



Callaghan sows, Thatcher reaps

Remember Labour's betrayals!

**No vote to Labour traitors!
For a revolutionary leadership
of the workers movement!**

For months, Tory wall posters have been proclaiming the message 'Cheer up, Labour can't hang on forever'. Now, after a year of coalition with the Liberals and months of clinging to power through sordid corridor deals with the other minor parties of Westminster, parliamentary defeat is staring the Labour government in the face. And the Tories are confident that their huge opinion poll lead will translate into a landslide election victory.

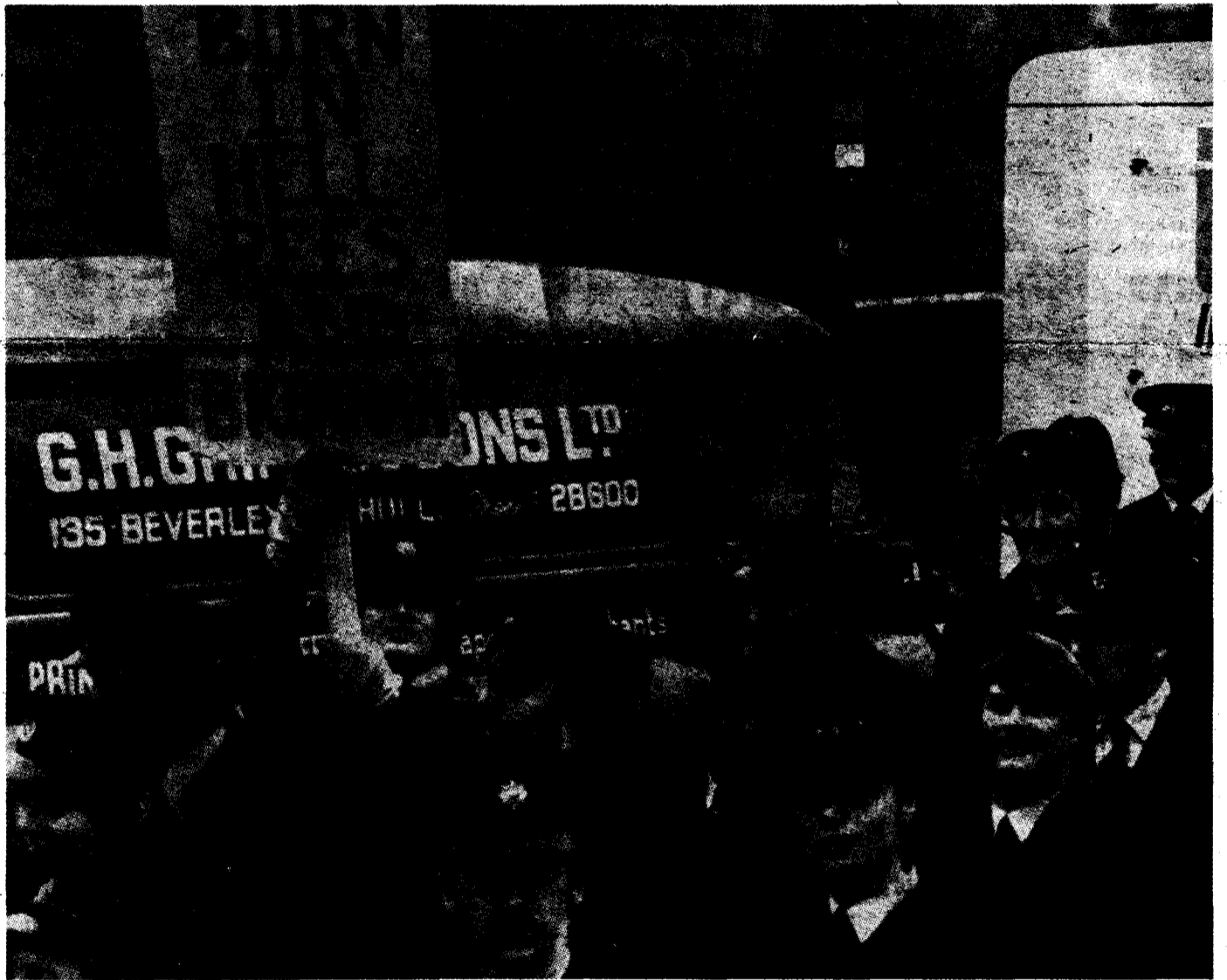
The City is itching for a Thatcher government; the day after the opposition leader tabled her 'no confidence' motion in Parliament, the *Financial Times* index shot up twenty points. The bourgeoisie now sees in the Labour government a spent force, a tired administration which has used up all its energies in curbing the working class to shore up British capitalism.

It is bathos indeed that the ostensible occasion for the parliamentary crisis was triggered by disputes over the issue of devolution. Callaghan's fraudulent and essentially inconsequential devolution proposals and the wretched parliamentary wheeling and dealing over them would have been deservedly forgotten if the wave of militant strikes had congealed into a decisive class confrontation.

Quelling militancy

Questions of parliamentary arithmetic aside, it is no accident that Thatcher decided to go for Labour's jugular only after Callaghan had apparently succeeded in his final assignment for the bourgeoisie. With the help of his allies in the TUC and NUM bureaucracies, the prime minister seems to have ridden out the latest union pay revolt with a minimum of damage to both the state crockery and the bourgeoisie's profits.

Throughout the winter months, striking workers were threatening to bring the country to a standstill as they buried Phase Four under an avalanche of industrial action. In this situation, while most of our fake-left opponents were revamping their own favourite schemes to



Firemen during 1977-78 strike

help Callaghan win the next elections, the Spartacist League raised the call for a general strike to centralise and give a lead to the fragmented struggles and bring out the big battalions of the labour movement, especially the miners. Such a general strike for certain key demands could have achieved a major victory for the working class against the austerity schemes of the capitalists and their government agents.

But instead the winter pay round looks like ending in no more than a stand-off. A few sec-

tors, notably the lorry drivers, won significant victories. Others, like Leyland workers, lost badly. And many others were kept isolated in their separate struggles by the bureaucrats and then gradually fobbed off one by one with measly settlements -- if necessary, as with the health workers, a bit above the government's original five per cent limit.

On Valentine's Day, the TUC leaders signed their Concordat with the Cabinet in an attempt

continued on page 2

Page 3

**SCLV: An uncritical
boost for the fake left**

Page 4

**China: Don't be a cat's
paw for US imperialism**

Page 6

**Who told the truth
about Khomeini?**

Labour's betrayals...

(Continued from page 1)

to stop militant picketing and underline their commitment to saving Labour's electoral skin at the expense of the interests of the membership. And two weeks later, the miners' leaders were offered and accepted 9 per cent. If this settlement gets past the restive membership, then the bourgeoisie, the government and the bureaucrats



James Callaghan

will together breathe a heavy sigh of relief at the end of an arduous winter of industrial discontent. Yet the working class has not suffered any decisive defeat, and the same conditions which generated the winter's strike wave must provoke new waves of militant struggle.

Five years of betrayal

Immediately, both Callaghan and the TUC will doubtless happily use an election campaign to dampen any lingering militancy, as they plump for the union movement to bury the hatchet and unite behind Labour to keep the Tories out. But for revolutionaries, the coming election is not an opportunity to take a last stand in defence of Labour or start declaiming on the alleged qualitative superiority of Jim Callaghan's programme to Margaret Thatcher's. We will state, as we have since the government's openly reactionary attacks began to cause major and deep-seated resentment and opposition in the working class in late 1976, that there is currently no basis for a vote to Labour over the Tories.

The last years have been ones of unbridled Labour treachery: first Wilson and now Callaghan have bound the unions hand and foot through a series of Social Contracts, wage control and now the Concordat. These pacts between the Cabinet and the TUC have produced soaring unemployment, gutted social services run by grossly underpaid workers and tumbling living

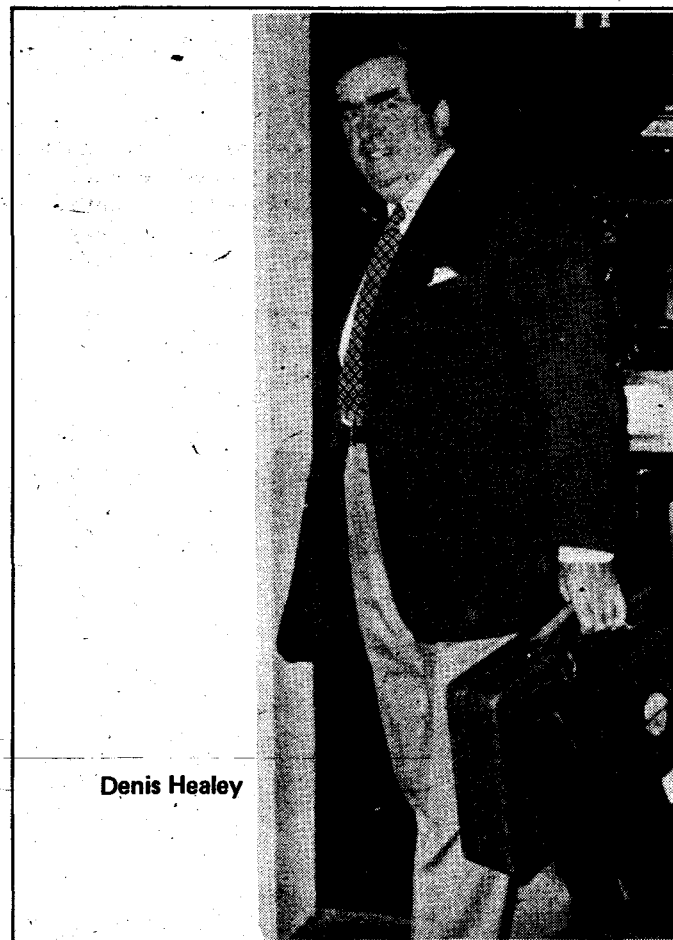
standards. And Labour has unleashed its cops and troops to smash strikes from the Glasgow dustmen to Grunwicks to the firemen and ambulance drivers.

Cap this with the unchecked torture of suspected IRA men in Northern Ireland, the imposition and annual renewal of the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act, the tightening of immigration laws and the barbaric 'virginity tests' carried out on South Asian women arriving in England, and you have a true picture of life under Labour.

Thatcher's crew of monetarists and union-bashers are certainly out to make things tough for the working class: already they have been outlining policies to further curb union picketing rights and cut social security payments to strikers' families. But the core of the Tories' programme in power will necessarily be the same as that of Callaghan. It will be the programme of thinner pay packets, longer dole queues and ever-poorer social services which the bourgeoisie demands in order to refurbish this country's decrepit capitalist economy.

In any case, Marxists do not orient their policy on the basis of a preference for the 'lesser evil'. Our aim is not to 'save Labour' or 'keep the Tories out', but to win the working class to the revolutionary programme and party. At times, critical electoral support to Labour can be an important tactic for building such a party: it can simultaneously draw the class line between the workers movement and the direct political representatives of capital and also expose Labour's pro-capitalist leaders by putting them in power and thus to the test of the masses. Such was the situation in both elections of 1974, when the Spartacist tendency called for critical support to Labour as a means toward destroying workers' illusions in Wilson, Benn, Foot & Co.

But today, after years of a Labour government whose hallmark has been the vicious wage-slashing Social Contracts and not even the meekest version of social-democratic tinkering, the tactic of critical support to Labour can in no way represent even the most deformed expression of a class line against the open representatives



Denis Healey

of the bourgeoisie, nor a way of exposing the pretences of the labour fakers before the masses. Indeed what pretences can Callaghan et al have today to leading and defending the interests of the working class? While most workers are probably set to vote Labour anyway, this will only be a vote born of desperation and despair at the want of an alternative, not a hopeful search for a better future.

No vote to the traitors!

With almost total unanimity the British left

Labour's torturers

Once again the British public has been given a glimpse of the kind of 'human rights' the army is protecting in Northern Ireland. The recent detailed revelations of RUC torture at Castlereagh Centre were a particularly sharp jolt to the Labour government's propaganda machine: not, of course, because accounts of ruptured ear drums, injured finger joints and multiple bruises are fresh news, but because this time they are part of an authoritative report from a senior police surgeon in the Six Counties.

A few days after Dr Robert Irwin first aired his charges on ITV, the official Bennett Report on police interrogation procedures backed them up. This report went further than detailing 'a large increase of significant bruising, contusions and abrasions' and similar technical descriptions of the results of RUC detective work. It suggested a new code of banned practices: there should be no future 'use of threats of sexual assault or misbehaviour', 'threats of abandonment in a hostile area', nor any 'order requiring a prisoner to strip and expose himself or herself'. Obviously, all these techniques must be in use today -- otherwise why suggest banning them!

The government's reply to Dr Irwin's much-publicised findings was a snide and filthy smear campaign, with evidence of orchestration from the offices of the chief constable of the RUC, Kenneth Newman, and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Roy Mason. Stooping about as low as it would seem possible to go, it was put about that Irwin was really after the RUC because he wished to revenge the rape of his wife a few years ago (the RUC had never found the rapist, who was rumoured to be an SAS sergeant).

This thoroughly revolting campaign led even the wretched Gerry Fitt, SDLP MP for West Belfast, to call for the resignations of Newman and Mason. This pair are guilty of many crimes in Northern Ireland, to be sure, but so is the entire British capitalist class and its Labour government. Policy in Ireland is not simply the work of a few evil men, but of all

the major political parties. To suggest that torture and lying are Mason's programme alone, and not the 'bi-partisan' programme of Labour and Tory alike, is to let off the hook a government which is up to its ears in terror, torture and political murder in the north of Ireland.

Both Irwin and the Bennett Report seek the unachievable: a non-torturing and self-policing RUC. Indeed they believe that such a body would be in the best interests of the imperialist order: Irwin says he wants to see the RUC purged of 'the few' who 'besmirch the name of the finest force in the Western world!' Communists, however, do not seek a 'more professional' RUC, with 'better trained' interrogation officers, or a more 'humane' British armed presence in the sectarian Northern Ireland statelet.

The British army is there to guard the torture chambers of Castlereagh; to protect the Long Kesh concentration camp and the filthy dungeons of its H-Blocks. The only thing we demand of the troops is that they get out. The British trade union movement must black all military transport to Ireland. The RUC and its sectarian para-military offshoots like the UVF must be smashed by the united mobilisation of the working class. All the victims of imperialist terror now rotting in Long Kesh and other imperialist gaols must be freed immediately -- and it would be more than appropriate if the RUC torturers and SAS assassins took their place and spent a long time rotting in the cages of their former victims.

All those who have suffered or died at the hands of the hypocritical murdering savages of British imperialism, of whom Newman and Mason are but two, will one day be avenged. When the workers of Ireland unite to smash imperialism, sectarian terror and capitalist rule and establish a workers republic, they will recall who administered the sensory deprivation techniques, who handed out the beatings, who watched the prisoners rotting in Long Kesh's H-Blocks. And when that is done, justice will be dispensed accordingly.

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is now gearing up to campaign yet again for Labour in the elections -- seeking to put the most brazen anti-working-class traitors since Ramsay Macdonald back in Westminster for another go-round. But the opportunists' knee-jerk critical support for Labour is a travesty of Leninism. Given the government's deep-rooted and savage attacks on the working class, a call to vote Labour today can only be an attempt to restore shattered illusions that the party can be forced to defend the interests of workers and the oppressed.

Today Marxists must seek to give a conscious lead to the hundreds of thousands of workers who share doubts about or outright hostility toward the Labour government and party. There must be no holding back of struggles to save Callaghan's

government of thieves and traitors -- including during an election campaign. And kill the Concordat, latest sellout pact between the TUC and Cabinet!

When election day comes, workers should not simply troop to the ballot boxes and vote meekly for four more years of defeat and betrayal under Labour rule. In this election, Labour offers no alternative to the Tories and the other bourgeois parties. No vote to the traitors! Any labour movement candidate who asks for workers votes must show that he has supported the struggles of the class in *action* -- not just with cheap words, like the Tribune fakers -- before being considered for even the most critical support.

Various regions of NUPE -- a union at the

centre of the most recent industrial upsurge -- have threatened to withdraw support from Labour in the elections unless it reverses its stand and backs their struggle. Militants must demand that union candidates standing on a full class struggle programme be run *against* Labour.

Whether the next government is Labour or Tory, the attacks will come -- and they must be resisted down the line. The working class acutely needs a new revolutionary leadership to lead this struggle and take the class forward. The sole alternative to the capitalist rot which is eating away at British society is a workers government, erected on the ashes of Westminster and over the political corpses of the James Callaghans, Len Murrays and Tony Benns. ■

SCLV: An uncritical boost for the fake left

Soon after the debut of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory (SCLV) last year we pointed out that this miniature election machine for 'left' Labour parliamentary hopefuls was 'bringing the *Workers Action* tendency closer to becoming a permanent and organic faction of the Labour Party' (*Spartacist Britain* no 4, October 1978). At the time, the supporters of the International-Communist League (I-CL)-backed newspaper *Workers Action* pooh-poohed us, protesting that they were simply conducting a 'four week manoeuvre' in the run-up to the anticipated autumn election.

But we were right. Six months on the SCLV (which amalgamates *Workers Action* and the intensely Labour-loyal Chartists with various unaffiliated Labour Party members and minor party bureaucrats) is still campaigning, furiously boosting its 'big name' left reformist sponsors, Ted Knight, Ken Livingstone & Co. And WA's slide from left-posturing nominal 'Trotskyism' to outright liquidation in the crassly reformist SCLV bloc is continuing apace.

Four times already an issue of *Workers Action* has been suspended to clear the decks for the production of the SCLV's very own newspaper, *Socialist Organiser*. This has given WA supporters more opportunity to peddle 'internationalist', 'communist' articles in which Ernie Roberts supports the existing policies of the Labour Party and the TUC, Ted Knight justifies rates increases by Lambeth Council, and Ken Livingstone blames the advent of new technology for the police force's 'new' role of 'political control' since the war. *Workers Action* itself has urged its supporters to get out and canvass for Knight in his Hornsey parliamentary constituency in order to help win this 'key marginal seat' for the sellout Labour Party.

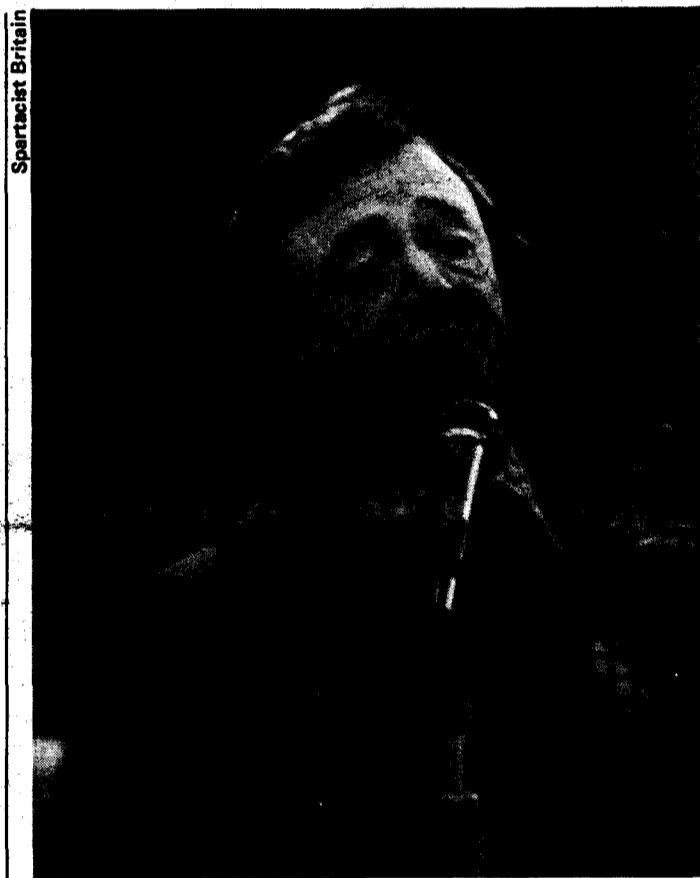
Most recently, the 23 February-3 March *Workers Action* uncritically reprinted a statement on the public sector strike by the Labour Party treasurer and MP for Tottenham, Norman Atkinson, Ted Knight and Reg Race, a NUPE bureaucrat and Labour candidate for Wood Green. A cheap gesture to the left, the statement blathered on about the 'just' demands of the 'low paid' for a 'fair deal' and endorsed the establishment of a 'support committee' for London Borough of Haringey strikers. But the political character of the piece was captured by the Declaration:

'We believe that the only solution to Britain's economic difficulties lies in a strong Labour Government pursuing the policies on which it was elected in 1974 and implementing the manifesto.'

This statement apparently caused some dissension among the WA readership. A letter in the March 10-17 issue complained that:

'It is not the job of *Workers Action* to give uncritical platforms to fake left-wingers and thereby help perpetuate the illusions which workers have in them. (The *Militant* tendency can do this perfectly well by itself.)

Perhaps the *Workers Action* editorial board was forced to acknowledge that it had slipped up in giving Atkinson & Co such a free and uncritical advertisement? Not in the slightest: *Workers*



Ted Knight: friend of *Workers Action*

Action's reply to its correspondent was to admonish him for sectarianism! After all, says the reply, 'a real struggle is worth ten lectures'. Atkinson's support for the Labour government through five years of strikebreaking and wage-slashing was doubtless 'a real struggle'. He has probably struggled long and hard to produce the 'most effective left-sounding bilge on the council workers strike, while committing himself to absolutely nothing.

WA is running very scared about 'sectarianism' these days. The I-CL journal *International Communist* interviewed John O'Mahony, chairman of the SCLV, in its August 1978 issue. In the eyes of O'Mahony sectarianism stalks the workers movement with a fearsome tread. The SWP is on an 'Oehlerite' binge because it doesn't foresee an indefinite future in the Labour Party trying to rejuvenate Callaghan's social democracy.

And WA itself? True, O'Mahony admits, there is always a danger that the SCLV could become 'just a cover for left reformism'. But 'a more real danger than diluting is to wind up as a small sect that puts forward its "Action Programme"... That is why we haven't insisted that people joining the campaign agree with every dot and comma of the platform.' And he concludes with the stirring admonition that 'the epochal task of revolutionaries' must be 'transforming the labour movement'.

The leaders of *Workers Action* are clearly set hard on their rightward course. After all, they have come in from the cold. No more polemics against opportunism and Labourism, no more small-time 'grouplet' politics, just the anaes-

thetising Labour Party round, on the knocker for Knight and the rest of Tribune's understudies -- and *sans* programme.


By contrast the other half of the rotten amalgam that originally launched the I-CL in late 1975, *Workers Power*, is currently posturing as the hard, principled alternative to WA's liquidation effort. In February WP went so far as to denounce the SCLV as 'no more than a bloc for common propaganda which could make no break from left reformism'.

But that was not always WP's tune. When the SCLV was first launched, WP hailed it as a 'principled alternative to the reformist mish-mash of Socialist Unity and the SWP' (*Workers Power* journal no 6). So what changed? Certainly not the programme of the SCLV, which was supposed to be 'principled', if a little rough around the edges. And certainly not the purpose and intent of its progenitors.

What changed was that WP got frozen out at the first SCLV conference, bureaucratically prevented from putting its amendments to the SCLV platform. After a period fruitlessly seeking influence in the local organisations of the SCLV, they have finally discovered that this walking canvassing machine for Labour is built 'on the model of a shoddy manoeuvre' a la IMG. And yet they *still* believe that it could have been some kind of principled ongoing 'united front' if its programme had been a little more left-wing and it had included some kind of commitment to 'action'.

Unlike WP, the Spartacist League recognised the rotten nature of the SCLV bloc from the beginning. The road to 'smashing the Labour Party can only come through a fight against the reformist bureaucrats to build an independent organisation armed with a full revolutionary programme. Any tactical entry into the Labour Party must be on the basis of a short-term fight to break workers from Labourism -- right and 'left' -- and win adherents for the revolutionary programme and party.

Workers Action's mucking about with the Tribunes and the new wave of Labour 'lefts' has absolutely nothing in common with such a fight. Its present activity is simply an accelerating osmosis into the Labour Party's club of permanent factions. Waiting to greet *Workers Action* at the end of its well-trodden road stand the spectres of the now explicitly anti-Bolshevik Chartist burrowers and their big brothers of the *Militant* group. ■



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Peking-Washington collusion behind Vietnam invasion



Vietnamese soldiers with captured Chinese tank

Vietnam News Agency

China: Don't be a cat's paw for US imperialism

China's military attack on Vietnam appears to be at an end, at least for the time being. Peking's forces began withdrawing towards the border at the beginning of March, shelling villages, burning houses and destroying bridges and railroads on their way. And despite the Chinese government's proclamation on 5 March that its troops had won 'an important victory', this scorched-earth withdrawal was evidence that Vice-Premier Deng Xiaoping's threat to 'teach Vietnam a bloody lesson' had failed. The result was only an abortive bloody adventure.

The 17 February invasion was the first military result of China's developing counterrevolutionary alliance with US imperialism against the Soviet Union and its allies. This shift in the big power lineup was first signalled in 1972 when Richard Nixon signed the Shanghai communique with Mao Tse-tung at the height of the Christmas bombing offensive against Hanoi. Subsequently the anti-USSR alliance was welded more firmly together, and it is now being formalised through parallel Sino-Japanese and US-China normalisation of relations statements which include the same key euphemistic anti-Soviet 'hegemonism' clause.

So, from Washington to Moscow, when China marched its troops into Vietnam its collusion with the Carter administration was immediately evident -- all the more so since Deng had been touring the US and Japan only one month earlier. One perceptive American journalist accurately noted that the invasion was a punishment of Hanoi for having routed American imperialism from Indochina in 1975.

In the face of this feactionary aggression

against the Vietnamese people, the urgent task of working class militants throughout the world was to demand the immediate withdrawal of Chinese troops from Vietnam. The international Spartacist tendency fulfilled this task: our comrades in the Spartacist League/US even achieved some notoriety in the bourgeois media and publicity on the Soviet media for our picket of the Chinese Mission to the United Nations in New York. We demanded: 'China get out of Vietnam now', 'China: Don't be a cat's paw for US imperialism' and 'Soviet Union: Honour your treaty with Vietnam'. (See *Workers Vanguard* no 226, 2 March, for coverage of the picket and the bourgeois media's response.)

Military flop, diplomatic stand-off

In sharp contrast to China's last military action against capitalist India in 1962, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) were unable to defeat the Vietnamese, who inflicted heavy casualties on the invading force. This effective resistance to the Chinese is even more striking in that Hanoi did not throw its full forces into battle. For the first week the PLA was held off solely by Vietnamese border guards and local militia. And even later Vietnam held in reserve much of its regular army to defend Hanoi and Haiphong. Many commentators also wondered why the Vietnamese did not use their technically superior air force. While they reportedly withdrew several main force units from Cambodia in order to bring them north, the Vietnamese avoided being drawn into a Chinese trap and thus frustrated Deng's efforts to administer a

stinging military defeat.

Although China was militarily blocked, the invasion was not a total failure for Peking in the political/diplomatic sense. Most importantly, Peking pulled the northern polar bear's tail without getting swiped by its powerful paw. In the first days of the fighting there was widespread speculation that the Russians would retaliate in support of their Vietnamese ally. But the Kremlin's commitment to detente with the US proved far stronger than its 'Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation' with Vietnam. The Russian Stalinist bureaucracy, deeply nationalist and conservative, reacted in the same way to the Chinese invasion as it did to US imperialism's massive bombing of Vietnam a decade and a half ago. Namely, it did as little as possible.

A major policy speech by Brezhnev on 2 March surprised even the bourgeois press by its cautious, conciliatory character. In contrast to a belligerent 27 February *Pravda* editorial which charged that the US had 'contributed to Peking's openly taking the warpath', Brezhnev's speech had nothing but good to say about relations with Washington. The highlight of his talk was a celebration over an imminent SALT II disarmament agreement! In opposition to this cynical clap-trap about 'peaceful coexistence' with imperialism, we raised the demand: 'Soviet Union: Honour your treaty with Vietnam!' We proclaimed to the Soviet masses that not detente but only revolutionary internationalism could defend the gains of the anti-capitalist revolutions and secure for the working people a socialist future.

Collusion with US imperialism

Peking's unsuccessful attempt to militarily humiliate Vietnam was designed both to assert itself as the dominant power in the region and to strike a blow at the Russians. Referring to Vietnam as the 'Cuba of Asia', Deng unleashed a vituperative diatribe that could have put Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger to shame (and which certainly brought a glow to the cheeks of Margaret Thatcher). Said Deng:

'We cannot tolerate the Cubans to go swashbuckling unchecked in Africa, the Middle East and other areas ... nor can we tolerate the Cubans of the Orient to go swashbuckling in Laos, Cambodia or even China's border areas.' (*New York Times*, 28 February)

And just one week later, the US deputy secretary of state, Warren Christopher, confirmed what everyone had really known all along: that the Carter administration had been informed beforehand, by Deng himself, of the plans to attack Vietnam.

Revolutionaries oppose Peking's big power ambitions aimed at the subordination of Vietnam and the rest of Indochina, ambitions which date back to the very beginnings of the Chinese Stalinist regime. But what poses the possibility of global military conflict and brings into force the Trotskyist movement's principled position of unconditional defence of the deformed/degenerated workers states against imperialist attack is China's deep collusion with the West.

Despite a formal diplomatic even-handedness, the Carter administration made little attempt to disguise its support to China. Immediately after the invasion, even before the Soviets had commented on it, Washington warned Moscow not to attack China. At the height of the fighting the US treasury secretary flew to Peking to open officially the American Embassy and also to grant China 'most favoured nation' tariff preference (which the USSR does not enjoy).

US imperialism is deeply involved in China's anti-Soviet policies; and their common anti-

1969: SL on China

Almost ten years ago, at a time when tens of thousands of youth throughout the world were attracted by China's occasional 'anti-imperialist' posturing, our comrades in the Spartacist League/US wrote:

'We must warn against the growing objective possibility -- given the tremendous industrial and military capacity of the Soviet Union -- of a US deal with China. Should the imperialists adjust their policies in terms of their long-run interests (which would take time, as such factors as US public opinion would have to be readjusted), the Chinese would be as willing as the Russians are at present to build "Socialism in One Country" through deals with imperialism at the expense of internationalism.' (*Marxist Bulletin*, no 9, Part II, emphasis in original)

On the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia

For Marxists there can be no question of political support to one Stalinist bureaucracy against another in a war between two deformed workers states. In either case the victor would exclude the working class from exercising political power through soviet organs of proletarian democracy. Thus we called for flat opposition to the war on both sides and opposed the Vietnamese invasion which overthrew the Pol Pot regime. On the other hand, the Spartacist League did not demand the immediate withdrawal of the Vietnamese troops propping up its creation, the FUNSK (National United Front for the Salvation of Kampuchea), and pursuing the remnants of Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge. Why?

In 1977 when fighting broke out between Vietnam and Cambodia, we were among the first to denounce this murderous Stalinist nationalism on both sides, at a time when many on the left pretended that the border war was simply a figment of the CIA's imagination.

However, once it was no longer a question of a border war, it was not immediately obvious that communists should demand immediate withdrawal of Vietnamese troops. We declared our opposition to the presence of a long-term occupation army, which would necessarily place the national question for the Khmer people on the agenda and thus raise the question of Cambodian right to self-determination. But the Vietnamese

forces presently in the country are wiping out the remnants of the Khmer Rouge regime and consolidating the hold of the new Hanoi client regime under the banner of the FUNSK.

Isn't the FUNSK regime, even with the presence of Vietnamese troops, better from the point of view of the working masses of Cambodia than its predecessor Pol Pot? Immediately after taking power in the spring of 1975 the Khmer Rouge forcibly emptied the cities, evacuating even hospital patients into the countryside where they were organised into vast labour camps lacking even the most rudimentary urban facilities. Now the Vietnamese have imposed a regime which promises to do away with this irrational peasant xenophobia and atavism. Given a choice, would the Cambodians rather have national independence or schools, marriage of their own choice, food, children, medicine, schools, and wages? It's not immediately clear, although it was notable that the predicted wave of Cambodian refugees fleeing before the Vietnamese troops never materialised.

And it is equally unclear whether the Vietnamese Stalinists have the capacity to create an essentially federated state in which the peoples and sub-peoples of Indochina can freely choose their national destiny. In the case of the Chinese, their practice has clearly been that of Han chauvinism, as Peking authori-

ties have flooded minority-populated regions with millions of Han Chinese. But the Vietnamese practice toward the montagnards of central Vietnam has been far less oppressive, following more closely in the line of the autonomous regions set up for the tribal peoples of the USSR in the early years of Soviet rule.

We do not place political confidence in the Vietnamese Stalinists to overcome the national question -- on the contrary, we call for the working class to carry out a political revolution to oust the heirs of Ho Chi Minh and replace them with soviets. That is the only road to a genuinely democratic socialist federation of Indochina. However, one cannot say in advance that under a client or puppet regime the national question will necessarily predominate. To declare that the national question always comes first ultimately rules out the possibility of liberation by conquest. Such a position would lead to the conclusion, for instance, that the 1920 Red Army invasion of Poland -- aimed at achieving a link-up with the German proletariat -- was not just tactically impossible but wrong in principle.

Our conclusion, therefore, is that only history can decide the justice of Vietnamese-Cambodian relations.

excerpted from Workers Vanguard no 226, 2 March 1979

Soviet appetites have by no means been satisfied by Peking's recent adventure. On the contrary, China was frustrated by a tenacious Vietnamese army which over thirty years defeated first the French, then the American imperialist forces at the bloody expense of millions of their people.

Peking may well try again. Chinese officials in Bangkok have mooted plans for retaining some bases inside Vietnamese territory, and another large-scale invasion in the near future cannot be ruled out. This would quickly pose the possibility of a Sino-Soviet war and could well draw in the US on the side of the militarily far weaker Peking. Thus the nascent US/China/Japan axis remains a dagger pointed at the heart of the Soviet degenerated workers state, the principal target of imperialism's drive to overthrow the conquests of the anti-capitalist revolutions. As we wrote in our article 'China Get Out!' (WV no 226, 2 March):

'Should the Soviet Union be drawn into the fighting in a direct way it would pit the Russian degenerated workers state against the Western imperialists, principally the US, through the intermediary of their Chinese ally. This would pose pointblank the urgent task of militarily defending the USSR and the gains of

the October Revolution. In this conflict the Trotskyists know where they stand: shoulder to shoulder with the Soviet workers against the counterrevolutionary attack.'

Fake Trotskyists duck defence of USSR

In contrast, the fake-Trotskyists of the 'United' Secretariat (USec) managed to come up with about as many different positions on the Chinese invasion as it has cliques and secret factions. Each national section had its own interpretation (or interpretations): the British International Marxist Group (IMG) had one line, the American Socialist Workers Party (SWP) another, and the crisis-racked French Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR) several more. The one thing that bound them all together was a shared willingness to shut their eyes to the anti-Soviet character of the invasion, and opposition to 'Soviet military intervention against China'.

Writing in *Socialist Challenge* (22 February), Tariq Ali of the IMG, drummer boy for Ho Chi Minh's Stalinist Vietnamese Communist Party during much of the 1960s and early 1970s, managed to say not one word about China's anti-Soviet alliance with US imperialism. Instead, the IMG

presented the invasion in almost exclusively regional terms: Vietnam was getting too big for its boots in Indochina and so had to be given 'a sharp rap on the knuckles from big brother' in Peking. The IMG did manage to call for Chinese troop withdrawal, but not at all because of the imperialist collusion in the invasion. Rather the Pabloites were motivated by their chronic political adaptation to the Hanoi bureaucracy. (The same *Socialist Challenge* featured a disgusting front-page graphic showing endless identical, bloodthirsty Chinese soldiers, thus conjuring up images of the 'yellow peril' and capitulating to the worst anti-Chinese chauvinism.)

The IMG also had the line that the entry of Chinese troops into Vietnam could not be equated with the earlier Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, on the grounds that the latter was a supportable act of 'help' to those resisting Pol Pot's crazy Stalinist rule. In the 1 March issue of *Socialist Challenge*, Richard Carver polemicised against Washington's attempt to link the two conflicts by calling for the withdrawal of both Vietnamese and Chinese troops. Unfortunately for the luckless Carver, however, it wasn't just US imperialism which had this line: his own comrades in the French section of this 'international' wrote:

'Just as we have demanded the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia, we demand the immediate withdrawal of Chinese troops from Vietnam.' (*Rouge*, 23 February, translated in *Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, 12 March)

And just to muddy the waters even more, the editors of *ICP/Inprecor* also managed to unearth an article by LCR Vietnamophile Pierre Rousset which raised not one criticism of Hanoi's invasion of Cambodia. As for the reformist US SWP, it believes that Pol Pot's Cambodia was still capitalist at the time of the Vietnamese invasion!

The imperialist warlords throughout the world remain dedicated to reversing the social revolutions which have driven them from more than one-third of the globe. The chief object of their attack is the militarily and economically powerful Soviet Union -- and, as we warned ten years ago might happen (see box opposite page), China is being used as a battering ram against the USSR.

The invasion of Vietnam threatened to pose that conflict directly. And while Deng's attempted 'punishment' of Vietnam fell flat, the Peking bureaucracy's sinister alliance with US imperialism deepened. At this late stage in the epoch of imperialist decay, the military/political alignments for a third global war are ominously being sketched out: As the Stalinists and their camp followers grovel behind Carter, mouthing dangerous phrases about 'detente' or sabre-rattling attacks on 'hegemonism', genuine Trotskyists must tell the simple truth: only social revolution in the capitalist metropolises and political revolution from Moscow to Hanoi and Peking can prevent nuclear annihilation.

adapted from Workers Vanguard no 227, 16 March 1979



Spartacist contingent demands 'China Get Out!' at Chinese Mission in New York, February 24

Workers Vanguard

The Spartacist tendency has been alone on the left in warning that a victory for the mullahs in Iran would be a triumph for Islamic reaction, not a blow for democracy or a magnificent opening for the left. At a time when it seemed that everyone was following Khomeini into the mosque, we sought to pose a third, proletarian, road forward for the Iranian people against both reactionary alternatives of the monarchy and the *ulema*, raising the slogan 'Down with the Shah! Down with the mullahs!'

The fake-lefts roundly condemned us, said we were reactionary, and called on the cops to exclude us from anti-Shah demonstrations. In contrast, they painted the exiled Khomeini as a courageous radical. They lied about his social programme for women (and everyone else). They cheered his ascension to power as a 'victory' for the Iranian masses. Yet today, just as we warned, Khomeini's Islamic warriors are putting into practice their reactionary programme -- on the backs of the oppressed masses of Iran. The opportunists wanted the ayatollah, and now they have him.

What they said

Remember what the opportunist fake-Trotskyists said about Iran? Last autumn, *Workers Action* had this to say:

'Even now, the most popular Muslim leaders base their appeal to the Iranian people not on religious ties, but on a courageous opposition to the Shah and a programme of democratic reforms.' (21-28 October 1978)

It went on to approvingly reprint a potted *Le Monde* interview with Khomeini, and three weeks later soothed its readers with the following information:

'Ayatollah Khomeini, the chief leader of the Muslim opposition, has declared many times that he does not want the barbarities of "Islamic law" as practised in Pakistan or Saudi Arabia, where thieves are supposed to be punished by having their hands cut off; nor does he oppose equality for women.' (11-18 November 1978)

Workers Power excoriated us for 'uncritical retelling of the chauvinist rubbish which filled the American press throughout the autumn', and went on to reassure doubters that:

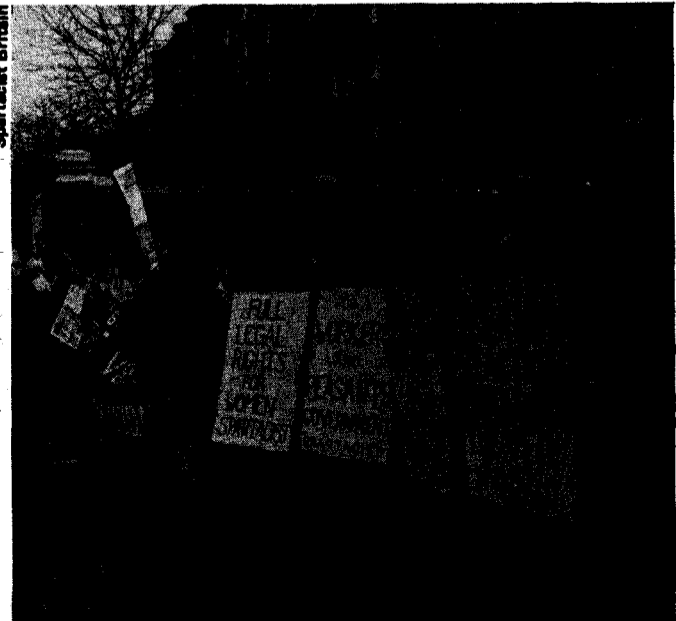
'it is plainly untrue that the movement is explicitly for the return of women to the seclusion of the home and their submission to barbaric punishments.' (February 1979)

Socialist Worker preferred to titillate its readership with ecstatic descriptions of the new Iranian radio station, 'Voice of the Revolution', and headlines saying 'Iran: The Glory', and insisted that Khomeini was merely a *symbol* of an amorphous opposition. Worry about what he might do in power? Of course not: only a month ago Tony Cliff termed our opposition to the mullahs 'lunatic' at a major public meeting.

Even the much-vaunted 'anti-Pabloism' of the Workers Socialist League was once more exposed as a fraud when *Socialist Press* emphatically announced on 14 March that in the Middle East the 'balance will only tip decisively in favour of the Palestinian national struggle by the mobilisation of the workers and peasants of the Arab world in the kind of mass struggles that toppled the Shah.'

IMG chants 'God is great'

But of all the left fakers who bowed towards Mecca, the International Marxist Group (IMG) and its international co-thinkers in the Pabloite United Secretariat (USec) were certainly the



Spartacist League pickets Iranian Embassy, March 17, in protest against Islamic repression of women, minorities, proletariat



Who told the truth about Khomeini?

most shameless and despicable peddlers of illusions in Khomeini. The IMG recently sent its national secretary, Brian Grogan, off to have a quick look at Iran. He returned, starry-eyed, apparently never having seen so many people in the streets at one time before, and spun around Britain on a speaking tour, babbling about the 'profound social revolution' which is 'unfolding' in Iran. In Birmingham, Grogan even recounted his delight at chanting 'Allah Akhbar' ('God is great') along with the masses -- like the veil, this was apparently a 'symbol' of Iran's revolution.

After all, this was the revolution which the IMG and the USec so dearly wanted. A few months ago, an IMG pamphlet on Iran told us that among the Islamic clergy:

'one wing has been forced to lean more on the masses and has moved increasingly to the left in its opposition to the Shah. Khomeini is now the leader of this section of the religious hierarchy.' (Saber Nickbin, 'Iran: The Unfolding Revolution')

The USec's English-language international journal offered a brazen apology for Khomeini's proposed Islamic republic in an article written by a woman who is now a leader of the Iranian Pabloite organisation:

'Khomeini calls for an Islamic republic that would terminate all military and economic treaties with imperialist countries and confiscate the property of imperialists in Iran.' (*Intercontinental Press/Inprecor*, 18 December 1978)

Even last month, Grogan was still happily explaining away fears about the events in Iran:

'And there are even some Moslems who would like to see a society as it exists in Saudi Arabia or Pakistan where those who drink can be subject to lashes of the whip; or women who commit adultery, stoned; or thieves can have their hands cut off. But if anyone tried to substitute this code for the democratic and social demands of the masses in Iran today, they would soon get short shrift.' ('Insurrection in Teheran', February 1979)

The cover up

We will say one thing for the leaders of the

Muslim opposition: at least they, unlike their fake-left camp followers, have been consistent. They have always fought for, and are now implementing, a social programme remarkably similar to the one Grogan derides as impossible. On the other hand, the IMG has lately been forced to peek out from behind its veil and catch a glimpse of social reality. Thus *Socialist Challenge* ends its coverage of the recent women's rights demonstrations by saying:

'We want solidarity and support from all over the world. For the euphoria has now ended, and there are difficult days ahead.' (*Socialist Challenge*, 22 March)

There is, of course, no hint from *Socialist Challenge* that for months it had done its best to fan that euphoria and thus politically disarm the left. Instead, a full-page article by Lebanese USec supporter Majida Salman takes Islamic movements apart from top to bottom, and even the unsigned introduction to her article talks of 'reactionary dangers' -- not from Spartacists, but from Islam! The publication of such an article at this late hour can only serve as a disgusting cover for the bankrupt course pursued by the USec. But it has its telling points. Salman notes:

'If Islam has been an instrument of counter-revolution in the Arab countries ever since decolonisation, that same risk has arisen all the more rapidly in Iran, for Islam has been the essence and goal preached by Khomeini. It does not speak well for the analytical clarity of the left that there was -- and in some cases still is -- great reluctance to recognise this fact.'

Salman is absolutely correct about the ostrich posture of the left -- which applies above all to her own comrades! But 'analytical clarity' is absent in the United Secretariat and the rest of the swamp not because of a lack of brain tissue but because of the lack of a Marxist programme. The opportunists long ago abandoned Bolshevism, and with it the ability to see.

IMG under the veil

From the start the USec refused to acknow-

ledge that the woman question was a decisive social question in the struggle in Iran. In contrast, we emphasised that 'the mullahs fervently desire to reverse the paltry gains made by women in recent decades' (*Spartacist Britain* no 6, November 1978). And we argued that our position ought to be basic for anyone claiming to be a Marxist:

'So one comrade asked in yesterday's discussion, "Well, on the mullah question, is their attitude toward women decisive in terms of judging the social character of this movement?" The answer, at least since Fourier, ought to be a resounding "Yes!"' (*Workers Vanguard* no 222, 5 January)

The IMG went beyond simply denying the reality of the mullahs' position on the woman question. The 18 January *Socialist Challenge* produced a nasty little piece of demagogy under the seemingly innocent title 'Women's Misery under the Shah'. The ostensible target of the piece was the foreign secretary, David Owen, and his disgusting apologia for the Peacock Throne; the real point however was to attempt to use a stale old Stalinist-style amalgam against the Spartacist tendency: David Owen says that the religious opposition would be harsh on women, therefore anyone who says that the religious opposition would be harsh on women is objectively in the camp of David Owen and the Shah.

The author of the article also argues that the Shah's opposition to the veil was but a 'superficially progressive move'. Because it left women's inferior status largely untouched? Oh no: it 'actually infringes women's right to wear the veil if they choose'. And the *Socialist Challenge* writer comes out staunchly in defence of donning the barbaric *chador*:

'many "Westernised" women, whose usual garb would probably be blue jeans, have taken to wearing the *chador* or veil. This will continue until there is what one woman described as "an atmosphere of freedom where human and democratic values count,"

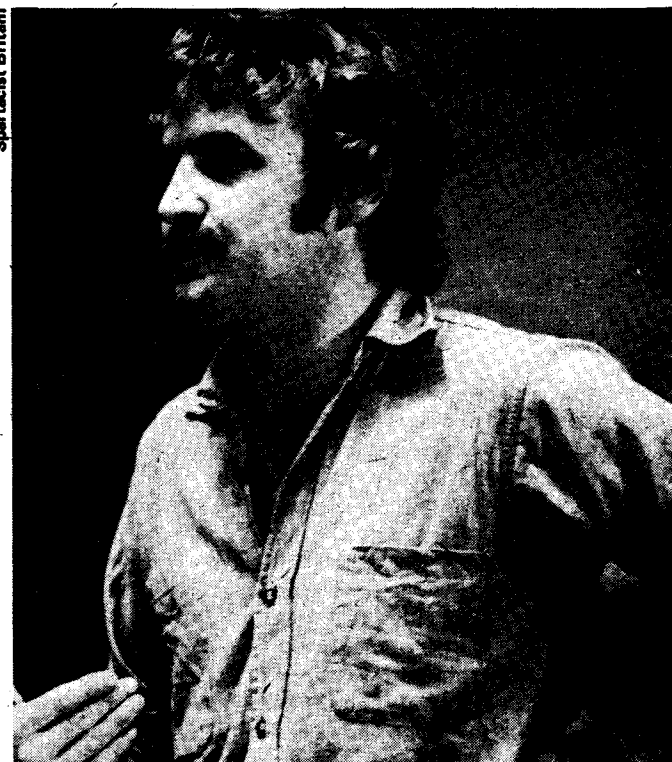
However the ink was barely dry on this little gem when women began marching through the streets of Teheran against the veil. With the unflappable cynicism which is the hallmark of its editor, a *Socialist Challenge* leader sagely admonished the women of Iran:

'In retrospect they [!] made a mistake when they donned veils to join the mass mobilisations which toppled the Pahlavi regime.' (15 March)

The cover of the same *Socialist Challenge* announces dramatically 'We did not liberate ourselves from the Shah to be imprisoned by Islam'. And the following week's reportage observes even more sharply: 'We didn't make a revolution to get a worse situation.' But only a few weeks ago these were 'reactionary' ideas, weren't they? Indeed, much to the undoubted discomfort of the IMG, which rather likes to try its hand at Spartacist-equals-Healyite amalgams, the corrupt bandits of the Workers Revolutionary Party have taken the position that such views are still reactionary.

Gapon, Kerensky, Ben Bella. . .

Whatever attempts they may now make to cover their tracks, the record of these betrayers is down in black and white -- even if IMG 'theoreticians' have been unusually inventive with their excuses of late. Last autumn, Khomeini was supposed to be another Father Gapon, an ephemeral figurehead who would vanish with the first real mass mobilisation. More lately, Khomeini



I chanted 'God is great', admits International Marxist Grogan

Pabloite school of falsification



Cover of *Payam Daneshjoo* (left) published by emigré Iranian supporters of the United Secretariat carries photo of anti-Shah protest under the slogans 'Down with the Shah monarchy, Long live the Constituent Assembly, Long live the republic of workers and peasants'. Cropped from the photo were the banners (above) with slogans that hailed 'Our leader Khomeini' and 'the Muslim nation of Iran'.

has become a Kerensky, bearing a package of reforms which will open the door to the Iranian October. Sometimes, the storytellers of *Socialist Challenge* have managed to transform the reactionary patriarch into a courageous anti-imperialist fighter -- a sort of grandfatherly Ben Bella. New realities are constantly spun out in order to avoid breaking the IMG's cardinal rule: say nothing which is not (yet) popular. Warnings, by definition, can only be made when they are already accepted.

When Pabloite voyeurs like Grogan wax enthusiastic over 'mass action', having done their modest best to paint Khomeini in bright red colours, one can see exactly why Trotsky wrote:

"Mass actions" are also of diverse kinds: there are the pilgrimages to Lourdes, the Nazi plebi-

scites, the reformist polls, the patriotic demonstrations....' (*Writings 1934-35*, p 278)

But to the United Secretariat it is axiomatic that 'mass actions' must have an 'unfolding anti-capitalist dynamic'. Thus the USec has urged the Iranian left on the road to suicide. They cheered for Khomeini, demanding that he carry his programme through to its conclusion... and now he is doing just that. The IMG has helped to give the ayatollah the whips, rocks and guns which he today uses to flog adulterers, stone women, shoot homosexuals and massacre Kurds. No doubt in the near future he will also try to mete out Islamic 'justice' to the IMG's own Iranian co-thinkers, while the journalists of Upper Street cry in their beer at such a sad end to the euphoria. ■

Iran...

(Continued from page 8)

'classless' mass women's movement, as the feminists' Women's Rights Committee is now demanding. Iran is heading rapidly for a sharp class showdown; and moreover the urban petty bourgeoisie, traditional backbone of ephemeral 'classless' mass movements, is overwhelmingly, even fanatically, in the camp of Khomeini.

The women protesters and the persecuted national and religious minorities must find common cause with a powerful proletarian movement or else their militancy will be dissipated or crushed under the iron heel of clerical reaction. Only the proletariat can lead a victorious struggle for democratic rights in Iran.

Yet the workers, especially the oil workers whose strikes were so key to bringing down the Shah, have yet to make their presence felt in the current round of protests. They are for the most part back in the factories, but production is taking place at a snail's pace due to an almost continuous round of political meetings. The workers are demanding the right to elect their own managers, and calls have been raised for the nationalisation of foreign-owned industries.

The urgent task for the Iranian working class today is the formation of factory committees and the imposition of workers control of production. Such factory committees, linked to soldiers committees rooted in the ranks of the army, could serve as organising centres for an independent proletarian struggle against the repressive Khomeini regime. Armed workers militias, based on the factory committees and other workers organisations, could form a solid core for a united military front to defend the women, leftists and oppressed minorities who are today under attack, and would provide a solid bulwark against the

threat posed to the proletariat by Khomeini and his Islamic National Guard and army.

- For a united military front defence against Islamic terror! Form factory committees and a workers militia!
- Away with the veil! Full and equal rights for women and homosexuals!
- For the right of self-determination for the Kurds and other national minorities! Full democratic rights for minority religions! For the complete separation of mosque and state!
- Islamic rule means armed terror against the workers and oppressed -- Down with Khomeini! The workers must rule Iran!
- For an Iranian Trotskyist party, section of the reformed Fourth International!

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Islamic reaction unleashed against women, minorities

Iran: Revolts against Khomeini

'Freedom not the veil!' 'Down with Khomeini!' These were the chants of more than ten thousand demonstrators who marched through the streets of Teheran on March 8, International Women's Day. The next day and again throughout the following weekend the protests continued, swelling in numbers. And for the first time since Khomeini swept into power in early February, mass demonstrations were met with a fusillade of stones and bullets as fanatic Muslim marshals attacked the protesters. Three women were shot; others were beaten and knifed. The rude awakening had begun.

Less than a month before, the entire opportunist left in Iran and throughout the world, was hailing the ascension to power of Khomeini and his Islamic shock troops. Indeed many of the women who took to the streets in defiance of the ayatollah's order to wear the veil had themselves donned the *chador* to be part of the massive mullah-led protests against the Shah. They claimed that it was a 'symbol of resistance' to the hated Pahlavi dynasty; and thus they too helped to bring the entire country under the leadership of the mosque.

The results of this opportunism are now all too clear. Iranian women -- along with the national and religious minorities and, increasingly, the working class -- are painfully discovering that Islam in power is bringing not liberation but brutal theocratic reaction. Khomeini is carrying out his programme.

Mullahs in power

True to his promises to bring the state in line with the Koran, the ayatollah has demanded that women must 'be clothed according to religious standards'. He has reversed the Shah's token reforms of divorce and abortion laws, re-instituting the old Muslim laws which allow polygamy and deprive women of the right of divorce. Coeducation has been abolished, abortion has been banned, and at least 300 women are threatened with expulsion for the 'crime' of



Women of Iran defy Khomeini's Islamic shock troops, say 'Freedom not the Veil!'

Down with the mullahs! For workers revolution!

marriage to non-Muslims. Public floggings for adultery have begun.

Many others are also feeling the lash of Islamic reaction. So far more than a dozen homosexuals have been executed for alleged 'rapes'. One of the alleged victims of these 'rapes' was given 100 lashes with a leather whip. In a central Iranian city a man convicted of bank robbery was executed; others accused of gambling and 'promiscuity' have been flogged.

Three months ago, we warned that 'the Persian chauvinism and blind anti-foreign sentiments whipped up by the mullahs promise a grim future for Iran's national/communal minorities' (*Workers Vanguard* no 222, 5 January). And already the 'revolutionary' Islamic government is cracking down on these minorities with a vengeance.

The Bahais, long a special target for xenophobic attack even before the mullahs' victory, have had their meeting halls occupied and shut down by Islamic police. Thousands of Afghani workers, accused of fomenting the 15 February attack on the US embassy and scapegoated for the recent increase in crime in Teheran, have been rounded up and deported. Now the government has announced that all other foreign workers -- including several hundred thousand Pakistanis, Indians, Filipinos and South Koreans -- will be expelled from the country before the end of May.

In the north west, hundreds of Kurds struggling for national autonomy have been massacred by the ex-Imperial (and now Islamic) armed forces. The Kurdish nationalists demand 'Kurdistan or kabrestan [the cemetery]' -- and Khomeini's generals are determined to see they get the latter. On March 19, while Kurdish militants were being slaughtered in the provincial capital of Sanandaj, the army staged a march through Teheran in support of the ayatollah's regime.

Khomeini has branded the Kurds and other struggling national minorities as 'bandits'. Similarly, his message for secular leftists like the Fedayeen is that they are 'satanic ele-

ments, worse than the Shah'. 'I won't tolerate anyone who is anti-Islamic. We will crush them', he vowed last month.

The ayatollah's new Islamic Revolution Party has warned that any who dare to vote no in the 30 March bonapartist referendum for an Islamic republic 'will be considered counterrevolutionaries and kept under close surveillance' (*Le Monde*, 20 March). Since all voters are required to sign their names and addresses on their ballots, Khomeini is clearly seeking a ready-made hit list for his Muslim stormtroopers.

The left in trouble

Thousands of misguided and opportunist leftists in Iran struggled long and hard to help Khomeini come to power -- and now that he has, they are in deep trouble. The ayatollah and his 180,000 mullahs possess a powerful social base centred in the mosques, bazaars and mullah-controlled 'neighbourhood committees'.

Moreover, insofar as the officer caste has been reconstituted, it too stands with Khomeini.

On the other hand, despite widespread and growing discontent with Khomeini's autocratic rule, the left and workers movement remains fragmented, isolated and woefully confused and misled. Only a relatively small stratum of largely bourgeois and petty-bourgeois women, feminists and leftists like the Fedayeen took part in the women's demonstrations. And the protesters betrayed fatal illusions in Iran's so-called 'progressive' bourgeoisie, the utterly impotent septuagenarians in the provisional government of Mehdi Bazargan.

The women chanted 'Bazargan, do not forget we do not want the *chador*'. As for the Fedayeen, they continue to demand the strengthening of the prime minister's authority. For all their brandishing of weapons and their militant rhetoric, the key demand of these 'Marxist' guerrillas is still for a place of their own in the Islamic government.

So long as a reliable and solid army has not been reconstituted, Khomeini still finds it necessary to maintain ties with Bazargan and the other bourgeois democrats. But the ayatollah was right when he told the doddering old prime minister, 'You are weak, mister': real power rests with the reactionary religious leaders. Iran today provides a classic case of the bankruptcy of the Stalinist 'two-stage' theory of revolution which ties the proletariat to the coat-tails of its class enemies, the powerless Bazargans and the murderous Khomeinis. The choice is posed sharply: either proletarian rule or brutal, blood-drenched Islamic terror.

But at present in Iran there is no party fighting for a revolutionary programme. The pro-Moscow Tudeh is openly supporting the Islamic republic; so in the final analysis are the more left-wing Fedayeen. And there is absolutely no room on the Iranian social spectrum for a

continued on page 7

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