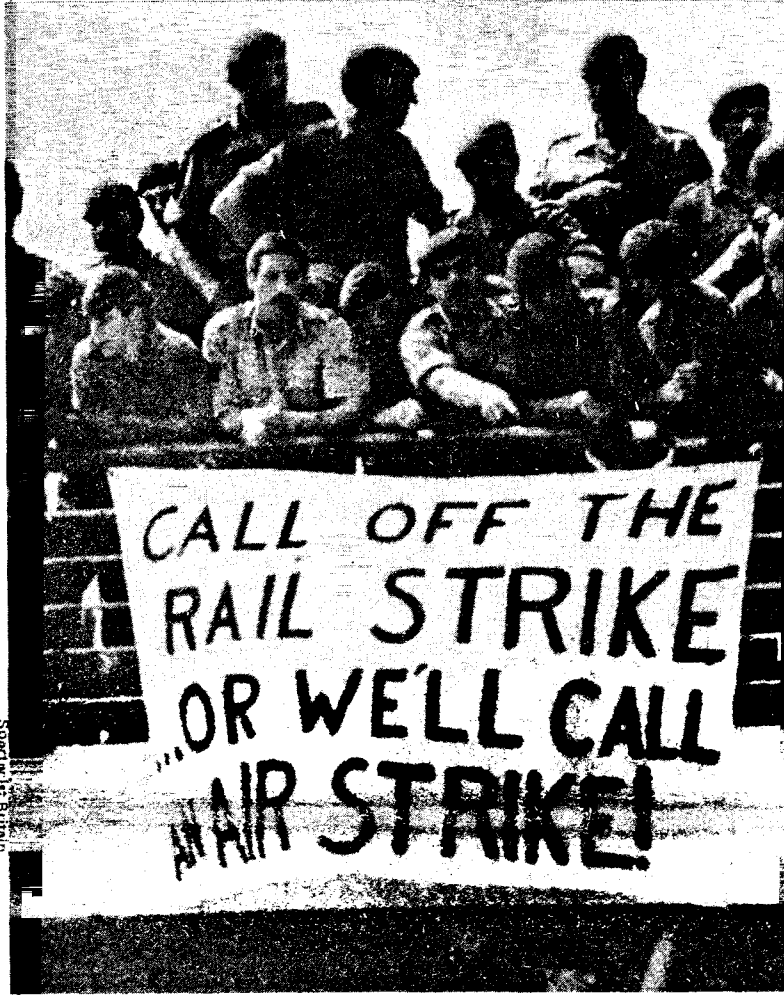


Defeat the witchhunt! Drive out the NATO/CIA-loving right wing!



Tony Benn speaking at Falklands peace rally (left). Arthur Scargill at disarmament rally (right). Left reformists have no answer to strikebreaking and chauvinism (here on the Canberra) which fuel right's offensive.



Labour left under the gun

After nearly two years of bitter factional warfare the left-right struggle inside the Labour Party is moving towards a conclusion. With Labour leader Michael Foot now demonstrably a front-man for the right, the NATO/IMF-loving right-wing around Denis Healey is driving for the complete emasculation of the Bennite left. The anti-Militant witchhunt endorsed by the National Executive Committee (NEC) only clears the ground for the right to launch an assault against their real target -- Tony Benn and his supporters in the labour movement. Much more is at stake than just the future of Ted Grant's Labour-loyal Militant tendency. The future of Labour as a party 'fit for government' (ie reliable bourgeois rule) is on the line. A recent *Times* editorial (24 June) put the issues plainly:

'Labour has a choice. It can opt for internal peace at the cost of impotence. Or it can determine that it will fit itself once again for government. That cannot be a painless process. Nor can it be a short one. It will

not be enough just to expel Militant.'

Over the recent period the left has found itself increasingly isolated and has begun to falter and fragment under the pressure. Militant, whilst formally a part of the anti-witchhunt 'Unregistered Alliance', has agreed in advance to register should the right win out. The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) has adopted a 'fall back' strategy of 'democratising' the register should it be implemented. And they all scream about the need for 'unity' and 'peace' in the party even as the right-wing leadership guns for their political heads.

As the polarisation inside the Labour Party proceeds apace it is the right-wing who are gaining in strength. The 'soft left', Neil Kinnock, Joan Lestor, Alex Kitson et al, have effectively decamped over to the right splitting the *Tribune* group over the question of support to the NEC witchhunt. 'The Death Of The *Tribune* Group?' ran a headline in ... *Tribune*! Whilst the newspaper has been left in the hands of Bennite editor Chris Mullin, the capture of

Tribune was at best a pyrrhic victory, which cannot hide the growing isolation of the Bennites.

Labour left for unity

All the ringing phrases of Tony Benn and his counterpart in the trade unions, Arthur Scargill, cannot hide the fact that they have been driven into a corner by the right-wing offensive. Trapped in the political framework of left reformism, committed to parliamentarism and the maintenance of the Labour Party as a vehicle for that strategy, the left is incapable of mounting a serious political challenge against the right. Scargill can repeat as many times as he likes that those in the Labour Party who do not agree with Clause Four should join the Social Democratic Party, but the plain fact is that the right are prepared to carry through the fight to a split if necessary whereas the left has no future with a rump Labour Party incapable of assuming governmental office. And so as the right escalate the stakes the left can only thrash around looking for a non-existent compromise. Characteristically the pro-Benn *London Labour Briefing* ran a headline 'Give Peace A Chance' and declared this was no time to 'start EXPELLING ONE ANOTHER from the Party instead of fighting the all-too-real enemies we face' (August 1982). Like Nye Bevan before him, Tony Benn has brought the Labour Party to the brink of a split without having the political wherewithal to land the killer punch.

Several months ago we pointed out that the Labour Party was undergoing its most significant internal differentiation and split in over

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'The Communist International answers the ILP'... p6

Labour left ...

(Continued from page 1)

half a century (see 'Labour's Cold War', *Spartacist Britain* no 41, April 1982). Under the impact of the Cold War an uneven and distorted class line has been cleaved through the Labour Party with the resulting deep split between Healey's pro-NATO internationalists and Benn's Little England socialists. That split is necessarily connected to domestic issues with the Benn movement representing primarily a repudiation of the record of the 1974-79 Labour government -- centrally its class-collaborationist, union-bashing stance which provoked the 1979 'winter of discontent'. Indeed so savage was the Callaghan/Healey government's assault on the unions that it served to alienate sections of the trade union bureaucracy, opening the way to Benn's close challenge to the discredited Healey in the deputy leadership election, and allowing the democratic reforms of the 'Blackpool revolution' to be driven through the breach.

But at root is Benn's support to the burgeoning Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and his opposition to the siting of American missiles in Britain -- a stance which threatens to tear up Labour's long-standing commitment to NATO's anti-Soviet war drive. In an interview in *Straight Left* (July 1982) Benn spelled out the position that has driven the right to move for his political destruction:

'The short term aim of getting rid of all nuclear weapons ... that is the most significant thing you can do now. If you do that then you are in effect changing the relationship fundamentally with NATO....'

That 'fundamental change' threatens to undo the work done by the Labour right in the 1950s to consolidate the Labour Party as a pro-NATO bastion in the European workers movement. Whether Benn intends to implement his programme is not the issue -- the bourgeoisie is not prepared to take the risk. And the right has been working hard behind the scenes to prevent Benn from winning out. The NATO-funded Labour Committee for Transatlantic Understanding has recently produced a declaration, on 'Unilateralism and NATO', attacking the growing European unilateralist movements. Among the signatories were Labour right wingers Frank Chapple, Sid Weighell, Terry Duffy and SDPers Bill Rodgers and Alan Lee Williams.

Out with the NATO/CIA lovers!

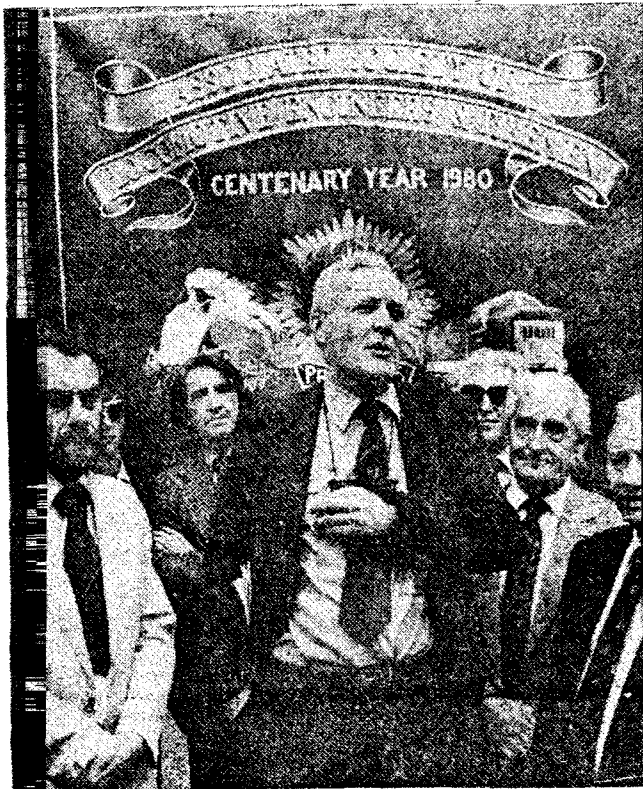
In a period of heightening Cold War Benn's positions and those of the right are irreconcilable. One will have to win out. Benn's anti-Communism is not in question; his opposition to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and his support to counterrevolutionary Solidarnosc demonstrate that clearly. But his desire to pull Britain out of the nuclear crossfire is out of step with the needs of the British bourgeoisie who see no way forward other than as junior partners of US imperialism. And in a period of escalating war drive anyone who gets out of step is liable to get the chop.

The split in the Labour Party has been exacerbated by the Falklands war and its aftermath. During the war Labour fractured roughly along the established factional lines. Healey predictably lined up behind Thatcher and accrued the consequent political authority as Britain was submerged in a frenzy of social chauvinism with Thatcher's outriders in the gutter press savagely attacking any sign of opposition as 'treason'. And the wave of outright social-chauvinism embracing the right and centre of the Labour Party/TUC served to obfuscate the role of the right wing as the central force behind the attack on the Bennites. Benn's advice to the British bourgeoisie, that it was no longer capable of conducting colonial wars thousands of

miles away and should withdraw the task force, did not go down well. If the bourgeoisie needed any more convincing that Benn is not a suitable future ruler they got it in the Falklands war. The blistering assaults against Benn from all wings of the bourgeoisie served to further isolate the Bennites.

In the aftermath of the British victory the Tories rode the wave of national chauvinism to unprecedented heights of popularity for a viciously anti-working class government most of the way through its term of office. Labour suffered a series of crushing by-election defeats, finishing in third place behind the Liberal-SDP alliance which largely held its ground.

Then came the ASLEF dispute. A small craft union, led by TUC left Ray Buckton, supported by newly-installed NUM president Arthur Scargill and backed by the seemingly incorrigible Tony Benn, is faced with destruction by the British Rail Board. Politically incontinent Labour leader Michael Foot makes a speech at the Durham miners gala, and the press release reporting it (though not apparently the speech itself!) contains a statement in support of ASLEF. No sooner had the ink dried on the pages of the gutter press attacking Foot than he intervened alongside the TUC urging an end to the dispute on the BRB's terms. The strike was broken and



Tony Benn on ASLEF picket

the left suffered yet another defeat. The so-called centre of the TUC, through its unwillingness to fight, had lined up with the right, and in particular National Union of Railwaymen leader Sid Weighell, to deliver another crushing blow to a left already in a state of siege.

TUC leaders Len Murray and David Basnett may not like the prospect of another Healey government but they want serious industrial action against the Tories even less. The TUC bureaucrats' unwillingness to fight means they have no choice other than to accommodate to the Labour right. Thus the recent 'Woodstock Commitment' drawn up by the Trades Unions For A Labour Victory and Foot lays out a revamped Social Contract, although this time Murray and Basnett intend to have a say in how it is administered.

Victims of a situation they are powerless to control, the Bennite left are staring defeat in the face. At a Tribune anti-witchhunt rally in London on 20 July Scargill demanded that those in the Labour Party who do not agree with Clause Four should join the SDP and issued a threat that the NUM would withdraw funds to the Labour Party if the witchhunt went ahead. But the plain fact is that the left has no perspective if it is not prepared to break with the NATO/CIA-loving right wing. And it is not. The disarray in the ranks of the Bennites is a reflection of their political incapacity to challenge the whole tradition of Labourism and carry the current cold split through to a conclusion with an offensive against the Healey wing. Trotsky addressed the fundamental dilemma of the Labour left in his 1926 'Problems of the British Labour Movement':

'The ideological and organisational formation of a really revolutionary (ie Communist) party, on the basis of a mass movement, is only conceivable under conditions of a continuous, systematic, unwavering, untiring, and naked denunciation of the muddles, the compromises, and indecision of the quasi-left leaders of all shades.... The left-wing muddlers are not capable of power; and if in the course of events power got into their hands, they would hasten to hand it over to their elder brothers on their right.'

And so as the right escalates the stakes the left can only thrash around looking for a non-existent compromise.

Trotskyists see this crisis in the Labour Party as an opportunity to carry through the process of political differentiation, forcing the CIA-loving right out and placing Benn in a position where his left reformism can be more effectively exposed and combatted through the counterposition of an alternative, revolutionary programme. But so pervasive is the influence of Labourism on the ostensibly Trotskyist supporters of the Bennite left that, without exception, they argue against a split and single-mindedly focus on questions of democracy and unity, in many cases not even going so far as Benn in posing the underlying political issues in the witchhunt. Their whole approach is captured by the cringing appeal of *Socialist Challenge* directed to the witchhunters: 'Fight the Tories -- Not the Left'.

Democrats for ... social democracy

For Militant, the tendency most immediately under the gun, life without the Labour Party is unconceivable -- so whatever happens they pledge themselves to 'continue to work for the Labour Party, to recruit workers into it, and, above all, to argue for socialist policies in it' (*Militant*, 25 June). They even go so far as to boast about their vote against the expulsion of a supporter of the right-wing Solidarity group in St Helens on the basis that 'we can deal with our problems within the party and be a mass party for the working class' (9 July). Militant's craven defence of the 'mass party' is not surprising when one remembers that their programme for 'revolution' consists of an 'enabling act' (passed by parliament of course) to nationalise the famous 200 monopolies, a refusal to call for the withdrawal of British Troops from Ireland, support for counterrevolutionary Solidarnosc in Poland and most recently backhanded support to Thatcher's Falklands war.

The Socialist Organiser Alliance (SOA) too, prates on about 'democracy', attacking the Labour right from the vantage point of social democratic anti-communism, railing against the 'Stalinist' methods of the right and claiming that the overthrow of the decisions of the 'Blackpool revolution' would result in a qualitative degeneration akin to that of the 'pseudo-Communist Parties'. The SOA's solution to the problem is to call on Tony Benn to run for leader, thus endorsing Benn's left-reformist programme.

And what of the SOA's habitual slightly-left critics, the Workers Power (WP) group? In an article headlined 'Kick Out the Witch-Hunters' WP outline a strategy for fighting the right which again never goes beyond the terrain of defence of democratic rights in the Labour Party: 'Not only should revolutionaries but all supporters of workers democracy, whether they be right or left reformists, oppose these efforts to complete the process of turning the Labour Party into a tightly policed social democratic party or rather, ultimately, into a plain Liberal Party.' (*Workers Power*, July/August 1982)

And in defence of this position the reader of *Workers Power* is treated to some astonishing arguments. According to WP the Labour Party 'remains a federal body'; moreover, 'Labour has never had a programme' and 'the famous commitment to Parliamentary Democracy ... is [not] to be found in the objects defined in Labour's constitution'.

Lying behind this set of lawyer's arguments and constitutional quibbles is a conception that the Labour Party is an empty vessel open to any politics whatsoever -- if only it remains 'democratic'. And where does this get you? First of all it leads to calling for a 'loyalty oath' to the Labour Party, as WP did in February 1981. Secondly, and more fundamentally, it opens up the prospect that the Labour Party can be transformed into a revolutionary instrument -- a position WP have in the past resisted, particularly in polemics against the SOA and its predecessors. But now?

Workers Power would do well to go back and look at what Lenin had to say about the Labour Party. Despite its constitution Lenin was never in any doubt that the Labour Party had a very definite programme -- a programme of parliamentary reformism inimical to the programme of communism (indeed Ralph Miliband opens his history of the Labour Party, *Parliamentary Socialism*, by pointing out that Labour from its inception was one of the most dogmatic of parties, not about socialism but about parliamentarism). In 1920 when Lenin and the Communist International addressed the question of tactics towards the Labour Party it was still a somewhat federal and 'open' social-democratic party, although Lenin noted at the time that it was in the pro-

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Who betrayed ASLEF?

ASLEF's strike to defend the guaranteed eight-hour day against British Rail's 'flexible rostering' scheme, to ward off the 4000 redundancies it would mean for the footplaters, posed far broader issues from the very first day. And everybody knew it -- from Margaret Thatcher to the BR management to the TUC right down to the average trade union member. Milking the 'Falklands factor' to the full, the Tory government set its sights on ASLEF as a prime target in its offensive to destroy the combativity of the trade unions. The relatively militant, small, craftist train drivers' union does not enjoy widespread 'public sympathy', and the railways themselves are unpopular. 'Archaic practices' was the codeword for trade union resistance to attacks on working conditions, jobs and wages.

The hysterical level of union-bashing was captured by the photo which appeared on the front page of one paper after another: troops returning from the Falklands aboard the Canberra with a banner reading, 'Call off the rail strike or we'll call an air strike!' For two weeks the strike by 24,000 ASLEF members was subjected to every threat the Tory government and British Rail could think of using, up to and including a replication of Ronald Reagan's notorious 'PATCO treatment' -- the threat of dismissing every last one of the strikers.

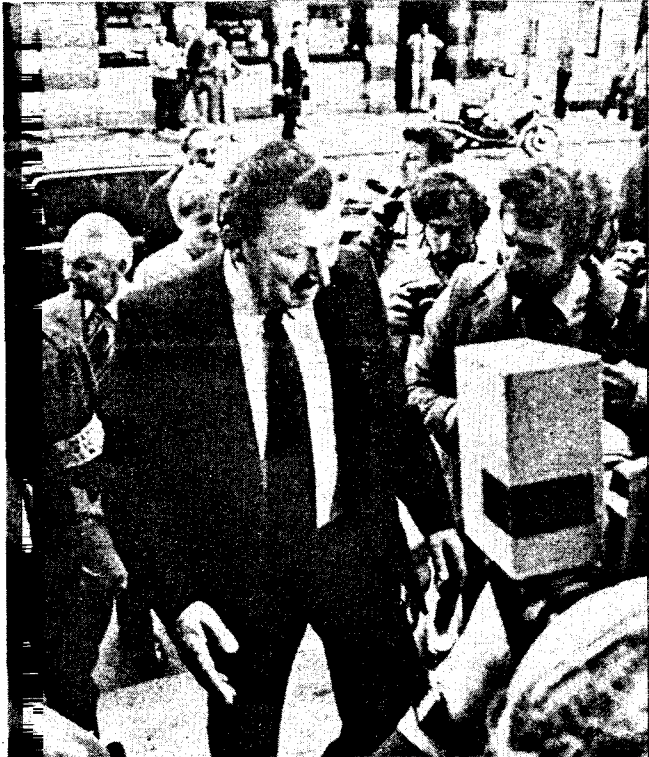
Even by their own figures, BR were prepared to lose more in the two weeks of confrontation with ASLEF than they expect to gain through five years of flexible rostering. 'Smash ASLEF!' screamed the *Daily Mail*, and the ruling class marshalled its forces to make it a reality. With Arthur Scargill's NUM threatening a national miners strike for November and the health workers continuing to galvanise support in their fight for a 12 per cent wage claim, the 24 July *Economist* summed up the bourgeoisie's fears over where the ASLEF strike could have led:

'If Britain's train drivers had won their national strike, then the Thatcher government could have been blown away this winter in a whirlwind of born again union militancy. Thankfully, the drivers lost.'

But even as it cheered, this mouthpiece for the bourgeoisie added a sober caution:

'The manner of the train drivers' defeat should also temper any crowing. The best end to the strike would have been a revolt of the rank-and-file against the executive of ASLEF... Instead the train drivers stayed pretty solid, even under threat of the sack. It was left to the "inner cabinet" of the TUC to bring ASLEF to heel.'

Indeed! For all its attempts to incite massive popular hostility to the strike and instigate a scab back-to-work movement, laying out £6 million a day in subsidies to keep a handful of trains running, BR and the government could not cow the strikers back to work. In the end that treacherous task fell to the workers' own misleaders. In a bitter statement after the TUC's finances and general purposes committee cut off all support to the strike, ASLEF general secretary Ray Buckton attacked right-wing NUR head



Ray Buckton bows head before entering TUC sellout meeting.

Sid Weighell for having 'by his actions assisted the British Railways Board at every stage'. Justifying the ASLEF executive's decision to call off the strike, Buckton added:

'This was a battle which could not be won without the support of the entire trade union movement, support which was not forthcoming.'

The TUC stands indicted. Weighell stands indicted. But what about the 'left-wing' ASLEF leadership, and the equally 'left-wing' Arthur Scargill? They too stand indicted for the betrayal of the ASLEF strike.

Weighell's not the only one

Buckton is not only a left, but an ostensible Marxist and supporter of the Soviet Union who sits on the editorial board (in an 'advisory capacity') of the pro-Moscow monthly, *Straight Left*. For those Communist Party (CP) members who express a subjective identification with the Russian Revolution against the increasingly social-democratic line of the CP, who see in *Straight Left* an opposition to that line, Buckton's role in the ASLEF dispute bears particular scrutiny.

The current leadership of ASLEF under Buckton has done nothing to undermine the destructive craft-based divisions among railway workers which have seen railwaymen striking separately and crossing each other's picket lines time and again over the last century -- to the delight of successive railway managements.

Even before the strike had begun, Buckton and the ASLEF national leadership had set up the conditions for its defeat. When the NUR went out over their wage claim the week before in a

short-lived 36-hour strike, Buckton's response was not to pull his men out immediately alongside their NUR brothers, forging industrial unity in struggle, combining their claims and preparing the possibility of reversing Weighell's treacherous acceptance of flexible rostering for the NUR. No, Buckton told his members to 'work normally'. It is no thanks to the ASLEF executive that so many NUR members honoured ASLEF picket lines.

Rather than appeals to industrial unity, to class unity, a strike edition of ASLEF's journal *Locomotive* argued that their strength lies in 'craft, in pride, in the status of a responsible job'. Instead of making an appeal to the NUR ranks even after Weighell had sold them out to join ASLEF in fighting for better wages and working conditions across the board for railwaymen, ASLEF officials poured salt in the wounds of the NUR sellout by bragging that BR management were playing 'Brazil now, not Kuwait'. But if Brazil had a crack at the World Cup, an isolated ASLEF never had a chance at defeating the Tory/BR juggernaut.

Not phoney 'solidarity', but joint class struggle

The ASLEF strike expressed in microcosm the questions facing the trade union movement: a strike in which the fundamental issues at stake were of direct interest to the entire labour movement; a union set up for the kill by the ruling class; token expressions of 'support and solidarity' where what was needed was genuine solidarity -- in struggle. It was clear from the very beginning that this battle could not be won without the active support of at least key sectors of the trade union movement. But if the support was not forthcoming, neither were any attempts by the ASLEF leadership to mobilise it.

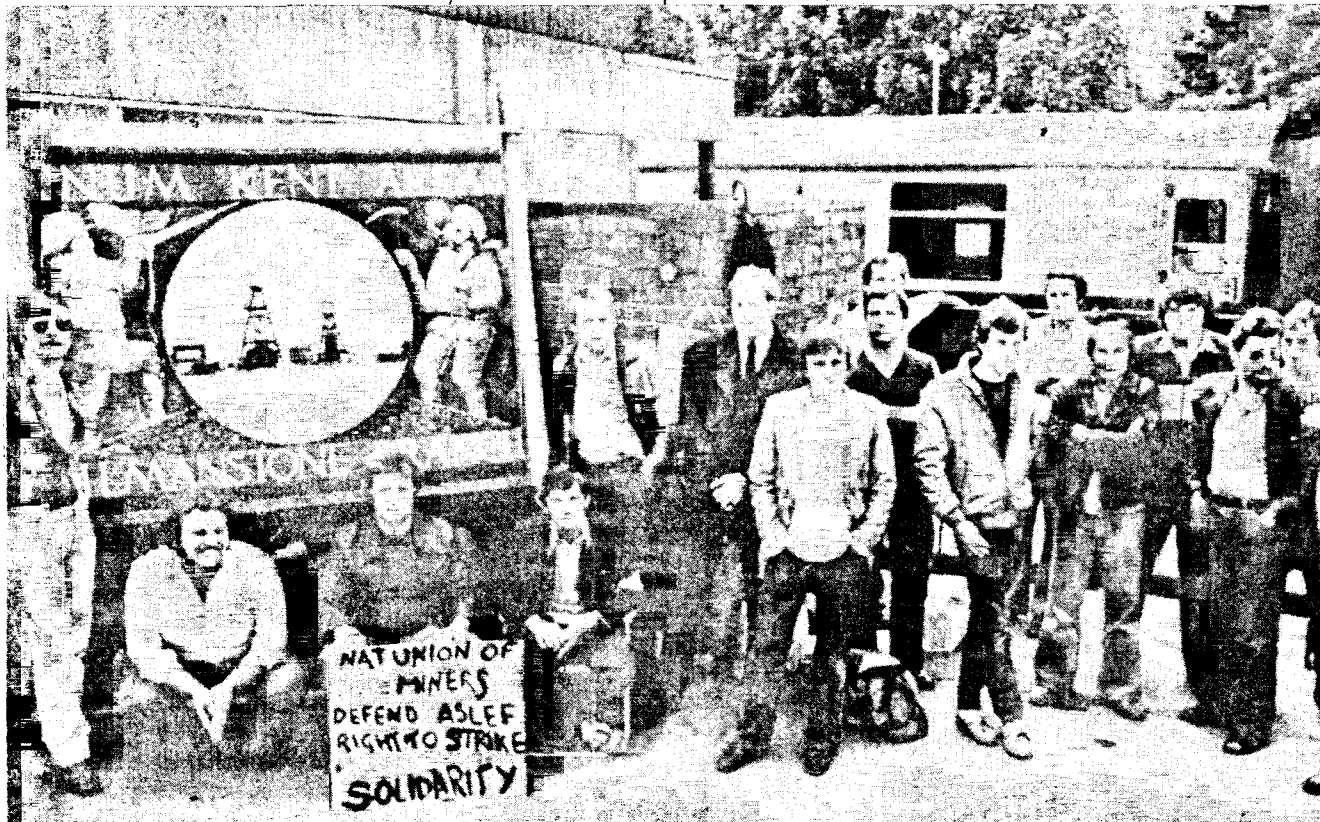
Tony Benn stood on the picket lines; Arthur Scargill made his usual vows of 'full support'; even Michael Foot announced his support for the strike -- until he turned around and announced his support for the strikebreaking. Indeed, it is a comment on the wretchedly myopic programmatic vista of the fake-revolutionary left that they could leap to applaud Foot of all people for his 'stand'. Scargill's 'full support' never went beyond a miserly £10,000 donation to the hard-hit strikers (indeed the all but non-existent strike fund reflected the lack of preparation by the ASLEF leadership for a hard and serious struggle) and a vow to black all coal normally transported by rail. But as the bourgeois press recognised this would have no bite for at least four weeks, as the stockpiles built up at the pitheads.

In justifying Buckton's capitulation to the TUC, an official at ASLEF national headquarters in London told *Spartacist Britain* that the executive did not have the 'authority to allow' the dismissal of its 24,000 members and that it could not go outside 'established procedures' in calling other unions to join it in strike action. Like every reformist misleadership the ASLEF executive attempts to pin its own shortcomings on its membership and on its willingness to acquiesce to a given 'procedure'.

In fact the willingness of the ASLEF membership to fight was never in question, as the *Economist* recognised. When BR issued its provocative dismissal threat, it only stiffened the resolve of the strikers, despite the economic hardship their families were suffering. Indeed in Bolton, as elsewhere, those railwaymen who had been scabbing on the strike were provoked into coming out against the management's provocation. At an ASLEF mass meeting in Sheffield, a resolution to continue the strike even in defiance of the TUC -- 'No surrender!' -- was passed overwhelmingly only minutes before the executive's decision was announced. And the anger which greeted the betrayal was expressed in a resolution to disaffiliate from the TUC. It was the ASLEF leadership's refusal to seek to broaden the strike that allowed for dismissals and redundancies.

Given the ruling class's readiness to wind down the railway system in any case in favour of road haulage -- as a *Times* leader noted, the country had proven that it can run without a national railway -- it was particularly key to the victory of the strike to extend it to the lorry drivers. But the attempt was never made. Nor was an attempt made to bring out the miners, whose industrial muscle and reputation for militancy still drives fear into the bourgeoisie. Flying pickets despatched to the pitheads, as the

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Miners' solidarity was never translated into call for joint strike action.

Workers Power - still waiting

SOA's first anniversary blues

First anniversaries are meant to be 'paper anniversaries'. And this marriage of convenience feels like it's already beginning to tear apart. When Sean Matgama's International-Communist League (I-CL) and Alan Thornett's Workers Socialist League (WSL) joined together last summer in the 'new' WSL (which lives on in name only), they pledged their Labour-loyal Socialist Organiser Alliance (SOA) to a fight to 'renovate the labour movement' on a 'roughly adequate' programme, to win the Labour Party to 'socialist policies'. We called it a 'fusion fixed on the terrain of the Cold War and formalised at the altar of the social-democratic "broad church": anti-Soviet, pro-Labour' (*Spartacist Britain* no 34, July 1981).

Since then the SOA have not only taken to calling themselves Bennites, but to seeing the central axis of conflict in virtually every situation as a struggle for enlightened (bourgeois) democracy against the dark forces of Stalinism, including the current anti-left witchhunt inside the Labour Party (see 'Labour left under the gun', p1). Needless to say they support Solidarnosc's Vatican/CIA-style democracy in Poland -- to the point of being the only ostensibly Trotskyist grouping still affiliated to the 'captive nations' Polish Solidarity Campaign. And they foreshadowed their craven 'defend democracy' response to the new Labour witchhunting register by ostentatiously opening up their recent Annual General Meeting to all Labour Party members.

But, despite the addition of a dozen SOA Labour councillors to the armoury of the British proletariat, the payoff for providing a considerable part of the organising cadre for Benn's deputy leadership bid has not materialised. As SOA spokesman John O'Mahoney put it, 'we have had diminishing success in affecting the Broad Left'. So the once tranquil dream of an ever bigger brood of Bennites has been replaced by bitter domestic strife in the SOA. The one missing ingredient in the SOA's little scandal was injected with a fawning love note ('Open Letter to the Workers Socialist League') to O'Mahoney's critics by his embittered ex-I-CL partners ('they broke up the fused organisation to which we belonged'), the centrist Workers Power (WP).

The most visible manifestation of the turmoil inside the SOA has been a furious exchange in the letters column of *Socialist Organiser* over the Falklands war. Congruent with its plunge into the mainstream of the Bennite left, the SOA leadership's social-pacifist neutralism and its overweening concern for the self-determination of 1800 Empire-loyal Falklands kelpers was virtually indistinguishable from that of Benn himself, whom they praised for taking a 'bolder and bolder' stand as the war went on.

As opposed to SOA's pacifist neutralism, Leninists took a revolutionary defeatist stance towards both sides in this war over a handful of windswept rocks. While the Labour left and their camp followers pleaded to 'Stop the war' lest it lead to 'tragedy' for Britain, the Spartacist League (SL) said, 'Let the war be Thatcher's downfall!' Lenin's dictum that 'military reverses must facilitate [the bourgeoisie's] overthrow' was given particular emphasis in this disarmament contest between two of Reagan's most fulsome allies in the anti-Soviet war drive.

But what irked SOA dissidents was not the social pacifism, but the failure to give it a fig-leaf of 'anti-imperialism'. Writers pointed to a 'rising tide of anti-imperialist sentiment in Argentina' and the exemplary stand of Peron-loving adventurer Nahuel Moreno's PST in linking arms with the junta butchers. 'Up for grabs is the theory of permanent revolution', charged one writer against O'Mahoney. Support for Argentina is a 'betrayal of Trotskyism' replied another while yet another O'Mahoney supporter tellingly explained how Thatcher's talk about the Falklanders' rights no more vitiated SOA's position than did Reagan/Thatcher's support for Solidarnosc!

Not only dissidents in SOA, but every affiliate (with the exception of the Australians) of the WSL's vestigial sham international, the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee, backed Argentina -- reflecting a rough division between the old WSL and old I-CL (as did the affinity for the WSL's old unrequited lover,

Moreno). Additionally the difference over Afghanistan (between the WSL's line of simply condemning the Soviet intervention against CIA-backed feudal reactionaries and the I-CL's outright call for the withdrawal of Soviet troops) reportedly continues to plague the lash-up. Add-

Writeback ARGENTINA- OPPRESSED NATION?
Yes! Defend Argentina!
No: don't defend Argentina!
Stand with Falklanders
Sub-imperialism and Argentina
OUR REPLY
Lenin, imperialism and - muddleheads
Don't back Galtieri!

ing to our suspicion that, as we said last year it would be 'Matgama's wedding, Thornett's funeral' is the conspicuous dropping of former Thornett lieutenant John Lister as co-editor of *Socialist Organiser*.

Once bitten, twice opportunist

Workers Power's pitch for (yet another) 'new fused revolutionary organisation' comes down in essence to an affinity of interests: 'You support Galtieri, we support Galtieri; you despise O'Mahoney, we despise O'Mahoney.' WP's willingness to leap into bed with whatever disgruntled Thornettites are floating around SOA says much about their understanding of fusion. When they got together in the I-CL in 1975, it was on the basis that the Russian question (on which they then had a state-capitalist position) was 'tenth-rate'. After leaving Matgama, they attempted a brief and unsuccessful flirtation with Thornett, followed up by an attempt to get a piece of the action in last year's merger with a shameless appeal to the mythical 'golden age' of an outfit prepared to sanction scabbing by its leadership.

Not surprisingly WP's 'Open Letter' has not so much as a whisper of their line on the Russian question (of critical support to counter-revolutionary Solidarnosc and condemnation of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan). And why attack Thornett for strikebreaking when WP itself blesses scabs in the NHS strike (among others) if only they throw a bit of guilt money into the strike coffers? WP supporters in the ASTMS South Yorkshire Health Services Branch voted in favour of a resolution calling on those who scabbed on the Health Service strike to give a day's pay to the national strike fund. The branch secretary, WP supporter Ron Giles, justified this scandalous defence of scabbing on the basis that 'it's impossible to stop them going in'.

WP's attempt to break out of years of effective national isolation by proving they are more deserving of the British patent to the TILC letterheading than the WSL itself rests on their absurd claim to be the only 'British Trotskyist Group' to have a revolutionary perspective on the Falklands war -- which despite a few nuances like sharper criticism of Benn, happened to be identical not only with the SOA opposition but, as they later admit, with the International Marxist Group (ad infinitum) as well.

The WP 'alternative' to O'Mahoney's social pacifism was evidenced in a Handsworth Labour Party meeting where a WP supporter 'counterposed' to an SOA resolution to 'withdraw the fleet' the 'anti-imperialist' amendment that

Benn be invited to speak at all antiwar rallies. Then there was that valiant 'anti-imperialist' initiative at a Sheffield antiwar rally, where having failed to convince the Communist Party organisers to allow the demonstration to go ahead by agreeing to drop their 'anti-imperialist' slogans, the WP contingent refused to chant anything but a social-pacifist litany of 'troops and navy back to port' counterposed to an SL contingent's revolutionary slogans. Indeed as the task force first set sail Sheffield WP thoughtfully put out a leaflet which went one better than *Socialist Organiser* and hoped that no British soldiers would be killed.

WP's 'revolutionary perspective' on the war, like that of SOA, centred around how best to involve the Labour left in a single-issue campaign for withdrawal of the fleet. The demand for withdrawal -- whether to South Georgia or Southampton -- by the Bennite left posed a peaceful solution to what threatened to be an embarrassing and potentially dislocating situation for British capitalism. It was clearly counterposed to the Leninist understanding that the defeat of one's own bourgeoisie in a reactionary war is desirable. A bloc with the Bennites was necessarily a bloc in opposition to class struggle against the war and against the bourgeoisie -- the Bennites' staunchly pro-British calls for fleet withdrawal were designed to suck the working class into pacifist politics that do not challenge the bourgeoisie, ie for peace in the Falklands and social peace in Britain. For Leninists, anti-imperialism abroad means class struggle at home!

But not for WP, whose understanding of 'anti-imperialism' has far more in common with 'Third World' New Leftism. Thus WP has attacked our (and Lenin and Liebknecht's) slogan 'The main enemy is at home!' as being 'vacuous' in this war, counterposing that 'in this case our ally was the Argentine nation because it was fighting a death battle with our enemy in a justified national war' ('Open Letter'). WP's theoretical exegeses to lend credence to the junta's 'anti-imperialist' claims, resting on the fictitious 'semi-colonial' character of Argentina and its revanchist appeal to a 150-year-old sovereignty claim, differed little in substance from the SOA dissidents, Morenoites, Mandelites et al.

To provide some sort of 'class analysis' cover for its support to Argentina, WP argued that a defeat for the Argentine junta would also be 'a significant and potentially highly demoralising defeat for the oppressed Argentinian masses'. Had this been a war of national liberation that would have been true. It was not. So, lo and behold, after the junta lost we read in *Workers Power* how 'The defeat of Argentina was a further crushing blow not just to Galtieri but to the military as a whole... The bourgeois opposition is equally terrified of the crisis of the regime.' The demoralisation of the proletariat? Not a word. On the contrary, WP recognises the defeat creates 'a situation in which an offensive by the Argentine proletariat ... can bring the junta crashing down'. And that has something to do with why Leninists took a revolutionary defeatist position.

The spectre of Spartacism

The WP 'Open Letter' is most conspicuous in its great pains to reassure WSLers of their opposition to 'sectarianism'. 'We know what sectarianism is and you will never find us guilty of it.' What is sectarianism? Sectarianism is the Trotskyist politics of the 'irrelevant' Spartacist League, which WP manages to guiltily attack five (or more?) times in this letter directed to the WSL. Of course, this could be related to the fact that the old WSL lost two significant left splits -- the Trotskyist Faction and the Leninist Faction -- to the SL and WP a founding cadre. WP's alternative to sectarianism is to 're-elaborate Trotsky's Transitional Programme' -- presumably by gutting it of central programmatic positions such as unconditional defence of the Soviet Union, the inviolability of the strike picket and the strategy of proletarian revolution in backward countries. We will stick to the original un-

continued on page 8

Her Majesty's Communist Party outraged Uproar over IRA bombs

The spectacular twin bombings carried out by the Provisional IRA in London on 20 July provoked the predictable stream of 'anti-terrorist' outrage from the imperialist butchers of Westminster and their media mouthpieces. 'Terror ... horror ... carnage ... inhuman' -- words that the gentlemen and women of the British bourgeoisie would never think of applying to the British army's massacre on Derry's Bloody Sunday. And what about the SS General Belgrano, torpedoed outside the 'total exclusion zone' around the Falklands? That brought a gleam to Thatcher's eye. But when the IRA got some of her boys, these were 'callous and cowardly crimes' committed by 'brutal and evil men who thought nothing of democracy'.

From the standpoint of the proletariat the latest IRA bombings were not crimes. The well-placed nail bombs which went off two hours apart were clearly directed at military targets. The first one hit a squad of Blues and Royals, part of the queen's own Household Cavalry, as they rode from their Knightsbridge barracks through Hyde Park; the second a bandstand in Regents Park at which the band of the Royal Green Jackets, which is stationed in Northern Ireland, was performing before a crowd. Eleven soldiers were killed, dozens others wounded. The perverse sense of 'humanity' of the imperialist media was best captured by the amount of sympathy bestowed upon the cavalry horses as opposed to the nearly two dozen civilians unfortunately injured in the attacks.

Coming atop a series of embarrassing security scandals, including the man in the queen's bedroom and mysterious spies in Cheltenham communications centre, the IRA bombings provided yet another shock to the security credibility of the Thatcher government, currently riding on the crest of a wave after its victories over Argentina and ASLEF. But there was nothing farcical about the bourgeoisie's response to the IRA attacks. This time the usual police dragnet of IRA 'sympathisers' and anti-Irish repression was spiked by talk of retracting voting rights for Irish residents. If that were not enough, the honourable defenders of imperialist democracy are now actively considering bringing the hated pass laws of South Africa to the mother country by demanding Irish residents in Britain carry special ID passes. We say: Down with the Prevention of Terrorism Act! British troops out of Ireland now!

A futile strategy

But defensible though they are, these bombings are a prime example of the futility of the IRA's 'bomb and ballot' pressure strategy against British imperialism. What will blowing away a handful of horse guards and bandsmen do to drive British troops out of the North or, more broadly, to alleviate the suffering and oppression of the Catholic masses?

Even before the bombings there was speculation that the IRA would carry out some sort of military action to prove it could still cut the 'Brits' down to size despite the successful adventure in the South Atlantic. But the IRA did not attempt 'to take advantage of Britain's military overextension by launching a renewed offensive in the North; nor did it attempt to demonstrate solidarity with its proclaimed 'Argentine allies' with a rocket attack on the Canberra as it steamed out of Portsmouth. Instead the Provos chose to take on a pretty soft target.

But for the cringing pawns of the bourgeoisie known as the Labour leadership, it was not the ineffectiveness of the IRA's tactics but their imperialist targets which led them to scream outrage. And, as usual, they were joined by Her Majesty's Communist Party (CP), who squealed that the 'outrageous bombings ... must be totally condemned' (*Morning Star*, 21 July). In the past the CP's cowering before its bourgeoisie meant that it refused to oppose British imperialist troops being sent in to 'keep the peace' in 1969, a position now enshrined in the 'British Road to Socialism' as the CP pleads for only 'the withdrawal of British troops to barracks'.

The CP's history of fawning social-chauvinism over Ireland has, not surprisingly, been an issue in the spawning of ostensibly leftist opposition groups in the Stalinist milieu. Thus *Proletarian*, a recent loyally

Brezhnevite spin-off from the Kremlin-loyal New Communist Party (NCP), attacks the NCP for its undoubted economism and tailism over Ireland and argues for uncritical 'support for the war of Irish national liberation' as 'the most demanding and certainly the most dangerous form of class struggle in Britain'. *Proletarian* savages the NCP's criminal inactivity during last year's hunger strikes, even going so far as to argue for 'united fronts' with 'Trotskyists' on the question. Likewise the *Leninist* grouping, whose core also came out of the NCP and raises an oppositional perspective in the CP, lambasts the CP's opportunism and calls for a 'united republic' and unconditional support to the IRA as a 'national liberation movement'.

Although a healthy response to the pro-imperialist capitulations of the CP, and the NCP, both *Proletarian* and the *Leninist* remain trapped in the Stalinist 'theory' of two-stage revolution in which the socialist revolution must necessarily (in reality, indefinitely) wait for the completion of bourgeois democratic tasks. Hence their desire to oppose British imperialism leads to a position of giving 'unconditional' support to the petty bourgeois nationalist politics of the IRA and their perspective of a forcibly united Ireland. Meanwhile they 'look forward to the Irish working class taking its proper place in that movement' (*Leninist* no 1), reducing the role of the proletariat vanguard to tailing after the nationalists.

Such a dead end strategy is doubly bankrupt in the context of the North of Ireland. As the *Leninist* (no 2) notes, partition meant the

accept the framework of the nationalist politics of the IRA. What is necessary for communists is to outline a programme to transcend communal divisions and unite the proletariat for socialist revolution.

The recognition that the Protestants are not part of the Irish Catholic nation is a key to winning over the Protestant working class. They understand that forcible integration into the Catholic-dominated state offers them nothing. Nor, for that matter, will it end the exploitation of their Catholic class brothers. Of course it would be preferable for both Catholic and Protestant communities to be part of a united workers republic after a victorious proletarian uprising. Even then forcible unification means a denial of the democratic rights of one of the peoples. The fate of the Protestant people, and thus the national question in Ireland, can only be resolved within the framework of a socialist federation of the British Isles.

There can be no solution to the problem of Northern Ireland other than through the perspective of proletarian revolution. Such a perspective necessitates strictest independence from all manifestations of Orange or Green nationalism whilst resolutely defending the Catholic minority from all forms of discrimination. Alongside the demands for full equality in housing, hiring and education the demand of the Trotskyist Transitional Programme for a sliding scale of hours and wages is necessary in order to transcend the fear that more jobs for Catholics means less for Protestants. However revolutionary working class unity can not be forged simply around economic demands, the



Stinking imperialist hypocrisy: the butchers of Derry's Bloody Sunday (right) decry IRA bombing as criminal.

'division(s) which had already existed in the Irish working class movement were frozen and reinforced', leading to the consolidation of a distinct Protestant community defined in large part in hostility to the southern Catholic state. Today Northern Ireland is a graphic example of interpenetrated peoples, a situation in which two distinct communities exist side-by-side with directly counterposed views of what their 'self-determination' would involve. Such a problem is intractable under capitalism because the 'self-determination' of one group means the oppression of another. Hence the demand for self-determination for the 'Irish people as a whole', or the 1968 'British Road to Socialism' demand raised by the *Leninist* of a 'united republic', is simply a call for the reversal of the terms of oppression and the subjugation, at best, of the Protestants.

The *Leninist* attempts to get around this obvious truth by equating the Protestants with the colour caste of South African whites. But the Protestants' meagre privileges are negligible compared to the massive differentials that divide South African whites from blacks. Moreover the Protestant working class, as demonstrated by its show of strength in the reactionary 1974 Ulster Workers Council Strike for example, is strategic to the mobilisation of the Irish workers' struggle for power. The *Leninist* says 'working class unity considered within the confines of the Six Counties is an impossible dream'. But this is of course true once you

working class must be guarded against the sectarian rampages of the RUC and the Orange gangs and the sporadic communal violence of the IRA. Thus integrated workers militias must be built to combat sectarian terror, Orange and Green, as well as imperialist rampage.

It can only be through the common revolutionary struggle of Protestant and Catholic workers, allied with their class brothers in Britain, to smash British imperialism and gommeen capitalism once and for all that the Irish question will be finally resolved. For Leninist-Trotskyist vanguard parties in Ireland and Britain! For workers revolution throughout the British Isles!

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Russian soldiers march under banner of Communism, 1917.

We reprint below selections from a reply by the Executive Committee of the Communist International (CI) to series of 12 questions put to it by the Independent Labour Party (ILP), then a centrist grouping affiliated to the Labour Party, in a letter dated 25 May 1920. The radicalisation of the ILP's working-class base under the impact of the Russian Revolution -- a phenomenon repeated internationally -- forced it to break with the Second International and consider the question of joining Lenin's CI. The CI's forthright reply, demanding a break with the ILP's past practice of parliamentarism and conciliationism towards the reformist Labour leadership, repulsed the opportunist ILP leaders. But it was instrumental in forging a unified Communist Party in Britain. In tandem with subsequent elaboration, particularly by Lenin, in discussions at the Second Congress of the CI later that year, and with Lenin's earlier work, *Left Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder*, it represented a statement of the fundamental principles of Leninism in relation to the Labour Party and the strategic task of British Communists in breaking Labour's mass working-class base from parliamentary reformism.

The questions taken up in these excerpts -- affiliation to the Labour Party, the use of parliamentary methods and the applicability of the dictatorship of the proletariat to Britain -- are particularly relevant today. With the possibility of a deep split in the Labour Party posed more directly than at any time since at least the 1930s, the influence of social democracy on ostensible communists in Britain could not be more manifest. Uniformly they counsel against a split, appealing to the integrity and unity of the Labour Party and painting it as some sort of united front of the workers movement.

At the time the CI's statement was written, the Labour Party did in fact have a federal character, manifested in the affiliation of various ostensibly Marxist tendencies, among them the BSP (British Socialist Party), which retained full freedom of propaganda and organisation. Lenin and the CI's argument for affiliation by Communists then was premised on this fact, as Lenin noted in the Second Congress discussions, that the BSP was allowed its own press where it could 'freely and openly declare that the party leaders are social-traitors'. But the CI warned that the Labour Party was in the process of consolidating into a 'large opportunist party' aimed at retarding 'the revolutionary development of the masses'. Indeed the Labour leaders' rebuff of the CP's application was a decisive element in that consolidation.

Today this document is a polemic against the Communist Party, which degenerated into reformism nearly five decades ago, and has been formally committed to a parliamentarist strategy since the adoption of the 'British Road to Socialism' in 1951. Likewise, the fake-Trotskyist Militant Tendency openly espouses a parliamentary road to socialism premised on British imperialism's 'democratic tradition'. As for the gaggle of centrist fake Trotskyist groupings, they sow the same illusions with their calls for a Labour government ('... pledged to socialist policies'). And all of them direct their main fire against the Labour right and paint left reformism as la Tony Benn as somehow representative of working class interests. It is unfortunate that for space reasons we must

omit those sections of the CI's reply which deal with the development of centrist conciliationism within the international labour movement and the Communists' hostility to it.

To the question of the British ILP 'In what respect does communism differ from other forms of socialism?'

We reply: 'There are no other forms, there is only communism. Whatever else goes under the name of socialism is either wilful deception by the lackeys of the bourgeoisie or the self-delusion of persons or groups who hesitate to choose between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie; who hesitate between a life and death struggle and the role of assistants to the expiring bourgeoisie.'

The dictatorship of the proletariat and the British proletariat

The second question of the representatives of the ILP to the Communist International is to explain how in its opinion is the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat to be applied in Great Britain. We consider that in no country can the dictatorship of the proletariat be applied better and more directly than in Great Britain.

The capitalist system dominant in England has been created by the most merciless capitalist dictatorship. English capital by violence deprived the peasants of their land. Beginning with the sixteenth century it forced the peasants from their lands to establish a system of capitalist ownership in land. Peasants and craftsmen who by force of economic conditions had become proletarianised, had in a most dictatorial way been turned into the wage slaves of capitalism and had their ears and nostrils cut when they refused to work. They were driven by capitalism into workhouses which were houses of starvation and death, husbands were separated from their wives, and children from their mothers, and forced to toil without rest in the interests of capital. Workmen were being sent to the gallows when ruined by the factories, they attempted to destroy the machines, failing to understand that the evil was not in the machines but in capitalist ownership. Workers who assembled peacefully to demonstrate their dissatisfaction, were shot down, as happened in Peterloo in 1819. Hundreds of the best representatives of the English working class languished in prison when, at the time of the Chartist movement, they attempted to raise the English proletariat to fight for their emancipation.

From the time of Cromwell, Clive and Warren Hastings to the time of Dyer, Allenby and French, with arms in hand, they have crushed under their iron heel the peasant masses of Ireland, India and Egypt, pitting one section against another in order to strengthen their own domination; every attempt at insurrection being drowned in blood. There is no other capitalism in the world which has attained and maintained its powers through so merciless, so bloody a dictatorship.

If the mendacious historians of the British bourgeoisie are able to convince a considerable part of the British workers that the domination of the British bourgeoisie represents a peaceful domination, and a domination of the people --

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Excerpts from 'The Comm

that England knows no revolutions and that the English people enjoy constitutional rights to realise every kind of reform desired by the majority -- this brazen lie wields influence only because the labour aristocracy of the British working class has, for fifty years and over, forgotten the turbulent history of English capitalism and the revolutionary record of the English labouring masses. The moment the majority of the English people will turn against it, the ruling clique will relegate Parliament to ash-heaps of oblivion and will institute in England the same dictatorship of French and Churchill which it has established in Ireland. This clique, ready to discard the parliamentary



Sixty years of Labourite treachery: Ramsay MacDonald, Arthur Henderson, Nye Bevan and Hugh Gaitskell, Harold

bauble, is already preparing for a policy of blood and iron. When Churchill asserts that the working class, that the Labour Party is incapable of leading England, that means to say that any Parliament with a Labour majority really intending to fight the bourgeoisie, will be dispersed with the aid of the expeditionary forces and of the bourgeoisie. Such a parliament he will declare 'incapable of governing England'.

Churchill's circular of February, 1919, the intent of which is to prepare the use of military force against the workers in the event of strikes, goes to show that the English military clique does not for a moment think of drawing any distinction between its English, its

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Keir Hardie, parliamentarian, founder of ILP.

Egyptian, Hindu or Irish slaves. Whoever tells the British working class that it can overthrow the capitalist dictatorship in the British Empire, through any other means than the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is, by taking the full power into their own hands by depriving of political power all those who defend capitalist exploitation, and by organising a Red labour army -- deceives himself and others. It is possible to think that the working class in England can secure government power even without a revolution and by means of parliamentary election victories. The world revolution knows various stages, as that, for instance, of the Hungarian workers who received the government power without insurrection and without armed collisions, owing to the capitulation of the Karolyi Government. The Russian working class has gained power, not so much owing to the application of armed force as to the fact that the armed forces of the country have gone over to their side. When the point in question is the dictatorship of the proletariat, the formal way in which the proletariat will acquire power is of no importance; what does count, however, is the fact that the working class can neither protect nor maintain this power unless the capitalist class is disarmed, and unless it is deprived of its political rights until the time arrives when it can be included in the ranks of the labouring people; unless the source of all the forces and wealth of the country be concentrated in the hands of the working class, whose power must be protected at all costs.

Had the British working class gained power by means of parliamentary elections, by means of so-called democracy, which under the existing conditions of the concentration of the means of forming public opinion in the hands of the bourgeoisie, is most unlikely -- even in that case the Communists are not for a minute freed of their duty of saying to the workers the following: (1) that it is most unlikely that the English bourgeoisie, the most energetic and most skilful oppressor of national movements, the richest in the world, the ruler not only of millions of British workers but of hundreds of millions of the peasants and the workers of its colonies -- it is most unlikely that this bourgeoisie will give up its power without a struggle and become subject to the paper will of the parliament; (2) that, therefore, the workers should prepare not for an easy parliamentary victory, but for victory by a heavy civil war; (3) that should the workers have succeeded in gaining power without this civil war, that would only signify that the necessity of civil war would confront the working class so soon as it set out to realise its will to defend itself from capitalist exploitation and speculation; so soon as it began to liberate the masses in the colonies, now oppressed by British imperialism.

The dictatorship of the proletariat is the more applicable in England in that the proletariat forms the greater part of the population, that it is on a high level of technical and general education, and that it is organised in strong trade unions. It only requires a firm revolutionary will and the establishment of a resolute revolutionary party, which will be able to express and effect and to spread this will amongst the millions of the working masses.

This is a reply not only to the second, but also to the seventh question of our English comrades, the question whether the dictatorship

of the proletariat can be introduced otherwise than by armed force.

Soviets and parliament

Our English comrades have put the question to us whether the acceptance of the Soviet system is obligatory on the members of the Third International. To this we shall reply by a slight excursion into the history of the English bourgeois revolution. When at the time of the English revolution the Independents, who represented the richest bourgeoisie and the capitalist landlords, became a conservative power, resisting further reforms demanded by the national army -- Cromwell in 1653, under the pressure of the army, declared: 'The time has come, I must act.' He made a parliamentary speech dwelling on the policy of greed and rapacity of the propertied classes; he was told that this was not a constitutional speech. Cromwell replied, 'You think this is not parliamentary language, I want to put an end to your parliamentary speeches; I say to you that you are no longer a parliament. Bring them in.' And in were led the revolutionary soldiers, and the parliament of the Independents was dispersed.

Revolution is a struggle of classes; and the struggle is the more acute the sharper the antagonism of class interests. Being a life and death struggle, a civil war, an armed combat, the revolution tolerates no delusive institutions, the discussions and speeches in which are intended to conceal the nature of the current events from the masses. The clearer the masses see into the progress and objects of the revolution, the stronger it grows if helped by the revolutionary government. Revolution, therefore, has no need for deceitful institutions, the aim of which is to deaden the class struggle by speeches. More than that, revolution has no time for speeches, it has to act, and to act rapidly.

This is the reason why Cromwell was compelled to disperse the parliament of the Independents. He formed the 'Small Parliament', of craftsmen, farmers, and tradesmen. This 'Small Parliament', which was the representative of the principal power of the revolution, of the revolutionary petty bourgeoisie and a weapon in the hands of the masses, was nothing but a Soviet or Council

of the representatives of the integral parts of the English Revolutionary Army. And for the very reason that Cromwell was connected with the bourgeoisie, with part of the landlord class and with the generals, he was subsequently compelled to disperse this parliament also, for the reason that, as he explained, it violated the rights of freedom and property. If a man possessed twelve cows it was the opinion of these Covenanters that his man should share them with those of his neighbours who possessed none; no man would have any property if these people remained in power. This parliament had therefore also to be dispersed. Revolution, like counterrevolution, like every active revolutionary social group, cannot indulge in speeches but must act. At the time of the French revolution the Jacobins gained a victory under the banner of democracy. The Constitution of '93 was democratic, it was one of the most democratic constitutions, but in order to respect the masses against the counter-revolutionary bourgeoisie and landlords and against the European counterrevolution, the Jacobins were compelled to expel from the parliament the Girondists and to deprive the counterrevolutionary classes of all electoral rights. They did not do this on paper, they did so actually.

The proletarian revolution, it is obvious, does not imitate bourgeois revolutions, differs from them in form and nature. But the proletarian revolution must act not less but more resolutely than the bourgeois revolution, because a proletarian revolution represents a coup d'etat infinitely greater than all the bourgeois revolutions taken together. Bourgeois revolution substituted one form of private property for another -- the proletarian revolution abolishes property and invokes infinitely more hatred, malignancy and resistance. Under the modern means of transit and communication all the counterrevolutionary forces of the world rally against the proletarian revolution and, therefore, delay is most destructive to the cause. The proletarian revolution is therefore compelled to act swiftly and resolutely, and must not indulge in lengthy disputes with the counterrevolution. The counterrevolution, as has been proved by the Finnish, Russian, Hungarian and German experience, is not less determined. It refuses

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Delegates at Second Congress of Communist International, 1920.

Labour left ...

(Continued from page 2)

cess of homogenisation into a hardened party irrevocably under the leadership of the social chauvinists. To frustrate this process Lenin proposed that the fledgling Communist Party affiliate to Labour and fight for its full programme forcing a split between the leadership and its mass base. As it was the Labour Party rejected Communist affiliation and proceeded to consolidate itself in hard counterposition to the Comintern. To say that sixty years on the Labour Party is still a federal body a la 1920 is simply mindboggling.

Split Labour — for a Trotskyist party!

The tactical stance of Trotskyists towards the Labour Party under current circumstances must be to exacerbate the split which already exists with the aim of driving the NATO/CIA-loving right-wing out of the Labour movement. Unlike Militant, Trotskyists would be in favour of moving to oust such elements; indeed any revolutionary worth the name would be the most energetic proponent of the denial of Labour 'democracy' to rabid NATO-lovers. Seeking to exit from the Labour Party with as large an organisation as possible revolutionaries would, even while tactically blocking with Bennite forces to drive out the right, conduct an intransigent political struggle against all wings of the Labour Party, including Bennite reformism.

Against Benn's programme of Little England 'socialism' we counterpose the programme of international socialist revolution. Where Benn looks to a utopian revamped British capitalism under the 'Alternative Economic Strategy', Trotskyists fight for the proletarian seizure

of power to reorganise the dilapidated British economy on the basis of socialised property. Against Benn's fantasy-world schemes of persuading the bourgeoisie to disarm and eschew war with the Soviet Union, Trotskyists stand for intransigent defence of the Soviet Union through workers revolution to disarm the bourgeoisie. Proletarian revolution is what this country desperately needs as it slides ever deeper into crisis, threatening to drag the proletariat into another bloody world war even more devastating than the two previous imperialist conflagrations. No to the witchhunt -- Defend Militant! No to Labour unity! Drive out the NATO/IMF/CIA-loving right! Not Bennite reformism but a revolutionary leadership of the labour movement, a Leninist/Trotskyist party to lead the fight for proletarian power! ■

SOA...

(Continued from page 4)

elaborated version, thank you.

Arch-manoevrer O'Mahoney may yet decide that organisational self-preservation dictates an abrupt turnaround in his all-the-way-with-Benn course, though a dozen Labour councillors and all that stands for is a pretty heavy overhead for a small organisation to break from. After being on the wrong end of two clarifying factional struggles and apologising for everything from scabbing to anti-Sovietism, there may not be much left in the SOA besides fit recruits to various Labour councils. But those that do want an alternative to O'Mahoney/Thornett's brand of politics, those who want to fight for a Trotskyist programme which both offers an alternative to the abject tailing of Bennism in the Labour Party and refuses to bend under the pressure of cold war anti-Sovietism need look no further than the Spartacist League. ■

ASLEF...

(Continued from page 3)

health workers earlier did in their one-day strikes, could have brought out the miners. But even Scargill's promise of 'full support' was never put to the test. In fact, despite Scargill's fine words, coal was being moved by rail, even in Yorkshire, into the second week of the strike.

And what of Buckton's fellow 'advisors' to *Straight Left*? Members of Bill Keys' SOGAT were allowed to load copies of the *Sun* onto scab trains in the midst of the strike and thus ensure that the Fleet Street press distribution was not affected. It was TUC president Alan Sapper who chaired the 'inner cabinet' meeting that arrived at the scab 'consensus' and who had the honour of reading the TUC decision to irate ASLEF lobbyists waiting outside Congress House. Then there's Seamen's head Jim Slater. Not long ago Slater pledged the 'total support' of his union to a struggle that was successful -- that of British imperialism to retake the Falklands!

For Buckton, Keys, Sapper & Co, 'support' for the Soviet Union has nothing to do with support for the methods and aims of the Russian Revolution, the programme of class struggle to defeat and overthrow the bourgeoisie. Their role in this strike, like their economist, sectoralist and class-collaborationist politics in general, is completely compatible with the way the Kremlin bureaucracy approaches the defence of the Soviet Union -- through 'peaceful coexistence' and not revolutionary struggle.

The strategy of 'left unity' advanced by *Straight Left* which accepts and justifies such betrayals had its germinal and indeed fullest test more than fifty years ago. In 1926, the Stalin regime in the Soviet Union refused to break with the TUC in the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee even as the TUC stabbed the General Strike in the back -- placing its 'united front' with the TUC above the interests of the British proletariat. Today the unity between Buckton and the other TUC misleaders is organic -- based on a common reformist programme which does not challenge the existence of capitalism but rather accepts it. This sort of unity does no more to ward off imperialist threats against the Soviet Union than it does to ward off Tory attacks against the British proletariat.

The ASLEF leadership's refusal to violate the 'established' procedures and structures of the pro-capitalist trade union bureaucracy is a quintessential expression of their perspective of working within the bounds of capitalism. To have defied the TUC decision would have meant exactly to break from those constraints, to appeal not to the sectional but to the class interests of trade unionists -- against their reformist misleaders, against an acceptance of the narrow boundaries determined by decrepit British capitalism. It would have meant putting forward a programme of struggle directed against the entire array of Tory attacks. The miners may not have a direct interest in flexible rostering, but they do need to fight against pit closures -- the answer to both is a combined struggle for worksharing on full pay. The destruction of a small craft union at the hands of a viciously anti-union government bent on restoring some degree of profitability to British capitalism may not have meant much to Sid Weighell. But the threat behind it of shackling and enervating the entire union movement means something to every trade unionist, and a leadership concerned with the class struggle and not the TUC constitution could have mobilised broad support to smash anti-union legislation like the Prior Act and the Tebbit Bill.

What is needed is class unity around a working-class programme to smash capitalism. And that is why Ray Buckton is no less an obstacle to the struggles of the British workers than are Len Murray and Sid Weighell. For a revolutionary leadership of the labour movement! ■

How US SWP 'turns'

Those of our readers who take an interest in the fake-Trotskyist US Socialist Workers Party, co-thinkers of the British International Marxist Group (IMG), will find these excerpts from a recent article in *Workers Vanguard* no 310 (23 July), fortnightly press of the Spartacist League/US, particularly interesting. We recommend the full version of the article, available for 20p from Spartacist Publications -- particularly to IMG supporters enchanted by this 'model' of a 'turn to industry'.

After what seems like eons of promises that 'consistent whatever leads to socialism', reams of resolutions proclaiming a 'New Rise of the Whatever Struggle' and a 'turn' which was supposed to bring in hundreds of proletarian recruits to a 'party of industrial workers', sections of the reformist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) seem to have become aware that the Barnes leadership is driving hard and not slowly toward irrelevance. The party has seemingly run out of 'whatevers' and, according to Mary-Alice Waters, money and members as well. Waters' report to the November 1981 National Committee plenum (*Party Organizer*, vol 6, no 1, April 1982) admitted a loss of 500 members (euphemistically termed a 'gradual decline in the total membership of the party over several years'). This and the concomitant ballooning of red ink resulted in the cutting of the full-time staff by about one third so far; and as for the future, Waters added: 'we don't think we've bottomed out in total membership'.

But the SWP is shrinking and Waters, long known for her 'Mary-Alice in Wonderland' org reports, thinks it's going to go on like that. So does everyone else, apparently. The SWP's difficulties and the concomitant outbreak of internal wrangling have been the subject of repeated comments in the rad-lib *Guardian* and elsewhere. At bottom the problem for the SWP is that Barnes' version of social-democratic reformism incorporates good-sized chunks of political eccentricity (eg, Castroism, necessarily a problem for an anti-Soviet party; maintenance of the infatuation with Khomeini long after the bulk of his apologists on the left backed away in embarrassment; the present orientation to the 'working farmer'; the Grenadian road to 'socialism' as the model for American blacks). On a par is a trade-union policy of 'talking socialism' which is guaranteed to produce victimizations of SWPers foolish enough to try it.

The SWP insists that the hair-raising story of what happened at the Jim Walter Brookwood mine no 4, in Alabama was not a correct application of the 'talking socialism' policy. We

suggest our readers draw their own conclusions from Political Committee reporter Ken Shilman's 'Report on the National Miners Fraction' (*Party Organizer* vol 4, no 1, April 1980):

'We did not collectively sit down, carefully size up the situation we found ourselves in, and figure out how to help the union win this battle. If we had started there, I think that after only two weeks in the mine when we did not know a lot about the struggles, and had not had time to win respect for ourselves as unionists or as political people, much less establish ourselves as socialists -- we would have decided not to sign grievances, write articles, or sell the *Militant* in the bars around the mine....

'When two comrades, Sara and Ellen, got hired at Brookwood in June, 1979, we walked into a war taking place between Jim Walter mining company and the UMWA. Jim Walter was out to destroy the local....

'By writing the kind of *Militant* article we did, quoting extensively from a closed union meeting and signing it with the names of comrades who had barely started work, we set into motion an entire train of events....

'That issue of the *Militant* gave the company and its right-wing agents the handle they needed. The red scare and violence that followed our sales of the *Militant* changed the relationship of forces dramatically.... What the company had thus far failed to do with its attacks on women's rights and other tactics, it pulled off with anti-communism -- it divided the union....

'Our actions also led to serious victimization. Comrades are familiar with the violence directed against our comrades that eventually forced us to decide that Sara and Ellen should not continue to work at the mine.

'But we were not the only victims. Others had their cars fire-bombed, tires slashed, and lives jeopardized. The climate of terror hurt everyone, intimidated everyone. The people who came to our defense were good people, courageous, and they helped us at great personal risk....' (emphasis added)

The only item of importance omitted from this account is the fact that many of the victims of the violence touched off by the SWP's incredible stupidity -- people who were struggling 'at great personal risk' before the SWP dropped in and after it departed -- were black.

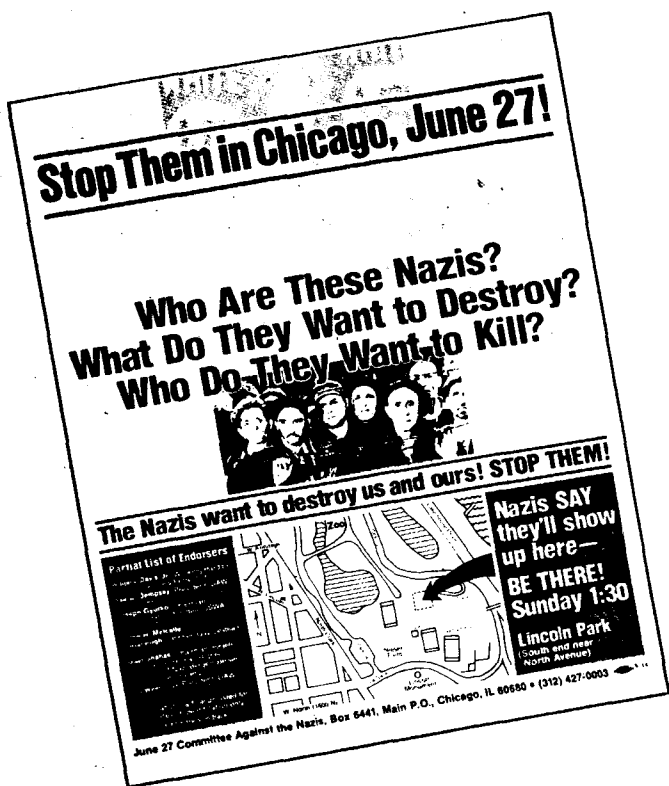
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Workers, blacks, Jews, gays respond to Spartacist campaign



Cops protect fascists from wrath of 3000 demonstrators.

Thousands mobilise to stop Nazis in Chicago

CHICAGO -- Sunday, June 27 here was a big victory for opponents of fascist terror throughout the country. It was the largest militant anti-Nazi protest in the area in decades, with more than 3000 participating. And the presence of protesters from a broad cross-section of the Chicago population in a demonstration led by socialists is a landmark in anti-fascist actions nationally. As Ronald Reagan's killer cutbacks and the Klan/Nazis' guns target black and working people, it is clear that there is no future for the oppressed and exploited in this rotting system. The class-struggle strategy of the Spartacist League (SL), for labor/black mobilizations to stop racist terror, shows how to fight back and win. June 27 proved it can be done.

They came from the steel mills of East Chicago and the Harvester plant in Melrose Park, from heavily gay New Town and the largely Jewish suburb of Evanston. There were even East European Catholics from North Side neighborhoods. But most important in this the most segregated city in the US, with the meanest white suburbs in the country, they came from the giant South Side black ghetto to stop the Nazis and defend themselves.

When the gang of Nazi storm troopers drove a rented truck up to the edge of Lincoln Park Sunday afternoon, they found the site where they planned to stage a provocation against the Gay Pride Day march already occupied by several thousand anti-Nazi demonstrators who turned out in response to determined organizing by the SL-initiated June 27 Committee Against the Nazis. As the fascists were spotted, the crowd surged forward chanting 'No Hitlers in Chicago -- Stop the Nazis now!' Unable to enter the park, the two dozen Hitlerites in brown and black uniforms clustered behind a chain-link fence, protected by hundreds of Chicago cops, including a line of mounted cossacks.

The whole rally -- podium, sound system and all -- charged up to the front lines as anti-Nazi demonstrators pressed against police barricades. The protesters were angry and militant and only the massive police presence stopped them from driving the fascists out. More than 165 uniformed cops were officially on hand, and many scores of plainclothesmen circulated in the crowd, ostentatiously sporting their red, white and blue buttons. Thirteen protesters were arrested during the afternoon, charged with disorderly conduct and released. But the crowd would not be provoked into a disastrous confrontation with the Chicago police force. The protesters drowned out the Nazis with spirited chanting for an hour, until the Hitler-lovers gave up and were ushered out by the police to a thunderous roar of 'Nazis Out! Nazis Out!'

As the Nazis left, Don Andrews, a spokesman for the Committee and member of the Spartacist League Central Committee, declared to the cheering crowd, 'We did it! We prevented them from carrying out their provocation!' This was a victory for all decent people of Chicago, he said. More than 3000 demonstrators had rejected the appeal by liberals and the official Gay Pride Parade Committee to ignore the Nazis. Instead, representatives of the labor movement, gays, blacks, Catholics, Jews, Arabs and others came out to block the fascists' attempt to victimize homosexuals. Someone had to stop these would-be killers, said Andrews, 'so the Spartacist League did this simple decent thing, mobilizing labor and all the sections of the oppressed to defend the rights of gays, blacks and Jews in this city'.

First they came for the gays

The thousands who showed up at Lincoln Park Sunday came in response to the organizing efforts of the June 27 Committee Against the Nazis. More than 75 individuals representing large sectors of the Chicago community endorsed the Committee's call to action. More than 250,000 Committee leaflets for the protest had been distributed in the area over the previous two weeks. At the demonstration members of dozens of local unions were present.

The main recruiting pitch of the fascist terrorists has been 'White Power', and their focus has been the neighborhood of Marquette Park, a racist pocket of East European 'Captive Nations' emigres on Chicago's South Side. This has given these little Hitlers a degree of credibility they lack elsewhere. Meanwhile, the homosexual population is an isolated minority here in the heart of 'Middle America'. The June 27 Committee leaflet, 'Who Are These Nazis? What Do They Want to Destroy? Who Do They Want to Kill?' pointed out: 'The Nazis have targeted Gay Pride Day, because they know that homosexuals are the weakest link in their chain of terror. But in the factories, union halls and neighborhoods, Chicagoans know that this attack on gays is only a beginning... The Nazis have their guns loaded and pointed directly at you!' We cited the famous statement by German Protestant theologian and World War I U-Boat commander Martin Niemöller, which begins, 'First they came for the communists, but since I was not a communist I did not protest...'

Especially among Chicago blacks we received an enthusiastic response. While the major TV stations and daily newspapers maintained a conspiracy of silence about the anti-Nazi demonstration being planned, every black radio station in the city picked up the news and broad-

cast it across Chicago including an interview with SL spokesman Don Andrews the night before the protest. Around 63rd and Halsted Streets every liquor store (off-license) in the neighborhood took at least 100 flyers. And people would come up to the Committee sound car at stoplights and ask for stacks of leaflets to hand around.

The victory party held after the anti-Nazi rally at a nearby bar was attended by 350-400 people, a third of them black. Many were interested in talking with members of the Spartacist League, which had initiated the mass protest against fascist terror, and learning about Trotskyism.

But not everyone sought to mobilize mass opposition to the Nazis' death threats. The mainstream gay organizations chose to 'ignore' the Nazis, making sure that their march didn't arrive at Lincoln Park until after the storm troopers were gone -- though hundreds of Chicago gays turned out to confront the fascists. The pro-Moscow Communist Party, with its line of support to the racist Democratic Party and futile appeals to the bourgeois state to 'ban' the fascists, stayed away from this rally, although various CP trade union supporters did come to the rally and speak. The equally reformist Socialist Workers Party, which prefers 'debating' the nightriders, did not even mention the 3000-strong protest in its account of the Gay Pride march. And such tiny centrist groups as the Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL) and Revolutionary Workers League (RWL -- associated with the Socialist Organizer Alliance) alternated between tailing gay sectoralism, seeking to provoke adventurist confrontations with the cops and -- their main preoccupation -- slandering the Spartacist League.

In the context of Reagan reaction and a bipartisan anti-Soviet war drive, there has been a sharp political shift to the right in this country, including by the bulk of the so-called 'left'. As the Spartacist League increasingly stands out as the clear communist pole, various pseudo-socialists have resorted to slander and provocation against us. In order to keep El Salvador protest 'ready for Teddy' Kennedy, they call on the capitalist cops to exclude the SL because of our call for military victory to leftist insurgents and for defense of Cuba and the USSR. As we have successfully mobilized labor and blacks to stop the fascists from penetrating northern urban centers -- Detroit, November 1979; San Francisco, April 1980; Ann Arbor last March 20 and Chicago on June 27 -- these fake-revolutionaries resort to ever more absurd lies to cover their own capitulation to the liberals. And these Big Lies by little

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centrist clots are then picked up and circulated by the far larger reformists to smear the reds.

In Chicago, the RSL claims we fingered anti-fascist militants to the cops and condemns the SL as anti-gay! Their sidekick, Peter Sollenberger, guru of the RWL, claimed the 'Sparks' didn't bring people out, the Nazis did. This is not the first time they have stooped to slanders. The RWL labeled Detroit, November 1979 a 'fraud' saying black demonstrators were 'passers-by' who had been 'duped'. In Ann Arbor, where 2000 responded to the SL campaign and ran the Nazis out of town, the RSL/RWL claim we attacked our own demonstration, because we blocked their attempt to take it over with their own sound system. And in Chicago, June 27 their ludicrous line is that we brought out thousands, distributed a quarter million leaflets in little over two weeks, put up 5000 posters in three days -- all calling to 'Stop the Nazis' -- just so that when masses came out we could prevent them from doing just that!

As several speakers emphasized, the fascists feed off the present depression conditions. They are the fringe products of the anti-Soviet war drive backed by both Democrats and Republicans, a renewed Cold War that seeks to 'roll back' not only Communism abroad but every gain won by the union movement and minorities at home. The fascists' appeal is to increasingly desperate and backward working-class and lower middle-class white layers who are persuaded not by rational arguments but by force. The Nazis and Klan understand this well: their 'propaganda' consists of lynchings, cross burnings and swastika painting. As it was in Germany, the question is: who will win, who will die? Will the Red Guards or the storm troopers prevail?

The fascists' ultimate function is as capitalism's shock troops to destroy the unions, to whip up genocidal racism against minorities. Today they are small gangs waiting in the wings to be used on a grand scale tomorrow. But in Reagan's America they have demonstrated their appeal, occasionally winning tens of thousands of votes in white racist pockets -- North Carolina, Detroit suburbs, southern California's Orange County. They must be crushed in the egg! The means are not small-group confrontations with the cops, or suicidal and idiot appeals to the capitalist state which systematically protects them, but militant class struggle leading to the conquest of power by the working class.

On the streets of Chicago and Detroit, the SL organizes to crush the race terrorists, to harness the power of labor to the struggle for equality, building a communist vanguard party that fights for revolutionary integrationism and socialism.

It is desperately necessary to fight! Failure to do so means descent into race war and destruction. But the key to victorious labor/black struggle is the forging of black leadership in a communist vanguard party. With only a few hundreds and a growing black component, the Spartacist League was able to bring out thousands to stop the Nazis in Chicago on June 27. With a few thousand militants gained in massive black recruitment, the SL can lead the way to black liberation through socialist revolution. In this race-divided country, the Spartacist League is America's last, best hope. ■

Correction*

Two lines were mistakenly dropped in the last issue of our paper. One, on p3, completed a clause beginning, '... the construction of a communist leadership, tested in opposition to the junta's nationalist diversion.'

The second, on p9, completed a sentence which should read as follows: 'I mean they failed in not acquainting the fascists with the pavement.'

WORKERS VANGUARD
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Thousands Mobilize to Stop Nazis in Chic

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(Continued from page 7)

to speak to the revolutionary workers, making instead every effort to destroy them by starvation and bullets. Therefore even had the British workers acquired power and failed immediately to deprive the bourgeoisie of its political rights and expel it from parliament, there is no doubt whatever that they would soon be driven to do so, if they wished at all to utilise their power for their own liberation.

But if they do expel the bourgeoisie from parliaments, and municipalities and so forth, then these would become organs of the working class. If it were so, then the question would arise as to the method of elections, namely, whether it would be a Labour parliament and municipality elected territorially or industrially. *The territorial principle represents election by the population of the districts. This was the most suitable method of election for the bourgeoisie; for if the parliament as a whole was to create an impression that it represented the entire nation, then the elections had to be conducted on the territorial principle, without distinction of classes.* But the Labour parliament, the Labour municipalities, have no intention whatever of creating false impressions. It is their express intention that the population know definitely who compose them and whom they represent; and therefore election by the various branches of industry, factories, shops, and organised employees, professional classes and agricultural workers, working on a collective basis, is the principle of elections most suitable to Labour democracy. *The Labour deputies should be connected with a definite industrial group. They must be under its direct influence and control, and the masses should be enabled to recall them at any time.*

The dictatorship of the proletariat in the epoch of capitalist concentration is bound up with the soviet system, for capitalism has concentrated the workers into big industries, and this concentration is a source of revolutionary energy which manifests itself in the manner of elections. Bourgeois democracy sought to match the parliamentary clique against the formless electors. Labour democracy is based on the closest contact of the labour representatives with the masses by whom they are delegated, and on the right of recalling the deputy if the policy of the latter does not correspond to the view of his constituents. Labour democracy demands a soviet system of elections by factories, shops, and the various branches of industry. When the Communists in Russia put forward the slogan 'All power to the Soviets', they as yet had no idea whether this would be the form of proletarian dictatorship in other countries. The revolutions in Germany, Hungary and Poland prove that everywhere the workers strive to establish their dictatorship on the principles of the soviet system as the most suitable to their interests; there is a universal distrust of bourgeois parliamentarism, a distrust of social democracy which has sold the masses, a distrust which is now being expressed in all the attempts of the masses to take the government power into their own hands through their representatives, and to exercise a constant control over them.

Our English comrades in their sixth question wish to know what other forms of soviet government are possible in other countries. We can say nothing definite. It is necessary to admit theoretically the possibility of variations of forms depending upon the varying economic structures of the different countries in a state of revolution. It must, however, be said that the experience of the development of the world revolution until recently has given no indications of the realisation of this theory.

It is the opinion of the Communist International that it is not its concern to indicate the exact form in which revolution is to develop. The watch words of the Communist International are of course based on the experience of the present level of the world revolution; they are in no way to be observed as if they were the dictates of religion but are to change in accordance with new experience. The thing that is important is that the masses should understand that without the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, without its disarmament and the complete eradication of its economic power, the victory of socialism is impossible; that to effect this it is necessary that all the power be in the hands of the workers, ie, of a class which is realising the revolution, and that the power of this class is to be expressed in labour organisations, both in the central cities as well as in the localities representing labour bodies which are fully dependent upon the mass of the

workers and the representatives of which can be recalled at any time.

The Communist International and the Labour Party

The fourth question of the English comrades demands an answer concerning our attitude towards the fact of affiliation of the ILP with the British 'Labour Party'. This question confronts not only the ILP but also the BSP, which belongs at one and the same time to both the Third International and the 'Labour Party'. The answer to this question is very difficult, because it demands not only a detailed knowledge of the dynamics of English politics, but also an estimation of the future of the 'Labour Party'. From the material which we succeeded in collecting on this subject, we arrived at the following view.

The 'Labour Party' was established, not as an independent political party, but as an alliance of parties, trade unions, and other organisations for the purpose of creating a parliamentary representation at elections to protect the interests of the trade union organisations of the British workers against the attempts of British capital to check the trade union movement. The majority of the delegates of the Labour Party consisted of Liberal-Labour politicians. At the time of the Campbell-Bannerman-Asquith government the Labour Party lagged behind the Liberal Party. Since that time the socialist movement has grown amongst the British working class which in its turn added strength to the socialist elements of the Labour Party. Owing to the weakness of the British socialist parties the central and vital question was that of their connection with the trade unions and the labouring masses. They were compelled to join the 'Labour Party'. The fact that the 'Labour Party' was not a political party with a definite programme, with definite tactics binding upon all its members, that it had neither local organisations nor a daily press dealing with its policy, made it comparatively easy for the various socialist parties to belong to it.

At the present moment there is a tendency of the opportunist leaders to make the Labour Party a real party with local organisations and a programme. They aim to create a large opportunist party which is to retard the revolutionary development of the masses. Were this tendency to succeed the Labour Party would never afford the socialist organisations which form part of it the right to an individual communist policy, nor to the propagation of the revolutionary struggle. It would bind their freedom of action hand and foot. It is thus evident that no kind of organisation seeking to carry out a communist policy could possibly belong to the Labour Party. It would then become necessary after a most energetic struggle against this tendency to leave the Labour Party and endeavour to keep in touch with the working masses by means of increasing the communist activity in the trade unions, by detaching these trade unions from the Labour opportunist parties to go over directly to communism. We, however, consider affiliation with the Labour Party admissible in so far as it represents a bloc of organisations free to carry on propaganda according to their own programmes. Affiliation should not mean a mechanical utilisation of the party for the purpose of keeping in touch with the masses, gathered under the roof of the Labour Party, but a striving to free the masses from the influence of the opportunistic leaders of the Labour Party.

The policy which the ILP pursued with regard to the Labour Party during the war and during the elections campaign in December, 1918, we consider inadmissible. During the war the ILP was not in favour of supporting British Imperialism, but it failed to carry on propaganda for its ideas. It failed to prove to the working masses that they were and are being betrayed by their leaders. Affiliation with the Labour Party then meant an alliance with opportunism -- and in no wise a struggle against it. During the election campaign, as far as their personal views and temperaments went, the candidates of the ILP more or less sharply criticised the government's war policy, yet the party as a whole failed to point out to the masses that the Labour Party as a whole was, because of its support of the government, responsible for the war, that its guilt was as great as that of the imperialist government. *We cite the following example to the parties which are at one and the same time part of the Third International as well as the Labour Party. At the time when the Russian Communists, being in a minority, were represented on the Soviets (Councils) along with the Menshevik majority, they never for a single moment abandoned their energetic struggle against the policies of this majority, mercilessly exposing them as treason to the proletariat.* ■

'Final solution' ...

(Continued from page 12)

the draining of Jewish workers by the army's mobilisation, Arab labour assumes an ever greater importance to the maintenance of the Zionist garrison state. A protest strike by the 100,000 super-exploited Palestinian migrant workers from the West Bank would land a crippling blow to Israel's economy and further tax its overextended army. Certainly Begin/Sharon would react with savage reprisals, but the fate of the Palestinian people now hangs in the balance. Defend the Palestinians! Israel out of Lebanon! No to US or UN imperialist intervention!

A history of Stalinist betrayal

If, in fact, Reagan sends US forces into Lebanon he will be following in the footsteps of Eisenhower. The 11,000 Marines who waded ashore Beirut's beaches in July 1958 were the direct application in the region of the so-called Eisenhower Doctrine of 'containing Soviet aggression'. After the 1956 Suez war in which the



Spartacist League demands: Israel out of Lebanon!

historic imperialist masters of the Near East, Britain and France, were humiliated and defeated, nationalist and revolutionary currents swept the region. The most important revolutionary development occurred in Iraq where in 1958 an unstable alliance of nationalist military officers and a powerful Communist Party, rooted in the oil workers, overthrew the Hashemite monarchy and so brought an ignominious end to Washington's CENTO alliance against the Soviet Union.

When the Maronite president Chamoun, the only Arab leader to openly endorse the Eisenhower Doctrine, threatened the traditional communalist agreement by running for a second term, the clan leaders of the Muslim population launched a revolt. To help put down this revolt Chamoun requested and got the US Marines. While the Marines were occupying Beirut, a deal was worked out between Chamoun and the Muslim clan chiefs to maintain the old feudalistic covenant. Thus the 1958 Lebanese revolt, though socially based on the downtrodden Muslim workers and peasants, ended up preserving the traditional Maronite-dominated confessional system.

The purpose of direct US military intervention was not simply to prop up the pro-Western Chamoun. That was the pretext. The real target of the Eisenhower Doctrine was the Iraqi revolution, which opened the way to proletarian power. In fact the Marines disembarked on Beirut's beaches the very day after the Hashemite monarchy was toppled in Baghdad. However, the Iraqi revolution was not crushed by US imperialist force; it was betrayed from within by Stalinism. In order to buy 'peaceful co-existence' with Eisenhower's America (an earlier 'spirit of Camp David'), Khrushchev ordered the Iraqi Communist Party to submit to nationalist strongman Kassim, who soon drove the Communists underground. But neither in 1958 nor since has the Kremlin's policy of betrayal of revolution in the Near East pacified US imperialism.

Reactionary nationalism and Stalinist treachery are poisonous weeds weaving through the entire contemporary history of the Near East. Under the directions of the Stalinist, the Palestinian Communist Party which in the thirties had a mass base both among Arab and Jewish workers, capitulated first to the reactionary Arab nationalism of the muftis and then to reactionary Zionism. Stalin's Russia was a foremost champion of the Zionist partition in 1948 in an attempt to replace Britain as the dominant influence in the region. After this backfired it squandered the most sophisticated weaponry on Nasser's Egypt -- while the North Vietnamese got

only a few antiquated missiles -- only to be slapped in the face by Nasser's successor Sadat.

Today the British Communist Party (CP) and the other Western European CPs continue this history of betrayal with their line of championing Arab bourgeois nationalism while simultaneously chasing the will-o'-the-wisp of a 'democratic', non-oppressive Zionist state -- and all within the usual framework of abject reliance on the UN den of thieves. That the deeply divided CP is more or less united around its Near East position reflects as much as anything the partial congruence between the Western European bourgeoisies' pro-Arab tilt and the Kremlin's foreign policy line.

The CP's answer to the central question of Palestinian self-determination is the old liberal scheme of a West Bank mini-state, with the Gaza Strip thrown in. But this small, impoverished area cannot possibly support the four million Palestinians dispersed throughout the Near East. Even assuming such a state could be created, it would become simply a 'bantustan' in which Israel and the neighbouring Arab states would dump their unwanted Palestinian populations.

A genuine solution to the Palestinians' right to self-determination is conceivable only on both banks of the Jordan, through the destruction of the Hashemite monarchy and the Zionist clerical state. Both of these states were carved out at the expense of the Palestinian people. While the Hebrew-speaking nation is today an oppressor of the Palestinian people, a democratic solution is not one which simply reverses the terms of oppression -- that is, an Arab Palestine in which the Hebrews are denied their right to self-determination. Only within the framework of a Socialist Federation of the Near East can there possibly be a just solution to the conflicting national claims of both the Arab and Hebrew-

speaking peoples. But that requires a revolutionary mobilisation of the toilers throughout the region, a perspective which the long reformist CP could not even comprehend. So instead the Western European CPs 'urge the democratic forces and governments in our respective countries' -- ie the murderous imperialist bourgeoisies -- to pressure the Zionists (*Morning Star*, 21 July).

For a proletarian internationalist party!

If ever there was a time to build revolutionary internationalist parties among the Hebrew-speaking and Palestinian masses, that time is now. Palestinian militants can see that their dependence on one or another Arab regime has left them isolated before Begin's war machine, while increasing numbers of Israeli Jews are beginning to understand the logic of Zionist expansionism will ultimately lead to their self-destruction in a surrounding sea of hundreds of millions of Arabs.

The PLO has finally achieved the elusive goal

of Arab unity ... against themselves. Not one Arab state -- 'radical' or 'moderate' -- has agreed to date to accept the commandos trapped in west Beirut. The Arab world's number one megalomaniacal dictator Muammar al Qaddafi has even told the PLO to commit suicide rather than surrender -- to which Arafat shot back that if Qaddafi was forthcoming with the fulsome support he has always promised, neither would be necessary! (And where does that leave the Libyan prophet's British messengers, Gerry Healy & Co, who pretend to be the great defenders of the Palestinians?)

Naturally many ostensible leftists still cheer for Arab nationalism. An especially gross example is the Lebanese section of Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat, the Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG), which is calling for the most ludicrous popular front. The RCG states its desire to 'preserve our Patriotic army' and proposes 'a National Resistance Government composed of all forces who are really fighting the Zionist enemy' (*International Viewpoint*, 10 July). Chief among these is Walid Jumblatt, who is supposed to be the leader of a Lebanese 'revolutionary national resistance'. In reality, Jumblatt has stabbed the besieged PLO forces in the back, publicly denounced them and demanded that they disarm. The RCG's appeal to the 'patriotic' Maronite-dominated army, which spawned Major Saad Haddad, is simply incredible.

The PLO militants under the gun have a better sense of the reality facing them. They well remember Black September 1970 when the Jordanian Arab Legion massacred thousands of them with the Israeli army ready to join the slaughter and the Syrians turning a blind eye. Its commitment to Arab nationalist ideology has now led the PLO into a deathtrap, isolated in west Beirut facing eight Israeli divisions. 'Curse their mothers', exclaimed a Palestinian militant waiting for the final Israeli assault:

'You see where the Israelis are. Well behind the Israelis is King Fahd and Hafez el-Assad and King Hussein. They are all in this together and every Palestinian, every child, will know what to do with them.'

But if there is one thing that is now proved, it is that the petty-bourgeois nationalists of the PLO (whatever their personal courage) do not know what to do with Begin's Israel, Hussein's Jordan, Assad's Syria and the rest of the reactionary regimes of the region. Since the calamity of 1948 the Palestinians have suffered defeat after defeat, betrayal after betrayal. How to break out of this tragic cycle?

The liberation of the Palestinians cannot be achieved through a purely national struggle of the Palestinian people, or through some utopian rapprochements between Zionist 'doves' and PLO 'moderates'. It requires that Zionist Israel and the surrounding Arab bourgeois states be exploded from within by revolutionary proletarian struggle. The emergence of antiwar protest within Israel, extending even into the ranks of the army, demolishes the Third World nationalist notion of the Zionist state as a reactionary monolith without deep internal contradictions. What is desperately needed is a communist vanguard which can unite the Hebrew-speaking working class and the Arab toilers against the Begins, Husseins and Assads, who promise only endless bloodletting, and open the road to a Socialist Federation of the Near East. ■

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SPARTACIST BRITAIN

Defend the Palestinians! Israel out now! Zionist 'final solution'



Beirut: US troops landing in 1958; victims of Zionist terror bombing today.

The Israeli *Blitzkrieg*. Tens of thousands dead and mutilated. Hundreds of thousands left homeless. Napalm, phosphorus bombs, cluster and fragmentation bombs dropped on refugee camps and major cities. The actual statistics of the destruction of Lebanon will take years to extract from the rubble, from the bomb shelters in which children are buried, from the mass graves dug around the ancient and now demolished cities of Sidon and Tyre. With all the refugees of war streaming in from the south, Beirut may very well now contain two-thirds of the entire population of Lebanon. The Israeli army has cut off food, water and electricity to the Palestinian and Lebanese Muslim masses in west Beirut. And the ceasefires arranged daily by US envoy Philip Habib are used by the Israeli forces to clean and rearm their artillery for the next day's bombardment.

The only language to capture what is happening in Lebanon today is the language of the Nazi holocaust, the destruction of whole populations. And that language is used not only by the opponents and detractors of Zionism, but by the Zionists themselves. An Israeli armed forces officer speaking on American television talks of a 'final solution' to the PLO 'problem'. Even the pro-Zionist *New York Times* (3 July) admits that the Israeli army has 'a difficulty in separating the fighters from the noncombatants who support them, or who are their wives and children'. 'They are all terrorists', in the words of one Israeli officer, meaning the only good one is a dead one.

Behind the Zionist holocaust in Lebanon stands US imperialism and now the threat of direct US military intervention. Reagan has agreed 'in principle' to send American troops to accept the Palestinian commandos' surrender, disarm them and take them away into another exile. Reagan's proposal to send in the Marines is another provocation against the Soviet Union, an attempt to use these forces as a nuclear tripwire for US military intervention in the region. Reagan now openly declares his aim is to forge an anti-Soviet alliance ('the strategic consensus') embracing both Zionist Israel and various Arab regimes.

Haig out, Bechtel in

America's European allies have long had a more 'even-handed' stance towards the Near East conflict, reflecting differing regional inter-

ests, particularly the Arab oil lifeline. The *Economist* (24 July) has been urging Reagan to agree a formula allowing for direct negotiations with the PLO. Within the American administration there are divisions as well. In the middle of Begin's Lebanese adventure the most prominent partisan of Israel in the Reagan administration, Alexander Haig, was suddenly out of a job. His successor, George Shultz, comes to the Reagan team from the presidency of Bechtel, a major construction and engineering company well known for its massive investment in Saudi Arabia. Closely tied to the oil majors, they regard one-sided support to Israel (in part a result of domestic pressure by American Jewry) as being against the true interests of US imperialism.

Shultz's appointment may not lead to an immediate sharp change in line. In any case, the Bechtel gang are no more concerned with Palestinian national rights than is Haig. Like him, they want to convince the Arab sheiks and colonels that only the US can restrain Israeli expansionism in order to undermine Soviet influence in the region. 'Don't cross us or you will face the Israeli war machine', has been Washington's message to the Arab capitals since 1967.

Defend the Palestinians!

Given the savagery of Begin's terror in Lebanon, this hard cop/soft cop act is having its effect on the petty-bourgeois nationalist leadership of the PLO. Arafat has reportedly demanded a US and French force to act as a 'buffer' between the Israeli army and Palestinian commandos. Does anyone really believe that the US, which arms Israel's war machine and supports its invasion of Lebanon, and that France, the historic champion of the Maronite Christian domination, will protect the Palestinians from their mortal enemies? Whether through open intervention or under the blue helmets of the United Nations, the only sort of 'peacekeeping' imperialist troops can bring to the Palestinian and Lebanese Muslim masses is the peace of the graveyard.

With his ostensible allies among the Arab regimes openly arrayed against the PLO, Arafat has apparently placed his hopes on securing at least de facto American recognition. But when a visiting US congressional team headed by Republican 'dove' Paul McCloskey secured Arafat's pledge to honour UN resolution 242 (implicitly

recognising the Zionist state), long stated as a precondition for discussions with the PLO, Reagan simply rebuffed it. And the Zionist regime replied that Israel's goal was now the destruction of the PLO as a 'political entity', -- and underscored it with yet another brutal pounding of Beirut by Israeli bombers. For the butcher of Deir Yassin, the 'existence' of Greater Israel has always meant the extermination of the Palestinian people. The intricate negotiations over the 6000 commandos trapped in Lebanon are over the terms of their surrender. And their surrender will lead only to further massacres.

The will to fight on the part of the PLO forces, despite the overwhelming odds against them, is critical as the fate of the Palestinian people hangs in the balance. They can turn to their advantage the extreme chauvinism and racism of Israeli society, the Zionist belief that one Jew is worth hundreds of Arabs. One Palestinian commando declared: 'Maybe the Israelis will come and maybe they will win here, but I promise you it will be a big cemetery for them.'

And that fear is the only thing staying the hand of Begin from sending his soldiers into west Beirut. Reaction against the atrocities of the Israeli war machine and, more importantly, fear of never-ending casualties in a prolonged occupation of Lebanon have already produced significant fissures within the Zionist camp. There has emerged a large-scale Zionist 'dove' movement, an unprecedented development in wartime. Tens of thousands have taken to the streets of Tel Aviv to protest against the war. Army reservists have come home from the war and given press conferences denouncing what they've done. Most recently, the commander of the brigade which demolished Tyre, resigned his post. One Jewish woman, who lost her only son in the battle for Beaumont Castle, wrote an open letter to Begin/Sharon: 'The history of our ancient, wise and persecuted nation will judge you with whips and scorpions, and your deeds will be an eternal damnation' (*Ha'aretz*, 5 July). What is now shaking this deeply chauvinist society is the shedding of its own blood. This is an unfortunate truth: every Israeli soldier who comes back from Lebanon in a body bag offers that much more of a chance that the Palestinians will escape the Zionists' holocaust.

With the Israeli economy under siege from

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