armenians and other sects). Moreover, before the communal civil war, the Lebanese leftist groups, notably the CP, typically drew much of their cadre from the Christian communities while many downtrodden Shi'ites were recruited into their ranks. While they sided with the Muslim warlords in 1975-76, the result was the destruction of the left as a significant political force as Lebanon was increasingly polarised along communal lines.

As for Syria, far from being a Soviet juggernaut in the Near East, the Assad regime is extremely fragile and plays its own game in regional politics. Based on the Alawite sect (only 10 per cent of the population), in 1982 Assad destroyed Syria's fourth-largest city, Hama, killing at least 20,000 of its inhabitants, in order to exterminate the Sunni-based Muslim Brotherhood. Syria first intervened in Lebanon in 1976 on behalf of the Maronite Christians with the support of both Washington and Jerusalem. This shifted the balance of forces, setting up the gruesome massacre of Palestinians at the huge Tel Zaatar camp by the Gemayels' Phalange and other Maronite gangs. And who has the Syrian army in Lebanon been fighting in recent months? US Marines? The French Foreign Legion? The Israel 'Defence Force'? No, the Arafat-loyal PLO. In December, Syrian-backed forces laid waste to two Palestinian refugee camps in northern Lebanon, killing an estimated 700 and wounding thousands of defenceless refugees and Lebanese Muslims while the Zionists cheered.

In short, the Lebanese political scene is a swamp. While Reagan wanted to use the US 'peace-keeping' troops as a springboard to achieve an anti-Soviet Pax Americana in the Near East, he only succeeded in sinking deeper into the quick-

sand of Lebanese politics. The pseudo-socialists who pretend that there is an 'anti-imperialist struggle' going on in the midst of the communal slaughter in Lebanon are following their usual practice of cheering for the murderous nationalists of 'progressive' Third World peoples (here identified with the Muslims, as opposed to the supposedly inherently reactionary Christians). And they are trying to cover their own complicity in calling for or refusing to protest the entry of the imperialist forces in the first place (August-September 1982). As we wrote last autumn:

'At bottom the present fighting in Lebanon is a continuation of the centuries-old communal/sectarian conflicts between Muslims and Christians, Sunnis and Shi'ites, Druze and others. A victory of the "other side" (whoever that is at any given moment) against the US and the Phalange would simply lead to new conflicts and deals among the myriad feudal-ist warlords of Lebanon, restoring conditions more or less as they existed before the Israeli invasion of June 1982.' ('Rape of Grenada, Bloody Mess in Lebanon', *Workers Vanguard* no 341, 4 November 1983)

Israel out of Lebanon and the occupied territories!

A few months before the present collapse of the Gemayel 'government', former Israeli chief of staff Mordechai Gur warned:

'... the U.S. hope for establishing a strong central government in Lebanon is unrealistic. No foreign military intervention can accomplish that -- certainly not the U.S. Marines, whose force is so small that nobody takes it seriously.' (*Newsweek*, 19 December 1983)

The Israelis should know, since they tried and failed with far greater military forces to impose a Phalange government on Lebanon. They adroitly sucked in the Americans with talk of an easy anti-Soviet victory. And then to minimise their own casualties, they pulled back from the Beirut area last September to a buffer zone south of the Awali River ... while Reagan's Marines were left holding the bag. The Israeli generals were no doubt laughing up their sleeves after the Beirut Marine headquarters bombing last October, but now they're getting worried as the US pulls out.

The Israeli army has its hands full with the 700,000 hostile, predominantly Shi'ite Muslim Arabs in southern Lebanon (now called the 'North

Bank'). The Israelis thought they could treat Lebanese Muslims like they do Palestinians in the occupied West Bank -- internal passports, armed searches, wanton brutality against the Arab population. But the Lebanese have not been cowed by almost 20 years of military terror, and they do not live in refugee camps. They own their own land and increasingly they are resisting the Zionist jackboot:

'Many of southern Lebanon's 700,000 Muslims are being radicalized by religious leaders advocating violence, including suicide attacks, as a way of driving out the Israeli occupation force.' (*Los Angeles Times*, 12 December 1983)

So what is Shamir going to do? Tap Brooklyn for 5000 more machine gunners in yarmulkes? Form 9000 armed Jewish settlements? Meanwhile, Major Haddad's death has left Israel's *Einsatzgruppe* in southern Lebanon without a leader.

Israel is paying a high price -- far higher than Sharon and Begin expected -- in both money and blood for the Lebanon adventure, and this is



Chatila/Sabra massacre prepared by Arafat's disarming of PLO fighters.

polarising the Hebrew population. The invasion/occupation is sapping the morale of the army, including the officers, who are no longer the cocky world-beaters of yesteryear. *Time* (13 February) recently reported one Israeli soldier in Lebanon crying out: 'I don't want to be killed here. It's crazy. They are crazy. We are crazy.'

The bloody course of Zionist expansionism contains the seeds of its own destruction. But with madmen like Begin, Sharon and Shamir sitting on a nuclear arsenal, the working masses of the Near East and the world cannot wait for the eventual disintegration of 'Greater Israel'. The Hebrew working class must be broken from Zionism before it's too late. For a binational Palestinian workers state as part of a socialist federation of the Near East!

Near East flashpoint for World War III

Reaganite demagogues feel betrayed by the Marine pullout from Beirut. For them it means memories of frantic humiliation -- those helicopters whirling out of the US embassy compound in Saigon, with ARVN officers pushing aside women and children to climb aboard.

But Lebanon is not Vietnam. The Indochinese war was a social revolution; in the Levant the US and its NATO allies are bogged down in a quagmire of communal and sectarian warfare. In

Vietnam, the class interests of the proletariat were clear, and our side -- the heroic workers and peasants who had fought imperialism, colonialism and its local puppets for 30 years -- won decisively. That is why Vietnam was a historic defeat for American imperialism, sapping its political, military, moral and economic capital. In fact, the resulting 'Vietnam syndrome' has been the most compelling component of the wave of pessimism and defeatism that has become dominant in the US bourgeoisie over Lebanon. They simply believe that no matter what happens, they're likely to lose again.

Reagan wants to bring back the 'American Century', the pre-Vietnam military-political arrogance of US imperialism with its unchallenged hegemony over the other imperialist powers, in preparation for war against the Soviet Union. He wants to regain the nuclear superiority the US held at the time of the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, and this time he wants to use it. The problem for Reagan is that the Russians aren't going to let the United States achieve that kind of strategic military superiority again, and they have the wherewithal to prevent it. Influential sections of the American ruling class are starting to balk at the trillion-dollar war budgets for weapons that don't work. While Reagan embarks on an escalating campaign of provocation -- from KAL Flight 007 to crippling a Russian sub on the high seas -- he can't seem to win on the battlefield anywhere except tiny Grenada. But while he can't put Lebanon back together under a US puppet, Reagan can blow up the world.

Reagan is stung by his debacle in Lebanon, and this could make the imperialist beast even more dangerous. Particularly with the death of Soviet leader Yuri Andropov, the demonologists in the White House may imagine that the Kremlin will be paralysed. US imperialism's truly evil empire, the mass murderers of Hiroshima and My Lai, may strike back anywhere on the globe. It could be Central America. Or, as the heavy guns pound away at Syrian positions, it could just as well be in the Near East, where several thousand Russian advisers are stationed less than 100 miles from the Sixth Fleet. After all, many of today's Lebanon 'doves' are committed Near East hawks. Remember, it was the Democratic Carter administration that proclaimed the US had 'strategic interests' in the Persian Gulf equivalent to its control of the Panama Canal.

The Near East could be the flashpoint for World War III. In point of fact, the most massive mobilisation of US naval power since World War II (more than 65 ships in the eastern Mediterranean and off the Persian Gulf) remains in place. As Henry Kissinger (along with many others) has pointed out, the endemic and explosive national antagonisms of the region make it resemble the Balkans before World War I. But unlike the inter-imperialist rivalries that engendered that slaughter, there is a *class line* between the two major world powers presently confronting each other: the bloody imperialist United States spearheading the anti-Soviet NATO alliance and the bureaucratically degenerated Soviet workers state. We warn of the danger of a new world war, instigated by the capitalists who live in mortal fear of new social revolutions. Most of all, with their military stretched across the globe and the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression still lingering on, the imperialists fear proletarian class struggle at home which could frustrate their war preparations and bring the whole damn system tumbling down. Defend the Soviet Union! NATO out of the Near East! The main enemy is at home!

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Imperialists limp out of Lebanon

Near East flashpoint for World War III

Ronald Reagan's Lebanon adventure has turned into a first-class debacle. The self-appointed sheriff of world imperialism shot himself in the foot and is hobbling away. But the global repercussions are by no means all to the good. The Reagan gang will want to wipe out their humiliation by launching a bloody adventure somewhere where the odds are more in their favour. Remember how the US raped the tiny black West Indian isle of Grenada in order to divert attention from the devastating truck-bomb attack on Marine HQ in Beirut last October. Lebanon was a long-shot gamble in the anti-Soviet war drive, one which the Pentagon always considered a no-win situation.

All of King Reagan's Marines and all his battleships and tough talk couldn't put the artificial country back together again. Right into late January Reagan was proclaiming 'We are making progress in Lebanon'. Forced to eat his words, he ordered the Sixth Fleet to open up with the USS *New Jersey's* 16-inch guns, killing who knows how many hundreds or even thousands of Druze villagers, just to make it look like he didn't 'cut and run'. With consummate cynicism Reagan offered naval and air cover to the British, French and Italian contingents of the 'multinational force' he was leaving in the lurch. The miniscule British contingent scurried the day after Reagan's announcement. Out of the valley of death rushed the 16th Lancers 'so fast that they left two army lorries on the quayside at Jounieh, the keys still in the ignition' (*Times*, 27 February 1984).

Aside from its military installations in Cyprus, British imperialism's role in the Lebanon was little more than a symbolic gesture of support to Reagan, and the Thatcher government shared the European bourgeois unease at American policy. Its interests are more concerned with the Persian Gulf and its oil resources, and anyway these days British imperialism can only play a role in the region as an American underling. With only two clapped out mini-carriers Britain has little clout, nevertheless Thatcher has been signalling her willingness to back new American adventures in the Persian Gulf. And the Tory government intends once again to endorse death-squad elections in El Salvador by sending 'observers'. If she thought it would help the anti-Soviet crusade and restore a little imperial glory, the Iron Lady would re-commission the cannon in the Tower of London. As for the Labour Party, its leader Neil Kinnock refused to condemn the *New Jersey's* bombardment and instead praised Reagan's efforts.

The humiliation in Beirut will intensify the Reagan gang's drive to drown in blood the insurgent masses of Central America. Unlike the squalid communalist bloodletting in Lebanon -- between Christians and Muslims, Shi'ites and Palestinians, Druze and everyone -- in Central America a potential social revolution is at stake. Salvadoran workers and peasants are fighting (and beating) a blood-drenched oligarchy and its Yankee protectors. A rout of the puppet dictatorship by leftist guerrillas in El Salvador would pose the threat of direct US military intervention. The CIA's *contras* are now ravaging Nicaragua, while 5000 US combat troops are poised for attack across the border in Honduras. While the Democrats and reformist leftists see the Marine withdrawal from Lebanon as a retreat from foreign military adventurism, in reality it



Gemayel's army fighting a losing battle in Beirut.

only makes more urgent the need to organise working-class opposition to the American war drive in Central America -- blacking military cargo bound for right-wing regimes, and labour strikes against US intervention.

Lebanon: not a country but a deal

The workers of the world have a side in the revolutionary struggles now engulfing Central America. But they do not take sides in the Lebanese blood feuds, the endless succession of communal massacres and retaliations. Lebanon is not a nation nor even a country, but a deal among the imperialists (1919) and between the imperialists and the various Christian and Muslim clan chiefs (1943). One is reminded of the description of Austria between the two world wars as a 'situation [that was] fatal but not serious'.

The entity known as Lebanon was created by the French, who together with the British carved up the Ottoman empire in the Near East after World War I. They sought to fashion a pro-Western enclave in the Levant by combining the predominantly Christian Mount Lebanon with a subordinate Muslim hinterland, part of it (notably the Bekaa Valley) extracted from the province of Syria. The French colonialist system of Maronite privilege was preserved after Lebanon became independent. Under the so-called National Covenant the president would always be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, the head of the Chamber of Deputies a Shi'ite Muslim, and so on. The Christians were allocated a six-to-five majority in parliament, and more importantly the officer caste of the Lebanese army was drawn predominantly from the Maronite elite.

Since the Muslims' birthrate outstripped the Christians' for a couple of generations, the deal that was Lebanon fell apart by the beginning of the 1970s. The mass of impoverished and downtrodden Shi'ites, who had become the largest

sectarian/communal grouping, demanded a change in the constitution to redress the balance of political and economic power in their favour. Further, the OPEC oil boom of the early 1970s, which Lebanon shared as the main financial centre and entrepot for the Arab East, widened the disparities between rich and poor in this bankers' republic. Shi'ite peasants from the countryside and migrant workers from Syria streamed into Beirut and other port cities looking for work, producing a class of desperate slum dwellers. American liberal academic Stanley Reed described Maronite-dominated Lebanon on the eve of the 1975-76 civil war:

'The conflict occurred because Lebanon's political and economic structure cheated too many people in too many ways. The Maronite businessmen and bankers who dominated the country refused to part with any of their huge profits derived from handling oil money.... The system that gave the presidency and the command of the army to the Maronites became a symbol of injustice to the have-nots and the leftists, both consisting largely of Moslem city dwellers.... What began as a social revolution has obviously taken on many other meanings. For instance, the leftist militia leaders who set out to topple the old warlords have wound up emulating them.' (*New York Times*, 9 July 1982)

In early 1975 Lebanon stood on the brink of a revolutionary upheaval which could have radically altered the political situation in the entire region, most immediately by extending itself to Syria. But a revolutionary outcome was diverted by the traditional Muslim clan chiefs (abetted by the Palestinian nationalist leaders) into a decade-long series of bloody squabbles between the various communal groups. The Levant correspondent for the snide *Economist* (5 November 1983) neatly captured the essence of Lebanese politics when he wrote of the 'national

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