

Australasian

# SPARTACIST



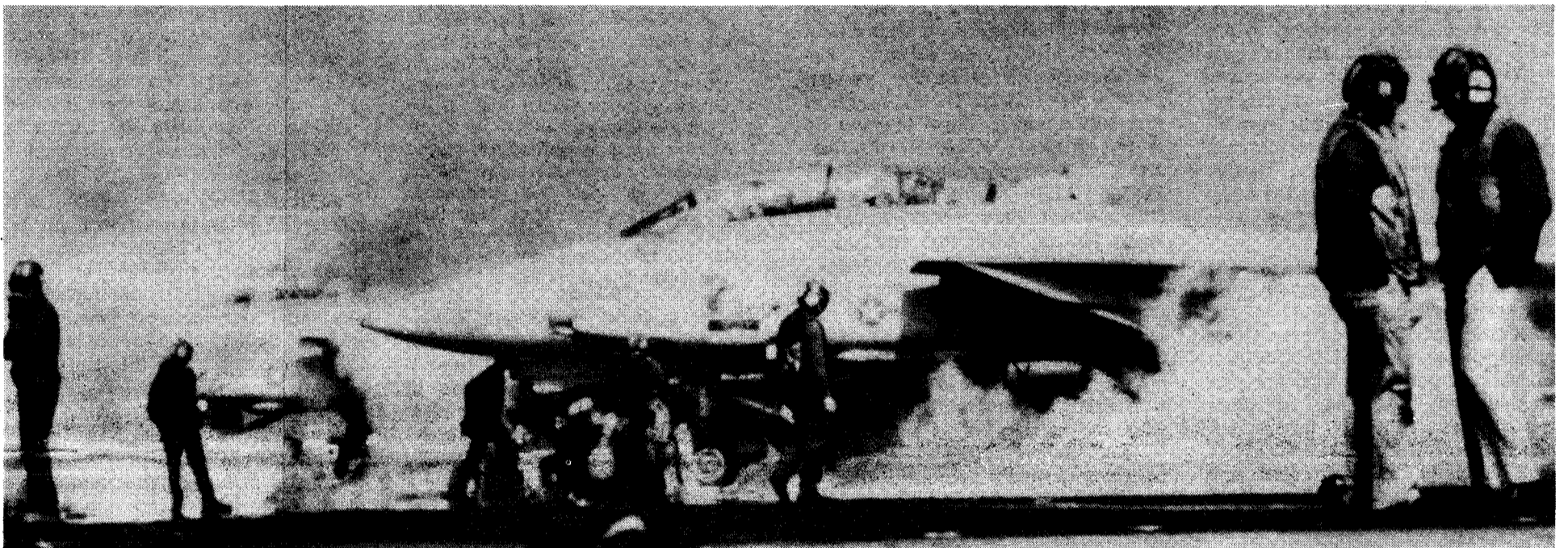
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## Reagan Strikes at Libya, Nicaragua, Afghanistan

# Flashpoints for War



Aircraft carrier USS Saratoga in Gulf of Sidra.

Turnley/Newsweek

The following article is reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* (no 401, 11 April 1986), biweekly paper of the Spartacist League/US. Since the article was written the Reagan administration has escalated its insane war provocations around the globe by bombing the Libyan capital of Tripoli and the second city Benghazi in the dead of night on 14 April. The attack was launched from carriers of the US battle fleet in the Mediterranean and from F-111s flown out of Thatcher's Britain. This wanton atrocity killed and injured hundreds of Libyan civilians, including members of the family of Libyan leader Qaddafi. While Reagan's criminal bombing of Libya provoked international outrage and fear of nuclear holocaust, the Australian Labor government of Robert Hawke justified Reagan's attacks with a welter of statements condemning Libyan "terrorism", and on his recent trip to Washington bolstered his support to Reagan as the mad bomber promised to do it again. The Australian representative to the United Nations Security Council joined the US, France, Britain and Denmark in vetoing a resolution condemning the US for the bombing. Alongside Thatcher's Tories the Australian Laborites stand as the most open supporters of Reagan's drive towards anti-Soviet armageddon.

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APRIL 7 — The White House declared "Operation Prairie Fire", the brazen American attack on Libya, an unqualified success. A Navy armada, with three aircraft carriers, 30 warships and hundreds of planes, managed to sink some Libyan PT boats and hit a missile site where Russian

## US Hands Off Libya! Defend the Soviet Union!

technicians were reportedly installing Soviet SAMs. The Teflon president had found the no-risk military option, so the US could flex its muscles "without loss of life or damage to American planes or ships", War Secretary Weinberger crowed. The Reaganites' war "game" in the Gulf of Sidra was supposed to teach the "bully" Qaddafi a bloody lesson and send a message to Moscow. In this confrontation, the world's working class had a side: with Libya against the insane war provocations of US imperialism.

Of course, the Libyan boats never fired a shot, and the only evidence of SAMs being fired were blips on a radar screen that were not reported to journalists on board the USS *Saratoga* at the time because the Navy wasn't sure they were real. Commenting on the Gulf of Sidra action, Admiral William Crowe, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, noted: "I would say these operations may lead us to revise our opinion of Gaddafi's rationality. Once we made it clear that we were determined to stay there, he withdrew his forces, and I consider that a very rational act" ([London] *Sunday Times*, 30 March).

The next week, however, when a bomb blew a hole in the fuselage of a TWA jetliner over Greece, killing four, and another blast in Berlin destroyed a disco frequented by GIs, the US

declared it would "hold Qaddafi responsible" for these wanton acts of indiscriminate terror. No matter that the Libyan strongman had condemned the TWA bomb as "an act of terrorism against a civilian target, and I am totally against this." It fit a "pattern" of Libyan terrorism, said Washington. The pattern is that Reagan will blame anything and everything on Qaddafi (and Gorbachev) if it furthers the anti-Soviet war drive.

The US aggression against Libya came on the heels of an even more insane war provocation in the Black Sea, in which two Navy spy ships invaded Soviet territorial waters near the port of Sevastopol, headquarters of the "Red Banner" fleet. And just as American F-14s were firing their Harpoon and HARM missiles over the Mediterranean, halfway around the globe in Central America US Army Chinook helicopters were ferrying Honduran troops to the Nicaraguan frontier, doing their best to set off a border war in order to get Congress to approve \$100 million in aid to the CIA's contra terrorists. When at first

Honduras declined to claim it had been invaded by the Sandinista army, Washington threatened to cut off its dollars. When they saw the light in Tegucigalpa, the US promptly supplied the Honduran military with \$20 million in unsolicited aid. And the next day the Senate dutifully approved the contra aid bill.

The Reaganite Cold War hawks were off and running. In addition to their "show of force" in the Black Sea, the Med and Central America, the US set off an atomic bomb in Nevada in March, rejecting Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's offer of a moratorium on nuclear testing, and word leaked out that the CIA is delivering Stinger anti-aircraft missiles to US-backed counter-revolutionaries attacking Soviet-backed Afghanistan and Angola. They're planning to do the same for the Nicaraguan contras, it was reported, as well as dispatching Green Beret advisers, as soon as the Democrats on Capitol Hill fall into line. A revote of the contra aid bill is scheduled for April 15, and if it passes, the administration will use it as a "Tonkin Gulf resolution", an elastic substitute for a declaration of war, as they did in Vietnam.

### Don't Mess with the Russians!

Ever since Ronald Reagan moved into the White House, we have warned

Continued on page two

**Eyewitness Report  
from Tripoli ... Page 4**

# US Hands Off Libya! Defend USSR/Vietnam!

Asp photo



Asp photo

Spartacist contingents at rallies protesting Reagan's terror bombing of Libya outside US consulates in Melbourne (right), 15 April and Sydney, 16 April.

Protests against Reagan's terror bombing of Libya took place outside the US Consulates in Sydney and Melbourne on Tuesday 15 April, with another in Sydney the following night. The Sydney demonstrations were small, disorganised affairs of only 80-100 people, and the Melbourne protest was only a little larger turning out 150-200. The small but spirited Spartacist contingents were the only organised left presence at the Tuesday rallies, while on Wednesday the rump pro-Moscow Socialist Party of Australia (SPA) fielded a small contingent. The Wednesday Sydney protest was also attended by a small group from the Arab Federation, and at the Melbourne rally four representatives of the pro-Qaddafi Main People's Congress turned out. The Socialist Labour League, after years of selling their services as PR men for Qaddafi and the Iraqi Ba'athists, now when Libya actually needed defending against imperialism, were nowhere to be seen. Neither was their recent split-off, the Communist League.

The disappointingly small size of the

protests is testimony to the bankruptcy of the pacifist Laborite politics of the reformist left and their impotence in the face of Reagan's war moves. In Sydney Peter Symon of the SPA showed the reformists' touching faith in their "own" imperialism: "It is necessary for the Australian government to play its part. . . . Our task is to persuade the government to speak up in the interests of peace, disarmament, and stopping nuclear tests". Former ALP senator and Nuclear Disarmament Party (NDP) luminary Jean Melzer told the Melbourne protest that we should "call on Reagan to act responsibly" — rather like calling on Jack the Ripper to run women's refuges.

In marked contrast Spartacist speakers and placards (see above) addressed all three demonstrations with the politics of class struggle internationalism. Drawing the links between Reagan's bombing of Libya and his global anti-Soviet war strategy the SL speaker at the Tuesday Sydney rally stated:

"These attacks, while immediately

targeting Libya, are part of Reagan's global drive toward war against the Soviet Union. One week before his March attack against Libya, Reagan sent US spy ships into Soviet territorial waters in the Black Sea — an overt war provocation. When Reagan lost the vote for \$100 million for the contras in Nicaragua — where he is waging war against what he calls "terrorist communism" — he struck at Libya which he considers a "Soviet surrogate". And in this region the US imperialists target the Vietnamese Revolution where they and their Australian imperialist lackeys lost at the hands of the heroic Vietnamese workers and peasants."

The truth about Washington's war drive and our call to defend Vietnam and the Soviet Union against imperialist attack brought forth howls of protest from the anti-Soviet reformists in both cities, in particular from the third camp International Socialists (IS) and anti-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) whose salesmen had been milling about the Sydney crowd peddling their respective rags. However, they really went nuts when we

told the truth about "their" government: "The imperialist government of Robert Hawke is Reagan's tool in Southeast Asia. . . . Hawke has supported the anti-Soviet war drive down the line while waging war at home against the unions". The IS/SWP clot set up a chant, "Hawke denounce Reagan!", and some even chanted "Hawke denounced Reagan", a flat lie in the service of Australian nationalist Laborism.

To the hand-wringing pacifism and nationalist reformism offered up by the SWP, IS, SPA and NDP types we counterposed forthrightly the only strategy that can defeat the imperialist war drive — proletarian revolution. As our Sydney speaker concluded: "We Trotskyists of the Spartacist League seek to forge mass revolutionary parties of the working class to sweep the imperialist war menace from the face of the earth. We fight to reforge the Fourth International, world party of proletarian revolution. For world proletarian revolution is the only solution to this imperialist war madness". ■

## Flashpoints

Continued from page one

that this anti-Communist nut is driving toward war with the Soviet Union by engaging in provocations and military confrontations across the globe. The events of the past few weeks have demonstrated this so dramatically that even prominent spokesmen for American imperialism are worried that "Ronbo" is pushing things too far. Leslie Gelb, the *New York Times* "national security" expert and a former high-level State Department official, reported that administration officials were saying that Reagan's actions come from "an attitude of confidence and optimism about having the Soviets on the run":

"Now, the sense is that Moscow is on the defensive and that the United States can be somewhat more venturesome in challenging Soviet interests with less risk of a serious Soviet response. Thus, there are the open and strong military challenges to Soviet client states."

— *New York Times*, 27 March  
In other words, Reagan thinks the Soviet Union is a 97-pound weakling, and he is gleefully kicking sand in Corbachev's face.

Reagan believes that faced with relentless military pressure and an all-

out arms race draining its economic resources, Russia will crack. He also believes that the US can commit endless provocations against the Soviet Union, its allies and military clients without fear of escalation (or even American casualties). This is a strategy that could touch off a thermonuclear World War III. Thus the Russians would have been entirely within their rights to blow the two US Navy spy ships off the Crimea right out of the Black Sea. And this might well have occurred. As the USSR deputy minister of defense, Fleet Admiral V N Chernavin, recounted:

"Taking into account the obviously provocative character of the American vessels' operations, the [Soviet] command sent out an order to heighten the battle preparedness of the fleet's strike forces. Ships and aircraft were immediately readied for battle duties. . . ."

"The strike forces of the fleet were prepared immediately to stop the provocative operations of the American warships in Soviet waters. But we distinctly understood the severity of the possible consequences. And this time, we showed patience and restraint."

— *Izvestia*, 23 March

In Central America, too, the Pentagon is playing with fire. Commenting on the ominous escalation of US helicopters moving into battle zones, Nicaraguan leader Daniel Ortega warned that American personnel who supported the contras ran the same risks as those mercenary terrorists. "I would not be surprised if tomorrow a US helicopter was shot down by our combatants or if US officials or military

advisors appear dead". Nicaragua, he said, would shoot down US helicopters in Nicaraguan airspace or attacking from Honduran airspace, "even if it would mean they launch North American troops into our territory". Such a Yankee invasion "won't be a military field trip", said Sandinista commander Omar Cabezas. "We have 350,000 rifles distributed and a people ready".

Meanwhile, in Afghanistan, the US is desperate to counter a buildup of "highly trained Soviet special forces", known as *spetsnaz*, who are "turning the tide against the mujahedeen resistance" in the past year, according to the *San Francisco Examiner* (7 March). For years the CIA has supplied the fanatic Islamic "freedom fighters" (who shoot schoolteachers for teaching young girls to read) with Soviet-made light missiles. The idea was to maintain "plausible deniability" of direct US involvement. But supplying American-made "Stingers" to the Afghan cutthroats, who will use them directly against the Russian army, turns a "proxy war" into a direct US-Soviet confrontation. This major escalation has sparked opposition even within the State Department and the CIA.

US military provocations, from the Gulf of Sidra to the Gulf of Mexico, are by no means the product of far-right anti-Communist fanatics. Liberals hailed the attack on Libya, and the Democratic-controlled House is almost certain to vote aid for the Nicaraguan contras. What unites liberal Democrats with Reaganite right-wingers is their bipartisan commitment to defend

capitalism, and therefore to seek the destruction of the Soviet Union, whose proletarian revolution of 1917 was the first and greatest blow in liberating the workers and oppressed of the world from this war-driven imperialist system. Despite its subsequent bureaucratic degeneration under Stalin, the USSR still stands today as the main obstacle to US imperialism's mad ambitions to dominate and exploit the entire world. It was fear of Soviet military power which prevented Kennedy from invading Cuba and Johnson and Nixon from nuking North Vietnam.

### Class War to Stop Imperialist War!

The Reagan gang likes to pretend that the American people have turned

Continued on page twelve

Australasian

## SPARTACIST

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**SPARTACIST LEAGUE**  
GPO Box 3473 Sydney, NSW, 2001 (02)264-8195  
GPO Box 2339, Melbourne, VIC, 3001 (03)654-4315

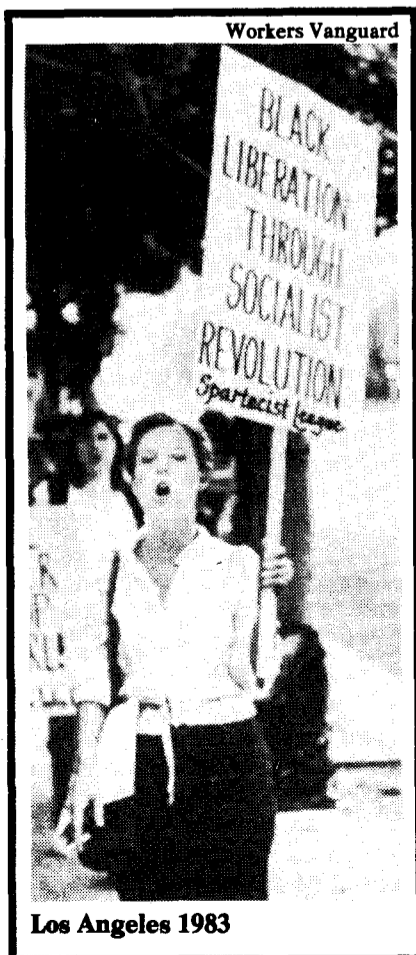


Our comrade Kimberly Sue Kilmer died tragically on 24 January 1986. She was only 32, but had been a member of our movement for almost eleven years. She died of carbon monoxide poisoning from a faulty gas oven in her San Francisco home. Comrades, concerned because her companion Paul Costan had not turned up for an appointment, went to their home in the early hours of January 24. There they found Paul overcome, but in time to get him to the hospital; he has since substantially recovered. Kim, a small slender woman, was already dead.

It was "landlord murder". Their apartment had central heating, but the landlord would never supply enough heat. And it can get damn cold in San Francisco.

Kim was a socialist all her adult life. She joined the Spartacus Youth League in April 1975 in Ann Arbor, Michigan and first joined the SL two years later in Boston, where she was youth organizer. Kim worked in the Detroit and Los Angeles branches, and in New York as part of the *Young Spartacus* comp crew. In a brief period of demoralization in 1979 she resigned, but soon came back hard, actively selling the paper in LA where she rejoined in 1981. A tenacious driving comrade, Kim was always in there fighting for the party. She was a party activist. Kim felt strongly that communists must champion the cause of the oppressed — every incident of police brutality or racist victimization became her fight. At the time of her death, she was a member of the SF local committee of the Spartacist League.

It's not easy to be a communist in America, and the bitter tragedy of Kim's death is that she had put in that hard decade of work it takes to make a seasoned communist cadre, and was visibly growing and maturing politically. She and Paul, an active trade unionist, had visited Nicaragua in the summer of 1985 as an act of solidarity with that embattled country. Upon their return she gave an insightful report to the Bay Area district committee that illuminated the necessity of revolution. Kim paid special attention to the condition of women, and how the US imperialists' overt/



Los Angeles 1983

# Kim Kilmer



17 June 1953 — 24 January 1986



Workers Vanguard

covert war against Nicaragua led to impoverishment of the population.

A longtime friend and comrade said of her, "Kim was moved immediately and directly by the sight of oppression, to the point of imperiling her own welfare. This could be a cop arresting or messing with someone on the street or a scene during a movie. The oppression of blacks in Detroit, where Kim grew up, was a formative factor in her worldview, and a contributing factor in becoming a communist". Kim came to the party during the course of a bitter campus strike and sit-ins against discrimination at the University of Michigan. Her years on the West Coast, particularly in Los Angeles, reflect the SL's ongoing struggles for labor black defense of minorities against racist terror.

"She was extremely competent, energetic, sometimes too energetic. She seemed to have no threshold of exhaustion", one comrade recalled. Kim put this energy to work, meticulously calling contacts, organizing to build the April 1983 demonstration demanding, "Vengeance for Patrick Mason", the five-year-old black child shot down in his own home by Orange County cop Anthony Sperl. That same June, news reached this country of an international campaign to try to save the lives of three South African black militants facing imminent execution by the apartheid regime. They had less than 24 hours to organize a demonstration — Kim had all the comrades in the LA office within two hours, working against time.

The LA comrades elected Kim as their first alternate delegate to the 1983 Spartacist League national conference, primarily based on her biting interventions against the whining quitters of the ET (External Tendency). She furiously attacked the ET's worse-than-"color blind" line that the Spartacist League was supposedly turning away from the working class by the formation of the labor/black leagues. In 1984, Kim moved to the Bay Area. Her last political action was participating in the 4 December 1985 demonstration called by the Labor Black League for Social Defense in defense of black unionist Jeff Higgins against Jim Crow discrimination at San Francisco General Hospital.

Kim had been a pre-med student, and because of her medical background during her time in LA she helped out veteran Trotskyist Dick Fraser when he was in the hospital and out. "She'd bring him cigarettes and vodka, go to the races with him", a comrade remembers. "They were both fairly stubborn, and so they would go at it a bit. But they both cared about each other a lot".

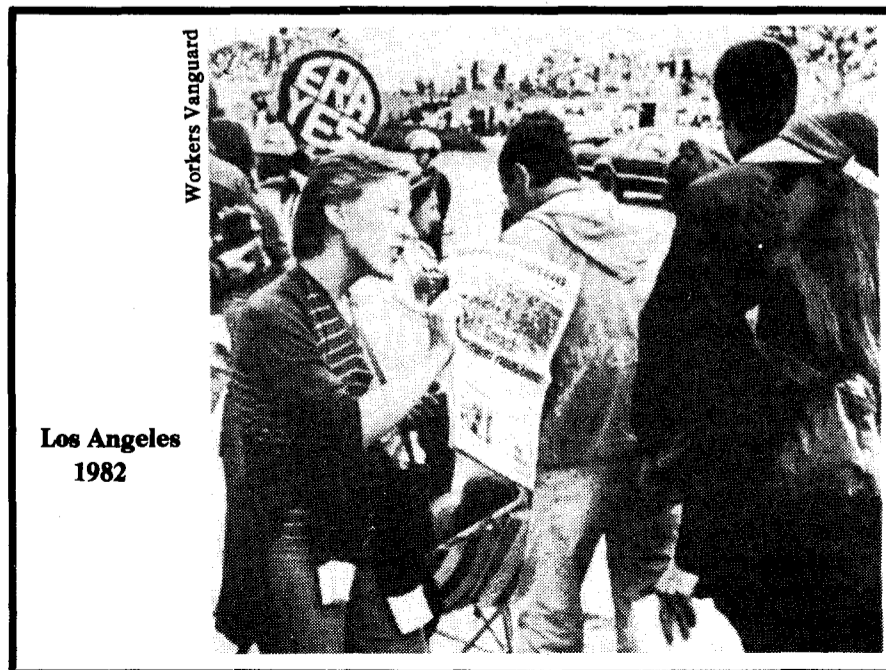
Last October, after returning from Nicaragua, Kim spoke at the University of California at Santa Cruz and talked to the students about the responsibilities of American revolutionaries: "We say to really fight imperialism abroad you have to wage class struggle at home against our own bourgeoisie. And we're looking to labor/black America to build a revolutionary party that has the power to bring down the biggest enemy of all the working and poor people of the world, and that's US imperialism. That's our job, and we're looking for people who want to fight with us".

Kim Kilmer's death was a widely and bitterly felt loss in our organization. Comrades came to her funeral in Farmington Hills, Michigan from New York, Cleveland, Chicago, Atlanta and the West Coast. Her closest friends and comrades observed that Kim came out of the New Left, and had a sense of struggle. "Maybe she struggled too much against herself, which is often the case with women. But she always kept on fighting". We extend our heartfelt condolences to her family and her companion.

A memorial meeting for Kim Kilmer will be held in the San Francisco Bay Area.

**POLITICAL BUREAU  
SPARTACIST LEAGUE/US  
28 JANUARY 1986**

A comrade recalled his work with Kim on the Los Angeles docks: "For two years plus, we did the ILWU longshore sale. This was a tough sale, but Kim knew this turf inside out. The longshoremen there knew that we were reds and WV was the working-class paper down there. Kim saw the presence of the timid SWP sales team there as an opportunity to engage in political debate. Week after week, she popped out of a car at 6.30 am, ready to fight those disgusting reformists. After our November 27, 1982 victory over the Klan, she hit the SWP hard over their 'free speech for fascists' line". Kim was particularly feisty in defending the Trotskyist program against opponents.



Los Angeles  
1982

Workers Vanguard

# Under Reagan's Guns in Libya

6 April 1986

A journalistic team of the international Spartacist tendency arrived in Tripoli on March 26. We were there with our physical presence to establish our proletarian internationalist commitment to the military defense of Libya against the barbaric attacks of US imperialism and its allies. As war-crazed Ronald Reagan flexed his trigger finger, we came prepared to help in any way we can where the US war drive is hottest right now — and to denounce before the world's working class the acts of aggression against Libya by the imperialist terrorists.

Our arrival was preceded by a telegram sent by the iSt from New York addressed to Colonel Muammar el-Qaddafi. The statement read: "We deeply respect and support just cause of Libyan independence and territorial integrity against assault by US imperialist aggression."

As we arrived Reagan's massive Sixth Fleet armada — with its 30 naval vessels, including three carriers and 240 warplanes — was carrying out its assault against the Libyan people. The frenzy whipped up by Reagan and the bourgeois press was at its peak. The cold-blooded order to shoot and kill was aimed not only at Libya but at the Soviet Union as well. Soviet personnel were servicing the missile site at Sirte bombarded by US planes. The US missile cruiser *Yorktown*, the warship that led the attack on the Gulf of Sidra, had just returned from carrying out the provocation against the Soviet naval base at Sevastopol on the Black Sea. Military support to this small country under Reagan's guns is integrally linked to the burning need of the international proletariat to rally to the defense of the Soviet Union.

The iSt team included an Italian, an American of Jewish background and a French woman. We wished to cut across lines of national hatred and demonstrate solidarity from the working-class movement of imperialist countries that have ravished Libya and other colonial peoples. We made clear our desire to interview survivors and relatives of the victims of the barbarous aggression as well as official representatives of the government, and expressed our willingness to speak to any audience about the class struggle in our own countries.

At the airport in Tripoli we delivered our statement from the iSt to Libyan officials there. They smiled and shook our hands. Later they drove us along with other journalists to the Al Kabir Hotel overlooking Tripoli harbor. It was obvious that the Libyan government genuinely extended itself to invite reporters into the country. Normal visa requirements were waived. There were upwards of 150 reporters and cameramen at the hotel, mostly from the US, British, French, Italian and Japanese press. From the beginning it was clear that the government had taken many steps to guarantee the safety of the foreign journalists whilst their own people were facing the American Sixth Fleet. It turned out that this was not so necessary but we appreciated their efforts.

We were somewhat surprised to find out in Tripoli that we were the only Western left-wingers in town: one



Workers Vanguard

Tripoli, March 28 — Libyan women students in uniform march in defiance of US imperialism.

would have expected that some of the various groups, some claiming to be socialists and even Trotskyists, would be present. The Italian CP paper *L'Unita* is one of the major dailies, and they didn't have a reporter there. This absence, however, was not accidental: Libya happens to be right now one of the hot spots of the confrontation between the USA and the Soviet Union. It's certainly easier to be a gung-ho guerrillaist from an armchair in Rome or Paris than to express concrete solidarity with this people targeted by the anti-Soviet war drive.

Every night on Libyan television you could see demonstrations against US aggression held in Arab countries, as well as Greece, Spain and Italy — and the absence of such rallies in the US testified only too well to the support given by liberal Democrats and most of the American left to Reagan's virulent anti-Soviet war drive. (Interestingly, one message of solidarity came from the Afghan government. One can be quite sure that Reagan's CIA-financed Islamic fundamentalist guerrillas there do not take Muslim Libya's side against the Afghan feudalists' American imperialist benefactors.) In particular, while the Libyan media

Torregamo-Sipa/Special Features



Colonel Muammar el-Qaddafi.

featured long lists of solidarity statements, there was nothing from the US except for a brief mealy-mouthed statement from Jesse Jackson. Clearly people understood that the reporters were for the most part mouthpieces for imperialist propaganda. So the presence of an American socialist there counted for quite a bit.

Expressing the feelings of the delegation going in, one comrade said, "On the one hand it felt extremely dangerous, frightening, not so much from the standpoint of what could happen to us in Libya, but rather from what the crazy people who run American policy these days could do. On the other hand we were conscious of the opportunity we were given of expressing directly the solidarity of our revolutionary organization to the Libyan people against US imperialism and we felt proud of that." Our presence attracted interest and some sympathy from the Libyan officials we spoke to. One of our guides appreciated the "Crush the Contras! Defend Nicaragua!" badge we wore. When one of our members required hospital treatment, he received prompt attention from Libyan officials.

## Popular Mobilization Against Imperialist Attack

One of the first things we learned was that a private plane carrying journalists had been harassed and driven out of the area by the Sixth Fleet. However, at the beginning we were cautious. The bourgeois press was claiming that Qaddafi was out to kill all Westerners and had whipped the population into an anti-American frenzy. This was simply a bald-faced lie. Throughout our stay we were never assaulted, jeered at or threatened by any of the populace, even when walking through Tripoli without Libyan guides. Nor did we hear of any such incidents involving other journalists. In fact, the Libyan people were generally relaxed and eager to pose for photographs and demonstrate their pride in standing up to the American war machine.

In his 28 March speech, Qaddafi underscored this point, saying that American and other foreigners who worked in the country were welcome guests and were to be treated as such. (Our flight in was shared by a number of Scottish technicians working in the oil fields.) In fact, it was Reagan himself who sought to order Americans out of Libya in clear violation of US law. The journalists in Tripoli were those who generally covered the Middle East — many had been to Libya before. One American correspondent who had previously interviewed Qaddafi said, "But of course he always draws a distinction between the American government and the people." This, however, did not prevent the bourgeois press from launching its endless scare stories about Libyans being trained as "human bombs" to launch themselves at Americans, etc.

While we were in Tripoli we attended two mass rallies. But these were hardly the only rallies that took place during this time. On television every day there were reports and film footage from other cities such as Benghazi. On one occasion a comrade walking in Tripoli came upon a rally that the reporters had not been informed of — you never knew where something might break. There was clearly a mobilization of a population prepared to defend their country. Wall posters and slogans, mainly in Arabic but some in English, were prominent throughout the city — not only around the airport and Al Kabir Hotel frequented by journalists. One popular placard depicted a big green fist (stylized after Qaddafi's "Green Revolution") smashing a US aircraft carrier. Reagan was portrayed as a Dracula in several posters. Under one of these was the slogan in English: "The Evil Doers — The unkempt barbarian Reagan is a necrophilic (obsessed with death) because his approach suffocates humans."

Despite the real concern over the US provocations, there was no frenzy or hysteria in Tripoli. Shops, schools and businesses were open as usual. There was no curfew and the visible police presence was low key. In the parking lot across from the hotel soccer games were being played. There were motorcades that occasionally came by the hotel at night with horns tooting and militants shouting slogans, and the evening prior to the big demonstration there was a fireworks display set off near the hotel. One journalist we spoke to aptly characterized the general attitude of the people as contempt for Reagan. Reagan had threatened to teach the Libyans a bloody lesson and there wasn't much to show for it. Despite the bombastic threats of the US warlords and the anger at losses suffered by the Libyan people, they clearly did not perceive themselves as defeated or humiliated.

When we arrived, the Western press was boasting of a huge victory for Reagan: four Libyan naval vessels sunk, the SAM-5 missile site at Sirte wiped out, and no American losses. The Libyan government conceded that one of its ships was sunk while saying that they had shot down three F-14s; they also accused the US of vindictively sinking a fishing boat and a



trawler attempting to rescue Libyan sailors. While we were obviously not in a position to verify the military claims, we did note how the Pentagon's stories kept changing. While still in Tripoli we were informed that they now claimed only two Libyan boats. Qaddafi said that one of the American missiles fired at Sirte had not exploded and that he was turning it over to the Soviets. The US was then insisting that all the missiles had detonated on target. (One friendly journalist in fact told us he had seen the missile being delivered to the Soviet embassy.) After leaving Libya we noted that the bourgeois press was now admitting that the Sirte missile base was operational and offering excuses that maybe all of the American missiles didn't explode. In fact, our sense was that the American government was so paranoid about taking any losses that they chose to avoid a serious engagement with even Libya's modest forces.

Workers Vanguard



March 28 — Mass rally at military barracks hears Qaddafi remind Reagan of US defeat in Vietnam.

### Cuba, Nicaragua, Vietnam: Defeats for US Imperialism

On 28 March we attended the demonstration of upwards of 10,000 people addressed by Qaddafi at the military barracks in Tripoli. This demonstration, while part of the general mobilization, was specifically to celebrate the sixteenth anniversary of the expulsion of British military bases from the country. There was a cross section of youth, militarised students, a contingent of nursing students, soldiers and sailors, military bands and representatives of various ethnic groupings including Bedouin horsemen. There was a heavy security presence, with soldiers posted on surrounding rooftops, army personnel with red and blue berets carrying Kalashnikovs, and civilian militia as well. (The red berets we later learned are apparently Qaddafi's personal guard.) The crowd included large numbers of women, mostly younger in green uniforms (some armed) and a number in traditional veils. At the front of the barracks there were four Soviet-built tanks visible and apparently ready to operate.

Qaddafi spoke in Arabic for a little over an hour. We did recognize several times the words "Cuba, Nicaragua, Vietnam". Qaddafi is undoubtedly popular here. There were numerous placards with his picture and he was



Workers Vanguard

Libyan women protest US military attacks.

repeatedly interrupted with chants in English such as "Down, down USA!" and Arabic equivalents. A couple of times he indicated the crowd should stop, without receiving immediate attention. People overall looked not too tense, talking to each other, laughing and apparently having some fun. At the end of the demonstration a cow with the tag "Reagan" was slaughtered, accompanied by militant chanting and waving of weapons in the air.

We were able to move about freely during this demonstration. When military personnel did not want to be photographed they indicated so firmly and politely. Weapons were shouldered quite professionally with the muzzles pointing down. There was no evidence of craziness, jumpiness or hysteria. At various points there were photographers who put their hands on soldiers to climb up or down platforms. To operate with crazy, gun-toting cops in such a fashion at a demonstration in Rome or New York would be to take your life in your hands.

The next day we obtained a translation of much of the speech from the daily JANA (Libyan news agency) bulletin. A Soviet TV journalist to whom we had made available a copy of the iSt statement and our pamphlet on Reagan's Korean Air Lines spy plane atrocity informed us that in fact there had been no Soviet casualties at Sirte and tipped us off that Voice of America was claiming that Qaddafi was daring the Americans to come back again. In fact, Qaddafi's speech was fairly low key and restrained (this accorded with our sense of the crowd reaction). Qaddafi had counterposed Libya's "modest and defensive" forces to the bloody record of US imperialist aggression. He correctly noted the US designs on Nicaragua as well as Reagan's fiasco in Lebanon. JANA reported: "Trivial and ignorant Reagan, he said, should have recalled the American defeat in Vietnam and consulted figures to see the number of American casualties after which they came out defeated and Vietnam became a united powerful and respected socialist state. But America suffered a political and military defeat for which, and without justification, thousands of Americans paid with their lives for that defeat."

The JANA news release also said: "Colonel Muammar al Gathafi confirmed that the madness of the Nazi force made Hitler imagine he can conquer the world and turn the Soviet Union into Colonies, occupy Africa and the North Pole.... Where are the empire of Alexander of Macedonia, the Ottoman empire, Hitler's empire which he wanted to build by force and

on the skulls of nations? Where are the empires of Portugal, Holland and Britain?"

### Libya Ravaged by Imperialism and Colonialism

The memory of bloody imperialist rampage and spoliation is burned into the Libyan masses. The Turko-Italian war of 1911, in which thousands of Arabs were butchered, was a barbaric conflict over the possession of Libya. For the first time in a war, airplanes were used — against a population whose most advanced form of military transport was camels. It was, as Lenin called it, "A perfected, civilised blood-bath, the massacre of Arabs with the help of the 'latest' weapons" ("The End of the Italo-Turkish War", 28 September 1912). This conflict set off a 20-year resistance against Italian imperialism in which almost 6,000 Libyan fighters were executed by the Italian government.

During World War II Axis and Allied troops ravaged Libya for years, without any respect for the population or the country. In the massive North African campaign between 1940 and 1943, some cities like Benghazi changed hands four or five times. And every time one army would retreat they would poison wells, loot, burn stores and granaries. The Australian troops were particularly notorious for their brutal treatment of Arab women. Tripoli, Tobruk and other cities were all sites of interminable air raids that indiscriminately incinerated civilian targets. No matter who "won" the Libyans lost. Quite logically, the Libyan people do not make much of a distinction between the belligerents: they surely don't see in the Allied troops any kind of "liberators". It highlights in a stark fashion the correctness of the Trotskyists' position of revolutionary defeatism on both sides during this imperialist war.

Neither the demise of the Italian imperialist presence nor the later evacuation of the British and Americans from their military bases has meant an end to the horror of this war for the Libyan people. In 1943 the German general Rommel alone laid down upwards of 150,000 mines in the area west of Sirte in a futile effort to contain a British counteroffensive. These mines were laid too late to stop the British, but along with similar "defensive lines" established by Allied troops they have been responsible for killing and maiming thousands of innocent men, women and particularly children since then.

As recently as 1980 five boys from Ghadames tripped an undetonated mine — two were killed outright, the others crippled. The Germans, Italians

and British have all refused to pay reparations for their grisly handiwork in a war justly characterized by the Libyan government as a "war that was fought on their land between people who were strangers to it and who — after having struggled against each other for a long time — left Libya, became reconciled and have become friends".

The Italian comrade on the delegation told *Workers Vanguard*: "I was proud to go to Libya as part of a revolutionary communist delegation to express our proletarian solidarity with a country under imperialist threat. Seventy-five years ago another man bearing my name was sent by Italian imperialism to help fight a war that was not his: my grandfather was ever since a socialist and an atheist, toiling daily as a dock worker to provide a living to his wife and children, among whom was my father, who became a communist quite early and together with my mother, herself a communist, gave me my basic social and political education."

### Libya and Nicaragua: The Difference Is Revolution

One of the comrades on the delegation had earlier been part of an iSt delegation to embattled Nicaragua. She remarked on the different perceptions of the two countries: "Between Nicaragua and Libya there are really enormous differences, two countries on two completely different roads. When I was in Nicaragua, a very poor country, one had endless contact with the population because there is a revolutionary situation. People were politically mobilized both against US imperialism and to build something. In Libya, while there was the same spirit of fighting against US imperialism, it is not a revolutionary situation. I was impressed by the level of development in the country — lots of housing complexes being built, many of the poor neighborhoods in the process of being torn down. But you can see clearly that here religion and the state go together, and it is felt particularly deeply around the woman question. You can see lots of women wearing a veil... I noticed that most women without a veil were either young women or foreigners."

In the course of their short stay, our comrades could only get a glimpse of the daily life of the Libyan people and of the social conditions in the country. The standard of living is higher than in many other Arab countries; the nationalization of the oil industry in this thinly populated country in the 1970s provided an increase in social wealth. The streets are filled with cars, many of them new, and the roofs of houses are crowded with TV antennas. The one hospital we saw was modern and clean, and medical care is free for all.

On a social level there is a quite obvious effort to mobilize the population against the US aggression, and reportedly all students, men as well as women, undergo military training. On the other hand, we noticed a great deal of enforced separation between the sexes: no cafes where men and women can mingle. Many women wear the *baracan*, the white veil typical of the area, which is less strict than the Iranian *chador*, in that the face may be uncovered. Alcoholic drinks and pork cannot be consumed anywhere. (One French businessman told us you could get a bottle of whiskey on the black market for 150 pounds!)

As we were leaving, the government announced that it was closing down the English and French departments of Al Fateh University in Tripoli and English and French language books

Continued on page thirteen

## Philippines: Aquino Government Made in USA

# Reagan Pulls Plug On Marcos

### US Bases Out!

FEBRUARY 25 — Now that deposed Philippines dictator Ferdinand Marcos has been shipped off to Guam on a stretcher, and Corazon Aquino is sworn in as head of a provisional government, Ronald Reagan is trumpeting a triumph for "free world democracy" ... and breathing a sigh of relief for the strategic US naval and air force bases in the Pacific island nation of 50 million. Liberal Democrats are joining in the chorus, proclaiming yesterday's military butchers today's "democratic" saviors. But for the Filipino people, the replacement of the corrupt, brutal Marcos dictatorship with the "clean team" of Aquino and Salvador Laurel will mean the substitution of one set of American lackeys for another. Marxists say: beware of coups "Made in USA".

Beginning now, attempts by the Filipino masses to fight against IMF starvation policies imposed by international bankers and their handmaiden in Manila will be suppressed in the name of "democracy". More ominously, the Reagan administration is on a roll, having extracted itself from potential disasters in Haiti and the Philippines. But a more "democratic" oligarchic regime can't even begin to deal with the bankruptcy of Philippines capitalism, which has fueled widespread worker and peasant unrest and a deep-rooted popular insurgency. And the new regime's attempts at "reconciliation" to preserve the bloody repressive apparatus will run head-on into the burning desire to avenge the brutal crimes of the Marcos regime.

On Saturday, two top Philippine military officials declared themselves in rebellion against the dictatorship of Ferdinand Marcos, swinging their support to his rivals Aquino and Laurel, who were denied victory in fraud- and violence-ridden elections February 7. Defense Minister Ponce Enrile and Deputy Chief of Staff Fidel Ramos switched their allegiance after informing the American ambassador and within one hour of the departure of Ronald Reagan's plenipotentiary envoy Philip Habib, on a "fact-finding" mission to Manila. The Filipino masses, sick of two decades of corrupt and brutal tyranny, poured into the streets to form a human wall protecting the rebel headquarters from tank assault by Marcos-loyal troops.

The scene was elaborately choreographed by the bourgeois opposition and their supporters in the Catholic church hierarchy headed by Jaime Cardinal Sin. The Catholic radio Veritas functioned as a command center, calling the masses to come out in support of the military rebellion. While nuns paraded in front of pro-Marcos troops with crucifixes, priests handed out communion wafers. (Cory Aquino appeared briefly outside the Defense Ministry to sing "Ave Maria".) Demonstrators put daisies in the gun barrels and McDonald's burgers in the soldiers' hands. Marcos knew he was finished when the "people's inauguration" of Aquino



Before the fall. Masses bloc Marcos tanks outside the defence ministry in Manila.

was broadcast over the formerly government TV channel, while his own "official" inauguration was blacked out. The "nonviolence" of the whole affair was an expression of the degree to which the mass outpouring has been kept safely within the bounds of bourgeois rule.

As they gathered with their supporters in the Defense Ministry on the capital's outskirts, Ramos and Enrile declared that their act was no coup d'etat but a "people's revolution", an example of "people's power". The presence of hundreds of thousands of Manila residents surrounding Camp Crame testifies to the popularity of the military revolt. But these "democratic" military men were Marcos henchmen only a few days before. Enrile declared that he personally ordered the falsification of 350,000 votes for the president in the sham elections. Ramos, a cousin of Marcos, has since the mid-1970s been the head of the notoriously brutal Philippine Constabulary, which last September shot up dozens of protesting sugar workers on the island of Negros.

Every major figure in the new regime is intimately connected to the US. Ramos graduated from West Point and Enrile is a product of Harvard Law School. Cory Aquino's slain husband Benigno spent virtually his entire political life in the service of the CIA, first participating in the suppression of the Communist-led Hukbalahap rebellion, then acting as control for a US-sponsored insurgency in outlying Indonesian islands. Corazon Cojuangco Aquino is herself one of the wealthiest landowners in her home province of Tarlac; her cousin Eduardo Cojuangco is a leading Marcos crony and head of the Philippine government's coconut monopoly. Her Yale-educated running mate (and rival), "Doy" Laurel, is a typical Filipino wheeler-dealer politico who only split from Marcos in the last three years.

The United States intervened in every aspect of the recent elections. Marcos called the election exercise in the first place to satisfy White House pressure for a "credible" mandate, so that the military could get on with counterinsurgency against the Com-

munist Party's New People's Army (NPA). To ensure that this vote would go down well in the US Congress, Washington insisted on official status for poll watchers from NAMFREL, an organisation funded by the US' "Endowment for Democracy". In addition, there were observation teams from the Democrats, the Republicans and the White House. And then, when the balloting was over, everyone looked to Washington for the verdict. When the Administration finally issued a statement on February 24 declaring that "attempts to prolong the life of the present regime by violence are futile", a Filipino opposition politician declared, "That's it — the election's over." Reagan had cast the decisive vote.

The elections and the Marcos overthrow were also an American media event, like a real-life replay of Woody Allen's *Bananas*. Only this time it wasn't Howard Cosell broadcasting the last words of El Presidente of San Marcos in his death throes on the palace steps and interviewing the usurping general for the "Wide World of Sports", but Ted Koppel staging an election "debate" between Aquino and Marcos for "Nightline". The spectacle of all the actors in the drama pausing in their coup and counter-coup attempts to keep the American viewing audience at home up to date only emphasizes that the Philippines' status as the US' first colony has not changed all that much since "independence".

For decades the Americans have treated the Philippines as their whorehouse. For ten years, the B-52s took off from Clark AFB on the island of Luzon on their way to carpetbomb the Indochinese mainland; for the GIs, Manila was an R&R stop, with bar girls and whiskey galore, and the Marcoses presiding over it all. In fact, Imelda and Ferdinand are like something out of Phil Ochs' "Vietnam Talking Blues", where dictator Diem says, "Meet my sister, Madame Nhu, the sweetheart of Dien Bien Phu. Meet my cousins, meet my aunts, the family that never takes a chance. The family that slays together ... stays together." The Philippine First Lady

certainly rivaled Madame Nhu, but Marcos was spared the Diem treatment.

### Ballots and Bullets

The alarm bells began ringing in Washington late last year, when American policy makers finally noticed that the rampant corruption and terror of the Marcos clique combined with massive capital flight, inflation and unemployment were driving large sections of the Filipino masses into the camp of the NPA guerrilla insurgents, who would obtain parity with the enfeebled army in "three to five years". With Marcos in declining health, but still alive enough to rob the country blind, both Republicans and Democrats became concerned about the fate of the US' largest and most strategic military outpost. Washington began planning for an "orderly succession" to a "post-Marcos environment", and stepped up pressure on their tyrant for political and military reform.

But the wily despot of Malacanang Palace, encrusted in power and privilege for 20 years, was determined not to be pushed aside so easily. Proving that he was no novice at democratic posturing, Marcos in late November suddenly came up with the gimmick of the "snap election". He hoped by this ploy to deflect American pressure, provide a safety valve for popular discontent, and wield the traditional "three Gs" of Filipino politics — guns, goons and gold — to ensure his continued tenure. The US went along with this election tent show conceived in the classic American style. (Marcos boasts of acquiring his bag of tricks from Chicago's mayor Daley, where loyal supporters also voted "early and often" and the dead did too.)

Ronald Reagan went on TV shortly after the February 7 vote, playing down reports of fraud and declaring the results prove "there is really a two-party system, obviously good" in the Philippines (*Washington Post*, 11 February). This gaffe made it necessary for State Department advisers and returning emissaries to pull Reagan aside and inform him what everyone already knew who had been watching the nightly news: if there were a two-party system under Marcos, it would be one party in the government and the other party in the grave.

In the Philippines, moreover, Marcos was a usurper — not old money but a grasping provincial boss, whose apprenticeship was as a black marketeer dealing with the Japanese occupation authorities during World War II. The greed of the Marcos gang was boundless, and eventually alienated not only middle-class professionals and the Catholic hierarchy but even decisive sectors of Manila's Makati financial district. This coincided with the escalating mass discontent as real wages have fallen steadily for years, millions were unemployed, and the government's constabulary and private armies of Marcos's regional cronies ruled through capricious terror and systematic "salvaging"

Continued on page twelve

Australasian Spartacist



# Australian Social Patriots Hail Made In USA Coup

The installation of Corazon Aquino as Philippine president and the flight of the Marcos gang to Honolulu was predictably hailed by Reagan as a "triumph for democracy". When Washington and its jackal imperialist ally in Canberra look at the Philippines they see above all the "archipelagic aircraft carrier". The Subic Bay Naval Station and Clark Air Force Base targeting the entire Asian/Pacific region are indispensable to the Reaganites' drive for nuclear war against the Soviet Union and its key regional ally Vietnam. The US strategy for war in the Pacific is predicated on blocking the Soviet Pacific fleet from open ocean access through what Reagan calls the "chokepoints", particularly in the Sea of Japan. Hence the imperialist hysteria over the Soviet naval base at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam. Continuation of the rapacious and brutal Marcos regime ultimately threatened the bases and imperialist domination over this strategic island chain so Washington moved to install an even more beholden bourgeois opposition.

Australian mini-imperialism had helped sustain Marcos through his twenty years of tyranny with intertwined "economic" and military aid, including training elements of the officer corps of the armed forces (AFP) in counterinsurgency and frequent joint military exercises. Hawke/Hayden maintained this policy until February when, in close coordination with Washington, they too began to unplug Marcos. As the Marcos regime crumbled, Hayden repeated his statement of last year that under ANZUS Australian troops could be sent to help defend the US bases. This amounted to an offer of troops. After Aquino was installed Hayden became the first "world leader" to rush to Manila to announce a 50 per cent hike in econ-

omic aid" and resumption of the Defence Co-operation Program suspended in February. In turn, Marcos and Aquino Defence Minister Juan Ponce Enrile told Hayden what he wanted to know — the US bases would be needed after 1991 to "balance" the Soviet presence in the region. Enrile demurred on a further increase in military aid because the AFP would be getting all it needed from the Pentagon. The Australian working class must oppose the Cold War Laborites'

virtually the entire Australian reformist left joined in celebrating this "made in the USA" coup. Leading the pack are the explicitly anti-Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP), who declared their "critical" support for the Aquino government by claiming "the mass involvement in Marcos' downfall indicates that there will be considerable pressure on the new regime to take into account the demands of the masses of the people" (*Direct Action*, 26 February). Since

compared to the "mass mobilisation" of "people power" in which the Catholic hierarchy under Cardinal Sin and his "Jesuit mafia" channelled the deep, pent-up rage of the Manila masses within strict bourgeois limits. The SWP compares "Cory" favourably with the "right-wing pro-American elements like Enrile and "Doy" Laurel, ignoring the fact that Aquino is one of the country's largest landlords, is the widow of a life-long CIA operative, has blood ties to notorious Marcos cronies, coordinated her every move with Washington and is massively supported by the Manila bourgeoisie.

The Communist Party of Australia's Denis Freney recognised that the "US still pulls the strings" but nevertheless supported Aquino by endorsing the statements of the newly released reputed founder of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), Jose Maria Sison, who has assured Aquino "that he will do whatever he can to work with her" (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 18 March). And the pro-Moscow Socialist Party of Australia, old hands at promoting popular front betrayal at home and abroad, enthused in an editorial (*Guardian*, 5 March 1986) over "a popular revolt" in the Philippines in which the "... deciding factor in ending the regime was the activity of the mass of the people ..." and stated that "The government and the trade unions of this country can play a major part in serving Filipino interests."

## SLL: What US Bases?

The Healyites-without-Healy of Nick Beams' Socialist Labour League (SLL) have headlined "Masses oust Marcos" (*Young Socialist*, 10 March) and hailed the huge "victory mass"

Continued on page twelve



Released Communist Party leaders Bernabe Buscayno (left) and Jose Maria Sison with Aquino.

support for the new "clean" oligarchic Aquino regime and the alliance with the intact Filipino military directed against the oppressed workers and peasants. Black all military aid to Aquino and Enrile!

## Reformists on Aquino Bandwagon

In a striking display of their gut-level social-patriotic identification with the rulers of this white imperialist enclave, who seek to live off the exploitation of the Asian working masses behind the US imperial umbrella,

then they have headlined that "Aquino moves Left" (*Direct Action*, 2 April) and reported sympathetically on the "reform group" RAM in the AFP officer corps who are purging Marcos' generals in order to better crush the insurgency (*Direct Action*, 9 April).

The SWP's ultra-Menshevism necessarily involves conscious and systematic distortion of events and social reality. For them, the hand of Washington is virtually disappeared. The military revolt of Enrile and General Ramos is a minor affair

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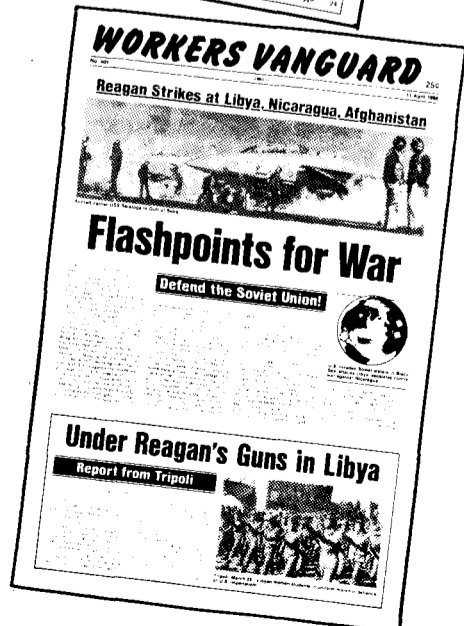
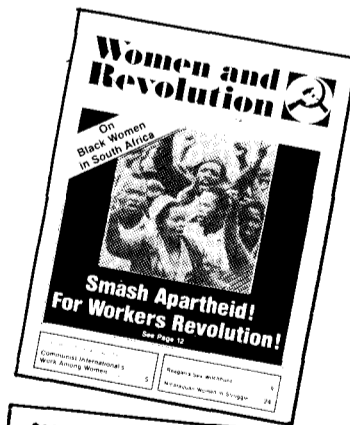
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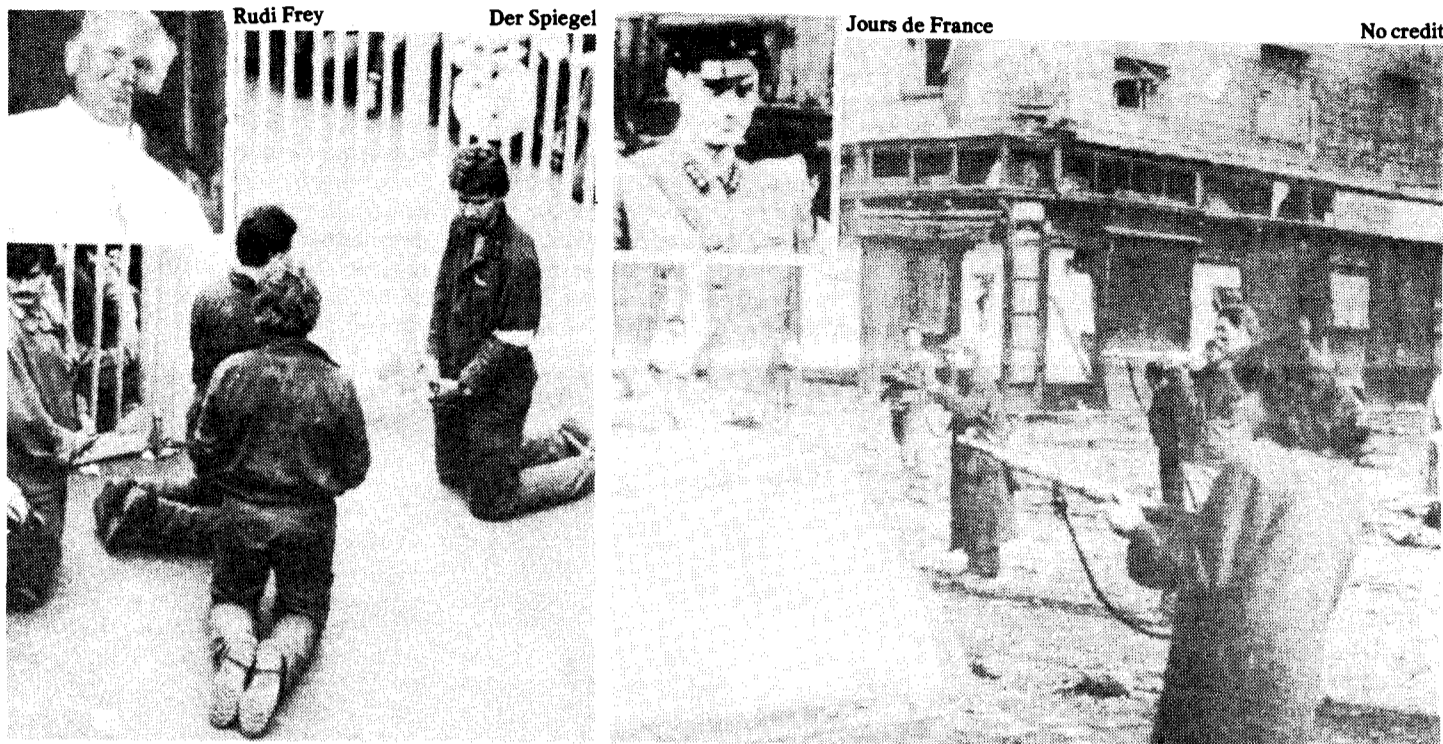
# The Communist League and the Russian Question

The dramatic implosion in the British Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) over the expulsion of its historic "founder leader" Gerry Healy has now torn apart its Australian satellite, the Socialist Labour League (SLL). The WRP had a second split in February when the majority of Mike Banda and Cliff Slaughter refused to recognise the "political authority" of the "International Committee" (IC), the dwindling remnant of Healy's fake "Fourth International" now controlled by David North of the US Workers League. (See "Healyism Implodes", special issue of *Spartacist*, no 36-37, advertised this issue.) In early March a similar ultimatum from the Northite SLL leadership of national secretary Nick Beams provoked a split by a substantial minority, led by Phil Sandford and supporting the Banda/Slaughter WRP.

The minority formed the Communist League (CL) and made an uncertain public debut at meetings in early April entitled, "Trotskyism Betrayed: Healy and the Socialist Labour League", featuring leading WRPer David Bruce. The first issue of its paper *Socialist Press* spoke of the IC's "profound degeneration" going back "at least for 20 years" and denounced key aspects of the Healy cult: the "gross capitulation to bourgeois Arab regimes" like Iraq and Libya, Healy's brain-jumbling "dialectics", "the agent-baiting campaign" against the US Socialist Workers Party under the title "Security and the Fourth International", and the brutal internal regime. While Beams' SLL denies it ever took the Arab despots' blood money, blaming everything on the WRP, the CL denounced its "mercenary relations with Arab regimes" and its bloody "class betrayal" in supporting the Iraqi Ba'athists' murder of 21 Communist Party members in 1978.

The Beams/North IC is aptly labelled "Healyism without Healy", denying everything and renouncing nothing. But the CL has not yet come clean publicly on the SLL's "mercenary relations" while their WRP allies are backtracking on the one million pounds alleged to have been received from Middle Eastern regimes. In the 8 March WRP paper *Workers Press*, one Charlie Pottins' "Comment" column went this far: "If any Libyan money did indeed reach the Workers' Revolutionary Party or its press in the past, then I for one would have welcomed it." It was left to former SLL goon Greg Adler at the 2 April Sydney meeting to relate how he was sent to Iraq in 1979 to collect \$100,000 — incurring Healy's wrath for poaching his preserve! This is but the tip of the iceberg.

Above all the CL must face up to the programmatic legacy of Healyism, centrally on the Russian Question, which presently separates it by a political gulf from Trotskyism. Spartacist League interventions at the Melbourne and Sydney CL meetings which focussed on the Russian Question appear to have hit a nerve. We reprint below a letter from the Melbourne branch of the Communist League, followed by our reply.



**Poland 1981 v Hungary 1956: While Solidarnosc led historically socialist Polish proletariat into arms of Vatican and CIA, Hungarian workers made clear their determination to defend socialism in struggle against Stalinist bureaucracy. Hungarian insurgent leader Col Pal Maleter (Inset) said: "We don't mean to go back to capitalism. We want socialism in Hungary."**

10 April 1986

To the Melbourne branch of the Spartacist (sic) League.

The Melbourne branch of the Communist League has discussed your wish to have some sort of discussion (sic) with us. I have to say that many comrades expect that such discussions would not prove to be fruitful. While all of us wish to clarify our position on the questions you have been raising with us, and would welcome discussion to this end, we all believe that not only is your position on these issues wrong, (Poland, the USSR and Afghanistan) but you do not exhibit a serious desire to analyse these questions from the standpoint of the interests of the international working class. Rather, you are determined to defend a fixed position that your organisation holds. This makes serious discussion difficult.

Our criticism of your position is generally that you reject historical materialist analysis (sic) of the movement and relation of classes in society in favour of idealist contemplation of the movement of ideas. Such a method, which replaces a concrete study of social conditions, the only basis upon which revolutionaries can orient themselves in relation to the working class, with a sectarian dispute over texts. Your inability to understand how and why we have come into existence without a program is a manifestation of this.

Very briefly, in relation to Poland, we are convinced that proletarian opposition to the Stalinist bureaucracy expressed itself, and continues to express itself, through the Solidarity Trade Union. Trotsky and Lenin both clearly understood the distinction between the workers' state, the Party and the class itself. And consequently the need of the working class to have Trade Unions independent of the state, even under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Trotskyists are obliged to support this movement in order to establish a relationship with sections of the working class using

Solidarity as a weapon against the bureaucracy; and obliged to ruthlessly criticise (sic) the policies of the Solidarity leaders, from the standpoint of how to take forward the struggle for genuine workers' democracy. Healy omitted this criticism — opportunistically. You deny support to the masses — as ultra-left sectarians.

In relation to Afghanistan, we are presently discussing issues related to the history of Soviet involvement and the concrete conditions presently in Afghanistan — difficult to ascertain given the rival propaganda machines — and also historical precedents. The question cannot be understood without a very concrete study of these questions.

In relation to the USSR, your advocacy of the political revolution is purely formal, since the whole drift of your propaganda is that the bureaucracy can reform itself under the spontaneous pressure of the Soviet workers, and in the meantime, the Red Army can lead the world revolution. No wonder you have no interest in turning to the working class to build your organisation! relying instead on intervention into other groups, since the crisis of revolutionary leadership will be solved by the Red Army and not by you.

Nevertheless, we believe that these complex questions of program leave much room for clarification and development and would welcome a written response to this letter at the present time. Also, isn't it time you recognised the sterility of the strategical orientation referred to above and found your way to a genuine turn to the working class. Perhaps you could comment on this.

fraternally,  
Andy Blunden  
on behalf of the Melbourne  
branch of the Communist League

30 April 1986

Dear Comrades,

We reply to your letter of 10 April. It is a hallmark of centrism to counterpose "concrete study of social con-

ditions" to the Marxist program. For Trotskyists there is no contradiction between defence of our "fixed position", ie the hard-won programmatic lessons distilled from the historical experience of the class struggle internationally, and the "interests of the working class". Trotsky many times warned against such "anti-sectarianism", in for example "Centrism and the Fourth International":

"The centrist frequently covers up his dawdling by referring to the danger of 'sectarianism', by which he understands not abstract propagandist passivity (of the Bordigist type) but an active concern for purity of principles, clarity of position, political consistency and organisational completeness."

— *Writings, 1933-34*

The Communist League is not "brand new". You have have a history, though Healy trained you to forget it in the service of his wild political gyrations; you defend a program, albeit a program which, as the legacy of Healyism, you understandably have little confidence in.

On the question of the Soviet Union, since 1917 the key dividing line in the workers movement, you have thus far stuck with the anti-Soviet positions of Healyism. Your methodology recalls that of Max Shachtman in 1939-40, co-leader of the petty-bourgeois faction in the then-Trotskyist SWP which was capitulating to imperialist anti-Soviet pressure in a similar period to today. Justifying his opposition to the Soviet invasion of eastern Poland and Finland after the Nazi-Soviet pact, he claimed:

"It is impossible to deduce directly our policy towards a specific war from an abstract characterization of the class character of the state involved in the war, more particularly, from the property forms prevailing in that state. Our policy must flow from a concrete examination of the character of the war in relation to the interests of the international socialist revolution."

— quoted in Trotsky, *From a Scratch to the Danger of Gangrene*, in *In Defence of Marxism*

**Australasian Spartacist**



Shortly after, Shachtman completely abandoned the analysis of the USSR as a degenerated workers state and the defencist programmatic conclusions, ending up two decades later supporting the Bay of Pigs and the Vietnam war. Your letter is striking for the absence of even the most abstract Soviet defencism, instead taking anti-defencist positions over Poland and Afghanistan. The present feverish imperialist war drive aimed primarily at the USSR is a class question: unconditional military defence of the degenerated and deformed workers states against imperialist attack and internal counterrevolution is the acid test for proletarian revolutionaries.

### Stalinophobia and Afghanistan

Your letter reflects the Healyite position that Stalinism is "counter-revolutionary through and through". The Healyites rationalised support to the murder of the Iraqi Stalinists thus; today *Workers News* (19 April) obscenely lies about supposed Soviet "complicity" in Reagan's bombing of Libya. Trotsky in contrast stressed the bureaucracy's contradictory nature:

"... all shades of political thought are to be found among the bureaucracy: from genuine Bolshevism (Ignace Reiss) to complete fascism (F Butenko). The revolutionary elements within the bureaucracy, only a small minority, reflect, passively it is true, the socialist interests of the proletariat. The fascist, counter-revolutionary elements, growing uninterruptedly, express with even greater consistency the interests of world imperialism...."

"If tomorrow the bourgeois-fascist grouping, the 'faction of Butenko', so to speak, should attempt the conquest of power, the 'faction of Reiss' inevitably would align itself on the opposite side of the barricades."

— *The Transitional Program*

It is simply Stalinophobic demagoguery to wilfully misrepresent our call "Hail Red Army in Afghanistan" as a call on the bureaucracy to self-reform and the Red Army to lead the world revolution. We hailed the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan both as a blow in defence of the USSR against imperialist-backed Islamic reaction and because it opened up the historic possibility of the liberation of the Afghan peoples, particularly women from age-old chattel slavery. We were the only tendency not to capitulate to the anti-Soviet hysteria because we based our stand on the Trotskyist program. What you dismiss in "third-camp" fashion as the claims of "rival propaganda machines" was in fact a massive one-sided anti-Soviet propaganda barrage in the imperialist countries. The lurid atrocity tales and wild anti-Soviet fantasies emanating from Kabul embassies, the CIA and the Islamic fanatics in their Peshawar hideouts, and retailed in the captive bourgeois media, were designed to whip up mass popular support for the imperialists' drive for nuclear superiority over the USSR, which began before Afghanistan. Now six years later it is abundantly clear that through the implementation of socially progressive measures the Red Army and its Afghan allies are steadily winning the war against the barbaric feudalists and mullahs who stand for the enslavement of women. Desperate to counter the mujahedeen's reverses, the US is supplying them with Stinger missiles, thus escalating this "proxy war" into a direct US-USSR military confrontation. These are the "concrete conditions presently in Afghanistan" and for Trotskyists there is only one side to take, the side of the Soviet Union against US imperialism. We fear it is not a "study" you are under-

## Proud to be a Healyite

# Who is David North?

For many people in the Banda/Slaughter-led Workers Revolutionary Party who deeply (and quite legitimately) mistrust the entire old leadership, American Workers League head David North has something of a reputation of a stalwart fighter against Healyism. After all, North probably never beat them up, probably didn't throw their daughter down the stairs and probably didn't attend the CC meeting which criminally ratified the monstrous murder of 21 Iraqi Communists by the Ba'ath regime. For his part, North lays claim to the mantle of having started the fight to oust Healy, with his abstract 1982 critique of Healy's "dialectical" gobbledygook. And, he got CIA-baited by Healy. So who is David North?

David North was Gerry Healy's handpicked man for the biggest CIA-baiting operation of them all. Indeed he rose to the top by showing his capacity to CIA-bait former WL head Tim Wohlforth, who got dumped in 1974 after more than ten years as Healy's loyal American accomplice and hatchetman. Here's North's version:

"... the immediate events that directly precipitated the split with Wohlforth led inexorably to the monumental political struggle of *Security and the Fourth International*. ... The extraordinary intervention of the late Joseph Hansen, long-time SWP leader, in defense of Wohlforth's flagrant violation of the Workers League's security — his failure to report the family connections of his personal companion, Nancy Fields, to leading CIA personnel —

taking but rather a test of the winds of social-democratic public opinion.

### Political Revolution and Polish Solidarnosc

For Laborite fake-Trotskyists "political revolution" means the overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy by any force irrespective of its class nature. Thus over Polish Solidarnosc they ended up in a sordid bloc for capitalist counterrevolution with the likes of Reagan, Thatcher and the Vatican. For us it means regeneration of authentic Soviet democracy in the USSR to return it to the road of proletarian internationalism. As Trotsky pointed out, it is thus premised on unconditional defence:

"We must not lose sight for a single moment of the fact that the question of overthrowing the Soviet bureaucracy is for us subordinate to the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR; that the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR is subordinate for us to the question of the world proletarian revolution."

— "The USSR in War", in *In Defence of Marxism*

Solidarnosc went way beyond trade unionism to become a political movement. Its pro-imperialist, clerical nationalist leadership exploited the workers' discontent at the Polish Stalinists' massive bureaucratic mismanagement to mobilise their power as a battering ram on behalf of the CIA, the Vatican and the Western bankers against the Polish workers state and the USSR. While initially a somewhat contradictory movement, by its first congress in September 1981 Solidarnosc had consolidated on a hard

raised under new historical conditions all the unresolved questions surrounding the assassination of Leon Trotsky in August 1940".

— 1984 Foreword, *Trotskyism versus Revisionism*, vol 7

"Security and the Fourth International" is a monstrous multi-year campaign centred on the despicable slander of Joseph Hansen of the reformist American SWP as an "accomplice" in Stalin's murder of Trotsky, but reaching out further and further until just about everyone was supposed to be implicated as a spy for the capitalist and Stalinist secret police (for a full treatment, see "Healyism Implodes", *Spartacist* no 36-37, Winter 1985-86). It echoes the discredited Stalinist lie that Trotsky was killed by his "own people". From the claim that Hansen had a part in setting up Trotsky's assassination by the GPU it's a series of short steps from Hansen to Cannon to Trotsky. It takes only one piece of evidence to dispose of this ridiculous charge: Hansen wrote his supposed FBI spymasters during the post-assassination investigation telling them that correspondence be sent to SWP party headquarters!

A few years ago, North's WL brought suit in an American court against the SWP — shades of Vanessa Redgrave! — for having expelled Healyite provocateur Alan Gelfand. And last spring, the WL's *Bulletin* carried two articles with North's by-line in which he wrote of the completion of "the evolution of the Spartacist group towards fascism".

Who is supposed to believe such

capitalist-restorationist program calling for doing away with central planning, the state monopoly over foreign trade and investment, and collectivised property, and for "free" elections involving bourgeois parties. They wanted Poland into the IMF and out of the Warsaw Pact. Solidarnosc was stuffed full of Vatican dollars and invited notorious Cold Warriors Lane Kirkland and Irving Brown (well-known CIA operative) of the US AFL-CIO to its congress. Its heroes were Pope Wojtyla and fascistic pre-war dictator Pilsudski; it spat on the socialist traditions of the Polish proletariat best represented by Rosa Luxemburg. That is why we said "Stop Solidarity's Counterrevolution!"

The attempt to compare Solidarnosc with the 1956 Hungarian Revolution collapses at the first test. The Central Workers Council of Greater Budapest's founding declaration said:

"We declare our unshaken loyalty to the principles of socialism. We regard the means of production as collective property which we are at all times ready to defend...."

"We demand the abolition of the one-party system and the recognition only of those parties which base themselves on socialism."

— quoted in *Eyewitness in Hungary*, edited by Bill Lomax

Jaruzelski's crackdown on Solidarnosc only froze the situation; the bureaucracy is deeply discredited and despised and we fight for a Polish Trotskyist party to sweep them away through workers political revolution.

Your analysis leaves out one small "concrete condition" of the Polish situation — the whole history of imperialist attempts at capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union and

outlandishly grotesque rubbish? Certainly not the illiterate or ignorant, they're probably too smart for that — only those who long for a new Healy. The purpose of these vile slanders is to build a wall around members to keep them from reading and thinking and discussing politics. And to this cause, David North has devoted his whole political career. North can't even claim to be "born again"; he remains unregenerate in his defence of the "security" set-up, even though he almost fell victim to it, and even denounces any talk of discussion with "revisionists". So how many millions do you have to take from despotic regimes to become a revisionist? And who is a CIA agent — North? Gelfand? Jack Barnes?

As for North's credentials as an intransigent fighter, the introduction in the *Bulletin* to his anti-Healy documents whines that he "was compelled to withdraw the criticisms, without an answer being given, under threat that there would be an immediate breaking off of fraternal relations". Perhaps in a party where nobody ever challenged the "founder leader" this sounds a logical and rational course of action, but it does not say much for the principled communist firmness, not to mention the moral backbone, of North. Then again, it was David North who said (in a 23 January 1984 letter to Mike Banda reprinted in the 5 November 1985 *Bulletin*), "every member of the Workers League is proud to be known as a 'Healyite'!"

— Reprinted from *Workers Hammer*, no 75, January 1986

Eastern Europe. Certainly the demand for trade unions independent of bureaucratic control is integral to the Trotskyist program for proletarian political revolution in the Stalinist-ruled Soviet bloc. But as well as omitting imperialism from your analysis you are guilty of a little terminological sleight-of-hand here, comrades. Solidarnosc's program was for "free trade unions", a slogan long associated with NATO imperialism, the anti-communist cold warriors of the American AFL-CIO, and the CIA. Its open appeal for "free trade unions" in the Soviet bloc was both an arrogant provocation of Moscow and a declaration of ideological solidarity with Western imperialism.

You have combined the objective/liquidationist methodology of Pabloism with the anti-Soviet assumption that every opposition to Stalinism in the workers states must be progressive. Trotskyists establish a relationship with the working class by fighting for leadership on the basis of program. And surely "historical materialist analysis" should take into account which *direction* the class is moving in, the leadership and its program.

Solidarnosc is Reagan, Thatcher and the Pope's favourite union. The WRP landed four square in the camp of Thatcher and the Cold Warriors, setting up the Cold War witchhunt of British miners' leader Arthur Scargill at the 1983 Trades Union Congress for nailing Solidarnosc as "anti-socialist". Scargill's isolation gave Thatcher the green light for her onslaught on the miners, yet the WRP to this day defends its role. This

Continued on page fourteen

The implosion of Healyism was one of the most dramatic reflections of the political impact of the miners strike on the bankrupt perspectives of the British fake left, becoming a lightning rod for the political turmoil in the ostensibly Trotskyist groups. The Banda/Slaughter-led Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) — one of three currently extant — has since the split with Healy being courted by a host of centrist and reformist suitors: Sean Matgamna's Socialist Organiser, Alan Thornett's Socialist Viewpoint, Workers Power, the Socialist Labour Group of Pierre Lambert's OCI/PCI in France. Speaking at the last of a series of classes on Marx's *Capital* in London on 7 March, WRP cadre Cyril Smith said, "There is a regroupment taking place."

The question is: what sort of regroupment? A revolutionary regroupment forging the nucleus of a Trotskyist party is very much on the order in this country today. But what the aforementioned lot have in mind is an anti-Soviet lash-up which could only serve as an obstacle to building a Trotskyist party. For all their quibbling "tactical" and cliquish differences, what unites Thornett, Matgamna and Co is a strident Stalinophobia which on key issues of the international Cold War finds them lined up behind their own bourgeoisie and its Labour lieutenants. Not coincidentally, they are all either buried in or orbiting about the Labour Party and hate the Bolshevik Spartacist League with a vengeance.

Since October 1917, social democracy and all who tail it have been defined by their fundamental hostility to the first workers revolution. As James P Cannon, Trotsky's central collaborator in the decisive 1939-40 struggle to defend the principles of the Fourth International against the Soviet-defeatist Burnham/Shachtman faction, said:

"The question of the Russian revolution — and the Soviet state which is its creation — has drawn a sharp dividing line through the labor movement of all countries for 22 years. The attitude taken toward the Soviet Union throughout all these years has been the decisive criterion separating the genuine revolutionary tendency from all shades and degrees of waverers, backsliders and capitulators to the pressure of the bourgeois world — the Mensheviks, Social Democrats, Anarchists and Syndicalists, Centrists, Stalinists...."

"... That, I repeat, is because it is nothing less than the question of the revolution at various stages of its progressive development or degeneration. We are, in fact, the party of the Russian revolution."  
 ("Speech on the Russian Question", *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party*).

### At the Altar of Cold War Labourism

Today the international Spartacist tendency can likewise proclaim: We are the party of the Russian Revolution! Throughout our twenty-plus years as an independent tendency, we have fought to build a democratic-centralist international committed to the reforging of the Fourth International on its original programmatic foundations. Our perspective of revolutionary regroupment through a process of splits and fusions has been vindicated on varying national terrains — with left-moving elements from Pabloism, Stalinism, feminism, black nationalism and other formations.

Indeed with typical centrist hypocrisy, Workers Power in its dense, eight-page "Open Letter" to the WRP offers up a bastardised version of the regroupment perspective we have argued for over the years, minus "merely" the programmatic content. Where we have emphasised the wide

# Anti-Soviet Lash-up in the Works?

# WRP at the Crossroads



## Scargill, the WRP and Solidarity

### Scargill's letter

Dear Mr Banda,

I have read your letter dated 17 July 1983 and had already read the open letter carried in the News Line.


I have no any ambiguity about my position on Solidarity in Poland. Let me phrase it as follows:

I am opposed to "Solidarity" because I believe it is a "bourgeois" organisation which is the creation of a socialist state.

I do not and never have supported "Solidarity" which has signed "human rights" pacts in Poland, the Soviet Union or anywhere else. But I will not associate myself with those statements, including you who seem paranoid in their determination to smash a socialist system.

I agree with you about the same fervour and unity with other sections of the working class movement in Britain can defeat in the Thatcher Government the policies which makes the Polish administration seem almost amiable by comparison.

Yours faithfully  
 A Scargill  
 President



### Michael Banda replies

(General Secretary of the Workers Revolutionary Party)

Dear Arthur,

I am pleased to receive your letter of 17 July 1983. It is a good example of the kind of "open letter" which you seem to favour. It is also a good example of the kind of "open letter" which you seem to favour.

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Healy's *News Line* set up Arthur Scargill for witchhunting barrage in Tory press. Where do Banda/Slaughter stand on "Scargill, the WRP and Solidarity" now?

programmatic gulf which exists — particularly on the Russian question — in our discussions with WRP comrades, Workers Power jumps in with a proposal for fusion (on a two-month timetable, no less). And this comes from an outfit which sneers at everything positive in the Healyites' history, like the International Committee's struggle against Pabloite revisionism in the 1950s or the 1961

"World Prospect for Socialism" document. Our opportunist opponents despise us for our "sectarian" insistence on the primacy of programme; and they deem it downright "unnatural" that our principled approach actually works! Going through the nuances between various Labour-cretinist groups in voluminous detail, WP tries to dismiss the Spartacist League in a

couple of sentences, claiming: "We will waste few words here on this degenerate and sectarian grouping... Suffice to say that this organisation broke with any semblance of Trotskyism when in 1981 it called for the crushing of Solidarnosc by Soviet tanks. It is a stalinophile cult". They forget to add that we also eat first-born Christian babies for breakfast! Nonetheless it slips out that Thornett's WSL lost "two splits to the Spartacists" and that we engage in "provocative manoeuvres" with opportunist groups — ie establishing principled relations with oppositions where there is programmatic agreement (doubtless a reference to a founding WP cadre won to the Spartacist League). Of course WP hate our stand in defence of the Polish deformed workers state against a movement even WP acknowledged to be capitalist-restorationist. (Lately Solidarnosc has even come out for the creation of a stock market!) Notably the "Open Letter's" one grudging concession to the Trotskyist obligation to "unconditionally defend all the workers' states against attacks from imperialism" stops short of any reference to *internal* counterrevolution. The Trotskyist perspective of proletarian political revolution to oust the Stalinist bureaucracies is necessarily premised on being the best, most



April 1966 London International Committee conference: Mike Banda and Cliff Slaughter standing, Garry Healy seated second from left.



consistent fighters against any counterrevolutionary danger.

Over the years these outfits have engaged in a series of incestuous opportunist marriages, each more rightist than the last. In 1975 WP fused with Matgamna — when the former was still openly state-capitalist and the latter nominally Soviet-defencist, a difference they dismissed as a “tenth-rate question” — to break apart a year later. In the “Open Letter” WP whines that Thornett rejected its entreaties in 1979 only to carry through “an unprincipled fusion with the rapidly rightwards moving Matgamna” (they should know!). At the time of the Thornett/Matgamna alliance — which lasted all of two years — we dubbed it “a fusion fixed on the terrain of the Cold War and formalised at the altar of the social-democratic ‘broad church’”. As they continue their game of musical chairs, these groups succeed only in plunging deeper into the cesspit of Cold War Labourism.

### Alan Thornett: a Wretched Scab

And that is now the trajectory of the Banda/Slaughter WRP. As the saying goes, “Tell me who your friends are, and I’ll tell you who you are.” Having finally drawn some conclusions about Healy and Healyism parallel to ones we argued twenty years ago, Banda/Slaughter now try to treat us like unwelcome ghosts. Instead they solidarise with the likes of Thornett. When a Spartacist supporter denounced Thornett as a scab at a 5 March WRP meeting in Leeds, Cliff Slaughter labelled it a “lie” and denied Thornett had scabbed.

As Trotsky observed, centrists abhor calling things by their right name. Yes, working during a national strike is scabbing (see *Spartacist Britain* no 15, October 1979). Faced with a right-wing backlash at his BL Cowley factory in response to the AUEW’s national one- and two-day strike calls in 1979, Thornett caved in rather than put his union position at risk in an election. He then went around campaigning among other union officials at Cowley, including senior steward Bob Fryer, to talk them out of setting up a picket line and to join the scab elements instead. As Thornett’s *Socialist Press* (5 September 1979) put it ever so politely, at the time, “The decision to pull back [from striking and picketing] once the action was lost and not hand over to the right wing was a difficult one”. Even as wretched a Stalinist labour traitor as Derek Robinson at BL Longbridge put to shame this self-styled “Trotskyist workers’ leader”, when he faced down a similar scab backlash

Workers Press



Alan “the scab” Thornett.

May/June 1986



Down with Islamic reaction. Afghan woman soldier (right). Trotskyists say: Halt Red Army in Afghanistan.

and organised a picket line which stopped the scabs. Within the WSL, Thornett’s scabbing was opposed by leading cadre, who subsequently formed the Leninist Faction.

Thornett’s evolution should be a sober warning to WRP members today. He too broke from Healy’s lunacies. Our initial appraisal of the Thornett split was that it was to the right, based on Thornett’s opposition to the WRP standing candidates in the 1974 election against the Labour Party. (In fact we extended critical support to the WRP candidates.) Thornett’s rightist trajectory was soon confirmed. In its early period the WSL attracted numerous leftward-moving elements. But Thornett shunned the struggle for programme, moving progressively deeper into the embrace of Labourism. In two waves, first with the Trotskyist Faction and then the Leninist Faction, those within the WSL seeking Trotskyist politics were won to regroupment with the Spartacist League, leaving Thornett and the WSL traumatised shells. Meanwhile Thornett’s fake “mass” Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement, itself a second-rate version of Healy’s All Trades Unions Alliance (ATUA), became increasingly apolitical and economist, necessarily adapting to the Labour “left”. Finally through the vehicle of his fusion with Matgamna, Thornett and his rump of a group took the dive holus-bolus into the Labour Party.

Slaughter is no babe in the woods. He refuses to criticise Thornett because he is pushing the WRP in the same direction. Many WRP members protest that they have no desire to liquidate into the Labour Party. Well and good. But it is programme that counts. At a recent ATUA meeting in London WRP speakers assiduously avoided any reference to the Labour traitors until it was raised by a Spartacist spokesman. After the meeting ATUA spokesman Peter Gibson boasted to our comrades how his TGWU branch had “congratulated” Ron Todd on his stand on the print strike! And when the WRP does take up the Labour traitors in *Workers Press*, it is always careful to restrict its attacks to the right wing, amnestying and at times applauding the “lefts”. The 29 February (sic) *Workers Press* hails Scargill for “principled leadership”, “a leadership that would not compromise”. This “make the lefts fight” line is the classic recipe for Labour liquidationism: it is the “lefts”, particularly now with the memory of Kinnock’s scabberding on the miners

still vivid, that are the transmission belt for restoring credibility in Labour among the masses. For all their innumerable “tactical” differences, none of the fake Trotskyists accept the need to split the Labour Party, breaking its working-class base away from the pro-capitalist reformists of “left” and right persuasions. They prostitute the Leninist tactic of critical electoral support aimed at exposing the Labour misleaders into a perspective of strategic support “against the Tories” at all times, prolonging rather than destroying the illusions of the workers in Labour. Thus, all of them, the WRP included, called for a vote to Callaghan in 1979 when he stood on the record of the Lib-Lab pact and the Social Contract.

### Afghanistan: An Acid Test

When the WRP does attack “lefts” like Scargill it is from the right. At the same Leeds meeting where Slaughter defended Thornett’s scabbing, he studiously avoided any reply to our attack on the WRP’s own scabby role in setting up Arthur Scargill for a right-wing witchhunt at the 1983 Blackpool TUC. With its carefully timed “expose” of Scargill’s correct opposition to Polish Solidarnosc as “anti-socialist”, the WRP provided grist for the mill of Fleet Street and vicious anti-Communists like Lord Chapple. Yet in all the many pages of recent “reexamination” there has been not a word on this grotesque incident by Banda/Slaughter. This is because the WRP to this day sticks by its anti-Trotskyist support to counterrevolutionary Solidarnosc.

Likewise the WRP refuses to touch Healy’s anti-Soviet stand on Afghanistan. The imperialist furore over the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan was the trigger for Cold War II, escalating anti-Soviet war preparations. As such it was an acid test for the left. And without exception every fake-Trotskyist group landed on the side of pro-imperialist anti-Sovietism. Thornett’s *Socialist Press* (5 March 1980) hailed “Mass resistance to Soviet invaders”, even as it confessed that the “mass resistance” was “animated by profoundly reactionary Islamic ideas”. Matgamna was so virulently anti-Soviet that he even attacked Thatcher from the right, for refusing to implement Reagan’s anti-Soviet oil pipeline boycott in 1982. The SLG’s French brain-trusters not only support the feudalistic Islamic rebels but have gone so far in the direction of “CIA socialism” that they

are on the CIA tit via their functionaries in the Cold War Force Ouvriere union federation (see *Workers Hammer* no 75, January 1986). Workers Power chose the occasion of Afghanistan to adopt a formally defencist stance towards the Soviet Union, but nonetheless stood with the mob in condemning the Soviet intervention.

And the WRP? An article entitled “The Kremlin’s counter-revolution in Afghanistan” in the June 1985 *Labour Review* denounced the Soviet intervention in the bloodcurdling language of Murdoch’s *Sun*: “the Kremlin generals have committed the Soviet forces to the perpetration of horrific brutalities disguised with the fiction of ‘international socialism’”. Even as it describes a feudalistic atrocity against Soviet and Afghan troops near Peshawar in Pakistan (a primary feudalistic base) the article condemns “the Kremlin” for “an act of aggression on foreign territory”. Not surprisingly there is only one passing reference in this entire anti-Communist tirade to the horrendously oppressed status of women in Afghanistan — and none to the changes wrought by the Red Army intervention!

If Banda/Slaughter were seriously concerned about Healy’s abominable attitude towards the woman question they would spend less time on endless bourgeois-moralist articles on “revolutionary morality” and “reexamine” their reactionary position on Afghanistan. But there has been not one word to date criticising the line in this article. For Trotskyists support to the Soviet army in Afghanistan should be an elementary political reflex. Trotsky/Cannon’s struggle against the Burnham/Shachtman “third camp” opposition was provoked by the imperialist campaign against the Soviet invasion of “little, democratic Finland”. Drawing the hardest line against social-democratic anti-communism, Trotsky declared: “The safeguarding of the socialist revolution comes before formal, democratic principles.”

And the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan has a far more progressive social content than Stalin’s action in Finland in 1940, where the Kremlin simply wanted a slice of territory for defensive military purposes, moreover in the context of an alliance with Nazi Germany. A victory for the Islamic-feudalist insurgency in Afghanistan would not only mean a hostile, imperialist-allied state on the USSR’s southern border, but the reimposition of feudal barbarism —

Continued on page thirteen

# Marcos...

Continued from page six

(disappearance) of political opponents.

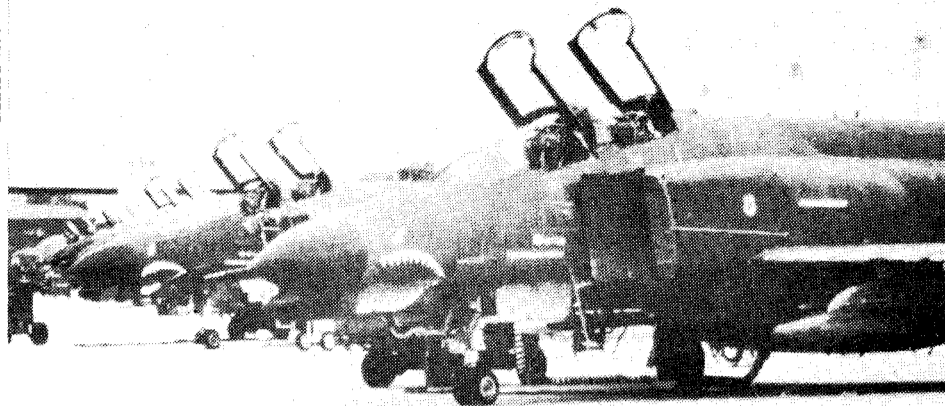
The elections of February 7 were a contest between rival bourgeois factions, both equally pro-imperialist. But between them lay the corpse of Benigno Aquino, assassinated by Marcos's security police upon his arrival at Manila airport in August 1983. If "Ninoy" alive was the chief candidate for US replacement puppet, Ninoy dead came to symbolize the tens of thousands who have perished at Marcos's hands during 20 years of iron-fisted rule. Vowing to avenge her husband's death, Cory Aquino threatened to put Marcos on trial for murder. Marcos therefore knew that it was not only his wealth and power, but his presidential head that was at stake in the outcome — and he spared no extreme of fraud and terror to prevent his opponent from winning.

These gangland tactics fueled popular rage. And while the opposition coalition was put together by the US, although Cory Aquino coordinated her every political move with the CIA, in the eyes of the Filipino masses, the widow of a slain national redeemer was taking on a despised tyrant. It was out of pent-up hatred for this used-up US strongman that millions of Filipinos refused Marcos's bribes, dodged his bullets and guarded ballot boxes with their lives to prevent the dictator's henchmen from stuffing or stealing them. What started as an electoral hoax designed to prepare an "orderly succession" in the Philippines became the occasion for a volcanic eruption of popular discontent that Marcos could not repress without massive killing and Washington could not contain without sending Ferdinand and Imelda the way of "Baby Doc" Duvalier.

Although the elections brought the Filipino masses into the streets, it was firmly under bourgeois leadership. This posed a dilemma for the Philippine left, which had a hard time deciding what attitude to take toward the Aquino/Laurel "Laban" candidacy. The "Bayan" (Nation) coalition, the Communist Party and its National Democratic Front eventually came out for boycott, but they kept their heads down during the campaigning. Moreover, a number of prominent Bayan leaders "temporarily" resigned from the organization in order to campaign for the opposition. The reason for this confusion is simple: fighting not for a socialist program but on a purely "democratic" platform, the main left groups had difficulty explaining their political differences with Laban. Yet they could not participate, because the whole sham "democratic" exercise was designed to defeat the Communists. And in fact, the yellow flags of Aquino/Laurel managed to gain ascendancy over the red flags of the left in the streets of Manila and elsewhere.

Since the election, the Philippine left has continued to stand aloof from developments. The *New York Times* (24 February) quoted the secretary general of Bayan, Leandro Alejandro, saying of the rebellion by Enrile and Ramos that "This is a war of the ruling class". An Aquino government would be a return to the oligarchic party politics of the pre-Marcos era, said a CP source. Yet Alejandro did go to Camp Crame to negotiate with Enrile, who had arrested the Bayan leader in demonstrations in 1983 after the assassination of Aquino. What neither the CP/NDF nor Bayan did was to take advantage of the division within the bourgeoisie to seize control of proletarian districts and mobilize the masses in their own class interest. Bound by

Matsumoto-Syngma



US Phantom jets at Clark Air base. US bases out! Defend USSR/Vietnam!.

their Stalinist popular-front programs, even though they can't get a coalition with significant bourgeois forces, the Philippine left has been reduced to silence.

The US' main concern in the Philippines is still to prevent the growth of "Communism", particularly given the strategic importance of the Clark Air Force Base and the US Navy base at Subic Bay. These are the largest American military installations outside the United States, employing tens of thousands, and the linchpin to US strategy in Asia. At a press conference on February 11, Reagan declared these bases vital to "the Western world" in order to ensure imperialist control of 16 "chokepoints" controlling vital sea lanes. It is by dominating these passages that the Americans hope to keep the Soviet navy bottled up in the event of nuclear war. And they are particularly concerned by the Soviets' access to former US facilities at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam.

With the installation of Aquino/Laurel the US has temporarily managed to ride a wave of popular discontent, replacing what Warsaw's *Trybuna Ludu* accurately termed a "now uncomfortable and moreover insubordinate dictator" with a new face while maintaining American control unharmed. A fight against imperialist domination and the anti-Soviet war drive which determines the life of the Philippines, described by the London *Economist* as an "archipelagic aircraft carrier", requires class struggle against popular-front illusions and for workers revolution, led by Trotskyist parties, from the Philippines to the US. The "special relationship" of American and Filipino workers must be that of proletarian internationalism, of a common fight for the rebirth of the Fourth International.

— Reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* no 398, 28 February 1986

## Social Patriots...

Continued from page seven

presided over by Cardinal Sin as a sign of "the power of the Philippines revolution"! At the same time Beams has attacked the CPP's stagist program and talked of the need for "permanent revolution" and a "Trotskyist" party. This was an attempt at "orthodoxy" is essentially determined by factional considerations in the recent SLL split and is utterly cynical. After all the SLL for years has been decisively subordinated, politically and financially, to various Arab bourgeois regimes. In any case Beams' version of permanent revolution in the Philippines is a nationalist, Cold War caricature of Trotskyism. The theory of the permanent revolution is profoundly internationalist, which should be nowhere clearer than in the Philippines where life at every

level is determined by imperialist domination and the anti-Soviet war drive centred on the presence of the two largest US military bases outside North America. These bases were the staging posts for the genocidal war against Indochina and are now the bottom line of both ANZUS and the ASEAN bloc. But the SLL's virulent anti-Sovietism leads Beams, like the SWP and the CPA, to essentially ignore the US bases and their critical role in Cold War II.

The endorsement of the Aquino government by the Australian reformist left represents more than simply their usual chronic Menshevik tailing of the "mass movement" and the "progressive national" bourgeoisie. By downplaying or ignoring the bases and Aquino's oft-repeated total commitment to them in their enthusiasm for "people power", the reformists overtly identify themselves with the interests of racist Australian imperialism and its US big brother. If you want to stay inside Hawke's Cold War social-democratic consensus then you have to duck the central class question in the region — the defence of Vietnam and the Soviet Union against imperialist aggression. That means de facto support to the US bases at home and in the Philippines. That means hailing as a "revolution" a "made in the USA" coup designed to stabilise Philippine capitalism, derail and then crush all resistance by the workers and peasants to Aquino's IMF-inspired starvation policies in the name of "democracy", and preserve the US military bases targeting Vietnam and the Soviet Union.

The essential anti-Sovietism underpinning all the cheerleading for Aquino was inevitably best captured by the "third campist" International Socialists (IS). Their paper *The International Socialist* (March, 1986) ran a front-page headline "Down with all Tyrants" (1) and carried a rabid anti-Soviet diatribe claiming that Moscow was Marcos' "last friend". Which is presumably why he is sitting in Honolulu as the guest of the US government! Moscow's pathetic diplomatic overtures to Marcos flow from the Kremlin's dangerous pursuit of "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism which means among other things not disturbing the peace in US neo-colonies like the Philippines. But at least the conservative bureaucrats in the Kremlin can recognise a CIA-engineered coup when they see one, unlike Australian reformists. But for the IS Reagan has truly smitten down a tyrant and for them the biggest tyrant in the world is of course Mikhail Gorbachev. The IS states that "Russia is just as much an imperialist power as the US and just as prepared to back the most brutal regimes..." but that "Even politicians as reactionary and stupid as Ronald Reagan could see that he [Marcos] had stolen [the election]..." Time and again these rabid Russia-haters act as aggressive mouthpieces for imperialism in the build-up to World War III.

To cover their support for "Cory"

the local reformists are sheltering behind the "authority" of Sison and in late March toured Etta Rosales of the CCP-influenced "Bayan" (Nation) coalition. At her Sydney meeting Rosales proclaimed the Aquino ascension a "big victory" for the Filipino people and personally repudiated Bayan's boycott of the elections as "isolating". Indeed the main groups of the left, wedded for decades to promoting a "democratic" revolution in alliance with sections of the bourgeoisie rather than mobilising the working class in its own interests around a revolutionary communist program, have been marginalised by events. This is the bitter fruit of popular frontism.

Nonetheless, since the fall of Marcos a wave of worker-peasant unrest has swept the country, highlighted by a bitter strike at the US bases themselves by the 22,000-strong Filipino workforce. With the state apparatus of Philippine capitalism in considerable turmoil and mounting class struggle the potential is there for working class-led struggle to overthrow 90 years of colonial and semi-colonial domination by the US. But this potential is in grave danger of being squandered by the CPP with their illusions in a bloc with the so-called "patriotic" wing of the bourgeoisie. While Aquino and Enrile have demanded that the guerrillas of the New Peoples Army lay down their arms the CPP has issued a welter of contradictory public statements doubtless reflecting internal disputes. But it is apparent that the CPP leadership is tilting toward "critical" support toward the Aquino government whose very reason for existence is to protect US imperialism's Pacific watch. This is tantamount to accepting continued American hegemony and is the road to annihilation.

Even more importantly the CPP-influenced union federation, the KMU (May First Movement) which groups hundreds of thousands of urban and rural workers, has endorsed the appointment of an ex-management consultant "Bobbitt" Sanchez as Aquino's Labour minister — a pledge in advance to attempt to police the militant workers for "Cory" and the IMF. The task of achieving genuine national independence, most immediately driving out the US bases, and the fight for the complete social emancipation of the workers and peasants through proletarian revolution requires above all the leadership of a revolutionary workers party, Philippines section of a reborn Fourth International. ■

## Flashpoints...

Continued from page two

into a bunch of Rambos, itching to reinvade Vietnam or go into Nicaragua or the Crimea. In reality, the "Vietnam syndrome" — the revulsion produced by that long, losing, dirty colonial war — remains very much alive in this country. Even after Reagan pulled out all the stops for contra aid, polls show a large majority in this country still oppose it. They know it's a major step toward sending in US combat troops. And that they don't want, in a big way.

It was not only Vietnam which turned the American people against foreign military adventures. Reagan can't even overcome the "Lebanon syndrome". When the US sent a small contingent of Marines to Beirut following the Israeli invasion of 1982, expecting to cow the contentious Arabs and impose a Pax Americana in the region, a one-man truck bomb that blew away 240 US soldiers was enough to end it. The strong popular reaction

Australasian Spartacist



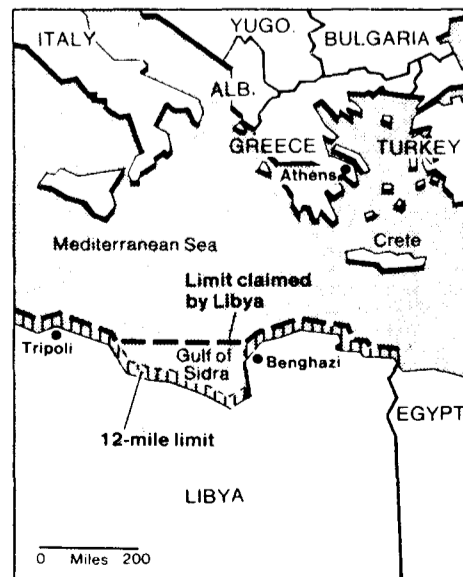
at home was to blame Reagan for wasting the lives of American youth. Washington managed to get out of this tight spot by its rape of the black Caribbean island of Grenada. But a few months later the "macho man" in the White House ate crow and withdrew the Marines from Lebanon.

There is no stomach in this country for a military adventure in which Americans, not just foreign hirelings, will be killed. And they will be killed, by the hundreds and perhaps thousands, if the United States invades Nicaragua. Social democrat Irving Howe noted: "Consider the probable costs of an invasion: significant, perhaps largescale resistance at home, with the campuses aflame once more and many churches aroused as never before" (*New York Times*, 3 April). We have already seen a revival of student protest on the campuses, mainly against apartheid in South Africa. But America's rulers vow they will have no repeat of the '60s: they're out to crush in the egg any radical student dissidence.

While campus protests may upset the men in the Pentagon war room and CIA headquarters, it does not threaten their power. Years of mass student demonstrations, building takeovers and campus strikes didn't stop American imperialism from killing two million Vietnamese. The notion that the antiwar movement forced the US to withdraw from Vietnam is a myth peddled for their own self-serving purposes by both rad-lib "doves" and right-wing "hawks". The former want to claim victory for their popular-front alliance with bourgeois defeatist Democrats, while the latter want to hide the fact that the US armed forces were beaten on the battlefield by the incredible heroism and sacrifice of the Vietnamese peasants and workers.

The campus-centred radicalism of the '60s never went beyond protest because it failed to link up with the one social power which can destroy the imperialist colossus from within: the organized working class. Now, as American rulers escalate toward World War III with Russia, we are experiencing an upsurge in working-class resistance to Reagan reaction on the home front. Ever since the PATCO air controllers union was smashed in 1981 (while the wretched AFL-CIO tops stood by), US capitalism has waged a "one-sided class war" against the labor movement. However, a series of militant strikes in recent months have courageously taken on the bosses and their state, and defied the International labor traitors, from Lane Kirkland on down: the long and bitter Hormel strike, the hard-fought battle of predominantly Mexican canner workers in Watsonville, California, TWA flight attendants standing up to notorious Wall Street raider Carl Icahn.

Significantly, the recent strike wave



**Naked provocation: US Navy spy ships were six miles inside Soviet waters, probing Sevastopol naval base (right). Gulf of Sidra (left), scene of US acts of war against Libya.**

May/June 1986

# TELEGRAM

25 March 1986

Colonel Muammar el-Qaddafi  
Chief of State  
Tripoli, Libya

We deeply respect and support just cause of Libyan independence and territorial integrity against assault by US imperialist aggression.

Spartacist League/US  
International Spartacist tendency

has also included workers at major armaments producers such as Lynn, Massachusetts GE, which makes turbine engines for US warplanes, and Colt Industries in Hartford, Connecticut, manufacturers of the standard-issue M-16 rifle for the American infantry. Despite all the hoopla about a "new patriotism" abroad in the land, these workers are willing to stand up to the Pentagon. True, they are fighting first of all to defend themselves against union-busting and wage-gouging. But the war at home against the workers, black and Hispanic poor has the same root cause as US war provocations around the globe: the drive of decaying capitalism to destroy the Soviet Union.

The same force which is sabotaging the workers' struggle from within is also mobilizing them for war: the rabidly anti-Communist labor bureaucracy and its masters in the Democratic Party of American capitalism. There is no future for humanity under a system in which an insane warmonger like Ronald Reagan has his finger on the nuclear button. The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, coming out of the slaughterhouse of the first imperialist world war, opened the road to a future without war, social oppression and capitalist exploitation. Only an American workers revolution, led by a communist vanguard party, can prevent World War III.

— Reprinted from *Workers Vanguard*, no 401, 11 April 1986

## Report from Tripoli...

Continued from page five

were burned. This was courageously resisted by some students. We also found that it was virtually impossible to find any papers or reading material in languages other than Arabic, and that even at Tripoli airport announcements were not translated into other languages. Even more disturbing were

*New York Times*



the posters we noticed as soon as we arrived at the airport, of American missiles with the Star of David painted on them, thereby identifying US imperialism with the Jewish people.

Libya thus remains a backward country which has to depend on the export of its only source of wealth, oil. And this subordination to the ups and downs of the world capitalist system — which led last year to the expulsion of 30,000 Tunisian workers, made the scapegoats for food shortages — cannot be overcome within the borders of a country of four million people, still suffering from the legacy of decades of imperialist exploitation. This can only be overcome through international proletarian revolution to open up the perspective of worldwide socialist economic planning. In particular, it is the duty of the proletariat of the advanced capitalist countries to militantly struggle against its own bourgeoisie's attempt to reenslave the semicolonial peoples and restore capitalism to the deformed workers states. The position of revolutionary communists toward Libya under imperialist guns today is akin to that expressed by Leon Trotsky, co-leader with Lenin of the Soviet Union, in relation to Mexico in 1938 at a time of acute hostility and threats from Britain and the US over the Mexican government's nationalization of its oil fields. Trotsky wrote:

"The international proletariat has no reason to identify its program with the program of the Mexican government. Revolutionists have no need of changing color, adapting themselves, and rendering flattery in the manner of the GPU school of courtiers, who in a moment of danger will sell out and betray the weaker side. Without giving up its own identity, every honest working class organization of the entire world, and first of all in Great Britain, is duty-bound to take an irreconcilable position against the imperialist robbers, their diplomacy, their press, and their fascist hirelings."

— "Mexico and British Imperialism", 5 June 1938 (*Writings 1937-38*)

In a statement delivered to Libyan officials on departure, we made very clear the political context of our trip and our aims:

"The terrorist actions of the US imperialists against Libya are part and parcel of the war preparations of the USA and NATO forces against the Soviet Union, Nicaragua, Cuba, Afghanistan, Poland, and any other country that is perceived as an obstacle to imperialist domination."

In leaving Tripoli, we pledged to "undertake every effort to propagandize the need for the world working class to take the side of Libya against US imperialism".

The war drive of Reagan, Thatcher & Co is aimed at restoring untrammelled imperialist domination all over the world, by "rolling back" the expropriation of capitalism in the degenerated and deformed workers states and reestablishing in full their sway over the former colonial

subjects. In their mad pursuit of this counterrevolutionary end they are quite ready to blow the world apart. Let's stop them! Workers of the world, unite to smash the capitalist system! Open the road to a peaceful, free world where every human being can enjoy life!

— Reprinted from *Workers Vanguard* no 401, 11 April 1986

## WRP...

Continued from page eleven

directed centrally against women — the veil, the bride price. The Soviet military occupation raises the possibility of a social revolution in this wretchedly backward country — where mullahs outnumber industrial workers by almost ten-to-one — a possibility which did not exist before.

Instead, in the language of the imperialists, the WRP (and the rest of the fake-Trotskyist left) bemoans the infringement of the right of self-determination of Afghanistan and rails against Soviet "foreign aggression". Even over Finland and Poland, Trotsky insisted that the right of self-determination was subordinate to the defence of the Soviet Union; but the Afghan peoples do not even constitute a nation in any real sense of the term but a pre-bourgeois collection of tribal groupings. As for the Soviet army crossing "foreign borders", this too is an old question. In his "Speech on the Russian Question" Cannon argued against Burnham/Shachtman:

"The contention that we should change our analysis of the social character of the Soviet state and our attitude toward its defense because the Red Army violated the Polish border is even more absurd than to base such changes on the Hitler pact. The Polish invasion is only an incident in a war, and in war borders are always violated... The inviolability of borders — all of which were established by war — is interesting to democratic pacifists and to nobody else."

In the Russo-Polish war of 1920, the question of a Soviet military conquest to aid and initiate a Polish workers revolution was purely a question of tactics and the relationship of forces, and nothing else. To be sure, there is a river of blood between the Red Army of Trotsky and the Red Army of Stalin/Gorbachev, but particularly in dealing with the question of the peoples of the East Trotsky noted:

"It is true that in the sphere of national policy, as in the sphere of economy, the Soviet bureaucracy still continues to carry out a certain part of the progressive work, although with immoderate overhead expenses. This is especially true of the backward nationalities of the Union, which must of necessity pass through a more or less prolonged period of borrowing, imitation and assimilation of what exists. The bureaucracy is laying down a bridge for them to the elementary benefits of bourgeois, and in part even pre-bourgeois culture."

— *The Revolution Betrayed*

In those sections of Afghanistan liberated by the Red Army, the women have had the opportunity to traverse not decades, but centuries — afforded the right to literacy, to discard the veil, even to join the army where they are among the most ferocious fighters against the CIA's mercenary barbarians. And only a few short miles across the border is Soviet Central Asia, which offers a beacon to the oppressed women of the entire region. Only those completely blinded by imperialist anti-Sovietism could refuse to hail the Red Army intervention in Afghanistan from the standpoint of human progress and social justice. Yet that is the stand of the WRP and

Continued on page fourteen

the rest of the fake Trotskyists.

What the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan emphasises, as the quote from Trotsky above makes clear, is the *contradictory* character of the Stalinist bureaucracy — which the WRP claims to acknowledge but in practice repudiates. Both in its support to the reactionary forces against the Red Army in Afghanistan and in its support to Polish Solidarnosc the WRP and its fake-Trotskyist allies choose the side of outright bourgeois reaction against Stalinism — and against the workers states. We say: Hail Red Army against Afghan reaction! Extend the social gains of October to the Afghan peoples!

**Return to the Road of Trotskyism**

Had the Banda/Slaughter WRP undertaken a thorough repudiation of Healy's material subordination to a host of Middle Eastern sheiks and colonels, it should have led them to reconsider their reactionary line of support to the Afghan anti-Soviet rebels as well. Likewise it would have meant a repudiation of their stab in the back to Arthur Scargill on behalf of Thatcher/MacGregor and a questioning of their support to Solidarnosc which politically paved the way to it. None of this is taking place. Instead the WRP is backtracking across the board. In reply to a challenge by Sean Matgamna for the WRP to explicitly repudiate its prostitution to Libyan finance, the "Comment" column in the 8 March *Workers Press* says, "If any Libyan money did indeed reach the Workers Revolutionary Party or its press in the past, then I for one would have welcomed it." If? Even the IC's Control Commission reports alleged receipt of well over a million pounds from various Arab governments. The article goes on to virulently slander Matgamna for "organising an anti-socialist campaign against the WRP". This is crap! It was Matgamna who was taken to court by the WRP's Vanessa Redgrave for telling the simple truth. We offered him financial and other support at the time (which this unprincipled centrist refused).

The WRP has taken one step forward, only to proceed two steps backward. It has broken with Healyism, but not with Healy's sinister embrace of virtually every reactionary regime and movement on the borders of the Soviet Union. Now it is moving rapidly in the direction of mainstream Labour-loyal fake Trotskyism. It is virtually indis-

**SLL Admits Printing Fascistic Bell of Saigon**

29 April — In April and May last year the Hawke government unleashed gangs of fascistic Vietnamese thugs against left and labour meetings called to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the victory of the Vietnamese Revolution. In addition an attache to the Vietnamese embassy was attacked on the steps of Canberra's Parliament House. Twenty-two students from Vietnam studying at university in Canberra were terrorised, and two had to be hospitalised. The WWF hall in Sydney was attacked as these reactionary scum tried to get at Vietnamese embassy personnel inside, and retired wharfie George Bliss was knifed in the assault. The line on defence of the Vietnamese Revolution and the right of the labour movement to organise was being drawn in blood as the losers from Saigon and their imperialist sponsors in Canberra sought revenge for their defeat at the hands of the heroic Vietnamese workers and peasants.

The Spartacist League fought for union-centred defence guards to smash the fascist vermin and to

defend these meetings. In Melbourne on 7 May we successfully held our meeting, despite a siege by over 200 of these rightist thugs screaming "kill the communists". We had to cancel our 10 May meeting in Sydney when the local union officials of all political stripes refused official union support to the defence effort, this despite considerable support among the union ranks, especially among maritime workers. We were quite bitter about this and accepted this defeat only reluctantly. One week later on 17 May we were there when, under a banner reading "Solidarity with Vietnam", over 250 mainly maritime workers assembled at the WWF hall, a vindication of our campaign. The fascistic thugs didn't dare show their faces.

It is therefore with considerable anger and revulsion that we have found out that, for a time at least, the most extreme instigator of the fascistic terror, the Vietnamese-language paper *The Bell of Saigon*, was printed in the party printshop of the Socialist Labour League

(SLL)! At a public meeting of the SLL in Melbourne on 24 April, in the very same room at the YWCA where we held our Vietnam forum last year, SLL spokesman Richard Phillips blithely admitted: "*The Bell of Saigon* — ah yes. It was printed by the Socialist Labour League..." — this as part of a turn by the SLL toward "commercial enterprise, commercial print work".

We don't know at this time whether the SLL printed the particular edition of *The Bell of Saigon* which stated that whoever "exterminates a communist is a hero" (26 April 1985) — but we certainly wouldn't be surprised. Printing this fascistic rag in their party printshop exposes the SLL's paper defence of Vietnam for the utter fraud that it is. This corrupt, anti-working class act pitted them against the most class-conscious elements of the Australian proletariat. The SLL should be denounced and reviled for this sordid action wherever they show their faces in the left and labour movement. ■

tinguishable from the rest in its uncritical adulation of the Green nationalist IRA, even selling *An Phoblacht* on its literature tables. "Reexamination" is not a neutral process, but an active struggle for programme. Comrades of the WRP, you stand at a political crossroads: one road leads to anti-Soviet social democracy, the other to the Trotskyism you professed more than twenty years ago. You must choose.

— Reprinted from *Workers Hammer*, no 77, March 1986

**Communist League...**

Continued from page nine

treacherous attack on Scargill, it may or may not have occurred to you, in aiding Thatcher against the heroic miners in fact worked against the prospects for proletarian political revolution in the USSR and the deformed workers states. To quote comrade Trotsky:

"The proletariat of a backward country was fated to accomplish the first socialist revolution. For this historic privilege, it must, according to all evidences, pay with a second supplementary revolution — against bureaucratic absolutism. The program of the new revolution depends to a great extent upon the moment when it breaks out, upon the level which the country has attained, and to a great degree upon the international situation." (our emphasis)

— *The Revolution Betrayed*

For Trotsky the proletarian political revolution in the Soviet Union had a crucial international dimension and was directly bound up with the victory of the social revolution in other countries in the West. And we note, comrades, that on this question, the question of the struggle against imperialism and Australian imperialism in particular, you had very little to say either in your public forums or in your letter to us. Still, what you have said gives some indication of where you are going.

**Trotskyism versus Laborism**

Your letter bids us to "turn to the working class". And you criticise us over Solidarnosc for denying "support to the masses". Permit us some observations about your "movement

of ideas". Having failed so far to break with Healyite anti-Sovietism it appears that you also have not broken with Healyite workerism. In this country that means *concretely* tailing the Laborite trade union bureaucracy and eternal support to the ALP at election time, the politics of reformist economism, parliamentary cretinism and virulent anti-Sovietism.

You exhort us to support the class as it is. This is a denial of Trotsky's analysis that the historic crisis of mankind is the crisis of revolutionary leadership, that the task of Trotskyists is to transform the class into a class conscious of its revolutionary historic task. The Australian working class remains dominated by the Labor Party bureaucracy and must be broken from it through a resolute struggle for the Trotskyist program. Your dismissal of the centrality of program and leadership and your embrace of Polish Solidarnosc leave you squarely on the road to the ALP and in the unsavoury company of the "White Australia socialists" like the SWP, IS, CPA and ... the SLL.

James P Cannon's statement that the Russian Question draws the class line through world politics is sharply vindicated in the history of the Australian workers movement. We have said that Solidarnosc is Poland's DLP/Groupers. They represent the same anti-communist, Catholic reaction in the Polish workers state as the NCC/Groupers did and still do in the Australian labour movement. Today Hawke campaigns to forge the ALP into a reliable instrument of Cold War reaction in the workers movement — he fought to get the NCC-led unions back into the ALP. Naturally Polish Solidarnosc is the cause celebre of these Cold Warriors. They toured Solidarnosc reps through

Australia in 1982 and the NCC-aligned leadership of the FIA is shortly to tour a Solidarnosc representative, Jacek Kaczmarek, employed by the CIA's Radio Free Europe. The Hawke Labor government has shown itself the enemy of the workers' states and (as in the present case of the BLF) the workers' unions. Your "turn" to the working class, it seems, begins from having some common friends with the enemies of the proletariat — a bad beginning.

Judging from your comrade Robert Buhler's attack, at your Sydney meeting on 2 April, on the SLL's "ultraleftism" for their call last year to bring down Hawke, the CL is on a rightist trajectory. The Hawke government was elected in 1983 on promises of anti-Sovietism and union busting and austerity at home. We headlined at the time "No Vote to Labor". The SLL along with the rest of the reformist left said that Hawke's election was a "victory" for the working class. Further, despite the SLL's bombast about support to the SEQEB strikers, in last year's Redlands by-election in Queensland the SLL supported the ALP against the candidacy of striking SEQEB workers. During the recent West Australian elections in which the Burke government ran on an explicitly racist campaign against Aboriginal land rights, *again* the SLL campaigned for a vote to Labor. We assume from Buhler's remark you consider these positions of the SLL correct. Yet this policy of strategic support to the Labor Party has nothing in common with the Trotskyist program of *splitting* the Labor Party, the proletarian base from the pro-capitalist tops. Rather it is a policy which covers for the ALP and binds the working masses more closely to it.


We have frequently pointed out that

**WORKERS HAMMER**

Reagan strikes at Libya, Nicaragua, Afghanistan

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**The Case of Bela Tampoe**

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**British Communism Aborted**



Hawke is Reagan's man in Southeast Asia and linked the struggle to bring him down to defence of Vietnam and the Soviet Union. Hawke is the sworn defender of the anti-Soviet ANZUS alliance and of the US bases here in Australia, a key part of the US strategic war machine targeting the Soviet Union. And last year having earlier cut off aid to Vietnam Hawke unleashed fascist Vietnamese gangs against left and labour meetings celebrating the 10th anniversary of the victory of the Vietnamese Revolution. Defence of the Vietnamese Revolution and opposition to US bases in Australia and the ANZUS/ASEAN alliances — these are the key class questions in the region. Defence of Vietnam and the Soviet Union means intransigent revolutionary opposition to the imperialist Hawke government. Is this "ultraleft", comrades? We think not — just principled Trotskyist politics.

Concretely, if you will, the right-wing climate of Cold War II is fueling social reaction across the board. Capitulation to pro-capitalist Laborism on the Russian Question and thus to the bourgeoisie means you can't fight racism, reactionary attacks on women or gays, or Hawke's anti-working class onslaught. It's not only Afghanistan, Iran and Poland where the Healyites' positions line them up with clerical reaction, the worst enemies of the liberation of women but also here in Australia. The SLL's workerist glorification of Laborism which we have termed "White Australia Socialism" results in, for example, their revolting anti-gay, anti-youth bigotry in supporting the Cain government's attack on the small Paedophile Support Group (PSG) and attacking us for defending the PSG, as Leninist tribunes of the oppressed, and opposing age-of-consent laws. Since your split some of your members have argued the SLL position on this question with us. This again is a political expression of the values of Australian Laborism with its "White Australia" racism, brutal male chauvinism, narrow economist trade unionism and all the other crap that derives from striving to maintain this country as a bastion of white imperialist privilege and reaction in Asia.

The CL like the British WRP is at a crossroads. You could either continue on your current course, becoming another anti-Soviet satellite orbiting round and possibly into Hawke's ALP. Or you could fight to complete your break with Healyism through reexamination of the entire gamut of its anti-Trotskyist program — this is the only road to Trotskyism.

Fraternally,  
Doug Flynn  
for the Spartacist League.

## Attacks on BLF...

Continued from page sixteen

ist whinge about supposed "Americanisation" of the Australian labour movement, but in America the kind of scab contracts that they are trying to ram down the BLs' throats are reviled in the labour movement as "yellow dog" contracts. When the scabherders of the BWIU etc come round with their "yellow dog" statements, they ought to get run off the sites by members of all unions and given the treatment scabs deserve. No real unionist could sign this outrageous document.

### Make the Unions Weapons of Struggle!

The crunch has come for the BLF; there's no room to duck and weave

and fight again another day — it's class struggle or go down to total defeat. The capitalists' media, their kept politicians and the scabherders are gloating that the BLF is finished. Bullshit! A hard fight can turn this situation around. The strategy to win is a nation-wide building industry strike, mobilising the full resources of the union to build mass pickets that nobody crosses to shut down the sites and drive off the cops and scabherding traitors. The BLF must fight but it must not be left to fight alone. All unionists must stand in solidarity with the BLF, and an all-out fight would have a powerful appeal. Firstly to the rank and file tradesmen, many of whom must be deeply ashamed at their union being effectively taken over by the capitalist government, whose cops have become their "union organisers". And to all militant workers chafing under Hawke's Cold War Accord, for example the miners. This fight can be won; the working class has the power — it's time to take off the gloves and use it. Defend the BLF! Smash Hawke's anti-union laws! Down with Hawke/Cain/Wran! Oust the scabherding traitors! An injury to one is an injury to all!

### Smash the Arbitration/Courts Straightjacket! Unchain the Unions!

This battle is a watershed for the union movement in this country. Via reliance on the courts and Arbitration, the unions have for a long time been enmeshed with the capitalist state. Arbitration always served the bosses, helping them keep the class peace, but because Australia's a rich country there's usually been enough fat to permit widespread illusions in its neutrality. But Australian capitalism's going downhill and the capitalists are tightening the straitjacket on the working class, using Arbitration and Hawke's Accord to drive down living standards and bust any semblance of militant unionism and class independence. Any illusions in Arbitration, the bosses' courts or their Labor servants pose the greatest danger. You can't play by the bosses' rules and win!

Yet that's what the BLF leadership have tried to do. In the first week of the onslaught, they simply hoped their ranks would stand firm on the jobs against the scabherders, bosses, cops and media lies. Their "guerrilla militancy" stands exposed as hollow, replaced by paralysis and defeatism — eg Gallagher's reported remark that the union could lose half its membership. Steve Black has said the BLF could continue operating under the right of free association and common-law contracts; at the same time gutting this of any force by asserting that there would be no blanket stoppages. Meanwhile the BLF leadership is attempting to stop the deregistration through court injunctions. This strategy is suicide, and has only introduced disorganisation and frustration into BLF ranks. Look at Melbourne, long Gallagher's stronghold. On Monday 21 April the BLs who'd refused to sign Cain's scab document and fought his cops at the Chia site (South Yarra) were screaming at their organisers that they'd been isolated, starved of information and denied reinforcements for the picket lines. One militant demanded that "this picket line should be ten deep"! The labourers who'd been sacked for refusing to sign were told to go back to their sites and work extra hard, rather than being dispatched to join the picket lines. The following day this hard core of militants were ordered by the BLF leadership to sign the yellow contract and return to their jobs and to work on

the inside. BLF leaders claimed that this was not a defeat; the Chia site organiser went so far as to call this a "victory"!

This battle will be won on the streets, not in the courts. There have been some initiatives in this direction led by BLF members. The attempts to picket and shut down the South Yarra site and Monday's action by BLF scaffolders at the Grosvenor Street site in Sydney are but two of them. And there should be widespread rank and file anger and a realisation in the building industry unions that the attack against the BLF is a threat to all unions. But to galvanise this union anger into effective action requires a leadership which breaks from all the class-collaborationist crap of the Arbitration system and courts and strikes out boldly on the road of class struggle strike action to shut the building industry down tight.

### It Is Desperately Necessary to Fight — Now!

This fight urgently needs class struggle leadership to win. The *Sydney Morning Herald* (5 April) gloated: "The acceptance of BLF work by other unions in the building industry is key to the BLF's deregistration". Traitors like McDonald, Sharkey, Cambourn, Ernie Ecob of the AWU, and Harry Hurrell of the FIA have been all too happy to oblige in the interests of the Labor government and its no-strike Accord, behind which they hide from their own members' discontent. This is the logic of state-supported craft unionism, which sets worker against worker and union against union. And now these bosses' men, who have been falling over themselves to get the BLF, are squabbling over the spoils at Sydney's huge Darling Harbour project. But all wings of the present union leadership basically accept the same pro-capitalist framework which in this period means rigid subordination to this Labor government's dual policy of austerity/union busting at home and Cold War anti-Sovietism abroad.

BWU chiefs McDonald and Sharkey claim to be "pro-Soviet" but in smashing the BLF alongside NCC types like the FIA tops on behalf of this pro-Reagan imperialist government they serve the worst enemies of the Soviet Union. For his part, Gallagher's anti-Soviet politics have only fed the attack on the BLF. Thus at the September 1983 ACTU Congress, he got a seat on the ACTU executive through a deal with the Cold War right wing, in exchange for which he joined in their rabid anti-Soviet furore over Reagan's KAL-007 war provocation, also backing the Accord. This only strengthened the dominance of the Cold Warriors running the ACTU who have since gone after the BLF with a vengeance. Gallagher now faces a retrial on the trumped-up "corruption" charges in June, and possibly another jail sentence.

We demand that the charges against Gallagher as well as all charges against BLF organisers and members victimised by the cops be dropped! But to enforce that demand, to defend the BLF and smash the Labor governments' anti-union attacks requires a fight for a class-struggle program against all wings of the union bureaucracy. The Spartacist League said in 1984:

"There are two choices posed. Either the ACTU will enforce the class enemy's moves to break the BLF and make it a tame-cat union within the Accord or destroy it outright. Or class-conscious militants in the BLF will stand in the forefront of mobilising militant mass action to forge one, united, class-struggle building union. There must be a union-wide fight for industrial union-

ism — fighting class independence and organisational unity — to bust the Accord and unchain the unions and to defend the historic gains of the working class, the workers organisations and the workers states. Every major workers struggle today becomes a political fight requiring a class-struggle leadership. From amongst the ranks of the BLF must come a section of this leadership — committed to building a revolutionary workers party that will fight for a workers government. It is necessary to oust the labour traitors to bust the union busters!"

— "ACTU, Labour Council  
Scabherding for Hawke  
— Defend the BLF!"  
*Australasian Spartacist* no 109

These words retain all their force today. It is not yet too late to stop these union-hating Labor governments, but it is necessary to throw off the chains of pro-capitalist Laborism and the shackles of the whole conciliation and arbitration system and fight back through class-struggle action. Break the ALP/ACTU stranglehold! Smash Hawke's Cold War Accord! Defend the BLF — Shut down the building industry nation-wide through militant strike action! Bust the union-busters! ■

## BLF Militant...

Continued from page sixteen

rally to one. When the massive South Yarra project became the focus of the attack labourers set up a picket line knowing that they had to shut the place down. Being the biggest site in Melbourne it was one of the most perfect places to draw the class line and get the union off its knees. When I joined the picket line fellow labourers were screaming at the organisers that they'd been isolated, sabotaged and set up for blacklisting. Shouts from the pickets showed a will to fight: "Why don't you send the others down. This picket line should be ten deep. Then we could stop these bastards. The courts won't". But the BLF leadership's strategy is to remain within the framework of the bosses' courts. So the hundreds of unionists who were ready to fight and preferred the sack rather than capitulate to the government and bosses were not mobilised to shut the place down. Indeed, at least in the case of myself and another we were instructed not to join the picket line but remain at our isolated work sites though already sacked! The next day the leadership told these same men that there wasn't enough support for the picket line and to go back in and sign, while promising to utilise in court statements that this union-busting contract had been signed under duress.

But this fight won't be won by appeals to the bosses' courts. Remember SEQEB. The whole system of arbitration, the courts and the Hawke/ACTU Accord is designed to throttle us. It is precisely what we must break from and smash if the organised union movement is to survive as a weapon of workers power. This whole state-run attack opens the door to union-busting and the blacklisting of workers throughout the union movement. We are at a crossroads. To defend the BLF and the union movement we must break from the whole framework of the bosses' courts and say to hell with Hawke's Accord. In so doing we must forge a leadership which fights independently on the basis of our own class power. For picket lines that mean don't cross! Defend the BLF! Shut down the industry! Unchain the unions! Bust the union-busters!

In Struggle,  
Martin Neal



## Hawke Is Thatcher In Drag!

# Smash Attacks on the BLF! Bust the Union-Busters!

We print below a Spartacist League leaflet which has been distributed at a mass meeting of BLF members in Sydney on Wednesday 23 April and at building sites in Melbourne. The accompanying letter from BLF militant Martin Neal graphically shows the necessity of a class-struggle offensive to turn around the no-win strategy of the Gallagher leadership to drive back the Labor governments' anti-union attacks.

As Prime Minister Robert Hawke struts around Washington and London with Reagan and Thatcher declaring his undying support to the ANZUS alliance and US bases in Australia and Reagan/Thatcher's mad terror bombing of Libya, his Labor government has declared war on the unions at home. Labor's drive to outlaw and smash the Builders Labourers Federation has come to the crunch in the worst attack on the organised working class since Chifley, likewise a Labor man, smashed the Communist-led Miners strike with troops in 1949. They used the troops then; this time it's the scabherding traitors running the BWIU, FEDFA, AWU and FIA in the vanguard of the capitalist state's union-busting — fully backed by the ACTU and state Labour Councils and enforced by the cops of state



Wran's cops attack BLF militants at Grosvenor Place site in Sydney, 21 April.

ALP premiers Wran and Cain. Just as Chifley smashed the miners in the service of Cold War I, so today Hawke wants to smash Australia's most militant union in the service of capitalist austerity and to regiment this

country for its part in Reagan's anti-Soviet war drive.

When the bosses' Arbitration system declared the BLF had broken their rules in acting "outside conventional trade union activity", Hawke

rammed the deregistration bill through parliament on 11 April. This was the signal for the bosses and the scabherders, with "lefts" like Tom McDonald and Stan Sharkey (BWIU) and Communist Party member Jack Cambourn (FEDFA) in the lead, to commence poaching BLF members en masse. With the cops at their side, they're trying to force the BLs to sign outrageous statements repudiating their BLF membership, "applying" for membership in the other building industry unions and, to top it off, demanding their share of the BLF assets — or be sacked. They're trying to force decent unionists to become scabs and commit perjury to help the government steal the union's money and destroy the BLF. This anti-union law and these scab statements violate common law justice in every sense, and target the entire union movement. No wonder Liberal Party deputy leader Neil Brown welcomed this legislation — by short-circuiting existing industrial laws it will make union-busting by a future Tory government much simpler. Like Margaret Thatcher in Britain, Brown is an open Tory. But watch out — Hawke is Thatcher in Labor drag!

McDonald and Co put on a national-  
Continued on page fifteen

## BLF Militant Says: Don't Sign Scab Contract —

# For Mass Pickets That No One Dares Cross!

Dear Comrades:

I am a supporter of the Spartacist League and one of nearly a thousand builders labourers who have been sacked in Melbourne alone for refusing to sign the Labor government's union-busting scab contract. This document, which was masterminded by Hawke's ALP/ACTU union-busters, was carried onto building sites by the scabherding BWIU and FEDFA leaderships and backed up by intimidation and threats of arrest by the state's cops. This filthy contract calls on union members to renounce their BLF membership, sign over to membership in the BWIU or FEDFA and authorise the state to seize the union's funds. I did not and will not sign this vile document and I don't think any other unionist should sign it either. We must defend the BLF against this state attack which is aimed at smashing the rights won

28 April 1986

with workers' blood over decades of struggle.

It started with the SEQEB workers. Now it's the BLF. But it won't stop there. We must fight back with the weapons that the unions were forged with — hard class struggle. Over the past couple of weeks there have been examples of this very action, not only from labourers at such places as the giant South Yarra project but also support across union lines where tradesmen, BWIU members included, have walked off when police tried to remove BLF organisers. The Melbourne Herald reported that 200 BWIU members resigned their membership in protest at their leaders' scabherding. Many examples of such resistance have occurred, both here and interstate as well as the thousands nationally who have refused to sign. Many tens of thousands of trade unionists are looking for a lead. The BLF has to take this lead to

rally this support into an industry-wide shutdown nationally with mass pickets that no one dares cross.

Unfortunately under this orchestrated and vicious state attack the BLF leadership has capitulated and

appealed to this same state apparatus and while so doing has pulled the rug from under not only those militants who sought to stage a class fightback but those decent unionists who would

Continued on page fifteen

BLF militants  
Tony Caruso  
(left) and  
Martin Neal —  
Fighting for  
an industry-  
wide strike.

