

Spartacist Britain

'Anti Nazis' celebrate...



Spartacist Britain

as National Front parades

# ANL Carnival scabs!

## No more popular-front betrayals — build workers defence guards!

The National Front scored a major political victory on September 24. Under heavy police protection, close to 2000 fascists succeeded in holding a march in London from Embankment to the East End without any serious challenge from counterdemonstrators. Speaking at an end-of-march rally near the new fascist headquarters in Great Eastern Street, NF national organiser Martin Webster was able to boast that there were no 'no-go' areas for the National Front. And the fascist thugs let out a loud cheer.

Why was the Front allowed to parade unchallenged into the East End? THE MAIN RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE FASCISTS' SUCCESS LIES WITH THE ANTI NAZI LEAGUE. For while the NF was spewing its race-hatred through the City and into Shoreditch, the ANL was leading many tens of thousands of people in the *opposite direction*, from Hyde Park to Brixton for the pacifist fun and 'magic' of Carnival 2. In the words of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the guiding force behind the ANL: 'The sun was out, the faces of the people were bright, happy.... All was celebration' (*Socialist Worker*, 30 September).

And the ANL was celebrating in full knowledge of the NF march. A month before, the anti-fascist magazine *Searchlight* had informed ANL leaders of the impending NF parade. For more than two weeks, immigrant groups in the East End and small left-wing organisations had repeatedly called on the ANL to mobilise its forces to stop the fascists. But to no avail.

Lulled by ANL leaders into thinking that all was well in the East End, an estimated sixty to one hundred thousand people stood in the sun and 'rocked against racism' in Brixton, and only a handful of ANL supporters joined leftists and local immigrants in the Brick Lane area for an anti-fascist demonstration called by the Hackney and Tower Hamlets Defence Committee. In all, perhaps a thousand or twelve hundred anti-fascist militants gathered in the East End. Pitifully weak and woefully disorganised, they had no chance of getting near, let alone stopping, the Front's deliberately provocative 'march against communism'.

The Anti Nazi League *scabbed* on the struggle against the NF. 'Sunday after Sunday' was its slogan for the weekly anti-fascist demonstrations in Brick Lane during the summer. But

the pacifist sitdowns failed to drive the Front out of the area, and on the one Sunday when a mass anti-fascist demonstration was *most important* -- the day of the first NF national mobilisation since May Day -- the ANL was too busy 'celebrating' to show up.

And yet the NATIONAL FRONT COULD HAVE BEEN STOPPED DEAD IN ITS TRACKS on 'Carnival Sunday'! Despite their chronic lack of organisation and manifest ill-preparedness to *fight* the fascists, the sheer numerical weight of the thousands on the 'Anti Nazi' jamboree could have been sufficient to stop the Front marching with impunity into Great Eastern Street. Instead, with drums beating and Union Jacks waving, and with the ever-present police accompaniment, the fascists marched unscathed to their rallying place.

Cock-a-hoop at their easy success, NF leaders Webster and Tyndall were able to claim 'We have never been stronger' to their followers at the East End rally. And in what these thugs no doubt consider a victory celebration, a gang of 50 to 60 NF youth that very night rampaged through a predominantly Asian estate off Brick Lane, smashing shop windows and threatening local residents.

This is the type of fascist thuggery which a strong, well-organised workers defence squad would prevent from ever getting off the ground. Rooted in the organised labour movement, it would be well placed to teach these fascist scum a well deserved lesson and send them scurrying back to their rat holes. No such defence force exists today. But the ANL and its hangers-on have no intention of ever fighting to build one; instead they keep preaching that blowing balloons and holding rock concerts is the way to deal with the NF hoodlums.

## Alibis for betrayal

Both the SWP and the International Marxist Group (IMG), who backed to the hilt the decision to continue the Carnival and denounced calls to divert it to Brick Lane, now have a lot to answer for. Already these Carnival revellers have started producing their alibis.

In the September 30 *Socialist Worker*, SWP patriarch Tony Cliff attempts to defend the Carnival ('the biggest anti-racist demonstration since the thirties'), while bemoaning the 'failure of organisation' which allowed the fascists to march unimpeded to Shoreditch. It was just a little slip-up, he claims -- like forgetting to bring enough paper cups to a picnic.

But Cliff has another, more honest, argument. He estimates that between twenty and forty thousand militants would have heeded a call by the SWP to go from Hyde Park to Brick Lane. However, if this had happened -- if the peaceful, orderly festivities had been interrupted by militant anti-fascist action -- 'the result would have been' ... the 'disintegrating of the ANL'. Thus Cliff admits the sorry truth: in order to hold the ANL together its supporters had to be *prevented* from confronting the fascists.

The SWP consciously used its authority to keep as many people as possible out of the East End, safely listening to music and 'anti-Nazi' speeches on the other side of London. Moreover, it did this by *lying*. At midday, when no more than 500 anti-fascist militants were in the Brick Lane area, SWP leader and ANL secretary Paul Holborow assured the crowd in Hyde Park that everything was under control in the East End: 'Several thousand anti-fascists are already there, shoulder to shoulder with the Bengali community..'

Cliff claims that there was a 'failure of communication'; but Holborow communicated his message very clearly. Exactly as was intended, virtually nobody came from Hyde Park to Brick Lane. Those ANL supporters who finally did make it over to the East End from Brixton at 6pm were several hours too late.

But the SWP's feeble excuses don't hold a candle to the arguments of the IMG. These second division ANL fans -- the same people who used to propound adventurist battles with the cops as an anti-fascist strategy -- positively *glory* in the ANL's betrayal. The back page headline of the September 28 *Socialist Challenge* asks: 'Were we

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# ANL Carnival...

(Continued from page 1)

right to go to Brixton?' and defiantly responds: 'YES! YES! YES!'

While the SWP kept Carnival marchers away from Brick Lane by lying, the IMG helpfully provided a political motivation for betrayal with a leaflet entitled 'Unity for Mass Action -- Only Way to Build Self-Defence'. The arguments in the leaflet -- repeated and elaborated in the subsequent *Socialist Challenge* article -- are strongly reminiscent of the social-democratic American Socialist Workers Party (the IMG's sister group, which actively defends free speech for fascists).

After warning that 'ALL CALLS TO CANCEL CARNIVAL 2 WILL PLAY INTO THE HANDS OF THE NF', the IMG adds: 'Of course Brick Lane must be defended. All ANL supporters in the East End will be ready to respond to any NF rampage. The ANL is also prepared to strike off 2,000 more of its supporters.' Now everyone knows what the IMG doubtless knew all along: the imposing-sounding 'all ANL supporters in the East End' were a meagre handful indeed, and the 'two thousand' ANL supporters to be 'struck off' from the Carnival turned out to be more like two dozen.

But given that 'the best answer to the fascists' was 'the mass mobilisation of Carnival 2 itself' the IMG should not be too perturbed by the pitifully small turnout in the East End. Yet such cynical indifference seems too much for even the newly pacifist IMG to swallow in one gulp. So they nod, yes, 'physical action is ... crucial' -- but not now, because the East End immigrant community does not 'support' or 'understand' self-defence. The answer is to 'boost the morale' of the immigrants ... by

leaving the streets to the fascists and marching off in the opposite direction with the Carnival.

The only alternative to this is supposedly to call for state bans on the fascists. 'Any idea of self-defence not based on mass action perspectives [read: Carnivals] will ultimately lead to reliance on the state.' But the IMG's sage advice against calling on the state to fight fascism rings completely hollow. What did these people have to say just one year ago, when the government banned an NF march in Tameside?:

'can we proceed and say that we are *in principle* opposed to any bans imposed by the bourgeois democratic State on fascist or racist activity? We reply clearly and say: No, we are not opposed to these bans if they are specifically directed against the fascists...' ('IMG Position on the Bans', *Socialist Challenge*, 6 October 1977). And now these hypocrites find opposition to state bans a useful stick with which to beat the reformist leaders of the immigrant groups in the East End!

## I-CL: Critical friends of the ANL

The gross and obvious treachery of the IMG and SWP will undoubtedly cause some difficulties in the ranks of these organisations. Hoping to make some political capital out of this, the eclectic centrists of the International-Communist League (I-CL), have tried to strike a hard posture as consistent left critics of the ANL. The September 30-October 7 issue of the I-CL-endorsed paper *Workers Action* denounces the 'fun and games' at Brockwell Park, screams 'betrayal' and tries to pretend that it has always warned of the ANL's treachery.

But what has the I-CL's *real* record been? For months, it kept up a not-so-dainty attitude of critical support to the ANL, advising local anti-fascist committees to affiliate and muting

its criticisms for fear of losing popularity in the byways of the SWP/IMG milieu. It argued for democracy, activism and a bit more programme as the answer to the ANL's 'weaknesses'.

Instead of the necessary sharp, clear warnings that the ANL popular front was *actively betraying* the fight against fascism, the I-CL emitted flaccid homilies about the ANL's 'confusion'. It argued that, by fighting for a more left-wing platform inside it, 'the possibility presented by the emergence of the ANL of building an effective mass activist anti-racist and anti-fascist movement may be realised' (*Workers Action* resolution to July 3-4 anti-fascist conference). In short, it was for a more left-wing, *fighting* popular front.

To be fair, most of the attention of *Workers Action* supporters has been given not to building the ANL, but to constructing their own small-time propaganda bloc, the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory (SCLV). In its post-mortem on the Carnival, *Workers Action* proudly claims that the SCLV organised 'a national mobilisation for Brick Lane'. Yet at a public meeting on, September 22, Mike Davis, a member of the Socialist Charter and secretary of this same SCLV, 'wished the Carnival well' and hoped that *both* it and the Brick Lane mobilisation would be successful.

And where were the big 'names' of the SCLV on September 24? Ernie Roberts, star of many an SCLV platform, chaired the ANL rally in Hyde Park. He echoed Arthur ('best wishes' to the SCLV) Scargill's message: don't go to the East End, we don't want the Carnival 'unity' split by the fascists. Ted Knight, another parliamentary candidate boosted by the SCLV, welcomed the festive 'anti-Nazis' into Brockwell Park on behalf of the Borough of Lambeth. *Workers Action* naturally failed to report the SCLV credentials of

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## Break with the ANL!

# For militant union/black defence of the East End!

We print below the text of a leaflet distributed by the Spartacist League at the East End anti-fascist demonstration on Sunday, September 24.

The Anti Nazi League has always been an organised betrayal of the fight against fascism. Today its treachery is clear for all to see. While the NF prepares to march to Brick Lane, the ANL is going ahead with its pacifist Carnival: telling anti-fascists to rally at Hyde Park for speeches by people like Tony Benn, that 'left' stalwart of the anti-working-class, anti-immigrant Labour Cabinet. Then it is parading off to Brockwell Park for fun, music and 'magic'.

THIS CARNIVAL SHOULD BE CALLED OFF IMMEDIATELY! *Everyone* who seriously wants the fascists to be crushed should be in the East End today. *Anyone* who goes to Brixton with the Carnival is SCABBING on this struggle.

Yet the ANL is *refusing* to end the Carnival in order to mobilise its forces to stop the NF march. In fact, it only agreed to send *anyone* to Brick Lane today under sharp attack from East End black and Asian groups -- and even now it is only making any *real* attempt to mobilise its East London supporters, while 'volunteers' will be 'encouraged' to travel from the Carnival.

This is criminal, despicable behaviour; but it is a necessary consequence of the ANL's strategy -- building 'anti-Nazi' unity through a pacifist, social-patriotic, class-collaborationist alliance. Tony Benn, the union bureaucrats, and the sundry Liberals, lords and bishops who inhabit the ANL are happy to stand under the Union Jack and mouth a few 'anti-Nazi' homilies. They are happy to sponsor dangerous pleas to the bourgeois authorities to ban the fascists (calls which have repeatedly resulted in state bans on *left-wing* and *anti-fascist* events). But they would shrink in horror from the idea of mobilising the ranks of the unions and the black and Asian communities to crush the NF in the streets -- the *only* strategy which can truly stop the fascists.

The ANL's moving spirits in the SWP, their CP allies and their IMG bootlickers prattle about the need to maintain 'unity' by continuing with the Carnival. But this is only a cynical cover for political bankruptcy. To continue the fun and games while the NF marches is to give a dangerous signal to the fascist leaders: it tells them, loud and clear, that the would-be anti-fascist force most in the public eye is nothing but a toothless, harmless *fake*.

Today's treachery is a repeat of May Day, the day after the first Carnival. At that time the ANL allowed the NF to march unopposed through central London for the first time *ever*, despite the fact that its leaders had prior knowledge of the fascists' demonstration plans. The ANL showed then -- and shows even more graphically today -- that it is a *barrier* to a true struggle against the fascists; that its 'anti-Nazi' festivals are the *real* diversion from the fight to smash the Front.

## Brick Lane

Today's Brick Lane mobilisation is an important -- albeit partial, highly confused and reversible -- break from the popular-frontist pacifism of the ANL. However, if this break is not carried through to its conclusion and the appropriate political lessons drawn, the anti-fascist struggle will not be reoriented in the necessary direction.

People are rallying in Brick Lane today for widely varying reasons. Supporters of small leftist organisations like the International-Communist League (the left tail of the ANL), starting off with a sense of adventurist bravado and a desire to throw themselves onto the front lines against the fascists whatever the odds, now find themselves outflanked by larger forces. The local immigrant communities -- organised in the Hackney and Tower Hamlets Defence Committee, an unstable coalition led by the opportunist Labour councillor Patrick Kodikara -- are outraged at the prospect of the Front terrorising their neighbourhoods yet again. Guilt-ridden members of the SWP (and its hanger-on the IMG) in the East End are re-

acting to pressure from the local immigrants to do something. And others are arriving from around the country for the simple reason that *here*, not the Carnival, is where the only meaningful protest against the NF will take place.

The sole thing which unites these disparate forces is a simple, laudable, but wholly inadequate gut hatred of the fascists and a determination to smash them. But the fascists cannot be destroyed by hatred, or by the will to act -- this task requires concerted, disciplined and united mass working-class action.

The answer is not the 'return to Lewisham' advocated by the I-CL and the Workers Power group -- by which they mean guts, disorganisation and lack of direction. The adventurist anti-fascist confrontations espoused by these groups, while certainly more militant than the wretched ANL parades, are attempts to *substitute* the mobilisation of small numbers of leftists for the hard but necessary fight to bring out the mass organisations of the working class -- above all the trade unions.

The struggle for *workers defence squads* will certainly never be undertaken by the union misleaders and other worthies who grace ANL platforms. Rather the fight to mobilise the power of the trade union movement to crush the NF is inseparably linked to the fight to oust the Callaghans and Benns, the Duffys and Scargills, and replace them with a new, revolutionary leadership of the labour movement.

Such a leadership cannot be built on the basis of opportunism and betrayal in the style of the ANL and its partisans, but only through the fight for the programme of proletarian revolution. As we of the Spartacist League have said from the start: 'No to the popular-frontist ANL! Build workers defence guards to crush the NF!'

BREAK WITH THE ANL POPULAR FRONT!

FOR WORKING-CLASS ACTION TO SMASH THE NATIONAL FRONT!

24 September 1978

# IMG's anti-Marxist 'theory'

Unlike last year's 'Marxist Symposium' which was confidently posed as an 'alternative to Eurocommunism', the organisers of the International Marxist Group's (IMG) 'theoretical weekend' this year failed to announce formally their symposium's theme. Despite their careful neglect, however, the leit-motif of the three-day event held on September 15-17 was quite perceptible: an 'orientation to' (ie adaptation to) Eurocommunism and its academic enthusiasts, whose best-known domestic representatives reside in the editorial offices of *New Left Review* (NLR). Ironically, this willingness to snuggle up to Eurocommunism was highlighted not only by the spokesmen of the Spartacist League who intervened throughout the weekend, but also by one of the IMG's own invited speakers, the academic economist André Gunder Frank, who referred in the course of the main Sunday debate to 'what I term the left Eurocommunism of Ernest Mandel'.

Day one of the gathering set the tone for the rest of the weekend. Opening the symposium, IMG leader Tariq Ali first welcomed 'my friend Nicos' (Nicos Poulantzas of the Eurocommunist Greek Communist Party [Interior]), then hailed the weekend to come as an opportunity to partake of 'some of the debates that are going on within Marxism at this time' (his emphasis). What emerged in the end was more akin to a debate on tactics between left and right Kautskyites.

Poulantzas presented a 'democratic socialist' perspective strikingly similar to the tracts of Adler, Hilferding and other left social-democratic 'Austro-Marxists' of sixty years ago. He worried how to combine 'representative democracy' (ie bourgeois parliament) with elements of 'direct democracy' (ie soviets) in much the same fashion as Max Adler in 1919 ruminated over how to integrate soviets into the Austrian bourgeois state apparatus.

In reply, Michael Löwy, whose political views are in sympathy with the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR), the IMG's French sister group, commented, 'I agree with Nicos, either socialism will be democratic or it will not be at all', and further added, 'The more I read Luxemburg's critique of the Russian Revolution the more I tend to think she was right.' Taking a verbal distance from Poulantzas, Löwy pointed out that Luxemburg had changed her position on the Bolshevik dispersal of the Constituent Assembly, but nevertheless agreed that she was right to focus attention on the Bolsheviks' 'suppression' of democratic rights. Then in an aphorism worthy of Kautsky himself, he revealed the essential similarity of his and Poulantzas' positions: 'no real workers power if there is no political plurality'. So much for the Soviet Republic during the Civil War, when the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries had been outlawed by the ruling Bolshevik Party! No member of the IMG took the floor to disagree with Löwy.

What these 'Marxists' of the phrase deny is the inevitable transformation of 'battles of ideas' into *actual* battles when workers states are fighting for their existence against domestic and imperialist reaction. To demand in advance 'institutional guarantees' and 'political pluralism' for the enemies of proletarian power is to renounce revolution altogether. Trotsky's polemic against Adler,

written in 1919 might have been addressed to these people today:

'The Viennese eclectic philosopher admits the significance of the Soviets. His courage goes so far that he adopts them. He even proclaims them the apparatus of the Social Revolution. Max Adler, of course, is for a social revolution. But not for a stormy, barricaded, terrorist, bloody revolution, but for a sane, economically balanced, legally canonised and philosophically approved revolution.' (*Terrorism and Communism*, p 181)

Poulantzas and Löwy were obliged to make occasional nods in the direction of Bolshevism, but that was certainly not true of *New Left Review* editor Perry Anderson (who spoke on the bourgeois revolution on Saturday) nor of the speakers at the Sunday morning session on 'feminism and the revolutionary party'. At this session -- to the warm applause of an audience packed with former IMG members and reformists badly mauled from cameo appearances in the class struggle -- the 'non-aligned' Sheila Rowbotham castigated the left for its reliance on 'male language', 'male methods' and a 'male stance'. Bea Campbell of the Communist Party (CPGB) also tried to portray herself as a sensitive plant in need of a 'protective environment' in which to grow, and in a choked voice confessed to being 'increasingly traumatised' by the conflict between her membership in the CP and her existence as a woman. She was later to snap into Stalinist shape and bark that 'she wasn't interested in the Trotskyist movement because it wasn't embedded in the working class'.

It was clear that *hostility* to Marxism was the key to winning bouquets from the audience at the session. For when an SL spokesman emphasised that we were proud to share the tradition of the Bolsheviks -- who, like us, fought for women's liberation through proletarian revolution and for a women's section of the Leninist party and opposed all forms of feminism -- she was met with vocal hostility from the 'sensitive' enthusiasts of 'protective environments for women'. This antagonism towards Marxism revealed that it is not the allegedly 'male' method of Leninist political struggle that the feminists fear -- but the Bolshevik programme.

Sunday's afternoon session on Eurocommunism which closed the symposium turned out to be the most interesting of all. Tariq Ali, who had spent the Friday cooking and billing with Poulantzas, came out in seemingly hard fashion against the representative of small-time native Eurocommunism gracing the platform, Geoff Roberts. The CPGB has not yet mastered the mellifluous obscurity of a Poulantzas, and so has difficulty concealing its reformism in the thicket of New Left Reviewspeak. Its limited attractiveness was further diminished by Roberts' know-nothing, buffoonish presentation.

Keen as sections of the IMG are to cosy up to the CPGB (exemplified most recently by Ali's vigorous proposals to 'save the *Morning Star*') they showed little inclination during *this* debate to 'orient' to Roberts & Co. Instead, the chameleon Ali merely tried to take the colour of another leaf on the platform -- André Gunder Frank, who was substituting for the absent star of the weekend, Ernest Mandel. Gunder Frank's views on other subjects are not those of the Spartacist tendency, but that afternoon he gave a substantially correct outline of the Eurocommunist parties' rightward evolution. When he attacked the Eurocommunists' attitude towards the state ('Since they ... don't want to *smash* it, and they can't *use* it, then they *join* it.'), Ali nodded his emphatic agreement -- just as on Friday he had nodded with Poulantzas and Löwy. When Gunder Frank pointed out that the Eurocommunist project was not even a 'transition to a transition' to socialism but 'quite the opposite -- it's going the other way', there was Ali to concur, giving the impression that he had *never* thought anything different.

These sleazy attempts to ingratiate himself with Gunder Frank backfired after an SL spokesman pointed them out and attacked the Pabloites' real record of prostration before the Eurocommunists. In direct response to our intervention, Gunder Frank revealed that he had written a critique of Fernando Claudin's book on Eurocommunism at the end of which he had asked,

in his words, 'what the real difference is between the left Eurocommunism of a Claudin and what I term the left Eurocommunism of Ernest Mandel'. He added that he had submitted this article to *New Left Review*, but the editors 'cut out my critique of Mandel, although I specifically asked them to leave it in', and allowed only a bowdlerised version to appear in *NLR* no 108. Gunder Frank had asked Ali 'whether I should mention my critique of Mandel and this incident with *New Left Review*, and Tariq said, "No, I should not mention it". This knocked Ali out of his usual smug complacency and, visibly stung, before the largest and most political session of the weekend, he tried (without much success) to save face by inviting Gunder Frank to submit his critique for publication in *Socialist Challenge*.

In her intervention the SL spokesman also pointed to the impressionistic method and programmatic instability which underpins Ali's willingness to adapt to every novelty. This has been the hallmark of Mandelite centrism for 25 years now: from tailing left bureaucrats (like André Renard in Belgium), to cheering on (from the safety of Europe, of course) guerrillaism in Latin America, to 'student-power' and now feminism and Eurocommunism.

There are deadly serious consequences to being a weathervane for every wind that blows in Belgium in 1960-61, Mandel was complicit in the derailment of a general strike; during the late sixties an entire generation of subjectively revolutionary militants in Latin America went down in bloody defeat, in part because they followed the 'guerrilla road' advocated by Mandel and Livio Maitan. What the United Secretariat now calls a 'mistake' cannot call back to life the would-be Trotskyists who fell in street battle after futile street battle with the Latin American state apparatuses. Programmatic intransigence and the will to 'say what is' to the working class, no matter how unpopular that may be at the time, is the only road to building a revolutionary party.

The Leninist honesty and vigour of the SL comes from our conviction that wrong ideas and a false programme lead to deadly political betrayals. Ali, by contrast, angrily flaunted his organisation's chummy view of political 'struggle' in his summing-up:

'We will continue to call them [the Eurocommunists] by their first names. We will continue not to denounce them as traitors and revisionists.'

A revolutionary party cannot be built by such characters. The IMG, as it tails the rag-bag around the *NLR* -- which itself flutters about with every wind from Paris, Rome and Madrid -- will never advance either the theory or the programme of Marxism.

Despite its often ragged and dog-eared appearance, however, the IMG is the British section of the largest world organisation claiming to be Trotskyist. Within its ranks are scores of once subjectively revolutionary militants, now deeply cynical, clinging to this burlesque of Marxism only because of the United Secretariat's size and reputation. The road to the rebirth of the Fourth International necessarily passes through the political destruction of the United Secretariat and the winning of its best militants to the authentic Bolshevism of the international Spartacist tendency. ■

## SPARTACIST BRITAIN

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SPARTACIST LEAGUE PUBLIC MEETING

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Speaker:  
PAUL LANNIGAN  
Spartacist League Central Committee  
(Derry Young Socialists 1968-1970)

Friday October 27      Conway Hall  
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# Down with the Shah!

# Down with the mullahs!



Anti-Shah demonstration in Iran before troops fired into crowd, killing over 1000

## Iran in turmoil

### For proletarian revolution not Islamic reaction!

On September 8, this summer's uninterrupted wave of massive protests against the brutal Iranian monarchy reached a grisly climax when the Shah's Royal Guard poured machine-gun fire into the ranks of an anti-government demonstration in Teheran. At least a thousand protesters were slaughtered in Jaleh Square in the biggest single massacre in decades, which occurred only hours after the regime imposed martial law and arrested several prominent leaders of the opposition movement.

The Shah has decided to drown the protests in blood. Not only had the anti-government demonstrations shown no sign of diminishing as the summer drew to a close, but they picked up increased momentum in the aftermath of the August 19 fire in an Abadan cinema (which claimed nearly 400 lives and was widely believed to be the work of arsonists working for the Shah). Protests on September 4 drew millions of participants throughout the country, including half a million or more in Teheran. The march was led by mullahs (religious leaders) reading from the Koran and banners called for the return of Ayatollah Khomeini, a Muslim religious leader exiled by the Shah. Other banners signed by leftist guerrilla groups called for 'US out of Iran'. But the dominant theme was set by the religious opposition.

The marches not only indicated the extent of popular hatred for the Pahlavi dictatorship, but protesters in the capital openly fraternised with the largely conscript troops. The Iranian regime is facing a threat similar to that of the 1963 uprising, when the Shah's military advisors believed that the troops in Teheran would mutiny if called upon to fire upon protesting crowds for a second day.

Fifteen years ago the Shah brought in fresh troops and killed thousands in order to crush the rebellion; today, relying on elite units, he is again embarked on a desperate attempt to exterminate all resistance. Three years ago, the shahanshah ('king of kings') decreed a one-party regime, confident that his opponents had been reduced to an impotent handful; today it is his Rastakhiz Party that has been reduced to a shambles.

The opposition shows no signs of having been defeated by the September 8 massacre. Already new clashes have been reported from Teheran, Mashad and other cities, while shops in the capital were once again shut down by a protest strike. Only a short time ago, the self-proclaimed 'light of the Aryans' boasted: 'Nobody can overthrow me. I have the support of 700,000 troops, all the workers and most of the people. ... I have the power' (*Los Angeles Times*, 17 August). Now the fragility of this mass murderer's rule is demonstrated for all to see. For the first time since 1953, when a CIA-engineered coup overthrew the bourgeois nationalist Mossadegh and restored the Shah to his throne, the Imperial Palace is guarded by tanks.

### The 'liberalisation' fraud

On August 27, the Shah announced a number of concessions designed to appease the Muslim fundamentalists and bourgeois liberals. Prime Minister Amuzegar resigned and was replaced by a politician more acceptable to the mullahs, Jaafa Sharif-Emami. The Shah's 'Imperial' calendar which began with the ancient Persian empire was replaced by the traditional Muslim calendar, and the new prime minister closed the casinos and other gambling spots. The post of women's affairs was abolished, and General Ayadi, a member of the Bahai sect, long hated by Iran's Shi'ite Muslims, resigned.

More important than these alleged proofs of the Shah's devotion to Allah was the announcement that freedom of the press, speech and assembly would be guaranteed to 'legitimate' political parties (the pro-Moscow Stalinist Tudeh party and other leftist groups continued to be banned). Free elections were promised for the summer of 1979. Within a day after this announcement 14 political parties had surfaced, testifying to the diversity of political currents which has so far been suppressed by the Shah's autocratic rule.

While some of the 'moderate' opposition politicians and the section of the religious opposition led by Ayatollah Shariatmadari were willing to test Sharif-Emami's sincerity, most bourgeois liberals and religious leaders continued to demand the dissolution of the Majlis ('parliament') and the holding of new elections. Ayatollah Khomeini who, unlike Shariatmadari,

calls for the overthrow of the Shah, denounced the 'liberalisation' from exile in Iraq as a 'plot to deceive the Muslim people and derail their movement'. Certain of the liberals demanded the abolition of the Shah's secret police, SAVAK.

But whether the concessions were the result of fright or a calculated manoeuvre, it soon became clear that they were meaningless. Two hundred and thirty imprisoned Muslim leaders remained in gaol. The reactionary hard-liner General Abbas Garabaghi, head of the National Gendarmerie, became Minister of the Interior.

The 'Iranian Spring' was soon seen to be the act of a regime that had been weakened, yet was clearly unreformable. The stage was set for the demonstrations of September 4. The capital had been the scene of almost a week of continuous street fighting, but the crowds demonstrating on the 4th were able to fraternise with the soldiers. Shouting 'Soldiers, you are from us' and 'Why do you kill your brothers?', they showered the troops with flowers. From before dawn until late at night, the demonstrations remained unmolested, and Teheran took on a carnival atmosphere.

Four days later more than 1000 protesters lay dead in the street. The 'Iranian Spring' had lasted no more than 11 days.

### The spectre of imperialist intervention

When the 'progressive', 'modernising' rhetoric of the 'White Revolution' is stripped away, what remains is but a brutal military dictatorship. And the shahanshah now faces the possibility that his only bulwark against the white-hot fury of the Iranian masses is eroding around him. At the top of the military machine both a major general and a leading official of SAVAK were executed in the last year for allegedly organising plots against the Shah. In the ranks, American reporters interviewed soldiers and non-commissioned officers who swore to commit suicide rather than fire upon civilians.

It appears that on September 8, some of these men were faithful to their word, and in at least one incident turned their guns on their commanding officer. Certainly, only a skeleton force patrolled the streets of Teheran; a force inadequate to stop many of the attacks on shops and offices, but one which had the advantage of being less susceptible to 'contamination'.

There remains one last resort for defending the shahanshah -- the same one which restored him to power in 1953, which has stocked his arsenal with billions of dollars of weapons and which has been his international press agent: the United States. No sooner were the bodies cold in the streets of Teheran than Jimmy Carter telephoned the Shah to reaffirm the 'close and friendly relationship' between Iran and US imperialism and to congratulate his client about the 'progress' made in 'liberalising'.

A few days later, James Callaghan followed suit, despatching a letter from Downing Street to the Imperial Palace, which expressed 'sympathy' for the plight of the Iranian butcher. Carter and Callaghan are both concerned about the same things: defending the oil companies' profits and maintaining Iran as a strategic bastion in NATO's anti-Soviet drive.

There are already more than 35,000 US military personnel in Iran. The American secretary of defense is now discussing 'the possible "dispatch of appropriate US forces to the scene"', and '100,000 US troops are being trained for possible intervention in the Gulf' (*Los Angeles Times*, 17 August). US intervention -- no doubt to 'save American lives' as in Santo Domingo in 1965 -- is a real possibility.

Carter's 'human rights' demagoguery is a cynical cover for propping up the Pahlavis' blood-stained rule. The situation cries out for the international workers movement to demand freedom for all victims of the Shah's white terror and a halt to all imperialist aid to the Pahlavi regime, and to boycott arms shipments to Iran through trade-union action!

### No to Islamic reaction

But what is the political basis of the current opposition to the Shah? It is not proletarian socialism. It is not even the bourgeois liberalism of Mossadegh, although liberals and leftists can be found in the movement -- and even apologising for the Muslim preachers. No, fundamentally, the current mass mobilisations against the Pahlavi family are under the ideo-



Soldiers confront demonstrators on Bloody Friday

logical sway of Muslim fundamentalists whose idea of a golden age is the expansion of Islam by fire and sword in the sixth century.

The hold of the mullahs over the Iranian masses is on the basis of a petty-bourgeois populist ideology, represented in its most radical form by Khomeini, who calls for the confiscation of the 'immorally' gained wealth of the rich. The lavish ostentation of the decadent, corrupt, jet-setting Imperial Court renders this Islamic puritanism all the more appealing to the Iranian masses. This reactionary 'anti-imperialism' virulently hates all aspects of Western culture which erode traditional Islamic society. The core of the mullahs' social support is thus the traditional middle classes -- merchants and artisans, the small stratum of wealthy peasants and certain backward sections of the proletariat such as casual construction labourers.

The victory of a reactionary movement of Muslim traditionalism would represent a far-reaching historical defeat for communists, who seek a revolutionary emancipation from semi-feudal backwardness. The religious opposition stands on the heritage of the Middle Ages, opposed even to the paltry social advances for women in past decades.

Thus in the Muslim holy city of Qom, Shariatmadari's stronghold, every female over the age of four must wear the *chador*, the black cloak/veil which is the symbol of centuries of brutal oppression of women by Islamic society. As for Khomeini, he states: 'We wish to liberate women from the corruption that is menacing them' (*Le Monde*, 6 May). His followers exposed the real meaning of this delicate phrase when they chanted 'Death or the veil' in the streets of Tabriz in February.

Placing themselves in the tradition of the Islamic religious leaders in the 1906 revolution against the monarchy, who fought for a constitution and a parliament, Khomeini and Shariatmadari pose as the champions of democratic rights against the Shah's tyranny. Do not be fooled! Numerous cases of dictatorial Muslim states masked by forms of parliamentary democracy can be found, including Pakistan, Malaysia and Indonesia.

More importantly, the Muslim religious leaders' 'democracy' does not extend to communists. Khomeini has ordered his followers not to engage in any collaboration with leftists against the Shah. Shariatmadari opposes the legalisation of the Tudeh party, as it would be contrary to the laws of Islam. Furthermore, at every key point in recent Iranian history (1906, 1946, 1953) there are many examples of anti-monarchical and 'anti-imperialist' religious figures who returned to the side of the Peacock Throne because of their fear of the left and plebian masses.

#### The left tails the mullahs

But this has not stopped the left -- both internationally and in Iran -- from falling into line behind the mullahs. Now that the medievalist Muslims are calling for the overthrow of the

Shah in the streets of Iran, the cowardly reformists of the American Socialist Workers Party (SWP) have finally raised the slogan 'Down with the Shah'. The SWP believes that the mullahs' 'anti-imperialism' and the call for parliamentary 'democracy' have an inherently revolutionary thrust. But the SWP is confronted with the dilemma of reconciling its uncritical support to the Muslim fundamentalists with its pose as the best fighter against the oppression of women. In the 22 September *Militant*, these social democrats once again resort to the 'SWP school of falsification' by running a picture of the Teheran march, proclaiming that 'Women played a prominent role in the September 4 protests'. The caption fails to mention that every one of the women is swathed in a veil!

Equally servile in its tailing of the mullahs is the International Marxist Group (IMG), the ~~SWP's British sister~~ organisation in the 'fake-Trotskyist' United Secretariat of the Fourth International' (USec). In a front-page article in *Socialist Challenge* (14 September), IMG leader Tariq Ali openly apologises for the reactionary religious leaders by claiming that they are Islamic Cromwells:

'True, many of the people are under the influence of religious leaders. When all other oppositions were brutally repressed some of the latter provided the only focus for struggle. But whatever the form (and students of English history will recall that Charles I, too, was overthrown by a movement which spoke with a religious voice) the content is clear. The masses do not like the monarchy.'



Shah of Iran with entourage of religious leaders

Three centuries of social history, and the vast difference between the epoch of capitalist ascendancy and its imperialist death agony, are conveniently forgotten in this incredibly limp excuse for political prostration.

Moreover, Ali claims that the 'key tasks' of the Iranian struggle for socialists today are the establishment of a republic, followed by a few bourgeois democratic reforms and the nationalisation of oil and multinational companies. The fight for these demands is somehow supposed to create a 'dynamic' which will ensure 'more lasting and fundamental social changes' -- no matter who is leading the struggle. Even if the masses in Iran were headed by a radical democratic leader with such a programme -- a new Mossadegh, perhaps -- they would hardly find this a solution to their fundamental problems. But the current leaders of the masses do not even *claim* to have bourgeois-democratic goals, limited as they may be. In the society which the mullahs seek to create, Iranian Pabloites would get a nasty shock if they tried to set up women's centres, people's cinemas, or any of the other trendy enterprises of which their European co-thinkers are so fond. In fact, they would be lucky if they were allowed to do *anything* at all.

The entire visible left in Iran also trails behind the Muslim leaders -- from the pro-Moscow Tudeh party to the guerrillaists of the Organisation of the People's Fedayeen (Self-Sacrificing) Guerrillas, to the various Maoist groupings, whether loyal to Albania or China. The Tudeh party accuses the Shah of 'pretending to respect the fundamental principles of Islam and ... taking demagogic measures...' (*Le Monde*, 1 September). Its programme goes no further than the confiscation of the property of the royal family.

And what of the Maoist and guerrillaist groups which vehemently denounce Tudeh's reformism? In the first place, the most hard-line China loyalists can barely posture as 'anti-Shah' militants, with Hua Kuo-feng arriving in Teheran at the height of the protests to pay respects to the 'anti-superpower' Shah. And even the most 'critical' Maoists praise Khomeini as the leader of the 'progressive clergy' and an 'anti-imperialist'.

Let us remind these 'Marxist-Leninists' of Lenin's *Theses on the National and Colonial Question*, presented to the Second Congress of the Comintern. Lenin stressed '... the need for a struggle against the clergy and other influential reactionary and medieval elements in backward countries' and '... the need to combat Pan-Islamism and similar trends which strive to combine the liberation movement against European and American imperialism with an attempt to strengthen the positions of the khans, landowners, mullahs etc'. The red flag of communism is irrevocably opposed to the red flag of Shi'ite Islam.

But the Iranian left does not understand this, and thus marches on the road to suicide. An Iranian Islamic 'republic' would have numerous precedents for a campaign to exterminate the left, from Libya to Pakistan to Indonesia where the army, aided by fanatical Muslim students, slaughtered more than half a million leftist worker and peasant militants. Whatever their 'anti-imperialist' trappings, not one of the states which swear by the Koran has abolished capitalism or imperialist domination.

The hundreds of thousands who are now marching behind the mullahs are by no means all Muslim fundamentalists. Many are primarily motivated by hostility to the real crimes of the Shah. Many leftist workers have probably joined what they view as a potentially successful opposition to the hated regime. But the masses, particularly the workers, who are now supporting the Khomeinis and Shariatmadaris can and must be won away from the present Islamic reactionary offensive in favour of a *social revolutionary* opposition to the Shah.

#### For workers revolution in Iran

The Iranian proletariat has not always been simple foot soldiers of the ulema. After the reigning Shah's father was deposed by the Allies in 1942, the new government's authority was minimal, with Russian forces occupying north-western Iran and British troops in the south. But class war erupted across the country. The city of Isfahan, in central Iran, saw three general strikes and one lockout between 1942 and

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# ANL Carnival...

(Continued from page 2)

the first two luminaries and did not mention the role of the latter scab:

Patrick Kodikara, chairman of the Hackney and Tower Hamlets Defence Committee and member of the SCLV steering committee, was in Brick Lane on September 24; but his record is little better. He recently wrote a tough-sounding article for the Campaign newspaper *Socialist Organiser* which denounced calls on the state to ban fascist mobilisations. But during the same week in which this paper appeared, Kodikara called on both the Home Secretary and the Metropolitan Police Commissioner to ban the NF march!

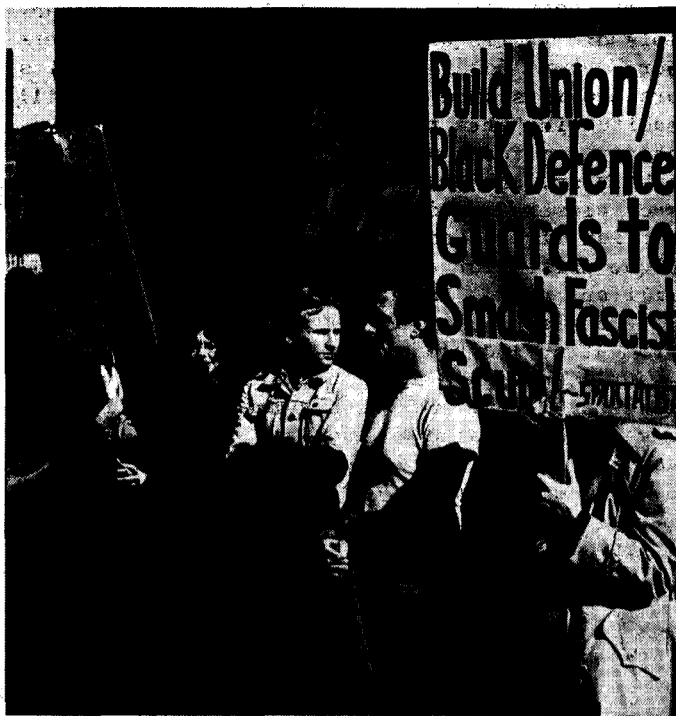
The IMG and SWP clearly do not have a monopoly on confusion. And the I-CL most certainly cannot draw the lessons of the September 24 debacle for serious militants.

## From Lewisham to Brick Lane

The events of September 24 should expose once and for all the rottenness of the popular front 'anti-fascist' road. After the Lewisham and Tameside demonstrations last year the SWP, red-baited furiously by the bourgeois press and without a firm base of support in the working class for its street fighting tactics, sought the comfort, respectability and numbers of a class-collaborationist bloc built on the quicksand of abstract 'anti-Nazism'. The ANL is a perfect replica of the peaceful 'anti-fascist' protest movements that the Stalinist Communist Party erected in the 1930s, full of hot air and pious gestures, and with all the fighting strength of a soggy biscuit.

The events of Lewisham shared with the ANL a total failure to see the mobilisation of the *organised working class* as the only way to destroy the fascist scum. They were the outgrowth of a *substitutionist* attempt to replace the weight of the trade unions with 'far-left' militancy. But the ANL has spat on and pulverised the fighting spirit and genuine desire to smash the fascists that the Lewisham demonstrators expressed.

The legalist, pacifist antics of the ANL were



Spartacist League contingent at East End anti-fascist demonstration, September 24

prefigured last autumn by the SWP and IMG's fatal predilection for state bans as a 'method' of halting the National Front. But the members of these organisations would undoubtedly have laughed derisively at any suggestion that, only one year later, they would be dancing to Tom Robinson whilst Tyndall and Webster's vile plague stomped in the East End. There is nothing accidental about this switch of policies. Without a clear programme of *proletarian* action, the fight against fascism will inevitably come to a dead end -- either in suicidal adventurist stunts or in the popular-frontist 'anti-fascism' of pacifist Carnivals.

The workers of Britain must look to the heroic battle of Cable Street in October 1936 for the answer to the NF threat. Until two days before Mosley's Blackshirts were scheduled to march to the East End, the CP was planning a simultaneous peaceable rally in Trafalgar Square in support of the Spanish Popular Front. Only under overwhelming pressure from the London

working class were they forced to call off this sham and mobilise to stop the Mosleyites in the streets. The hundred thousand workers who joined the demonstration that day were the force that was primarily responsible for arresting the crescendo of Blackshirt activity.

At least the CP -- rotten, reformist and popular-frontist as it was -- eventually managed to make it to the East End. But the SWP and IMG never got there.

If ever organisations aspiring to the leadership of the workers movement have deserved to be excoriated as 'scabs', it is the SWP and IMG. Falling at the feet of reformism and liberalism -- these are the methods of the rubber-spined ANL and its creatures. The fight to mobilise the united strength of the working class, headed by disciplined, organised and serious workers defence squads -- these are the methods of Trotskyism. September 24 has drawn the line. Make your choice! ■

## Spartacists excluded from public meeting

# How SWP repays its 'debts'

'But to the 2,000 anti-racists who held Brick Lane throughout the day -- an extremely arduous and frustrating task -- all anti-fascists owe a tremendous debt.'

— (Tony Cliff, *Socialist Worker*, 30 September 1978)

On September 27, three days after the ANL's scab Carnival, the Socialist Workers Party showed the real currency in which it intends to repay those who went to Brick Lane to demonstrate against the NF. In a cowardly move, members of the SWP in Birmingham physically prevented Spartacist League (SL) members from attending a public meeting on Iran, pushing one SL member against a wall in an attempt at thug-gish intimidation.

After all our 50-strong contingent on the East End mobilisation was the only one to raise slogans openly attacking the ANL's betrayal. Moreover, we have been highly visible this summer on previous demonstrations to defend Brick Lane, warning that the ANL could *only* betray the struggle against the NF.

Until Carnival 2 our programmatic placards, our militant and pointed chants, and our disciplined contingents seemed only to irritate or amuse the reformists of the SWP and their ANL assemblage. After the London 'Rock away from Racism', the Birmingham SWP, at least, seems to have felt more pressure. At first it decided to claim that the meeting, advertised as public, was internal. But when a *Workers Action* supporter announced his presence, the SWP changed tack and asserted: 'The Spartacists disrupt meetings.' When this slander was knocked down as baseless, another reason for excluding us emerged: the politics of the SL are 'pernicious'; they're out 'to destroy our organisation'; 'anyone else, the IMG, the I-CL, the CP, even the Labour Party can come, but not the Spartacists'.

But why didn't the SWP utter a word of protest about our non-existent 'disruptions' before? Why have they continued to formally bloc with us in defence of the Birmingham Ramp, the left selling place which has been attacked by local fascists?

In an attempt to give themselves a reasonable cover for excluding us, the SWP may wish to reach for time-tested Stalinist arguments: the SL is against the ANL; but so too is the National Front, therefore... Forty years ago the line was: Trotsky is against Stalin; the fascists are also against Stalin, therefore...

We warn the SWP: taking up these arguments and methods of political exclusion is a dangerous game, which not only backfires on the entire workers movement but will hurt the petty tyrants in the SWP itself. Cliff, Hallas, and Co have only to look at their enfeebled American 'co-thinkers' to learn that bureaucratic harassment of Spartacists leads thinking leftists -- workers or students -- to question further the extreme political shabbiness which leads to Stalinist-style tactics. ■

# Iran...

(Continued from page 5)

1946. As a result of the lockout the starving workers occupied the granaries and factories and had to be suppressed by armed tribesmen.

In parts of the north, the Central Council of the Trade Unions of Iran, organised by the Tudeh party, and its workers militia held sole administrative and judicial authority, collecting taxes, issuing travel permits etc. Factories were taken over in Mazanderan, and armed strikers clashed with troops in the streets of Teheran. A bloody struggle was waged against the British oil companies in the southwestern province of Khuzistan. The working class, although armed and independently organised, lacked the revolutionary vanguard party which could lead them to victory. The Tudeh broke the 1946 oil strike in return for three cabinet positions. Again and again the Stalinists betrayed the struggles of the Iranian masses on behalf of the diplomatic manoeuvres of the Kremlin.

Today Iran's working class has just begun to re-enter the battle. Throughout the 1960s a number of militant but scattered strikes were waged, but the veterans of the struggles of the 1940s and 1950s had largely been decimated and a new generation of proletarians had flowed into the factories from the villages. Under the leadership of a Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard party this proletariat, which confronts the vicious repression of the Shah's dictatorship in its struggle for the most elementary demands, can bring into play its social power at the head of the other oppressed strata of Iranian society.

The democratic tasks of the Iranian revolution will only be won through the weapons of the class struggle and the triumph of a workers and peasants government. Yet the latter-day Mensheviks and Narodniks seek to restrain the Iranian masses within the bounds of a 'democratic' stage of the revolution. And in this 'two-stage' schema it is the ayatollahs and

bourgeois nationalists who would reap the benefits of the struggles of the workers and peasants.

As we wrote in 1975:

'Iran, with its fragile ruling crust, combative proletariat, desperate peasantry ... and suppressed national minorities, may well prove to be the cockpit of revolution in the Middle and Near East. In many respects the template of Russia in 1917 fits Iran today. But lacking is a Bolshevik party which can rally the vast masses of rural poor and lead the proletariat to power.' (*Young Spartacus*, September 1975)

While the Stalinists argue openly for a suicidal 'two-stage' schema, the fake-Trotskyists of the United Secretariat pretend that the struggle for democratic demands can somehow magically grow over into a struggle for socialism (or 'more lasting and fundamental social changes', in Tariq Ali's polite expression). Thus the USec rejects the core of the theory of permanent revolution -- the fight for a conscious revolutionary *leadership* which can connect the immediate democratic aspirations of the masses with the struggle for workers dictatorship.

An authentic Trotskyist vanguard in Iran would struggle for full legal equality for women, for the right of self-determination for the national minorities, and in particular for land to the tiller to draw the peasantry to the side of the proletariat. It would raise the demands: 'Smash SAVAK', 'Down with the Shah', and would call for a constituent assembly based on universal suffrage, while simultaneously fighting for organs of proletarian rule (soviets) whose victory alone can guarantee the tasks of the democratic revolution.

Only by sweeping away the social bases of the Pahlavi autocracy and of the ulema's religious obscurantism, can the proletariat win the oppressed masses to its side and emerge victorious. Smash the Pahlavis' reign of terror! For an Iranian Trotskyist Party, section of the reformed Fourth International! For a workers and peasants government!

-- adapted from *Workers Vanguard* no 215, 22 September 1978

# SCLV fizzles...

(Continued from page 8)

institutional guarantees of support are likely to be given, the Nationalists may well be convinced to support the government (or at worst abstain) in any confidence votes, in exchange for an early move to hold the projected referendums on devolution.

However if the sessions in Parliament may see some upsets, extra-parliamentary events are likely to be far more stormy. Already Ford workers have come out on strike for a pay increase of 25 per cent, and behind them stand other unions lining up against the Phase Four restraints, including tanker drivers claiming 40 per cent and almost thirty other sections claiming between 20 and 30 per cent. Moreover, miners' leader Joe Gormley has already threatened strike action this winter.

It is quite possible that Callaghan's election gamble will turn out to be a first-rate political blunder. Instead of protracted negotiations over sell-out productivity deals, which would avoid big straight cash claims and deny workers any clear victory over wage controls, the government faces a sharp confrontation with the Ford workforce on the continuance of any kind of wage limits. Tribune MPs like Eric Heffer and Norman Atkinson have joined the majority of union bureaucrats in verbal opposition to a further phase of pay policy.

If the Ford strike is won then Callaghan's usefulness for the bosses will rapidly evaporate. The Tories, discredited by the failure of Heath's confrontation with the miners in 1974 and now led by a weak and competitive melange of ex-Heathmen and reactionary extremists, can offer the bourgeoisie nothing better. The prospect of a series of weak, hung parliaments confronts the bourgeoisie -- with a National Government to tame the working class, and eventual moves towards Bonapartist strongman rule looming as the alternatives for the British capitalist class, squeezed by its parlous economic position and the unbroken strength of the trade unions.

## The SCLV embarrassment

In a kind of sideshow to the events of the class struggle, the election postponement has also caused problems for many of Labour's Trotskyist satellites. In particular the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory is obviously proving rather embarrassing to the supporters of the International-Communist League (I-CL) and the paper *Workers Action* with which the I-CL is in political solidarity. The lash-up of social-democratic constituency activists, parliamentary aspirants and fake 'revolutionaries' in the SCLV was apparently conceived by *Workers Action* leaders as a short 'four week manoeuvre' to consolidate a small periphery in the Constituency Labour Parties. But this tactical turn has been thoroughly bogged down by Callaghan's decision; thus the *Workers Action* tendency is lumbered with the SCLV albatross for perhaps another six months, with only the prospect of furthering its play for a political alliance with the 'activist' minority of the Chartist group.

Yet the idea of continuing to provide platforms for such thoroughgoing social democrats as Ernie Roberts, former AUEW assistant general secretary and prospective parliamentary candidate for Hackney North, does not seem to overly worry the *Workers Action* editorial board. Indeed, these hardy souls welcomed the election postponement, as this 'gives us a few more months to build support ... for the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory' (*Workers Action*, 16-23 September).

Rank-and-file supporters of *Workers Action*, however, seem decidedly less enthusiastic about 'building support' for the SCLV in the coming months than do their leaders. Desultorily attended meetings and scarcely concealed wincing at the most right-wing statements of their social-democratic bedfellows testify only too vividly to the ranks' positive lack of appetite for this campaign. And for good reason: anybody with the slightest communist instincts should be nauseated at the prospect of six months' foot-slogging and door-knocking for aspiring bureaucrats who agree with the SCLV demands because they 'are already the policies of the Labour Party Annual Conference or the trade union conferences and the TUC' (Ernie Roberts, *Socialist Organiser*, October 1978), or who stand for the 'democratisation of existing housing departments' and advocate price controls (Ken Livingstone at the All-London Rally of the SCLV

on September 22).

The SCLV circus was no doubt designed as an episodic tactic aimed at winning new supporters for *Workers Action*. In reality it has taken its protagonists once round the reformist treadmill, habituating them to the non-criticism, sycophancy and fuzzy politics of fake-Trotskyist Labourism, and bringing the *Workers Action* tendency closer to becoming a permanent and organic faction of the Labour Party. Indeed a certain niche exists for 'left' activist critics of the Militant group, Labour-loyal but prepared to take certain positions -- as on Ireland, women's liberation and homosexual rights -- which Ted Grant's entourage avoid to maintain their stodgy respectability. And the gravitational pull of organised social democracy may ultimately prove too strong for *Workers Action*'s miserable opportunist caricature of Trotskyism, despite its genuflections in the direction of the revolutionary programme.

If Callaghan had gone ahead with an October election, the correct Leninist position would have been to refuse to vote for Labour (much less actively campaign for it!), given the party's recent sordid record of coalitionism, severe wage-cutting and mass strikebreaking. (For an extended presentation of our position, see 'No Vote to Labour!', *Spartacist Britain* no 4, September.) Should the Labour government maintain its hard-line stance in defence of Phase Four in the face of a working class upsurge, and then call an election on this basis, a position against voting Labour should be even more timely as a means of breaking militants from the iron grip of the social democrats.

Hard, unflinching programmatic opposition to the politics of social democracy, not smuggling up to the 'left' reformists, is the hallmark of communists -- a fact which militants who support *Workers Action* would do well to recall. At the SCLV fringe meeting at the Brighton TUC, *Workers Action* supporters could manage not a single word of criticism of Ernie Roberts and their other social-democratic bloc partners. At the September 22 All-London Rally, one individual did feel compelled to state 'I want to disagree with certain emphases [...] in Ernie Roberts' remarks' -- though this was solely as a result of a sharp attack from a Spartacist League spokesman.

Such an organisation is incapable of building a communist party, in Britain or internationally. That task falls to the international Spartacist tendency, not to the 'socialist' campaigners for Labour of the I-CL. ■

## Ford...

(Continued from page 8)

lose £10 million a day while the strike lasts. And shoulder to shoulder with them stands a government which recognises that its future depends on defeating the strike, and which is therefore in no mood for conciliatory measures.

This strike must be won! With Ford plants shut down, it is imperative that all attempts by the company to move Ford products into, out of or within Britain be halted through blacking action on the railways and at docks and airports both here and abroad. Already Southampton and Merseyside dockers have prevented the loading of Ford products, the National Union of Seamen has blacked all Ford shipments, and East Coast railwaymen and dockers at ports throughout the country have agreed to black parts and vehicles. Ford workers internationally can also give practical material support, through financial contributions to the strike fund and by blacking any work Ford may try to divert to its factories in Europe or North America.

The Ford strike must be spread, and turned into a general offensive against Phase Four. Other sections with claims in the pipeline -- in particular car workers at Vauxhall and British Leyland, Cowley, who are both seeking substantially more than 5pc -- should come out on strike now! The government's 12 month rule, designed to isolate workers taking industrial action which threatens Labour's wage controls, must be challenged. Bring the review dates forward! Those preparing claims -- like the bulk of British Leyland -- should put them in now and seize the chance to wage a joint strike. Such united militant action would enable workers across the board to smash through the wage freeze.

The greatest obstacles to victory at Ford's are the bureaucrats who currently head the strike. Moss Evans was a fulsome supporter of the Social Contract, and Ron Todd played an important role in selling out the Grunwick dispute, which involved T&GWU as well as APEX strikers. Todd, who is also London treasurer of the Labour Party, has already indicated that he

wants to limit the dispute as much as possible: 'I don't want to get into confrontation with the Labour Government. We are in favour of 90pc of their policies, but in terms of wage restraint they are wrong' (*Financial Times*, 23 September). But this strike is a head-on confrontation with the Labour government! Attempts to skirt around that central issue by arguing for special 'exemptions' from the guidelines serve only to misdirect the strikers and undercut support from other workers.

The running of the strike cannot be left to these proven agents of the employers, nor to their local and district representatives. Local and national strike committees, subject to recall at any time, should be elected to co-ordinate the day-to-day running of the strike and to take over negotiations. There must be regular mass meetings and information bulletins on the strike. Flying pickets must be despatched whenever necessary to ensure that all Ford parts and products are blacked.

And no secret negotiations! Remember the sellout of the 1971 Ford's strike, which Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon gave away by cementing a behind-the-scenes deal with the company and then pushing it through by means of a postal ballot.

The unions' claims are limited -- for example, a £20 basic increase scarcely makes up for the drop in real wages experienced in the past four years, and without a sliding scale which guarantees wage increases to compensate fully for rises in the cost of living there will be no protection against future inflation. But a 25pc pay rise for Ford's workers would sound the death knell of wage controls and burst the class struggle out of its Labour government-imposed straightjacket. Winning the 35-hour workweek would also point the way to the fight against unemployment through work-sharing at full pay. Yet these are demands which the British bourgeoisie, because of the continuing downward slide of British capitalism, cannot concede generally without severely worsening the current critical state of capitalism in these islands. If they can defeat the strike, it would mean the consolidation of the wage freeze and a further year of declining living standards and lengthening dole queues for British workers.

The key to victory is active solidarity by the rest of the union movement. The bureaucrats will do their level best to limit and sell out any clash with their friends in the Labour government -- remember how they sold the firemen down the river just last winter! The union leaders will try to prevent other sectors from joining Ford's workers in the kind of mass industrial action which can win.

Don't let these sellout artists get their way! Rip control of the Ford strike out of their hands, and spread the strikes against Phase Four! Not 'exemptions' from the 5pc ceiling, but strikes to smash Labour's wage freeze and win the shorter workweek at higher pay!

The past four years of Labour government have been a long and bitter lesson in social-democratic treachery for the working class. Workers today have very few, if any, illusions that the Labour government is somehow on their side. Don't listen to calls to 'moderate' your demands and your struggles because of the need to 'strengthen the economy' or to 'keep out the Tories'. There is nothing worth 'saving' in this Labour government.

And don't be fooled by the Tribune 'lefts' and their cheap talk about opposing wage controls now that the heat is on. These are the same people who have played along with every one of Callaghan's attacks on the working class throughout the life of the Labour government. Moreover, their strident cries for import controls to save British industry from foreign competition provide a 'solution' which can only hurt foreign workers.

Labour's rule is bosses' rule, government for the owners and managers of industry. Like the TUC leaders, the Labour Party chieftains are the agents of the capitalist class in the workers movement. They must be thrown out -- all of them, from Callaghan and Moss Evans to the 'lefts' like Tony Benn and Bob Wright -- and replaced by a new, revolutionary leadership of the labour movement. This is the only way for the struggles of the working class to go forward to final victory: the smashing of the capitalist state and the creation of a workers government. Such a government would nationalise all basic industry and finance, thus replacing the anarchy of production for profit with a planned socialist economy.

VICTORY TO THE FORD STRIKE -- JOIN THEM ON STRIKE TO SMASH PHASE FOUR!  
OUST THE BUREAUCRATS -- FOR REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT!

# SPARTACIST BRITAIN

## Ford strikers challenge Labour's wage freeze

# Spread the strikes, smash Phase Four!

In the first major challenge to Phase Four of the Callaghan government's wage controls, 57,000 workers at Ford car plants throughout the country have come out on a national strike in support of claims for a 25 per cent pay rise and a shorter workweek. Despite the fact that union leaders are trying to plead that Ford workers are a 'special case', the strike is openly aimed against the Cabinet's attempt to limit pay increases to 5 per cent this year. Many workers who have suffered vicious attacks on their wages and living standards under four years of Labour government are looking to the Ford's strike, hoping that it will finally break the stranglehold of Callaghan's wage controls.

Incensed at management's haughty refusal to countenance a claim which went outside the government's wage limits, workers staged spontaneous walkouts in almost every one of Ford's 23 British plants on September 21. From Halewood to Basildon, from Dagenham to Southampton, thousands of workers downed tools and marched out on hearing the offer. Mass meetings the following Monday overwhelmingly backed the call for indefinite strike action. Out of the 3000 car body workers representing the day shift at Dagenham, only 25 voted against the strike; likewise at Southampton less than 100 hands were raised when the vote against was called.

The unions' claim, drawn up by a conference of shop stewards in Coventry in July and submitted to the company on August 24, calls for a minimum £20 increase on basic rates, a reduction of five hours in the working week (to 35 hours), an increase in holidays, holiday pay and the annual bonus, and improved sick pay, shift rates, redundancy payments and pensions. At a meeting on September 21, Ford management threw out almost every demand. Paltry increases in the grade rates were offered, along with a small rise in the annual bonus, while everything else was rejected out of hand. As an attempted sweetener, the company offered 'to make additional payments if agreement could be reached on a plan for improving the Company's efficiency and capacity utilisation' (*Ford Employee Information newssheet*, 21 September) -- ie a self-financing productivity deal.

To back up its hard-line attitude, the company quoted the government guidelines and referred to the economic sanctions with which it is threatened if the pay limit is breached. But when word of the company's offer reached the factory floor, the ranks streamed out of the gates. The bureaucrats had to sanction the inevitable: Ron Todd, national organiser of the Transport and General Workers Union (T&GWU) and chairman of the negotiating team, denounced Ford's offer as 'derisory' and called for a national strike. This position was swiftly endorsed by Moss Evans, T&GWU general secretary, and the national executive of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers (AUEW), the other major union at Ford's, soon followed suit.

However, if the Ford workforce was quick off the mark in spurning the offer, the Callaghan government was no less speedy in showing what side of the class line it stood on. Speaking on

BBC radio on September 25, Joel Barnett, the chief treasury secretary, spelled out the Labour leadership's attitude: 'I can assure you, the Ford workers and everybody else that there is no question about it. The Government intend to stand firm because we believe it is right' (quoted in *Evening Standard*, 25 September). There can be no doubting the determination behind Barnett's words: the smashing of Grunwick picket lines and the use of troops to defeat the firemen last winter underscore the lengths to which this government will go to keep the working class in check.

All eyes are now on the Ford strike -- potentially the most important industrial showdown in the last four years of Labour government. Victory at Ford's would be an enormous morale booster for the working class, showing that it is possible to strike against the Labour government and win. With tanker drivers, ICI workers, local government manual workers and many others soon to submit their own claims, the chances of ripping the government's White Paper to shreds would be greatly increased were the Ford claim to be won. Defeat on the other hand could well mean the reluctant acceptance by other sections



Workers stream out of Dagenham gates after vote to strike

of the 5pc limit, and a fourth year of wage control. With the scalps of Ford workers on his belt, Callaghan might well call a 'Phase Four' election, and campaign for votes to Labour as the party of 'responsibility' which broke the Ford strike.

The stakes riding on this dispute are very high indeed. The Ford bosses are expected to

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## Election off: SCLV fizzles

In an unexpected move which took both political opponents and ostensible allies by surprise, Callaghan on September 7 put an end to speculation about an October poll by announcing that the 'on-off' election was officially 'off'. Although a major parliamentary defeat or a sharp escalation of strikes against Phase Four could force his hand, it is unlikely that the Prime Minister will want to call an election before next spring at the earliest. The postponement, presumably considered to be to Labour's advantage, has caught most interested parties on the hop: from the Tories who are left with a £1 million bill for their premature advertising campaign, right over to fake-Trotskyists like the partisans of *Workers Action*, who, together with the Chartist group, are left with their own premature advertisement for Labour, the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory (SCLV).

Callaghan's motives for calling off the election are by no means clear. The timing of the announcement -- the day after the TUC had voted massively against the government's 5 per cent pay limit, and just 48 hours after Callaghan himself had addressed the Congress -- only adds to the confusion. Despite the trade union leaders' undoubted desire to see another year of 'social peace', massive revulsion among the

union ranks at the idea of a further twelve months of wage restraint obliged delegates to reject Phase Four by an overwhelming majority. Callaghan's postponement decision was thus taken in the sure knowledge that a winter of industrial discontent lies ahead.

Callaghan and the Labour Cabinet are probably the only ones who really know why the election was put off. The reported opposition of four key cabinet ministers to an October election; Labour's poor showing in recent opinion polls, giving them only a sporting chance of victory; the report by general secretary Ron Hayward revealing a dismal lack of preparedness in the party for an election campaign; and the possibility of winning additional seats as a result of the electoral register change next February, were all no doubt operative considerations.

But whatever the reasons, it is clear that the next parliamentary session will be tough going for Labour. With the Liberals refusing support in order to re-establish some distance from Labour and with the reactionary maverick Ulster Unionists not to be trusted, Callaghan has solicited the support of the Scottish and Welsh Nationalist Parties. And although no

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