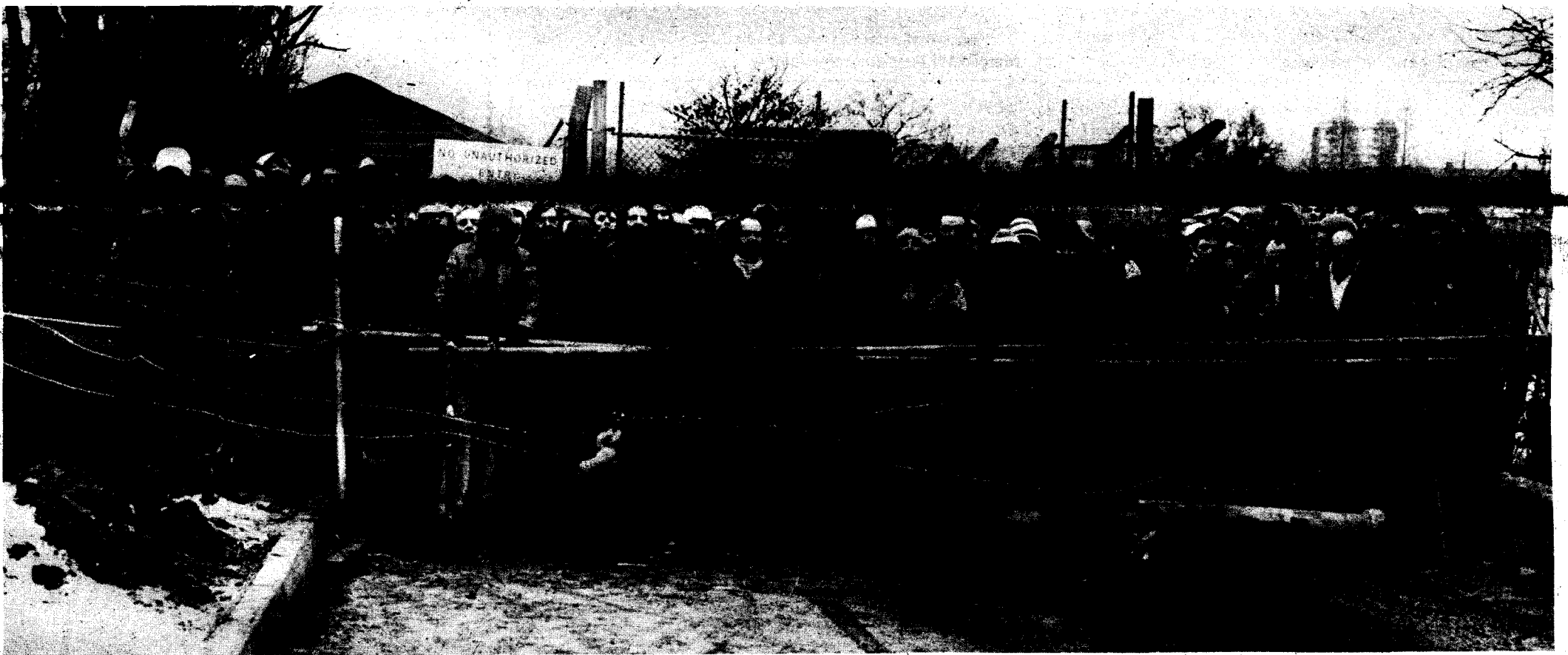


Not Callaghan/Benn but a workers government!

Labour strikebreakers vs Tory union bashers



Picket line at Longbridge during February Leyland strike

**No vote to the traitors!
For class-struggle union candidates against Labour!**

In this election the competing parties offer the working class only variations on the same theme of austerity. The open bosses' parties -- Tories, Liberals, Nationalists etc -- have never made any bones about their policies. They stand openly for the suppression of all attempts by the working class to defend its interests. And on this occasion the Labour Party is equally brazen about *its* real programme. No more pious talk about nationalising industries, saving jobs and building a 'better future' for British workers. Today Callaghan & Co boast only that they can control the unions better than the Tories. They promise to continue to smash strikes, cut public services, slash wages and attack union organisation in order to jack up capitalist profits.

The Spartacist League says that there is no reason for any worker to support the return of the strikebreaking Labour government. While the TUC bureaucrats trundle out their 'Trade Unionists for a Labour Victory' electoral machine and sundry pseudo-revolutionaries add their feeble voices to the pro-Callaghan chorus, we say: no

vote to the Labour traitors on May 3, any more than to the Tories and the other bourgeois parties.

Labour's programme, Tories' programme

If many thousands of workers seem resigned to voting Labour again, despite the party's betrayals, this is not because they think that Callaghan and Healey are going to act positively on their behalf. Rather they see no other alternative to a right-wing, union-busting Tory government. And Thatcher and her companions are certainly reactionary -- they stand for further legal shackles on union activity, for public sector wage control, for tighter immigration laws, for greater state repression under the guise of 'law and order'.

But Labour's programme is *not* fundamentally better. Callaghan tells his capitalist paymasters that he can make deals with the TUC bosses in order to lower workers' wages. He says that he has a superior strategy for combatting workers' struggles than the Tories -- although

such claims are looking more than a little tattered after the wave of pay strikes which shattered Phase Four this winter.

You don't need to read the Manifesto or watch the election broadcasts to know what the Labour Party is standing for. Just recall the events since 1974. Remember the army and police strike-breaking against the Glasgow dustmen in 1975, Grunwick workers and the firemen in 1977 and the ambulancemen this year. Remember the attempts to strangle effective picketing, enshrined in the TUC/Cabinet Concordat and exemplified by the TGWU scab picketing code for the lorry drivers strike. Remember the repeated wage cuts, added to by every phase of wage control; the hospitals and public services starved of money; the plague of unemployment ravaging cities like Liverpool.

Then there is the continuing occupation of Northern Ireland by the imperialist army, promoting Orange ascendancy with its RUC torturers and its SAS hit men. And the gross abuse of South Asian women arriving in England through so-called 'virginity tests' -- a graphic pointer

continued on page 2

Election...

(Continued from page 1)

to the government's racist immigration policy and its pervasive discrimination against blacks and Asians. The attempts of Labour loyalists and fake-Trotskyists to paint Thatcher as the 'iron heel', an unprecedented scourge of the workers movement, only serve to gloss over *Labour's* catalogue of betrayal.

1974 to 1979

In February and October 1974 the Spartacist tendency called on workers to vote Labour. The first election took place because of the miners' strike. Heath went to the polls crying: who rules -- the unions or the bourgeois government in Westminster?

A vote to Labour at that time was a means of demonstrating support for the unions against



Jim 'I cross picket lines' Callaghan

Heath. And it served another purpose too. Many workers then looked to Labour for a pro-working-class policy and had illusions in the leaders and programme of the party. During that election campaign, and again in October, we warned that Wilson and Benn would repeat the policies of Heath or any other bourgeois politician. We wanted a Labour government in power to prove to militants that Labour really stands on the side of the employers.

The last years have decisively proved that our predictions in 1974 were right. Labour is standing in 1979 *openly* against the working class with barely a figleaf of reforms to cover its flaunted hostility to workers' struggles. And many militant workers recognise this; moreover, some are beginning to draw the appropriate conclusions.

NUPE militants, seeing the Labour government pauperise the union's members, have put down motions for their next union conference calling for the withdrawal of support to the Labour Party. NUPE officials in some areas have threatened to stop calling for votes to Labour if the government did not support the union's pay struggles. Shop stewards at the Dunlop plant in Speke actually carried out this policy during the Edge Hill by-election. Clearly those bureaucrats in NUPE and at Dunlop who go along with these positions are only attempting to cover for their overall reformist strategies. Nevertheless they have been forced to reckon with their members' deep hostility to the Labour government.

The fakers who talk about opposing Labour's betrayals must be put on the spot. There must be no let-up in industrial struggles for the election, no burying of pay demands in the name of 'unity against the Tories'. The NUPE and Dunlop workers who see no point in voting Labour are right, but militants should fight for union candidates to be run *against* Labour in the elections, on a full revolutionary programme of class struggle. And any working-class candidate in these elections who asks for electoral support must, at a minimum, be a proven opponent in both words and *deeds* of government wage controls and class collaboration.

Yet even as small but significant sections of militant workers are beginning to see through the 'vote Labour' sham, almost the entire British left is out campaigning for Labour once again. In words they may not have given up the communist aim of destroying the Labour Party's influence and fighting to build a revolutionary vanguard party, but in practice the fake-

Trotskyist groups are acting as unpaid public relations officers and election agents for Callaghan and his henchmen.

Three ostensibly revolutionary organisations are in fact standing candidates in these elections, but none merits even the most critical support. The Communist Party's campaign is simply part of its attempt to cement an alliance with the Labour 'lefts' -- and why should revolutionaries counsel the workers to vote for a second-rate reformism when they can have the real thing? The Workers Revolutionary Party is also running candidates. But unlike in 1974, when we urged critical support to their candidates on the basis that they represented a flawed left opposition to Labourism, today a vote for the WRP would simply be a vote for their alliance with Colonel Qaddafi and their despicable endorsement of the Iraqi government's executions of Communist Party militants.

Finally the Socialist Unity campaign, a vehicle of the International Marxist Group and its appetite for a Menshevik unity of the 'far



Margaret 'I bust unions' Thatcher

left', has put up some candidates, though they insist only in 'safe' Labour seats. This, together with their attack on the Dunlop workers for proposing to abstain, their vague and inadequate election programme, and the fact that **they, like the Communist Party and the WRP, insist on a vote for Labour** indicates they in no way offer an alternative to the Labour Party.

The reformist Socialist Workers Party has abandoned its one-time pretence of being a 'mass' alternative to Labour, along with its plans to stand numerous parliamentary candidates. Instead it has caught election fever, arguing that Labour is the lesser evil to the 'Iron Lady'. It even has the gall to proclaim 'Defend Our Unions -- Vote Labour!' -- as if Wilson and Callaghan had not been seeking to cripple the fighting strength of the unions for the last five years! The Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory is pushing the same line from inside the Labour Party, canvassing frantically for a group of neo-Tribunite hopefuls in London.

All of these groups are trying to coax and wheedle disgruntled workers into voting Labour again. In this election, that can only mean *rebuilding* illusions in the social-democratic traitors. In contrast, the Spartacist League seeks to win workers away from Labourism. Our strategy and tactics are aimed at splitting the mass base of the Labour Party from the treacherous misleaders, and thus building a new revolutionary workers party. We stand for class struggle, not co-operation with the employers. The working class must be ready to wage a no-holds-barred fight against the inevitable attacks of the next government, whether it be Tory or Labour.

The solution to the downward slide of workers' living standards, to the decay of cities in the grip of the grip of the bankers, to the special oppression of women, of blacks and other minorities, can only come when the workers movement has a new revolutionary leadership. And the goal of that leadership will not be a Labour government in the capitalist Mother of Parliaments. The working class needs a *workers government* based on independent organs of workers power, to seize industry, transport, land and finance from the employers and establish a planned socialist economy.

On May 3 and after: Remember Labour's betrayals!

No vote to the Labour traitors, any more than to the bosses' parties!

Fake-lefts on the knocker for Callaghan

Spot the difference?

SPARTACIST BRITAIN

A monthly newspaper for the rebirth of the Fourth International, published for the Central Committee of the Spartacist League, British sympathising section of the international Spartacist tendency, by Spartacist Publications.

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Bureaucrats knife Leyland craftsmen's strike

British Leyland management has won another victory against striking workers. Only two months ago an attempted national all-out strike to force BL to make agreed productivity payments failed (see *Spartacist Britain* no 9, March 1979). And at the end of April, having been out for two full weeks, Leyland's skilled craftsmen dribbled back to work empty handed. The combined strikebreaking efforts of the Leyland bosses and the bureaucratic leaders of the Transport and General Workers and Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers proved to be enough to squash what could have been the most important stoppage to hit the car company since the toolmakers' strike of 1977.

The strike began on April 9 when some 3000 day-shift workers at the Cowley, Castle Bromwich and Rover plants (with the exception of Acocks Green), and a further 1000 night-shift workers, answered a call from the newly-formed, unofficial British Leyland United Craftsmen's Organisation (UCO) to stop work. All told, 50 per cent of Leyland's skilled workforce responded in support of the UCO executive's demands for a £90 minimum weekly wage, a 35-hour week and separate negotiating rights for craftsmen. But the narrow craft orientation of the UCO ensured that the strike remained confined within tight sectional limits, thus making it easier for management to pit unskilled worker against craftsman and smash the strike.

The UCO leaders made no attempt to bring out other Leyland workers, and indeed only began picketing the important Rovers Solihull plant in order to stop supplies towards the end of the strike. Moreover, their narrow sectional demands offered absolutely nothing for the tens of thousands of unskilled Leyland workers. In contrast, class-struggle militants would have sought from the beginning to broaden the action into an all-Leyland strike for a substantial across-the-board wage increase and the rejection of the productivity deals shoved down the throats of BL workers in the past period.

The extent of initial support for the strike was enough to provoke a furious response from both management and the union officialdom. Top Leyland boss Michael Edwardes denounced Cowley-based strike leader Roy Fraser as a 'wrecker', and warned that the strike 'would do irreparable



Roy Fraser

damage and some plants would never open again'. Mass redundancies were threatened by the head of Jaguar-Rover-Triumph, who sent a letter to each of the division's 35,000 employees threatening that if the craftsmen at Rovers went on strike the planned £280 million expansion of the Rover plant in Solihull could be scrapped. This wholesale intimidation particularly affected skilled workers in the precariously placed Longbridge plant, who joined Drevs Lane craftsmen in voting not to join the strike.

Backing up this management onslaught were the union bureaucrats who, from district up to national level, stood as one against the strikers. The TGWU instructed its drivers to cross picket lines while the AUEW nationally encouraged its members to do the work normally done by the toolmakers and even allowed contract labour and management to join in the scabbing unopposed. The AUEW district secretary for Birmingham East, Ernie Hunt, backed up this call for scabs by sending off a letter telling the

strikers to get back to work. These moves engendered a jubilant, screaming front-page headline in the Tory gutter rag, the *Sun*, which accurately summed up the officials' attitude: 'BLACKLEGS OK!' (11 April).

On top of this, the AUEW top brass decided to go after strike leader Fraser with a vengeance. The union's right-wing 'moral rearmament' president, Terry Duffy, called for 'a thorough investigation into the activities of Mr Fraser outside his own Oxford district', citing 'complaints that the actions by Mr Fraser could threaten job security' as the basis for initiating the inquiry. What Duffy really wants is the removal of Fraser's shop steward's card and ultimately his expulsion from the union and from his job at Leyland.

If the AUEW leaders succeed in witch-hunting Fraser out of the union this would be a setback for all Leyland workers, not just the skilled men. Although the UCO strategy limits any struggle to skilled workers, offering production workers nothing, the craftsmen who struck were attempting to fight against the company on wages and conditions. Militant car workers were obliged to take sides: *with* the workers striking for higher pay and a shorter working week, despite their craftism, and *against* the sellout bureaucrats who want to extinguish any action which threatens Labour's wage controls and speed-up plans -- particularly if it challenges the class peace considered vital to Callaghan's muzzle-the-unions electioneering.

While communists do not oppose differential payments for skills, we seek to break down, not widen, the gap between skilled and unskilled workers. And we do not wish to see the fight for higher wages diverted into sectional gripes about differentials. In place of the UCO's fragmentation policy we advocate united national strike action by all Leyland workers for a substantial across-the-board increase to restore and improve workers' living standards, coupled with a sliding scale of wages to match price rises point for point.

And we oppose vigorously the UCO's basis of existence -- its project of organising skilled workers apart from the rest of the workforce

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Letter to Socialist Challenge

20 April 1979

Dear *Socialist Challenge*,

In 'Every Militant's Guide to the General Elections' (*Socialist Challenge* no 91, April 12), you falsely claim that the Workers Revolutionary Party is 'unique in refusing to call for a vote for Labour candidates'. To set the record straight for your readers, we wish to correct you on two counts.

First, the WRP is in fact calling for a vote to Labour in constituencies where their own candidates are not standing. This has been their consistent position throughout the life of the Labour government: their stated reasoning is that a vote for Labour is a vote to keep the Tories out (see *Newsline*, April 7). Thus far from being 'unique', the WRP position precisely parallels that of Socialist Unity.

Second, as the *Socialist Challenge* editorial board well knows, the group which *does* have a position against voting Labour today is the Spartacist League. Since late 1976, when the government's openly reactionary attacks began to cause deep resentment and hostility in the working class, we have argued that there is no longer a basis for extending critical electoral support to Labour. The policies of the Labour government have been ones of ever more overt and unmitigated treachery: Wilson and Callaghan have bound the unions by wage controls and police and army strikebreaking, a pact with the Liberals and corridor deals with other minor parties at Westminster -- to say nothing of stepped-up imperialist terror in Northern Ireland and tightened racist immigration controls.

The 'choice' for workers in this election is

between a Labour party *openly* committed to cutting wages and smashing strikes and the union-bashing Tories. Even some sections of advanced trade unionists are beginning to openly question and even reject their leaders' pleas to back Labour once again. When militant workers at Dunlop Speke and in NUPE call for withdrawing support from Labour, Marxists can only applaud their position -- and seek to give a political direction to their break with Labourism by calling on them to fight in the unions for candidates to be run *against* Labour on a full class-struggle programme. In contrast, *Socialist Challenge* has chosen to polemicise against these (presumably 'ultraleft') workers and tried to cajole them back into voting Labour, ie into voting for four more years of wage controls and strikebreaking.

Finally, since we have argued our position on this question consistently in our press and at public meetings (including against leading IMG members), we are forced to ask: why has *Socialist Challenge* tried to hide the truth by serving up the WRP position as being against votes to Labour and then lyingly describing them as 'unique' in this respect? The answer is obvious. In order to justify your bankrupt position of calling for the return of the Callaghan government, you wish to discredit any opposition to voting for the Labour traitors by tarring it with the Healyite brush.

Such shoddy amalgams are of course instantly reminiscent of the WRP school of falsification. But it is also worth noting that the IMG's American fraternal section, the Socialist Workers Party, has for years tried to identify all opposition to the opportunism of the United

Secretariat (and in particular the Spartacist tendency) with the absurdities and gangsterism of the Healyites. This conscious dishonesty may satisfy *Socialist Challenge's* cynical editorialists but we doubt that it will fool the more politically serious of your readers.

Yours fraternally,
Patricia Porter for the Spartacist League

Spartacist League public meetings

Remember Labour's Betrayals!

Speaker: Alastair Green, SL Central Committee

London:

Friday 27 April, 7.30 pm
Central Library
68 Holloway Rd N7
(tube: Highbury & Islington or Holloway Road)

Birmingham:

Tuesday 1 May, 7.30 pm
Australia Bar
Hurst St

British centrists search for halfway house

A workers government without revolution?

The following article discusses the positions of two centrist organisations, the International-Communist League and Workers Power, on the 'workers government' slogan. It is based on a presentation given to a Spartacist League national educational in London last December by comrade Joseph Seymour of the SL/US Central Committee.

Various centrist groups, currently among them the British International-Communist League (I-CL) and Workers Power group, have sought to exploit the confusions around the 'workers government' slogan at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International in 1922 in order to construct a halfway house between the dictatorship of the proletariat and the administration of the bourgeois state by reformists. These groups insist that a workers government is not the dictatorship of the proletariat, but can only be an intermediate form between a bourgeois and proletarian state. Thus Workers Power leader Stuart King writes in his article 'The Workers' Government: Problems in the Application of a Slogan 1917-1977':

'Such a government could only be a temporary phenomenon, giving rise as it must to a civil war with the forces of the bourgeoisie. Although such a government was not the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Comintern allowed for the possibility of Communists entering such a government under certain strictly laid down conditions....' (*Workers Power* no.5, autumn 1977).

A few years ago the I-CL was in a short-lived international bloc with an Austrian group, the Internationale Kommunistische Liga, and reproduced favourably an IKL document which similarly presented the workers government as a stage on the road to the proletarian dictatorship:

'The workers' government is not the same as the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is to the same degree and in the same way as the slogan of workers' control is the same as socialism.' ('A Bold Tactical Compromise', *International Communist* no 7, March 1978)

While the various centrist groups differ among themselves as to what a workers government signifies, they all insist that it is *not* the dictatorship of the proletariat. In this they follow the well-beaten path of the 'big time' centrists of the United Secretariat (USec). In a mid-1960s introduction to Leon Trotsky's Transitional Programme, USec gnome Pierre Frank bragged about how he and his revisionist friends had 'enriched' Marxism:

'... the key piece in the program is precisely the culminating slogan of the whole chain -- the slogan for a workers' and farmers' government or for a workers' government. Here again the Fourth International has both revived and enriched the teachings of the third and fourth congresses of the Communist International by using the slogan as a transitional governmental formula corresponding to the organizational conditions and consciousness of the masses at a given moment, and not as a synonym for the dictatorship of the proletariat.' (*International Socialist Review*, May-June 1967, emphasis in original)

Far from 'enriching' the teachings of the early Comintern, Frank thoroughly distorts them, and stands in flat opposition to the position of Trotsky's Fourth International. During the 1930s Trotsky insisted that the 'workers government' was a popular synonym for proletarian state power:

'The important thing is that we ourselves understand and make the others understand that the farmers, the exploited farmers, cannot be saved from utter ruin, degradation, demoralization, except by a Workers and Farmers Government, and that this is nothing but the dictatorship of the

proletariat, that this is the only possible form of a Workers and Farmers Government.' ('Conversation on the Slogan "Workers and Farmers Government"', *Writings 1938-39* [first edition])

The confusions at the Fourth Congress which centrist groups exploit arose because the Comintern launched a new slogan with two different, though *not* contradictory, purposes. The 'workers government' was to be used as a popularisation for the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which many social-democratic workers falsely identified with the dictatorial rule of a communist minority. It was also to be used as part of a united front offensive against the mass social-democratic parties, centrally in Germany and France, demanding that these parties break with the bourgeoisie and establish a workers government in alliance with the Communists.

The dual purpose of the 'workers government' slogan was expressed in the first paragraph of the Comintern resolution on the question. The first sentence states:

'The slogan of a workers' government (or a workers' and peasants' government) can be used practically everywhere as a general propaganda slogan.' (Jane Degras, ed, *The Communist International 1919-1943 Documents*, vol I: 1919-1922 [1956])

In his report Zinoviev rightly noted that in the United States, for example, the 'workers government' can be used for general socialist propaganda, but could not be posed as a demand upon a mass reformist party, which didn't (and still doesn't) exist:

'Of course, even to-day in the United States good propaganda work can be done with the slogan of the Labour Government. We can explain to the workers. "If you want to free yourselves, you must take power into your own hands." But we cannot say, in view of the present relationships of power in the United States, that the watchword of the Labour Government is applicable to an existing fight between two parties....'

(*Fourth Congress of the Communist International* [1923])

Having indicated the general propagandistic use of the 'workers government' slogan, the Comintern resolution went on to emphasise the tactical applicability of the slogan in countries where the bourgeois order is highly unstable and mass reformist workers parties are contenders for power:

'But as a topical political slogan it is of the greatest importance in those countries where bourgeois society is particularly unstable, where the relation of forces between the workers' parties and the bourgeoisie is such that the decision of the question, who shall form the government, becomes one of immediate practical necessity. In these countries the slogan of a workers' government follows inevitably from the entire united front tactic.' (Degras, *op cit*, emphasis in original)

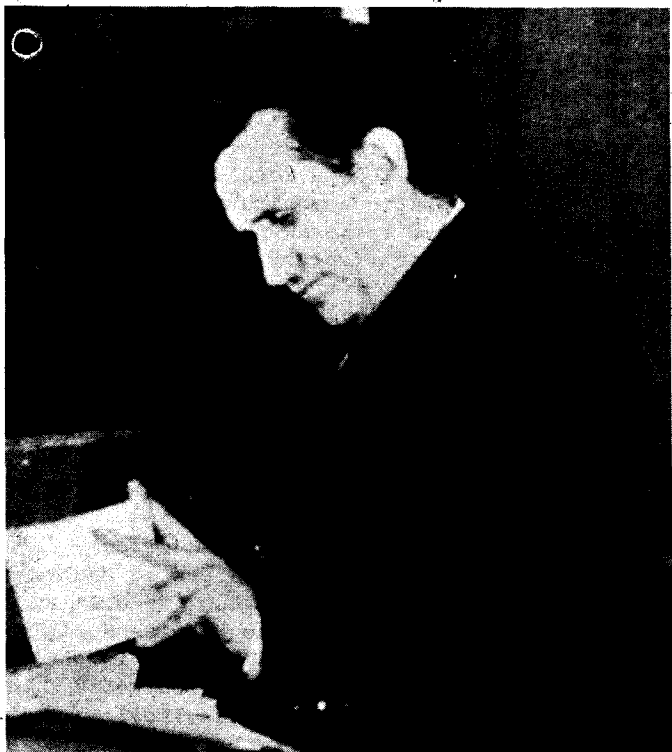
The confusions surrounding the 'workers government' slogan derive from its second usage, as a united front tactic in the struggle for proletarian state power. One can identify three areas of confusion. One, can a workers government take a parliamentary form or must it be based directly upon the organs of proletarian power (soviets, factory committees, trade unions)? Two, could a soviet government under social-democratic leadership represent the dictatorship of the proletariat or does the proletarian dictatorship require a government of communists? And three, is the demand upon a mass reformist party to break with the bourgeoisie and establish a workers government to be made at all times in all countries or is it rather to be raised only in exceptional circumstances?

Workers government, dual power and parliamentarism

To address the first question, we do not call for a workers government based upon the bour-



Lenin and Trotsky with delegates at the Second Congress of the Comintern, 1920



Zinoviev, president of the Third International

geois state, and therefore within a parliamentary framework. A reformist parliamentary government, even in a revolutionary crisis when it is actively supported by factory councils, workers militias etc, is *not* a workers government. When we concretise the 'workers government' slogan as a demand upon a reformist party, we call for that party to take power on the basis of *proletarian organs*.

Unfortunately, the Comintern theses do not address the question of the organisational basis of the workers government. Moreover, in the discussion a number of the delegates, among them Karl Radek, sharply demarcated a 'workers government' from a soviet government and from the dictatorship of the proletariat:

'... if we keep alive the consciousness of the masses that a Workers' Government is an empty shell unless it has workers behind it forging their weapons and forming their factory councils to compel it to hold on the right track and make no compromise to the Right, making that government a starting point for the struggle for the Proletarian Dictatorship, such a Workers' Government will eventually make room for a Soviet Government....' (Fourth Congress of the Communist International)

The implication here is of a parliamentary government actively supported by the mass workers organisations.

Radek's interpretation of the 'workers government' slogan was implicitly opposed by the Polish delegate Michalkowski, who criticised the entire discussion for 'too much empty speculation'. He pointed out that the slogan of a 'workers government' was first used by the Bolsheviks between February and October 1917 in association with the demand 'All power to the soviets'. Thus, the slogan of the 'workers government' was a call upon the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, who enjoyed a temporary majority, to break with the bourgeoisie and establish a soviet government.

Michalkowski then went on to generalise about the use of the 'workers government' slogan:

'When there is another revolutionary wave, when again the working masses pour into the streets, when workers councils are formed again, based upon our historic experience we shall in all probability again come forward with this slogan and call for: Governmental power into the hands of the workers councils!... It can well come about that there is a great revolutionary movement at a moment when we have not yet conquered the majority of the working class. The revolution comes -- that is the most probable eventuality -- at a moment when, through the revolutionary ferment, through the revolution itself, we will capture the majority much faster than at present. If in all probability we then come forward again with the same slogan, it will essentially be the same slogan that the [Comintern] Executive has already attempted to formulate in this or that fashion. It will essentially be the same government, but based on the mass movement. And if in this question the Executive has up to now been unable to find the correct form of the slogan, this in my opinion comes from our confusing two different things, from wanting to pose a slogan while simultaneously attempting to give it a form which we cannot at all do, because the form will be dependent upon the revolutionary conditions, in which it might well find a broader base than

is now the case.' (Protokoll des IV. Weltkongresses der Kommunistischen Internationale [1922], our translation)

We agree with Michalkowski as against Radek and insist a workers government must be based upon the organs of proletarian dual power, although it is not possible to project the specific form of these organs in advance. Radek's interpretation of the rather vague Comintern resolution opens the door to parliamentarist opportunism and revision of the Leninist position on the class nature of the state.

Workers government and proletarian dictatorship

Perhaps the most intractable source of confusion is the relation of the workers government as a united front tactic to the dictatorship of the proletariat. As previously indicated the Comintern also used the 'workers government' formulation as a propagandistic popularisation for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Prior to the Fourth Congress, Leninists had restored 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' to pride of place in the living Marxist vocabulary. Why then in 1922 did the Comintern adopt a softer, more popular synonym for the dictatorship of the proletariat? The answer to this question goes a long way towards resolving the confusions around the 'workers government' slogan.

In 1921 the Russian Communist regime outlawed the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, who were engaging in counterrevolutionary agitation and conspiracy. The leaders of European social democracy made the defence of the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries a *cause célèbre* in their campaign against Bolshevism and claimed that 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' really stood for the tyrannical rule of the Communist Party. Social-democratic workers



Discussion during Civil War: Bela Kun on left, next to him Alfred Rosmer and Trotsky

identified 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' in general with the existing situation in Soviet Russia where the Communists exercised a monopoly of political power.

The adoption of the 'workers government' slogan at the Fourth Comintern Congress, in both its general propagandistic and tactical uses was designed as a counter-offensive against social democracy. It was an attempt to address the following real and important contradiction. Many social-democratic workers wanted their own party to carry out a socialist programme, were open to a coalition government with the Communists and were even willing to establish such a government on the basis of proletarian organs of power, not parliamentarism. In other words, many social-democratic workers accepted the essential programmatic core of the dictatorship of the proletariat, while retaining illusions in their leaders and distrusting the Communists. At the same time, the social-democratic leaders were demonstrated counterrevolutionaries who in a revolutionary situation would *sabotage* proletarian state power and pave the way for bourgeois reaction.

For the participants of the Fourth Comintern Congress a soviet government under social-democratic leadership was not just an abstract theoretical possibility, but a bitter historical experience -- the Hungarian Soviet Republic of March-August 1919. The discussion around the workers government was conditioned by the fateful experience of the Hungarian Soviet government, composed of a social-democratic majority and a Communist minority.

The military defeat and disintegration of the Hapsburg empire effectively shattered the bour-

geois order in Hungary. The social-democratic-led labour movement, centrally the trade unions, remained the only real source of political authority in the country. At first the social democrats formed a coalition government with a handful of liberals around Count Michael Karolyi and persecuted the fledgling Communist Party of Bela Kun. However, the continuing radicalisation of the masses and the attempt by the victorious Entente powers to dismember Hungary, a multinational state, caused the social-democratic leaders to do a sharp tactical about-face. In March 1919 they released Bela Kun from prison, formed a coalition with the Communists and proclaimed the Hungarian Soviet Republic as the dictatorship of the proletariat. This tactical turn was made to forestall the radicalisation of the workers, arrest the growth of the Communist Party and also to secure Soviet Russian military support to preserve greater Hungary against the Entente.

Throughout the brief history of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, the social democrats systematically worked against the Communists and prepared the way for the victory of the counter-revolution. They secretly negotiated with the Entente to liquidate the Soviet regime. In the last phase of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, the social-democratic leaders even plotted an armed coup against their Communist coalition partners, but were not able to execute it.

Especially in the light of the Hungarian experience, Zinoviev, who wrote the resolution on the 'workers government', correctly wanted to express the position that the social democrats could not and would not defend the dictatorship of the proletariat. However, he did so by constructing a confusing terminological schema of a spectrum of 'workers governments':

1. Liberal workers' governments, such as there was in Australia; this is also possible in England in the near future.
2. Social-democratic workers' governments (Germany).
3. A government of workers and the poorer peasants. This is possible in the Balkans, Czechoslovakia, Poland, etc.
4. Workers' governments in which communists participate.
5. Genuine proletarian workers' governments, which in their pure form can be created only by the communist party. (Degras, *op cit*)

The first two were seen as phoney workers governments. The third and fourth were considered weak or transitory workers governments because the social democrats would not defend them. Zinoviev defined the dictatorship of the proletariat as a strong workers government led by communists: 'The complete dictatorship of the proletariat is represented only by the real workers' government (the fifth on the above list) which consists of communists' (*Ibid*).

As a broad historical generalisation, the above statement is correct. Only a government led by the communist vanguard can defend the dictatorship of the proletariat, centrally through its international extension. Thus, the Stalinist bureaucracy in the USSR sabotages proletarian state power, strengthens capitalist imperialism and fosters restorationist forces internally.

However, as a definition of the dictatorship of the proletariat, Zinoviev's statement is misformulated and has proven historically inadequate. The proletarian dictatorship is centrally defined by the expropriation of the bourgeoisie as a class, not the party composition of the government. The Comintern rightly regarded the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic as the dictatorship of the proletariat, *despite* its treacherous and ultimately counterrevolutionary social-democratic leadership. Interestingly, in 1928 after Stalin had consolidated his rule, he revised the Comintern position on the Hungarian Soviet Republic, denying it had represented proletarian state power. This revision expressed the Stalinist dogma that the dictatorship of the proletariat is synonymous with a 'Communist' party state.

From another angle the post-World War II expansion of Stalinist rule also illuminates the inadequacy of Zinoviev's formulation on the relationship between the proletarian dictatorship and communist vanguard. Of course, no one in 1922 could have foreseen the overthrow of capitalism by petty-bourgeois military-bonapartist formations as in China, Vietnam and Cuba. However, post-1949 China and post-1960 Cuba are deformed expressions of the dictatorship of the proletariat. But they certainly are not governments of communist parties nor even of reformist

continued on page 6

Workers government..

(Cont'd. from page 5)

parties based on proletarian organs of power, ie workers governments.

Zinoviev's famous list of 57 varieties of workers governments and Radek's rightist commentary on the Fourth Comintern Congress theses have been seized on by virtually every ex-Trotskyist revisionist who wants to abandon the fundamental principles of the Leninist party and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Tony Cliff baptised the post-World War II Labour Cabinet a 'workers government' and Joseph Hansen used the label to justify political support to the Cuban Castroite regime. But while there was plenty of ambiguity on the workers government slogan at the Fourth Comintern Congress, it was just that -- and not the anti-Leninist programme for a 'workers government' that is neither bourgeois nor proletarian in its class character.

Zinoviev repeatedly contradicted himself on the question of whether or not the workers government was the same thing as the dictatorship of the proletariat. At a meeting of the enlarged Executive Committee of the Communist International in 1922, he said: 'The workers

group writes:

'The workers government slogan remains a tactic of central importance for revolutionaries in the present period because of the strength of reformism in the working class movement. It is not a simple slogan to be raised or dropped as appropriate. It is a difficult complex of tactics aimed at the problem of winning the mass organisations of the working class away from the reformist leaders *in the process of winning state power for the working class*. As such it performs a central part, it is in fact "the crowning piece", of the United Front tactic; it is the method by which revolutionaries counterpose their programme and strategy, in struggle, to those offered by the reformists.'

(Workers Power no 5, our emphasis)

We reject any notion of the united front tactic as continual political collaboration with the reformists (ie sworn opponents of revolution) 'in the process of winning state power for the working class'. A united front is a conjunctural agreement for common action. As we wrote several years ago in response to the French Organisation Communiste Internationaliste, the best-known proponent of the strategic united front:

'The united front is *nothing more* than a means, a tactic, by which the revolutionary party,

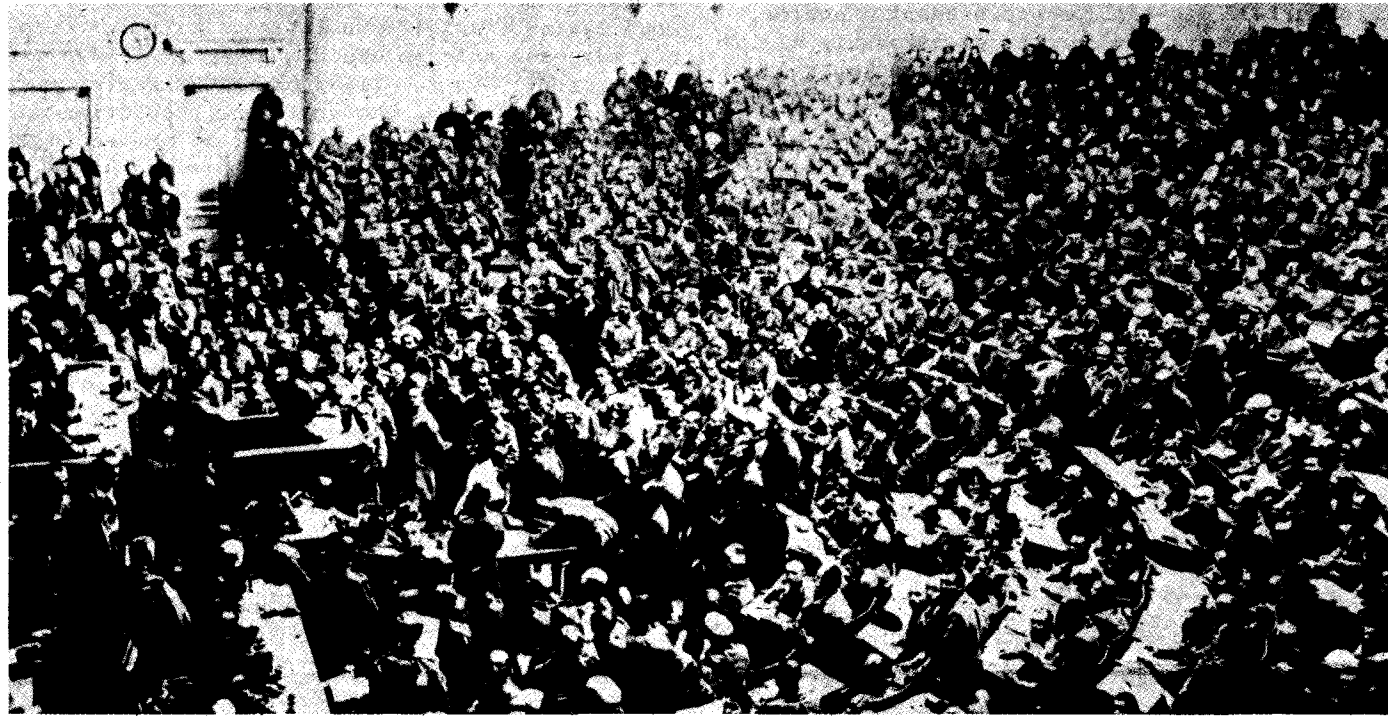
Stuart King's statement that the workers government is always and everywhere 'the crowning piece' of the united front tactic is in a sense exactly wrong. The purpose of the united front and related tactics of the communist vanguard is to win over the base of the mass reformist parties *before* a revolutionary crisis erupts. If a revolutionary situation occurs and the reformists have leadership of the potential organs of dual power (factory committees, strike committees, workers militias), this means that the communist vanguard has not succeeded in the prior period. If such a situation does arise, we do not throw up our hands in despair, but adapt our tactics and slogans accordingly. However, to define a workers government as one led by reformists implies a *defeatist* attitude towards political struggle against social democracy and Stalinism *in the present*.

The same demand depending on the circumstances can either destroy illusions in the reformist leaderships or create them. To call upon the Largo Caballero wing of the Spanish Socialist Party in 1934, when it was engaged in an insurrection against the right-wing bourgeois government, to establish a workers (soviet) government is not only correct but imperative. To call upon James Callaghan's Labour Party to fight for a workers government would be obscene and ludicrous. Would-be revolutionaries who, in normal bourgeois-democratic conditions, call upon the established reformist leaders to fight for proletarian state power foster illusions where none such exist and rightfully discredit themselves in the eyes of advanced workers.

During a major crisis when the normal conditions of bourgeois rule are disrupted, we are prepared to concretise the 'workers government' slogan as a propagandistic demand on the mass social-democratic or Stalinist parties. But this is precisely a demand that these parties break from parliamentarism and govern on the basis of organs of proletarian power. For example, during the 1974 British 'winter crisis', when the miners struck against the Tory government, we raised the demand of a Labour Party/Trades Union Congress government. The inclusion of the TUC indicated that the government we called for would be based on the organisations of the working class rather than the parliamentary institutions of the bourgeois democracy.

We of the Spartacist League/US developed our position on the workers government in good part through political struggle against the Healy/Wohlforth Workers League, which continually campaigned for the violently anti-communist and racist Meanyite bureaucracy of the trade unions to form a labour party. The more advanced American workers, especially blacks, hate George Meany, who, except on a few narrow economic issues, stands to the right of Democratic Party liberals. Tell a black American steel worker to break with the Kennedys and fight to make George Meany build a labour party and he'll think you're some kind of strange right-winger.

To summarise, we use the 'workers government' formulation in general as a propagandistic popularisation for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Therefore we identify a workers government in general with a communist leadership, not an episodic, unstable coalition dominated by re-



The All-Russian Soviet of Workers and Soldiers Deputies, Petrograd, 1917

government is the same thing as the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is a pseudonym for the soviet government.' Then at the Fourth Congress in November 1922 he in effect said with his five-fold typology: sometimes it is, and sometimes it isn't. But in January 1924 he came back to his original position (with a totally disingenuous explanation for his wavering): 'The workers' government is either really nothing but a pseudonym for the dictatorship [of the proletariat] or it is simply a social democratic opposition' (quoted in Helmut Gruber, ed, *International Communism in the Era of Lenin* [1967]). Even in his Fourth Congress summary remarks, Zinoviev says: 'Yes, dear friends, in order to erect a workers government one must first overthrow and vanquish the bourgeoisie.'

So all the centrists who try to cover themselves with Comintern orthodoxy and the authority of Zinoviev in arguing for a 'neither-nor' workers government might as well throw in the towel. Their claim is utterly and demonstrably fraudulent. If at the Fourth Congress Zinoviev misformulated the dictatorship of the proletariat as only a government of communists it was in order to *deny* that the parties of Friedrich Ebert, Albert Thomas and Ramsay MacDonald had revolutionary potential. Those centrist groups today who want to separate the 'workers government' slogan from the dictatorship of the proletariat have exactly the *opposite* motive from that of the Comintern leader. They want to minimise the distance between the communist vanguard and reformist parties by projecting a stagist conception of proletarian revolution.

Workers government and the united front tactic

The centrists' misuse of the 'workers government' slogan is associated with the notion of the strategic united front, the policy of continually demanding that the reformist leaders of the labour movement carry out the socialist programme. Thus, Stuart King of the Workers Power

i.e. its program and authority, can in times of crisis mobilize and then win over masses (at that time supporters of other parties) by means of concrete demands for common action made to the reformist organizations. Any other interpretation must base itself on a supposed latent revolutionary vanguard capacity within the reformist or Stalinist parties themselves....' ('Letter to the OCFI and OCI', *Spartacist* no 22, winter 1973-74, emphasis in original)

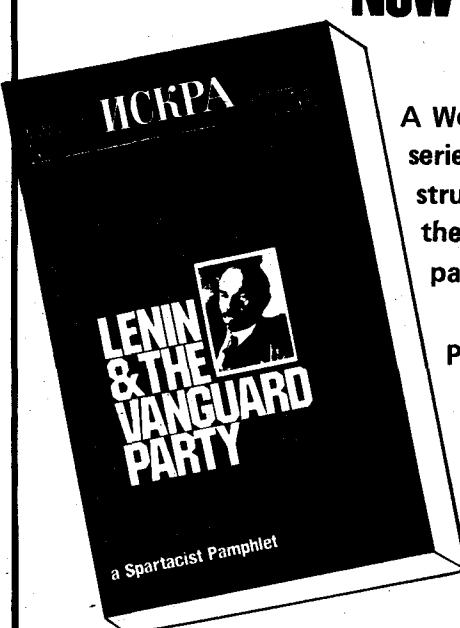
At the Fourth Comintern Congress the association of the 'workers government' slogan with the united front was *conjunctural* and confined to certain countries. If this is not so clear in the resolution itself, Zinoviev's report presents the relation of the 'workers government' slogan to the united front tactic quite well:

'The tactics of the united front are almost universally applicable. It would be hard to find a country where the working class has attained notable proportion but where the tactics of the united front have not yet been inaugurated.... By no means can the same thing be said of the watchword of the Labour Government. This latter is far less universally applicable, and its significance is comparatively restricted. It can only be adopted in those countries where the relationships of power render its adoption opportune, where the problem of power, the problem of government, both on the parliamentary and on the extra-parliamentary field has come to the fore.'

(Fourth Congress of the Communist International)

(When Zinoviev spoke of the 'universal applicability' of the united front tactic, he was talking about communist parties which were sizeable relative to the social democrats. Therefore workers supporting social democracy might well be attracted to the communists' united front proposals, because the latter had the forces to affect the outcome of joint struggles. For revolutionary propaganda organisations, united front overtures to mass reformist parties are generally not applicable.)

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formists. It is a historical possibility that a revolutionary upheaval might place reformists in power on the basis of proletarian organisations (Hungary 1919), but we do *not* call for a soviet government led by class traitors as a programmatic norm! Our programmatic model of a workers government is the Russian Soviet Republic of October 1917 not the Hungarian Soviet Republic of March 1919.

Trotsky's Transitional Programme

Our use of the 'workers government' slogan conforms to Trotsky's 1938 Transitional Programme rather than to Zinoviev's 1922 Comintern resolution, which is vague, confusing and highly conjunctural in purpose. Trotsky's presentation of the 'workers government' slogan has a very different weighting from that of the Fourth Congress resolution with its conjunctural emphasis on the united front offensive, especially in Germany.

For Trotsky the question of a workers government of or with the old reformist parties was an exceptional historical possibility and not at all the essential meaning of the slogan:

'Is the creation of such a government by the traditional workers' organizations possible? Past experience shows, as has already been stated, that this is to say the least highly improbable. However, one cannot categorically deny in advance the theoretical possibility that, under the influence of completely exceptional circumstances (war, defeat, financial crash, mass revolutionary pressure, etc.), the petty-bourgeois parties including the Stalinists may go further than they themselves wish along the road to a break with the bourgeoisie. In any case one thing is not to be doubted: even if this highly improbable variant somewhere at some time becomes a reality and the "workers' and farmers' government" in the above-mentioned sense is established in fact, it would represent merely a short episode on the road to the actual dictatorship of the proletariat.'

What Trotsky is referring to here is the situation if in mid-1917 the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries had expelled the ten capitalist ministers from the provisional government. This could only have been a fleeting episode before all effective power was in the hands of the



Members of the Left Opposition in 1928: Karl Radek is seated on Trotsky's right; behind him, Christian Rakovsky

soviets.

Having dismissed the perennial centrist project for a workers government of the old reformist parties as a most remote historical possibility, Trotsky then goes on to emphasise the value of the slogan as a popular expression for proletarian state power:

'The agitation around the slogan of a workers'-farmers' government preserves under all conditions a tremendous educational value. And not accidentally. This generalized slogan proceeds entirely along the line of the political development of our epoch.... Each of the transitional demands should, therefore, lead to one and the same political conclusion: the workers need to break with all traditional parties of the bourgeoisie in order, jointly with the farmers, to establish their own power.'

It is highly revealing that in his lengthy

article on the 'workers government' slogan, Stuart King omits *any* mention of the 1938 Transitional Programme, *the* basic statement of Trotskyism. He limits his quotes from Trotsky on the 'workers government' to the 1922-23 period as if this was Trotsky's last word on the subject. This dishonest methodology is similar to considering Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution solely based on his pre-1917 writings. Furthermore, King deliberately distorts Trotsky in 1922-23 by trying to present him as an apologist for a 'strategic united front'.

The document on the workers government by the Austrian IKL does deal with the Transitional Programme, but only by falsifying its meaning. Here is the IKL's interpretation of the passage about the 'traditional workers' organisations' cited above:

'It must be seen as extremely improbable that the reformists or centrists could be forced to break with the bourgeoisie without coming under the pressure of a mass revolutionary party. Only the situation of a massive fight-back by the working class that in parts already bases itself on the revolutionary programme, of the united front of these workers with other sections of the class, could establish the preconditions for a transitional government.' ('A Bold Tactical Compromise')

So according to the IKL, given the right pressure by a mass revolutionary party (maybe in the back of the neck), it ceases to be 'highly improbable' that the reformists will establish a workers government and perhaps even becomes probable. Trotsky clearly stated that it was 'highly improbable' that the established reformist parties would create a workers government at all, pressure or no pressure from a mass revolutionary party. In opposition to centrism, Trotsky's programme was not to pressure the reformist parties into establishing a workers government, but to win over their base -- precisely in order to establish a workers government.

As against various centrist groups, Trotsky did *not* centrally define a workers government as a united-front 'transitional' government with the old reformist parties. We, as Trotskyists, take as our model of a workers government the Bolshevik-led Russian Soviet Republic of 1917.

Who mourns Neave?

The election campaign period opened dramatically on March 30 when Airey Neave, the main Conservative spokesman on Northern Ireland and a close friend of Margaret Thatcher, was killed by a bomb which exploded under his car as it accelerated up the ramp from underneath the Houses of Parliament. Two Irish nationalist groups, the Provisional IRA and the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), quickly entered rival claims for the assassination. Subsequent reports indicate that the claims of the INLA, which shares the political outlook of the Irish Republican Socialist Party, were accurate.

Following the assassination, leaders of all parliamentary parties united to praise the Tory spokesman and prepare tougher security measures for the election campaign. The Labour government's Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Roy Mason, underscored the all-party unity by eulogising Neave as 'a man of proven courage, humanity and integrity'.

Revolutionaries, however, cannot feel the slightest twinge of regret in learning of the death of Neave, a colourless but thoroughly efficient administrator of British imperialism, whose ruling class manners served as a fine veneer for the most crude 'law and order' lynch-law sentiments. For over 25 years in the House of Commons Neave helped formulate barbaric British imperialist policy; his special interest was in making the military forces more scientific and ruthless.

Neave's career received a substantial boost in 1975 when he successfully braint trusted Margaret Thatcher's rise to the Tory leadership. For this he was rewarded with a role in her inner circle of advisers and a post in the Shadow Cabinet. In the spotlight as Shadow Minister for Northern Ireland Affairs, Neave campaigned week in and week out -- in the past year, almost monomaniacally -- for an even tougher anti-IRA line than that taken by the Labour government. He argued for draconian penalties for belonging to proscribed organis-

ations, for the return of hanging and for the reintroduction of internment without trial.

It is not the least bit surprising that the leaders of all the major political parties in Britain would mourn this arch-reactionary gentleman. But one might expect a different response from the British ostensibly revolutionary left, perhaps? Not so. After all, the nationalists had the temerity to kill Neave in the precincts of the sacred Mother of Parliaments, not safely across the sea in Belfast or South Armagh. And with an election coming, Labour's loyal supporters in the fake-left are scared lest the murder feed right-wing sentiment and thus help the Tory cause.

The Communist Party led the chorus, filling the *Morning Star* with revolting praise for 'war hero' Neave. Tony Cliff's Socialist Workers Party and Ted Grant's Militant group joined in, denouncing the murder while offering not a word in defence of the Irish nationalists who planted the bomb. However the prize for the most disgusting capitulation must certainly go to the Healyite Workers Revolutionary Party. The 31 March banner headline in *Newsline* shrieked 'Poll Provocation', and the article went on to 'completely condemn' Neave's assassins.

Scarcely better was the International Marxist Group (IMG), an organisation which used to swagger with mock-Guevarist bravado in imitation of the IRA. In the past the IMG has gone so far as to support indefensible indiscriminate terror (eg the 1974 Birmingham pub bombings) in the name of 'solidarity' with the IRA. But now *Socialist Challenge* (5 April) can barely manage a whisper of defence for the assassins of Airey Neave -- and even that is buried amidst many column inches of worry about the effect of the bombing on Labour's electoral chances and dark hints that the killing might have been the work of a 'provocateur', a claim for which there is absolutely no evidence.

Such cringing has nothing in common with

the programme of revolutionary Marxism. We are not terrorists and we give no support to the petty-bourgeois strategy of individual terrorism. However we do not shed a single tear for Airey Neave, who was a leading spokesman for the class which is guilty of countless crimes against the working class and the Irish people. His murder was *not* a crime from the standpoint of the proletariat.

But this is not true of all the Irish nationalists' military actions. While today they can target a Neave, last December the IRA was equally happy launching random attacks on innocent civilians in its indiscriminate bombing campaign in six English cities and several Irish towns. The Provos also have a sordid history of communal violence against Protestant working people. Moreover a strategy of individual terror, even when directed against such legitimate symbols of imperialist repression as Airey Neave, is utterly futile and self-defeating. Ridding the world of one, or even a dozen, of capitalism's officers only means that others will come forward to take their place, while the state seizes on an excuse to fortify its arsenals of armed repression.

For all their spectacular military actions, the petty-bourgeois nationalists have an anti-working class, sectarian programme. And even when they do fight against imperialism, they seek only to pressure and reform it -- as demonstrated most graphically in the IRA's demand that the British troops in Northern Ireland be forced only to return to their barracks.

In contrast, the Trotskyist programme of permanent revolution stands uncompromisingly against the imperialist presence in the Six Counties -- troops out now! This programme alone can show the Irish working class, Catholic and Protestant alike, the way forward to proletarian power. The workers of Ireland and Britain will be able to mete out justice to their oppressors only when they rise up under Trotskyist leadership to create their workers republics in a socialist federation of the British Isles.

Islamic reaction...

(Continued from page 12)

International] draw from this conclusion that [the] working class can simply tail the mullahs. If they refuse to pose the central need for working class independence and leadership then the Spartacists turn this on its head. The mullahs are simply reactionary -- identical to reactionary petit bourgeois movements in Imperialist countries like the Poujadists in France.' ('Opportunists and Sectarians on Iran', *Workers Power*, February 1979, emphasis in original)

According to our reformist/centrist opponents, imperialist domination sanctifies the petty-bourgeois masses of the oppressed, backward countries making them immune to reactionary mobilizations. The petty merchants and lumpen-proletarians of Germany or France may sometimes do bad things, but not so their Iranian or Indian counterparts. We grant that Weimar Germany was a very different kind of society from the shah's Iran. But early twentieth-century tsarist Russia was not. As an extreme instance of combined and uneven development, no country in the contemporary world so resembles the Russia which produced the Bolshevik Revolution as does Iran.

One of the central doctrinal elements of Bolshevism was that the proletariat was the *only* consistently democratic class in tsarist Russia. The petty-bourgeois masses, including the peasantry, could potentially be drawn to anti-democratic, anti-working class movements. This was one of the important differences within the Iskra group of 1900-03, a difference which foreshadowed the later Bolshevik-Menshevik split. Lenin strongly objected to Plekhanov's assertion in the draft party program that the proletariat was in actual political life the petty bourgeoisie's 'foremost representative'. He insisted:

'The struggle is growing sharper among the small producers too, of course. But their "struggle" is *very often* directed *against* the proletariat, for in many respects the very position of the small producers *sharply contraposes* their interests to those of the proletariat. Generally speaking, the proletariat is *not at all* the petty bourgeoisie's "foremost representative". ... It happens very often ... that the anti-Semite and the big landowner, the nationalist and the Narodnik, the social-reformer and the "critic of Marxism" are the foremost representatives of the *present-day* small producer who has not yet deserted "his own standpoint".' ('Notes on Plekhanov's Second Draft Programme' [February-March 1902], emphasis in original)

Lenin's insistence that the Russian petty-bourgeois masses could be rallied to reactionary as well as revolutionary democratic movements was no mere theoretical speculation, but found living expression in the Black Hundreds. Addressing a meeting of the Communist International in 1923, Zinoviev likened the Black Hundreds to German Nazism:

'There was in our country once a strong, utterly reactionary movement which we called the Black Hundred. It was really Russian fascism which used social demagogy very cleverly. The "Black Hundred" movement arose from among the monarchists and supported the monarchy. It had a chapter in almost every village, every city. All the little people, the watchmen, servants, etc., went with them. This movement also used religious conflicts for its purposes. In a way, it was a *popular* movement, for it knew how to secure allegiance of broad social strata, which it gathered under its cloak of demagogic pursuit of Jews. It was a big movement which attracted not only the large landowners, not only the aristocracy, but also thousands of petty bourgeois, and was much more a *mass party* than the Milyukov [liberal monarchist Cadet] party.' (reproduced in Helmut Gruber, *International Communism in the Era of Lenin: A Documentary History* [1967], our emphasis)

It is true that the Black Hundreds supported the autocracy to the end, while the German and Italian fascists fought to take state power into their hands. However, it was historically possible for the Black Hundred movement to have broken with the tsar and fought for power in its own name, using nationalist-populist demagogy. Had such a development occurred in pre-1917 Russia, no doubt at least a section of the Mensheviks would have sought unity with Black

Hundreds (as their contemporary counterparts have done with Khomeini) in the 'struggle against the autocracy'.

One doesn't have to look as far back as the Black Hundred movement of tsarist Russia to find a reactionary mass movement, analogous to Khomeini's, in a backward, semi-colonial country. Look at Indonesia in 1965. The political reaction which overthrew the bourgeois-nationalist Sukarno and annihilated the Communist Party (then the largest in the world not holding state power) was not simply a military coup. The murder of *half a million* Communists and leftist workers and peasants (as well as many Hindus) was mainly carried out by petty-bourgeois Islamic fanatics led by the mullahs.

An 'anti-imperialist' bourgeois revolution?

Since it is not so easy to portray Khomeini as a bourgeois democrat (he would be considered a reactionary by Henry VIII or Peter the Great), the favored leftist adjective is 'anti-imperialist'. This all-embracing term is the code word for class collaborationism in Asia, Africa and Latin America. We are presented with the view that the entire people of the colonial and semi-colonial countries, except for a handful of traitors and foreign agents (like the shah), have been revolutionized by imperialist domination. In this view the petty-bourgeois masses are always progressive while a section of the bourgeoisie is also progressive (ie 'anti-imperialist'). Verily imperialist domination ennobles all social classes in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The idea of all-class unity against imperialism finds its expression, for example, in the fictitious notion of 'the Arab Revolution'. Here we have a 'revolution' embracing an entire people, extending over decades and countries, a 'revolution' which is directed *not* at overturning the existing Arab governments and ruling classes, but externally against the US and Israel.

As Leninists, we fully recognize that the advanced capitalist countries, centrally the US, dominate, oppress and exploit backward countries like Iran. This fundamental historic fact imposes a particular program, strategy and tactics on proletarian revolutionaries in the colonial world. In these countries the struggle for democratic rights and against feudal reaction is inextricably bound up with the struggle against foreign domination. Popular movements against domestic reaction and imperialist domination are often led by bourgeois nationalists.

The particular problems of proletarian revolutionary strategy and tactics in backward countries were first posed at the Second Congress of the Communist International in July-August 1920. Here it was recognized that the communist vanguard should at times support and seek alliances with 'revolutionary bourgeois-nationalist movements'. But the *condition* laid down for such support was a very strong one. In his report on the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions, Lenin insists:

'There has been a certain *rapprochement* between the bourgeoisie of the exploiting countries and that of the colonies, so that very often -- perhaps even in most cases -- the bourgeoisie of the oppressed countries, while it does support the national movement, is in full accord with the imperialist bourgeoisie, ie joins forces with it against all revolutionary movements and revolutionary classes. This was irrefutably proved in the commission, and we decided that the only correct attitude was to take this distinction into account and, in nearly all cases, substitute the term "national-revolutionary" for the term "bourgeois-democratic". The signifi-



Striking oil workers in Abadan



'Democratic, secularist' Yassir Arafat hails Khomeini's Muslim theocracy

cance of this change is that we, as Communists, should and will support bourgeois-liberation movements in the colonies *only* when they are genuinely revolutionary, and when their exponents *do not hinder our work* of educating and organising in a revolutionary spirit the peasantry and the masses of the exploited. *If these conditions do not exist*, the Communists in these countries *must combat* the reformist bourgeoisie....' (our emphasis)

Can support to Khomeini against the shah be justified with reference to the Comintern's position on bourgeois national liberation movements? To begin with the Khomeinist opposition was *not* a revolutionary bourgeois-nationalist movement. As a matter of fact, in 1920 the Comintern did deal with the kind of movement which has just conquered power in Iran, but not exactly in the spirit of possible support and cooperation with it. Here is what Lenin had to say about movements like Khomeini's:

'With regard to the more backward states and nations, in which feudal or patriarchal and patriarchal-peasant relations predominate, it is particularly important to bear in mind: ... third, 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 position of the khans, landowners, mullahs, etc....' ('Preliminary Draft Theses on the National and Colonial Questions', [June 1920], our emphasis)

Furthermore, Khomeini never even pretended that he would 'not hinder' communists from organizing and educating the exploited. If Iranian leftists believed they would enjoy democratic freedoms under an 'Islamic Republic', they duped themselves. Khomeini was always clear that he hated communism even more than he hated the shah. In a widely publicized interview in *Le Monde* (6 May 1978), the Ayatollah stated:

'We will not collaborate with Marxists, even in order to overthrow the shah. I have given specific instructions to my followers not to do this. We are opposed to their ideology and we know that they always stab us in the back. If they came to power, they would establish a dictatorial regime contrary to the spirit of Islam.'

A glance at the basic Comintern documents on the colonial question is enough to convict as opportunists those self-styled 'Leninists' who supported the Islamic opposition -- and those in Iran as suicidal opportunists. But this does not resolve the general question of support to bourgeois-nationalist movements in the colonial world. In 1920 proletarian revolutionary (communist) parties in backward countries were new on the scene. Mass bourgeois-nationalist movements were also a relatively recent development. It is therefore understandable and in a sense correct that Lenin's Comintern posed the relationship between the communist vanguard and the bourgeois-nationalist movement in an algebraic manner.

Particularly the Chinese revolution of 1925-27, when the bourgeois-nationalist Kuomintang butchered their Communist would-be allies, and all subsequent experience shows that the colonial bourgeoisie will never 'not hinder' revolutionaries from organizing and educating the exploited masses. It was the Chinese revolution which caused Trotsky to generalize the theory of the permanent revolution from tsarist Russia to all backward countries in the imperialist epoch. Trotsky recognized that the Stalin-Bukharin China policy was simply the old Menshevik two-stage revolution transposed to the colonies. As he wrote in his 1927 polemic, 'The Chinese Revolution and the Theses of Comrade Stalin':

'The old Menshevik tactic of 1905 to 1917 ... is now transferred to China by the Martinov [ideologue for Stalin/Bukharin] school.... The arguments are the same, letter for letter, as they were twenty years ago. Only, where formerly the *autocracy* stood, the word *imperialism* has been substituted for it in the text.... The struggle against foreign imperialism is as much a class struggle as the struggle against autocracy. That it cannot be exercised by the idea of the national united front, is far too eloquently proved by the bloody April events [Chiang Kai-shek's Shanghai massacre], a direct consequence of the policy of the bloc of four classes.' (Problems of the Chinese Revolution, emphasis in original)

Imperialism is in its very essence the subordination of the weak propertied classes in the backward countries to the powerful bourgeoisie of the metropolitan centers. As Trotsky put it:

'Imperialism is a highly powerful force in the internal relationships of China. The main source of this force is not the warships in the waters of the Yangtse Kiang -- they are only auxiliaries -- but the economic and political bond between foreign capital and the native bourgeoisie.' (Ibid.)

There is no anti-imperialist bourgeoisie and therefore can be no anti-imperialist bourgeois-democratic revolution as such. In the imperialist epoch the historic tasks of the bourgeois-democratic revolution, including national liberation, can be realized only through proletarian socialist revolution.

United fronts in the struggle against imperialism

For Leninists, a united front is a specific, episodic agreement for common action: 'March separately, strike together' was the way the early Comintern expressed the united front as a slogan. This was sharply distinguished by Trotsky from a political bloc for propaganda. Moreover, united-front tactics cover a broad range and are not all interchangeable. Thus there is a fundamental distinction between military support to bourgeois-nationalist forces (eg for the Algerian FLN against the French army and colon terrorists) and political (eg electoral) support. The tactic of critical electoral support or even entry can sometimes be applied to social-democratic (eg British Labour) or Stalinist (eg French Communist) parties based on the organized working class. Such a tactic, used to expose the reformist misleaders, can be justified as representing at least a first step toward the political independence of the workers, by drawing a class line against the bourgeois parties. But revolutionaries never give such political support to bourgeois formations, however radical or 'socialist' their rhetoric or extensive their popular support. In contrast to reformist labor-based parties, bourgeois-nationalist movements (eg Chinese Kuomintang, Algerian FLN, Argentine Peronism) are not just misleaders but class enemies -- they can turn on and destroy their working-class support without themselves committing political suicide.

There are, to be sure, specific partial struggles against imperialist domination (eg for

political independence) which are progressive and are often led by bourgeois nationalists. Bourgeois-nationalist regimes sometimes carry out measures against foreign capital (eg Cardenas' nationalization of Mexico's oilfields in 1937, Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal) which revolutionaries will support and if necessary defend. An Egyptian revolutionary vanguard, for example, would have given Nasser military support against the 1956 Anglo/French/Israeli invasion in retaliation for nationalizing the Suez Canal.

The legitimacy of such united-front tactics depends entirely on the progressive content of what is concretely being fought for and not at all on the 'anti-imperialist' posture of the bourgeois forces involved. In fact, in defending genuine national rights against imperialist attack, we are willing to make common cause even with extreme reactionaries. Haile Selassie, for example, was a feudal autocrat. Yet revolutionary Marxists gave him military support in defending Ethiopia against conquest by Mussolini's Italy. Another example: Chiang Kai-shek in the 1930s was a reactionary butcher compared to whom the Iranian Pahlavis come off like saintly humanitarians. Furthermore, Kuomintang China was at least as closely tied to US imperialism as was the shah's Iran. Yet when Japan launched a war of conquest against China in 1937, Trotsky exhorted his Chinese followers to participate actively in the national resistance to imperial-



Mullahs win over ex-imperial army

ist Japan despite Chiang's leadership.

For opportunists, on the other hand, united fronts in the ex-colonial countries are based on the supposed progressive ('anti-imperialist') character of the bourgeois forces they are tailing after. Thus, Khomeini's movement was presented as 'anti-imperialist', and conversely the shah was portrayed not as a representative of the Iranian bourgeoisie but as a direct agent of US imperialism, sort of a high-class CIA operative. Polemicizing against us, *Workers Power* writes: 'The Spartacists position would in practice rule out an anti-imperialist united front against the Shah in Iran' ('Rights and Wrongs of the Spartacists', *Workers Power*, January 1979).

Even if Khomeini were a bourgeois nationalist espousing a democratic program (which he decidedly is not), we would reject what *Workers Power* means by an 'anti-imperialist united front'. This slogan was first raised at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International in 1922, where it was associated with agitation for 'temporary agreements' with bourgeois nationalists in the struggle against imperialist domination. Even at that time it was used to justify capitulation to the bourgeois nationalists. In the debate over the 'Theses on the Eastern Question' where the slogan was first raised in the Comintern, a Chinese delegate argued:

'On the assumption that the anti-imperialist united front is necessary to get rid of imperialism in China, our party has decided to form a national front with the national revolutionary party of the Kuomintang.... If we do not enter this party we shall remain isolated, preaching a communism which is, it is true, a great and sublime ideal, but which the masses do not follow.' (quoted in Jane Degras, ed, *The Communist International 1919-1943, Documents, vol I*)

Within the Political Bureau of the Russian Communist Party Trotsky had opposed the entry into the Kuomintang from the outset. The tragic Shanghai massacre of April 1927 was the bloody consequence of this entry. And those who call for political support to the Islamic opposition betray the same capitulationist impulses that led to the KMT entry -- only worse, for at least the party of Chiang Kai-shek was 'progressive' relative to the warlords. It wanted to unbind the feet, cut off the pigtails, etc. Not so the mullahs, who want to reimpose the veil.

There can be specific united-front actions of an anti-imperialist character between proletarian revolutionaries and bourgeois nationalists, such as a march on a colonial military base. Naturally communists would join in a pro-independence mass uprising, advocating that it go farther than its bourgeois or petty-bourgeois leaders wish in breaking with imperialism. But what the pseudo-Trotskyist revisionists wish to do with the slogan of an 'anti-imperialist united front' is exactly what Stalin-Dimitrov did with the slogan of a 'united front against fascism' at the Seventh Congress of the Comintern in 1935: use it as a codeword for a political bloc with a section of the exploiters, actual and aspiring. The essentially Stalinist concept of 'the anti-imperialist united front' amounts to supporting those bourgeois groups which stand for (or claim to stand for) a less

pro-Western foreign policy than their main opponents. In practice 'the anti-imperialist united front' means supporting Indira Gandhi against Janata in India, Ethiopia's Colonel Mengistu against everyone, etc.

The reactionary, anti-democratic content of the 'anti-imperialist united front' is well illustrated in Peru. On a scale of 'anti-imperialism' Peru's General Velasco Alvarado outdistanced Ayatollah Khomeini by light years. The Velasco junta (1968-75) carried out an extensive land reform and nationalized several of the country's major industries, including the big US-owned copper and oil (Texaco) companies. It reestablished diplomatic relations with Cuba and developed close ties to the Soviet bloc, which is quite unusual for a country located in US imperialism's backyard.

The logic of 'the anti-imperialist united front' called for support to Velasco's 1968 coup against the right-center parliamentary government of Belaunde Terry, and support to the junta in power against the pro-Washington bourgeois opposition parties (the CIA-connected, right-wing pseudo-populist APRA and the conservative Popular Christian Party). Naturally the pro-Moscow Stalinists supported the 'progressive' generals in just this way. The revisionist 'Trotskyist' international bloc of Guillermo Lora and Pierre Lambert -- the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International -- also offered its hand to the Velasco junta for an 'anti-imperialist united front'. Because of its support to the oppressive, though 'anti-imperialist', military bonapartist regime, the pro-Moscow Communist Party is today justly discredited among the Peruvian toiling masses. And Khomeini's Islamic Revolutionary Committee promises to make the

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Islamic reaction...

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Peruvian junta look like a bunch of bleeding-heart liberal do-gooders by comparison.

A revolutionary policy in Iran

Our reformist/centrist opponents assert that the 1st slogan 'Down with the shah! Down with the mullahs!' meant political abstentionism in this period of revolutionary turmoil. This is their bottom-line argument. While the masses were toppling the shah, they fulminate and in part believe that Spartacists advocated that Iranian revolutionaries stay home and perhaps study *Capital*. For opportunists, of course, political activism is always synonymous with tailing the mass movement. Not so for revolutionaries. We have in reality put forward an *active and interventionist political line* at every stage in the Iranian crisis, from the mass Islamic demonstrations last summer through the strike wave which paralyzed the economy late this year to the beginnings today of leftist and democratic protests against Khomeini's first steps in erecting his Islamic Republic.

The main action of the Islamic opposition consisted of a series of mass demonstrations under the slogans 'God Is Great' and 'Long Live Khomeini'. The program of these demonstrations, which was utterly transparent, was to *replace* the shah's autocracy with a theocratic state under Khomeini. Participation in these demonstrations could be *nothing other* than support to the rule of the mullahs, that is, support to the kind of regime which now holds power.

Shameless reformists like the American SWP simply resort to 'black is white' subterfuges, arguing that the veil is a 'symbol of resistance to the shah' (dixit Cindy Jaquith) rather than an expression of *pardah*, the Muslim traditionalist seclusion of women; that to the masses an Islamic Republic meant a workers and peasants republic (according to Barry Sheppard); or that 'allah akbar' (god is great) *really* meant the people were stronger than the shah's army (Brian Grogan's contribution). Where the reformists simply lie, centrist tailists like Workers Power resort to pseudo-orthodox confusionism:

'Whilst we in no way hide that the positive goals of mullahs are not and cannot be those of the working class we do argue that Trotskyists must participate in the actions against the Shah and the Generals.' ('Opportunists and Sectarians on Iran', *Workers Power*, February 1979)

Ha! Any left group which attempted to participate in the 'Long Live Khomeini' demonstrations with slogans opposed to an Islamic Republic would have received a swift lesson in Koranic justice.

Workers Power argues that participation in the Khomeinite demonstrations amounted to 'a de facto anti-imperialist military united front' (ibid). But these demonstrations were *not* civil war, in which victory for the shah's army would mean *obliteration* of the popular forces, and thus a policy of revolutionary defensism on the side of the mullah-led forces would necessarily be posed. The demonstrations were essentially a pressure tactic for the Islamization of the existing state apparatus. The Khomeini leadership was clearly looking forward to a coup against the shah by a Persian equivalent of Pakistan's 'soldier of Islam', General Zia. The demonstrations for an Islamic Republic were just that.

Our principled opposition to participating in

the Khomeinite demonstrations was not an option for political quietism. Depending on its resources and the concrete military situation, a Trotskyist organization in Iran would have used the opening created by the eruption of a mass Islamic opposition, and the occasional hesitancy of the shah's repressive apparatus, to agitate for revolutionary-democratic demands and its full class-struggle program. A Trotskyist vanguard would also have sought to break the ranks of the leftist groups, centrally the Fedayeen, from Khomeini by proposing to these organizations a series of united-front actions against the shah independent of the mullahs' movement and politically opposed to it.

The shah was brought down not only by the 'Long Live Khomeini' demonstrations, the reformists/centrists will here argue, but also by the workers' strikes, especially in the economically decisive oilfields. True. But whereas our tailist opponents *amalgamated* the reactionary petty-bourgeois protests and the proletarian strike wave into a single classless 'anti-shah' movement, we drew a fundamental line between them. The strikes were certainly blows aimed at the monarchy, although initially they had a very considerable economic component. Significantly, the key oil workers' strike did *not* call for an Islamic Republic, even though undoubtedly the workers supported the Khomeinite opposition to some extent.

A revolutionary party in Iran would, of course, have vigorously supported and done everything in its power to strengthen and extend the strikes, while demanding that the workers give *no support* to the Islamic opposition. As we wrote a month before the shah fled:

'The strike battles now being waged by the Iranian workers could be the basis of the independent mobilization of the proletariat as a competitor for power with Khomeini, not as cannon fodder for the mullahs. In the imperialist epoch, the democratic tasks of freeing oppressed nationalities, agrarian revolution, and breaking down imperialist domination can be carried out only under the leadership of the Iranian proletariat. But these urgent democratic demands require the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship for their success, not the dissolution of the working class into the petty-bourgeois masses.' ('Down with the Shah! Don't Bow to Khomeini!', *WV* no 221, 15 December 1978)

Once the shah fled, popular fury turned against the police and especially the hated SAVAK; they were hunted down and killed by angry mobs. The Islamic leadership opposed these spontaneous reprisals against the shah's torturers because they were seeking a rapprochement with at least a section of the generals and also feared 'chaos in the streets'. A revolutionary party in Iran would not only have participated in the attacks on SAVAK, but sought to organize them on a united-front basis through popular tribunals. As we wrote in January:

'Thus the mullahs correctly see the popular mobilizations against SAVAK as counterposed to building up their jurisdiction and keeping up good relations with the officer corps. People's tribunals to punish the SAVAK torturers could be the beginning of revolutionary dual power, directed against both the religious hierarchy and officer corps.' ('Shah Flees', *WV* no 223, 19 January)

During the Bakhtiar interval, especially after Khomeini returned from exile, it was quite possible that the generals might have attempted to drown the mass opposition in blood. This was the shah's last message to his senior officers. As we wrote just after the mullahs' victory:

'Had such a confrontation erupted into civil war, Marxists would have militarily supported the popular forces rallied by the mullahs against an intact officer caste, even as our intransigent *political* opposition to the reactionary-led movement sought to polarize the masses along class lines and rally the workers and lower strata of the petty-bourgeois masses around a proletarian pole.' ('Mullahs Win', *WV* no 225, 16 February)

Such a revolutionary-defencist policy would be justified and necessary *not* because Khomeini is more progressive or anti-imperialist than the shah. As in any war the decisive question was the line-up of class forces and the consequences of the victory of one side or another. If the generals won such a civil war, they would have crushed not only the Islamic fanatics but also the advanced elements of the Iranian proletariat and the organized left.

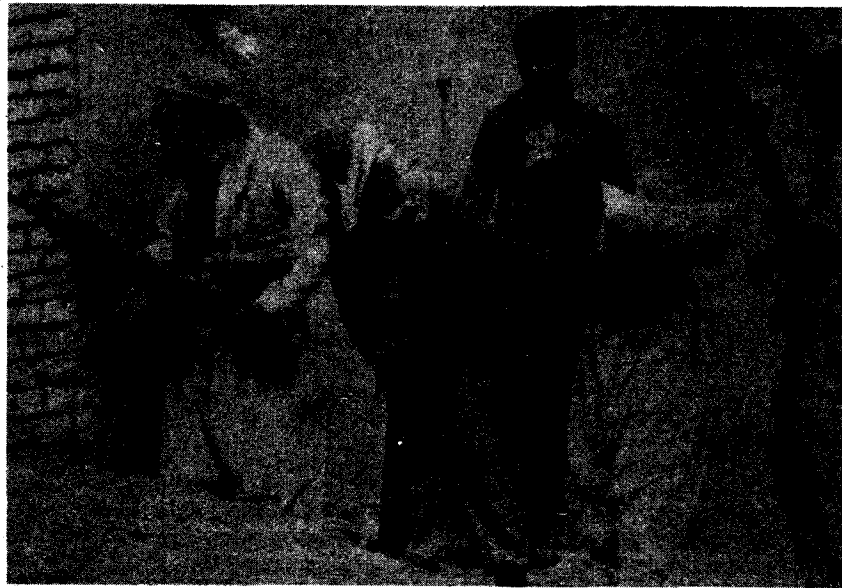
In the period of the Spanish Civil War Trotsky explained to those ultra-leftists who argued that since Marxists would not give pol-

itical support to the Popular Front of Negrin in the elections, therefore to give it military support against Franco was 'degeneration into the swamp of "lesser evil" Popular Front politics...':

'Let's take an example: two ships with armaments and munitions ... -- one for Franco and the other for Negrin. What should be the attitude of the workers?...

'We are not neutral. We will let the ship with the munitions for the Negrin government pass. We have no illusions: from these bullets, only nine of every ten would go against the fascists, at least one against our comrades. But out of those marked for Franco, ten out of every ten would go to our comrades.... Of course, if an armed insurrection began in Spain, we would try to direct the ship with munitions into the hands of the rebellious workers. But when we are not that strong, we choose the lesser evil.'

'The civil war between Negrin and Franco does not signify the same thing as the electoral combination competition of Hindenburg and Hitler. If Hindenburg had entered into an open *military* fight against Hitler, then Hindenburg would have a "lesser evil".... But Hindenburg was not the




Kurdish rebels in Sanandaj combat Khomeini's Islamic army

'lesser evil' -- he did not go into open warfare against Hitler....' ('Answer to Questions on the Spanish Situation [A Concise Summary]', September 1937)

Trotsky here repeatedly emphasized the decisive difference between a civil war and the pressure tactics of bourgeois democracy (elections, etc). By trying to pretend that mullah-led anti-shah demonstrations are equivalent to civil war, Workers Power is simply masking their *political support* to Khomeini and his Islamic Republic.

After Khomeini, us?

It has become commonplace among the pseudo-Trotskyist groups to liken Khomeini's role to that of Alexander Kerensky between the February and October revolutions in Russia. Barry Sheppard of the American SWP said at the previously cited NYC forum, 'To say "Down with the Shah, Down with the Mullahs" is the same thing as saying in Russia in 1914, "Down with the Tsar, Down with Kerensky".' Likewise the British partner, the Mandel International Marxist Group, states: 'If anything he [Khomeini] bears a closer resemblance to Kerensky, though analogies by their nature are never exact ('Iran's February Revolution', *Socialist Challenge*, 15 February). This particular analogy is not merely not exact, but is so off-the-wall it is hard to deal with in a politically meaningful way. Analogies between the Russian February revolution and what has happened in Iran would be valid only if the tsar had been overthrown by a movement led by Metropolitan Tikhon of the Russian Orthodox Church. Kerensky was an accidental figure thrown up



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by the revolution. He was insignificant before February 1917. It was precisely Kerensky's lack of political definition and strong party ties which made him an acceptable 'leader' to the bourgeois liberal Cadets, the petty-bourgeois populist Social Revolutionaries and labor-reformist Mensheviks. Khomeini was anything but an accidental figure in the overthrow of the shah. He was the established leader of the dominant religious sect. He went into opposition to the shah precisely over the monarchy's superficial attempt at Westernization (the 1963 'White Revolution'), especially over the land reform, which damaged the economic interests of the mosque, and legal rights for women.

There is, however, an ulterior political logic in the fake-Trotskyists' fixation with the nonsensical Khomeini-Kerensky analogy. Everyone knows Kerensky was but a transitory figure, easily overthrown by the Bolsheviks after a few months in power. In making the Khomeini-Kerensky analogy our revisionist 'Trotskyist' opponents are expressing their belief -- or at any rate hope -- that (soon) 'After Khomeini, us'. Here we come perhaps to the underlying reason why leftists supported a manifestly reactionary religious movement in Iran. It was a cynical maneuver to support the mullahs against the shah, on the assumption that the 'inevitable radicalization' ('the objective dynamic') of the revolution would bring the left to power. Much of the left's effort to prettify this backward-looking religious fanatic as some kind of radical democrat was undoubtedly a hypocritical gesture to ingratiate themselves with Khomeini's Iranian followers.

Perhaps the most sophisticated defense for supporting the mullahs against the shah is an amalgam of cynicism and objectivism. It runs something like this: granted Khomeini is a religious reactionary; if he comes to power and consolidates his rule, this might even be more reactionary than the shah, at least in its domestic policies. But a reactionary Islamic Republic in Iran today is very unlikely. In order to overthrow the shah, Khomeini had to unleash popular forces which he cannot control and which will prevent him from carrying out his program. In the political chaos which must follow the shah's fall, the left will gain over Khomeini. Although leftist support to Khomeini is an opportunist policy, there is a certain methodological similarity here to the ultra-left Third Period Stalinist position expressed as, 'After Hitler, us'.

The German Stalinists had all the arguments worked out: Hitler stood at the head of an unstable coalition of big capital and ruined petty bourgeois, which would soon explode; he could never deliver on his demagogic social program. But with the combined strength of a fanatical mass following and the armed forces Hitler built his Third Reich over the broken bones of the organized workers movement. The cynical policy of supporting Khomeini against the shah, figuring he can then be overthrown on the morrow of his victory, is like playing Russian roulette with five bullets in the chamber. Khomeini now has in his hands, though not yet securely, the resources of state power. He will certainly command the loyalty of the still-intact officer caste in any showdown with the left or workers movement. Furthermore, Khomeini enjoys enormous popular authority, especially among the backward, rural masses, not only as the imam of the faithful but as the conqueror of the hated shah.

As revolutionaries, we are never fatalistic about the victory of counterrevolution. When Hitler was appointed chancellor in early 1933,



International Women's Day in Teheran: thousands protested Khomeini's order to wear the veil

Trotsky called on the German working class to insurrect against him. Likewise in Iran today we call for a united-front defense of the workers movement, the left and secular democratic forces against the imminent terror of Islamic reaction:

'From the Fedayeen to the women in the streets, every non-Islamic sector of society is under the gun of the Muslim fanatics. The Fedayeen's protection of the women's protests in Teheran is an encouraging sign that the basis for a united-front defense of the left, proletarian and secular democratic forces exists.

'Revolutionaries in Iran would agitate for the formation of workers militias based on factory committees and trade-union organizations as the backbone of such a united front against the mullahs' rule!' ('No to the Veil!', WV no 227, 16 March)

But we recognize that the political and military advantages now lie with the Islamic Revolutionary Committee and not with the suicidal opportunists of the Iranian left and the tragically misled working class. Khomeini is not engaging in empty bombast when he threatens:

'If the united leadership is not accepted by all groups I shall regard this as an uprising against the Islamic revolution, and I warn these bandits and unlawful elements that we were able to destroy the shah and his evil regime, and we are strong enough to deal with them.' (New York Times, 20 February)

And how did Khomeini acquire the strength to destroy the shah? It was provided not only by the mosque's traditional petty-bourgeois base, the *bazaaris* and similar social strata. It was also the support of the Iranian left (the pro-Moscow Stalinist Tudeh Party and eclectic Stalinoid Fedayeen) which gave Khomeini the weapons he will now turn against them. And the foreign leftist cheerleaders for the mullahs in the streets -- the Jack Barneses, Ernest Mandels and Gerry Healys -- they too bear responsibility for the gathering reactionary terror in Iran. Every unveiled woman who is beaten, every petty malefactor who is flogged, every worker militant who is tortured by an Islamic SAVAK will be right to curse all of those who helped bring to power their new tormentor.

Reprinted from Workers Vanguard no 229, 13 April 1979

Letter on Indochina

16 March 1979

Dear Workers Vanguard,

This is to call your attention to a contradictory formulation in the article 'China Get Out!' (WV no 226, 2 March):

'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.'

As WV correctly says in the next paragraph:

'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 genuine democratic socialist federation

of Indochina.'

WV was correct to suggest that a Hanoi-dominated Indochinese federation would not necessarily be so oppressive of the Cambodians that the majority of them would want an independent state. Despite the well-publicized discontent among non-Russians in the USSR, there is also evidence that many national minorities (Armenians, for example) favor being part of the present federated state, which brings to them very considerable economic advantages. However, like their Kremlin counterparts, the Hanoi Stalinists, nationalist bureaucrats that they are, will certainly not grant the Cambodian people the democratic right of national self-determination.

Comradely,
John Sharpe

Note: The Workers Vanguard article referred to was also excerpted in Spartacist Britain no 10, April 1979, under the title 'On the Vietnamese Invasion of Cambodia'.


Leyland...

(Continued from page 3)

around a craft-oriented programme, incorporating the fatally divisive demand for separate bargaining rights. The UCO has the dangerous potential for further splitting BL workers, setting toolmakers against production workers. The British union movement suffers already from highly damaging divisions which separate workers in the same industry and even the same company into a proliferation of unions. Roy Fraser's strategy promises to deepen those divisions, making it harder for Leyland workers to take on management's highly co-ordinated and unified attacks. The Spartacist League stands for an active struggle for industrial unionism, uniting all workers in a given industry, irrespective of job, grade or employer.

The failure of the craftsmen's strike poses anew the question facing all Leyland workers: how to beat back the management attacks which have already cut thousands of jobs, held down wages and increased track speeds? The repeated willingness of the trade union leadership to sell out has stimulated an upsurge of craftism. This purely organisational response to bureaucratic betrayal is a dangerous dead end. The bureaucrats sell out not because they are against skilled men in particular but because they uphold the interests of the employers within the labour movement.

The answer to their repeated betrayals is to oust them from the leadership of the unions -- fake-lefts like Longbridge convenor Derek Robinson of the Communist Party, who actively scabbed on the strike, as much as the hard right wingers like Duffy who openly collude with Edwardes & Co. They must be replaced by a leadership with a programme which defends the interests of all Leyland workers -- not just this or that section. Such a leadership must above all be consciously revolutionary, pledged to a programme of overthrowing capitalism, the decaying system which threatens every gain of the working class. The future of British Leyland workers will be salvaged, not by capitalist rationalisation and speed-up, but only by a workers government and a planned socialist economy. ■



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SPARTACIST BRITAIN

Iran and the left:

Why they supported Islamic reaction

In one sense it is now very easy to polemicize against those leftists, especially ostensible Trotskyists, who supported the Islamic opposition to the shah. We said Khomeini in power would seek to reimpose the veil, restore barbaric punishments (flogging, amputation), suppress the national minorities and crush the left and workers movement as ruthlessly as did the shah. Imperialist propaganda, they shouted, Khomeini is leading a great progressive struggle! Thus one self-proclaimed Trotskyist group in Britain charged:

'The Spartacists make a series of charges against the Mullah-led opposition as a result of which they characterise the movement as one of "clerical reaction". A number of these charges amount to uncritical retailing of the chauvinist rubbish which filled the American press throughout the Autumn. The Mullahs they claim wish to restore Iran to the 7th century AD... They wish to introduce savage Islamic law punishments; stoning, public hanging and whipping etc. They wish to enforce the wearing of the veil and the removal of the rights given to women by the Shah....' (*Workers Power*, February 1979)

Well?

Now every piece of news out of Iran proves that the international Spartacist tendency (iSt) was obviously, indisputably, 100 percent right. The streets of Teheran are filled with the anguished cries of those, from middle-class liberal women to Guevarist guerrillas, who claim they were taken in by Khomeini's revolution. Tragically, the voice of the revolutionists who warned of the reactionary clerical aims of the mullahs was drowned in the clamor of opportunists singing the praises of the 'anti-imperialist' ayatollah. It is the Iranian masses who will pay the price.

Unfortunately, our main opponents here and in Europe are so cynical and so removed from the immediate consequences of their support to the mullahs' revolution that they will not repudiate their position. They will obfuscate or perhaps deny that they supported Khomeini, or concoct elaborate stagist theories to justify it. However, some subjectively revolutionary elements may just be shocked enough by the sight of Khomeini's marshals shooting down women protesting the veil to reconsider their solidarity with the mullahs' opposition to the shah. But unless such leftists break with the *anti-Marxist methodology* which led them to support Islamic reaction in Iran, they will end up supporting the Khomeinis of Egypt or India or Indonesia tomorrow.

To polemicize against the methodological arguments of the pro-Khomeini left groups is not so easy, for they didn't raise any. That Khomeini led the masses in the streets is presented as the beginning and end of all argument. Confronting Spartacists at a March 4 forum in New York, Socialist Workers Party (SWP) leader Barry Sheppard shouted:

'Revolutionists were with Khomeini and this



The mass demonstrations which toppled the shah: all progressive, said the fake-left. We warned against Islamic reaction, said 'Away with the veil!'

revolution, were with the masses in the streets against the monarchy. Only counterrevolutionaries would stand aside from that fight....'

'If it's popular, chase it' seems to be the motto of these inveterate tailists, whose instincts are closer to lemmings than to Leninism. Such 'arguments' do not allow or deserve a serious political reply.

A partial -- very partial -- exception to the theoretical nullity of the pro-Khomeini 'Marxists' is the small British centrist Workers Power group. Its polemics against us on Iran put forth a few arguments which go beyond unabashed tailism of the masses, although in their case as well this is the fundamental motivation. This perhaps bespeaks less of Workers Power's political seriousness than of its unenviable position in the spectrum of British ostensible Trotskyism. As a small, nationally limited centrist formation, Workers Power finds the British section of the iSt a formidable competitor on its left. Unless it can discredit the Spartacist League/Britain as hopeless ultraleft sectarians, Workers Power cannot expect to attract leftward-moving elements from the Pabloist International Marxist Group, the workerist/reformist Socialist Workers Party of Tony Cliff, etc. Still, the not terribly coherent polemics by Workers Power provide a useful foil in attacking those ostensibly Trotskyist groups who supported the mullahs against the shah.

In a critical commentary on Bukharin's writings, Antonio Gramsci insisted that Marxist polemicists must refute the strongest and not the weakest arguments of their opponents. In trying to carry out Gramsci's injunction, we are forced to give our reformist and centrist opponents' positions on Iran a theoretical coher-



ence which they do not in reality possess.

The Islamic opposition: A reactionary mass movement

In the last weeks before the fall of the shah's bloody regime, all the forces of opposition to the monarchy in Iranian society, including the organized proletariat and the left, had rallied behind Khomeini. But the core of Khomeini's movement was the mullahs (the 180,000-strong Shi'ite Muslim clergy) and the *bazaaris*, the traditional merchant class being ground down by the modernization of the country. This traditional social class is doomed by economic progress, and so is naturally prone to reactionary ideology and its political expressions.

For opportunists it is unthinkable that there could be a reactionary mass mobilization against a reactionary regime. Yet history does offer examples of reactionary mass movements. Adolf Hitler organized an indubitably mass movement which toppled the Weimar Republic. In the US in the 1920s the Ku Klux Klan was a dynamic growing organization capable of mobilizing tens of thousands of activists in the streets.

The experience of German fascism has had too shattering an impact on the memory of the left for our reformist/centrist opponents to deny the possibility of reactionary mass movements based on the petty bourgeoisie. But not, they argue, in backward, semi-colonial countries like Iran. Workers Power polemicizes against us:

'Iran is in Lenin's terms a *semi-colony*. The masses, despite all their illusions, are struggling against this Imperialism. If the USFI [the revisionist United Secretariat of the Fourth

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