



Iran in chaos



Mullahs v 'moderates': Bani-Sadr burned in effigy. Proletarian revolution the only answer to bloody Islamic reaction.

Little more than two years after the fall of the hated shah, Iran's 'Islamic Republic' stands on the verge of total anarchy. Large-scale street fighting swept the country last month as 'Imam' Khomeini and the Islamic clerical fanatics drove 'moderate' president Abolhassan Bani-Sadr out of office and into hiding, followed by a wave of executions. In the end, the only force willing to fight for the hapless Bani-Sadr was the left, notably the well-armed radical Islamic Mujahedeen guerrillas. Street battles with *Pasdaran* ('Revolutionary Guards') and *Hezbollahi* (clerical-fascist gangs) in a number of cities left scores dead and hundreds injured.

When 100,000 turned out for a demonstration called by the Mujahedeen in Tehran on 20 June, *Pasdaran* opened fire to disperse the crowd while gangs of kill-crazy *Hezbollahi* -- rushed to the scene in trucks -- attacked with knives, chains and clubs. Nineteen were reported killed and 200 injured. Fifteen of those arrested were executed the next morning, to be followed by Mohsen Fazel, a leader of the eclectic Stalinist Peykar group, and well-known playwright-

poet Said Soltanpour, a prominent opponent of the shah and supporter of the leftist populist Fedayeen (minority). By the end of the week sixty victims, mainly leftists, had fallen to the mullahs' killing machine.

Now these reactionary terrorists-in-turbans are on the receiving end. On 27 June, Khomeini's chief military aide, Hojatolislam Sayed Ali Khameini, had his tirade in a Tehran mosque cut short when a booby-trapped cassette recorder exploded in his face. The following night, Tehran experienced probably the most spectacular terrorist action of recent times. As chief justice Ayatollah Beheshti addressed a weekly meeting of the Islamic Revolutionary Party (IRP), Khomeini's political vehicle, a powerful bomb placed in a nearby trash bin turned the building into rubble, wiping out a large section of the political rulers of Iran. In addition to the chief justice, at least twenty members of the Majlis (parliament), four cabinet ministers and six deputy cabinet ministers met their maker.

At the very moment that the ayatollahs celebrate their bloody ascendancy, they are blown

to bits by the terrorist bombs of ... Shi'ite Islamic fundamentalists, perhaps. The official news agency, Pars, reported a note found in the wreckage: 'This is the first gift of Forghan.' Forghan is reputed to be a group of ultra-dogmatic Islamic clerics who oppose mullahs participating in political life, sort of an Iranian version of Jehovah's Witnesses with bombs. There have also been rumours of links to former Savakis (members of the shah's murderous secret police). Despite the turmoil in the Khomeiniite ruling circles, this dramatic terrorist act cannot decisively alter the balance of political forces to the benefit of the exploited masses. The fate of the mullahs' regime will be decided not by well-placed bombs, but by class struggle in the factories, fields and streets.

If the mullahs weather this crisis and keep their hold on the state apparatus they will extract a terrible vengeance on their enemies. The left will face a bloodbath as never before. More than ever, what is desperately needed in Iran is the working class mobilised to fight for its

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Benn, Healey: no choice!

With his campaign against Denis Healey for deputy leader of the Labour Party, Tony Benn has clearly tapped a groundswell of working-class hatred for the Tory government and disaffection with the right-wing Labour leadership epitomised by the Wilson/Callaghan cabinets. The disappearance of Callaghan, the rise of Benn and the partial eclipse of Healey have helped erase some of the bitter memories of the government of Social Contract and strikebreaking, reflected in the claimed recruitment of 60,000 new members. And the man who is right now making all the gains is not Callaghan/Healey's ineffectual 'left' Foot but Tony Benn.

In the face of economic devastation not seen

for forty years, with the US-led war drive threatening mankind with nuclear annihilation, Benn's appeal to broad layers of the working class is real and potent. To a working class fed up with life under Thatcher and betrayed time and again on the industrial front he offers the vague hope of better times ahead under a left reformist government.

Benn's campaign has predictably attracted the enthusiastic support of virtually all the opportunist tendencies to the left of the Labour Party. They cheer his every 'left' utterance while tactfully sidestepping or offering convoluted apologies for his 'limitations'. But those would-be revolutionaries who are today jumping on his bandwagon, seeking a quick road out of cabbage-patch activism and 'sectarian' isolation, are playing a cynical game. FOR TONY BENN OFFERS ABSOLUTELY NOTHING FOR THE WORKING CLASS OF DECAYING CAPITALIST BRITAIN.

Far from being some naive leftist with a confused programme being thrust forward by a wave of working-class struggle, Benn is a tried and tested pro-capitalist politician, the second-longest serving Cabinet minister of all current Labour MPs. He has a calculated manoeuvrist strategy for attaining power, based on blocs with secondary-level union bureaucrats and premised on the relative quiescence and defeats of the union movement since the sellout of the

marathon national steel strike in winter 1980. And his programme not only offers no consistent way forward but is on every substantial issue *counterposed* to the interests of the working class. As Trotskyists, we say: No support to Benn, no more than to the craven Healey or the other politicians of the Labour right! Not 'left' Labour reformism but a revolutionary leadership of the workers movement!

Hold Benn to his promises?

Shorn of social-democratic cant, Benn's programme amounts to the following:

- For UN troops to replace British troops killing Catholic kids in Ireland. No support to IRA hunger strikers -- support the Prevention of Terrorism Act!
- For the British Army of the Rhine, for NATO, and for defence of the West against Soviet 'totalitarianism'!
- For wage control under the next Labour government -- Resurrect the Social Contract! Sack Japanese and German workers whilst preserving British bankrupt companies with workers' tax money!
- For 'workers participation' in industry a la Michael Edwardes and British Leyland. For

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IMG dissident expelled

A six-year member of the International Marxist Group (IMG) was expelled last month from the Bristol/Bath branch after internally protesting against the wholesale purge of the Communist Faction (CF). A letter sent to the IMG leadership by cde Lionel Holley appealing his expulsion (unsuccessfully) for 'collaboration' with unnamed 'forces' laid out the circumstances leading up to it:

'At the "specially convened branch meeting of 8.6.81" no evidence was presented to support the charges. It is obviously impossible to refute evidence which is not presented. This demonstrates that the motive behind these charges is political frame-up. First I was excluded as an "unperson" from branch meeting. Now I am summarily expelled....

'At the branch meeting on Monday 18th May I criticised the liquidationist content of the IMG's tactic of "deep entry" in the Labour Party. At the Mon[day] 25th May branch meeting after being informed of the expulsion of the *entire* Communist Faction for refusing to unambiguously characterise the IMG as "revolutionary Marxist" I argued against the expulsion and for the discussion to be continued, especially on "entry" into the LP and our line on Ireland.

'This was represented by the Bristol/Bath branch committee as being "disruptive" of

the discussion on the LP. But if minority views on such burning revolutionary issues are "disruptive" what is happening to the IMG?'

Banning of 'disruptive' views; exclusion of members from internal meetings; expulsions without evidence -- what is happening to the IMG is clear enough. And the reasons are clear as well. In a letter to the IMG centre, the Bristol branch secretary worried that: 'Several comrades voiced unease that the "Disarmament slogans disarm the working class" document of the CF hadn't been circulated.' The IMG leadership is intent on carrying out a hysterical witchhunt to root out oppositionists who, like the CF, refuse to be silenced. Holley concluded an earlier letter to the IMG leadership protesting against his 'banning':

'I joined the IMG in 1975 because I want to make a proletarian revolution. Since the expulsion of the CF I have felt more like a black South African than a member of a Trotskyist organisation.... I wandered off my political Bantustan and now I am getting the treatment.'

IMG members who are fed up with political liquidationism and bureaucratic practices, remember that 'house oppositionists' undergo a peculiar biological process of loss of backbone: Live like Lionel!

Iran...

(Continued from page 1)

own class power. Proletarian revolution or bloody Islamic reaction: the choice is clearer in Iran today than at any time since the ouster of the Pahlavi dynasty. And the key is a Trotskyist party, built on the programme of permanent revolution, fighting for proletarian leadership of the oppressed rather than support to sectors of the ruling classes -- whether shahs, ayatollahs or impotent 'liberals'.

The rout of the 'western moderate' Bani-Sadr and his coterie dramatically exposes the left's illusions in the 'Islamic Revolution'. Although elected by an overwhelming majority of the vote, he was never more than a semi-secular figurehead. Real political power has always been a monopoly of the mullahs who placed themselves at the head of the mass movement which toppled the hated Pahlavi monarchy. Their 'Islamic revolution' which the left in Iran and internationally hailed uncritically was based on a priestly caste which organised through the mosque, propagandised and rallied from the minarets and terrorised its opponents with the *Pasdaran* and *Hezbollahi*.

With their control of the Majlis, backed up by the submachineguns of the *Pasdaran*, the Islamic fundamentalists were able to chop away at Bani-Sadr's official powers. One of the reasons Bani-Sadr survived in office as long as he did was because of the protection of the Imam Khomeini, whose backing was crucial in his electoral victory in the first place. He would whine to his mentor Khomeini and occasionally snipe at his fundamentalist fellows, but only inveighed against 'dictatorship' when his own neck was next on the chopping block. Remember it was Bani-Sadr who promoted the 'Islamification' of the universities, a campaign of terror aimed at driving the left out of this stronghold. And when it came to suppressing the just struggles of the Kurds, Turkomans, and other oppressed nationalities in Iran, he proved himself as rabid a Persian chauvinist as

Khomeini or Beheshti. Before the reactionary border war with Iraq broke out, Bani-Sadr declared: 'First of all, we must purge Kurdistan of armed political groups in order to be able to face the [Iraqi] Ba'ath regime.' But these services on behalf of clerical reaction and Persian chauvinism were not enough to save him. The turning point came when he called for nationwide protests against the government closing of his newspaper, *Islamic Revolution*, along with five others. The next day 100,000 people streamed into downtown Tehran to demonstrate support to Bani-Sadr. Perhaps even more significant was the fact that the Tehran bazaar -- the small shopkeepers who in the past had been staunch supporters of the clerics -- shut down the same day.

Obviously alarmed by this show of opposition to the ayatollahs' rule, Khomeini denounced Bani-Sadr's call for anti-regime protests and threatened to deal with him 'as I have dealt with the shah'. The next day the Imam sacked Bani-Sadr as commander-in-chief of the military, his last remaining position of power. Not one military commander rallied to his chief's defence. The presidential palace was besieged by *Hezbollahi* chanting 'Death to Bani-Sadr!' And that was the last day the president of Iran was seen in public. His taped messages from underground still profess his loyalty to Khomeini and his willingness to return to face trial provided he be granted three hours of radio time!

IMG discovers Islamic reaction . . . finally

If the ayatollahs had the power to easily sweep away Bani-Sadr, it is in large measure because of the criminally opportunistic policies of the Iranian left. When Khomeini's reactionary Shi'ite clerics were leading a mass movement against the bloody dictatorship of the shah, the entire Iranian left supported the 'Islamic revolution' and the new regime. At that time only the international Spartacist tendency warned that the mullahs' rule would be just as reactionary as the shah's and insistently counterposed a proletarian revolutionary alternative.

We wrote:

'This is not a victory for the working masses. Today, Iran belongs to middle-class Islamic reaction in a bloody alliance with a section of the same officer corps which has dealt out decades of death and oppression on behalf of the Pahlavis.' ('Mullahs Win', *Workers Vanguard* no 225, 16 February 1979) Mesmerised by the 'mass movement' in Iran, the fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat (USec), willfully denied the reality of Islamic reaction. Khomeini was variously a figurehead, a limited anti-imperialist or, at worst, a Kerensky figure -- Ernest Mandel even likened him to the French revolutionary democrat Danton! Our call for the independent mobilisation of the Iranian proletariat, under the slogan 'Down with the shah, down with the mullahs', was denounced as 'reactionary' and 'pro-imperialist'. When the Communist Faction fought inside the International Marxist Group (IMG) against its criminal support to the mullahs in the Iran/Iraq war and shredded the myth of the 'gains of the Iranian revolution', IMG leader Clynes replied in an internal polemic *only four months ago*:

'Anyone with half an eye to the Tory press let alone to the press of our movement should be able to see that the hold of the Mullahs today is less than it was at the beginning of the revolution 2 years ago.'

First a figurehead, then less . . . and now we read that 'The revolution is being kidnapped by the zealots of Islamic reaction' (*Socialist Challenge*, 2 July). Kidnapped? By whom? The 'zealots' it installed in power, on the programme that installed them! When the IMG today calls for a 'policy based on the independent mobilisation of the workers and the poor -- independent both of Khomeini and Bani-Sadr', it is not only hypocrisy but a cynical *sham*. The 'independent mobilisation' pursued by their Iranian co-thinkers consists of applauding demonstrations of *veiled* women on the birthday of Mohammed's daughter and of praising the 'youth who have organised themselves around the mosque [!] mobilizations' as 'sincere revolutionaries of action' (*Intercontinental Press*, 29 June). And even now the IMG shows its awe before the leaders of the 'Iranian revolution' by maintaining that only 'imperialist or other reactionary forces' could conceivably have planted the terrorist bomb. In fact the rule of the dominant clerical faction has been so oppressive that forces from just about any point on the political compass could have thought they had cause to plant the fateful explosive charge. The IMG is blinded to this evident point by its continuing respect for the blood-soaked mullahs.

Workers revolution or bloody reaction

The fall of Bani-Sadr has all but forced the rival Fedayeen guerrilla organisations onto opposite sides of the barricades. Last year this radical populist organisation split, with a minority more critical of the regime. Since then the Fedayeen majority has moved close to the pro-Moscow Tudeh party as Khomeini's loyal left servants, while the minority found itself in a *de facto* alliance with the Mujahedeen as reluctant opponents of the dominant IRP, reportedly participating in the pro-Bani-Sadr protests and fighting the fascist *Hezbollahi*. Their 'two-stage revolution' dogma dictates that they must support some bourgeois-democratic force, but where are the bourgeois democrats in the 'Iranian revolution'? Compared to a Beheshti or Khalkhali, Bani-Sadr might look like something of a bourgeois democrat, but even this 'moderate' clericalist politician was no force at all in resisting feudal reactionaries. Iran today offers but the latest proof that the 'progressive anti-imperialist' bourgeoisie, which according to Stalinist doctrine must carry out a 'democratic' revolution before the proletariat can establish its own class rule, is a fiction and a suicidal illusion.

What is needed in Iran is a Trotskyist party which hammers home that proletarian revolution is the real alternative to capitalist bonapartist rule upholding the social backwardness and imperialist subjugation, whether this takes the form of shah monarchy, Shi'ite theocracy or a military dictatorship. Such a communist vanguard would organise workers militias to defend the left, champion the right of the oppressed nationalities to self-determination, agitate in the armed forces against the reactionary nationalist war with Iraq, calling instead for a class war against the bourgeoisie on both sides of the Shatt al-Arab, and fight for the liberation of women from the veil and other forms of feudal/bourgeois oppression. The Trotskyists struggle to win subjective revolutionaries from all tendencies of the Iranian left to the programme of permanent revolution. Not shah or ayatollah or general, but a workers and peasants government. ■

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Interview with BL militants

Occupy Rovers now!

On 12 May Ray Horrocks, chairman of BL Cars, announced the latest phase of the 'Edwardes plan': the axing of 8000 jobs by closing five plants. The chief target is the closure of Rover car operations at the SD1 plant in Solihull and the switching of decreased production to the Cowley plant near Oxford by April next year. In the two years since BL Chairman Michael Edwardes was allowed to impose his 'recovery plan' by a timid and treacherous trade union bureaucracy of the likes of Terry Duffy and Moss Evans, tens upon tens of thousands of jobs have been lost forever. Two days after the Rover closure announcement, Edwardes warned that the whole company would be closed down if it doesn't make a profit by 1984. With huge chunks of British industry, and the motor industry in particular, visibly dying by the day there's as much chance of that happening as of Margaret Thatcher becoming a communist. But the response of the union leadership has been the same as their response to the closures at Speke, Canley and many another plant: plead with Edwardes and the government, then do nothing.

It was in this context that two supporters of the Spartacist League put forward a motion at the 14 June meeting of 5/357 TGWU branch, one of the union branches covering Rover Solihull, calling for setting up a joint action committee of Four-by-Four and the SD1 to organise the immediate occupation of the SD1, and for spreading the industrial action. One of the centres in last year's strike in which these two militants played an active role, the Rover plant is key to a fight throughout BL. The following interview with these two militants should be of particular interest to readers of Socialist Challenge, paper of the International Marxist Group, who have been following the 'diary of resistance' of Socialist Challenge supporter Pat Hickey. This 'resistance' seems to consist primarily of 'preparing' for a fight by concentrating on dis-suading shop-floor militants from organising one now.

Spartacist Britain: Can you tell us what the current situation is in the Rover?

Terry: The mood in the SD1 is one of wanting to resist the closure, because they can see the workforce in the last two years slashed from 5000 to 2000 through voluntary redundancies. But if you go around the SD1 you don't see any action being organised on a shop floor level, leaflets being distributed, stuck up on walls, notice boards, or any kind of organising in the shop stewards' rooms.

In the Four-by-Four, the adjacent plant where we work, the mood is just one of ignorance, not knowing what's going on in the SD1. Up until six weeks after the closure announcement there wasn't even a report into the shop stewards committee of the Four-by-Four. That feeds into a division which the senior stewards find to their advantage because they don't want to get involved with the SD1. For example, one of the guys in the body shop, who was fairly militant,

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SPARTACIST BRITAIN

Monthly newspaper of the Spartacist League, British section of the international Spartacist tendency.

EDITORIAL BOARD: Len Michelson (editor), Caroline Carne (production manager), Judith Hunter, Mark Hyde, John Masters, David Strachan.

CIRCULATION MANAGER: Rob Holt

Published monthly, except in January and September, by Spartacist Publications, 26 Harrison St, London WC1. Address all letters and subscription requests to: Spartacist Publications, PO Box 185, London WC1H 8JE. Subscriptions: 10 issues for £2.00; international air mail rates: Europe £3.00, outside Europe £4.00. Printed by Anvil Printers Ltd, London (TU).

Opinions expressed in signed articles or letters do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.

on the picket line every day, when we were on strike over a year ago, now said, 'I can't wait for the SD1 to go on strike so that I can cross their picket line like they crossed ours.' Now that's no good at all: you never win anything by crossing picket lines.

Spartacist Britain: What's the union leadership been doing about the closure threat?

Pat: Well, the union leadership in the SD1 is Mick Clarke, the convenor, and Pat Hickey, the deputy convenor, who supports Clarke and is also a leading supporter of *Socialist Challenge*. I've been following his 'diary of a sellout' in *Socialist Challenge*, and if I were a supporter of *Socialist Challenge* I'd be ashamed to have to sell that paper. Hickey doesn't have a very good record: he also crossed our Four-by-Four picket lines during the strike in April 1980. But what the SD1 leadership is doing now is just awful. They've been lobbying various MPs, both Conservative and Labour, they've been up to the Houses of Parliament, they've lobbied the local true-blue Tory Solihull council and the T&G conference in Brighton. They say they're fighting



Spartacist Britain

April 1980 strike at Rover Solihull: militants were on picket line; Socialist Challenge supporter Pat Hickey went through the picket line.

to defend the jobs at Rover Solihull, but their way of doing this is basically through 'exposing' Michael Edwardes' plan for BL. They want to debate Edwardes. They want an enquiry in BL and say no jobs must go until they get that. Mick Clarke has said on television that if at the end of the road this strategy has not worked then they would consider occupying. But SD1 is already at the end of the road. It's now or never. But all Hickey can say is, 'Action now is not on.'

This member of the SD1 works committee I spoke to made the point that basically Mick Clarke and Pat Hickey are doing all the lobbying, going around and talking to councillors, whizzing down to London -- and that in itself they wouldn't mind so much if at least when they came back to Birmingham and the SD1 they'd give report-backs to the works committee. He said he thought Pat Hickey and Mick Clarke were only in it for the glory, from what he could see.

Terry: At the second mass meeting they had, some of the stewards were saying: well we've got to put it to the membership, we've got to tell them straight what's going to be necessary is an occupation. But the position of Hickey and Clarke was: no, you can't put it to the membership, we'd lose the vote. And before there was the mass meeting, when some people were arguing for an occupation, Hickey argued that they had to follow through their strategy of lobbying to avoid a confrontation with the management too soon. But as this guy from the works committee said, hell they're in confrontation now, so what's the point in waiting. There was an overtime ban moved and passed by the stewards committee of the SD1, but the convenor said this will bring us into conflict with management too soon, and even this action was abandoned. Pat Hickey was backing up Mick Clarke; they go together like hand in glove. That's pretty gross for someone who claims to be a revolutionary. But he actually brags about it in *Socialist Challenge*!

Spartacist Britain: So what have you been doing in order to try to turn this situation around?

Pat: We put a motion forward in our branch which called for a fight for immediate occupation, for joint action to be set up between the two plants. We called for a mass meeting of the Rover Solihull workforce to attempt to get this implemented, and for the stewards to take this back to their stewards committees and fight for it. And we said the fight couldn't be limited to SD1, or even all of the Rover -- it had to be spread through strikes and occupations throughout the rest of BL and into the rest of the working class. We got a similar motion passed last January, but this time when the crunch was coming it was defeated, although we got some support.

We've also tried to get some people who support what we have to say to go on a lobby of the T&G conference and fought for the Four-by-Four to join the SD1 on a demonstration to Solihull town centre. But the SD1 leadership did nothing to get the Four-by-Four workforce involved in these activities.

Terry: Even on the one occasion when the SD1 leadership has mentioned that just maybe, ultimately, perhaps, they might have to have an occupation if everything else fails, then that's put forward as the be-all and end-all. Simply because we're fighting for the occupation of the SD1, we're not fighting just for a big Lee Jeans or a big Gardners or Lawrence Scott. You'd have to spread the strikes and occupations throughout BL because these attacks are not only happening in the SD1, they're happening in the whole of BL in terms of redundancies, closures and rotten pay deals. Leyland is bankrupt, but the jobs must be saved. And with

unemployment at 13 per cent in the West Midlands, that fight can't stop at the gates of BL. What is needed is to spread it to other sections of the working class with more muscle, such as the steelworkers, the coal miners, the dockers, the transport workers. That's where the strength is. That was clearly demonstrated in the last few months when the miners took on Thatcher and she backed down.

Pat: That's certainly not the way the works committee sees it. They've got verbal support from the leadership in Cowley, including Alan Thornett, a leading supporter of *Socialist Press* and a fellow member of Hickey's Leyland Action Committee -- but they offer nothing more than a statement that they're willing to 'support' the workers in SD1 if they fight the closure and refuse to accept transferred work. There's been no statement that they'll call for strike action alongside them. That's just not good enough.

Spartacist Britain: So how do you see fighting for a strategy for victory?

Pat: Basically it's a question of leadership. What we have to fight for, not only in Rover, not only in British Leyland, but in the labour movement as a whole, is opposition groups which are based on a programme which can lead the working class not only to defend jobs and living standards but will fight for working class political power. That means making it clear it's no good just waiting for another Labour government -- whether it's Benn or anybody else. We remember it was the last Labour government that put Edwardes on the payroll. That means fighting on all the questions that face the working class, like troops out of Ireland and defence of the Soviet Union against the Reagan/Thatcher war drive, like defence of blacks against gangs of fascists -- if the trade unions put their muscle on the line through the organisation of defence squads, these murderous scum would think twice before the sort of attacks they've made against left-wing bookshops in Birmingham and London. It means fighting for a revolutionary leadership in the trade unions.■

At the altar of the 'broad church'

The end of the WSL

'Now the Labour Party supporters of Socialist Press have decided to add their forces to those already grouped around Socialist Organiser.' (*Socialist Organiser*, 30 May)

Thus read Sean Matgamna's rather gloating obituary for the Workers Socialist League (WSL) of Alan Thornett. Six years after its appearance on the British political landscape as a self-described 'orthodox Trotskyist' alternative to the revisionist morass, the WSL is about to be swallowed by Matgamna's International-Communist League (I-CL) in a 'fusion' inside the Socialist Organiser Alliance (SOA). Soon all that will remain of the WSL are several dozen more foot soldiers for 'left' reformist Tony Benn, a reputation for scabbing by its principal leader among militant unionists at BL Cowley in Oxford, and a sizeable number of former cadres recruited to the Trotskyist programme of the international Spartacist tendency (iSt). Several months ago we noted the extreme disarray and rightward degeneration of the WSL and its increasing chumminess with the Matgamnaites, and wrote:

'One way or another the future does not look bright for the WSL -- whether desertions, a right-wing split or wholesale liquidation into the Labour Party.'

(*Spartacist Britain* no 28, December 1980/January 1981)

And it looks like turning out to be the latter. The WSL is following a well-travelled path

Nor is it likely to be the last of its kind. The stream of fake-Trotskyists towards Labourism will continue -- the International Marxist Group (IMG) already has one foot in, and the tiny Workers Power (WP) group is sniffing around the edges. The gaggle of centrist groups is bound to thin out as the drift to the right squeezes out their innumerable 'secondary' quibbles and pulls then along, or else forces their cadres to recognise that the impulse which led them into left-wing politics in the first place necessitates a break from centrism to Trotskyism.

The WSL and I-CL have their share of differences even as they enter this 'fusion'. Thornett has claimed to stand on a tradition of 'anti-Pabloist orthodoxy'; Matgamna in contrast has always been the arch manoeuvrer, claiming that anti-Pabloism has produced only 'junk'. The WSL used to be nominally anti-feminist; the I-CL is ardently pro-feminist. The WSL calls for withdrawal from the Common Market; the I-CL does not. The I-CL calls for withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan; the WSL does not. But neither side thinks the differences are important. After all, both echoed the Labour NEC last year in condemning the Soviet intervention against a CIA-backed rag-bag of feudal reactionaries -- and that's what counts! To those members of this prospective 'fusion' who think it's a good thing that the Red Army is wiping out some

ment into unprincipled blocs and liaisons with anti-revolutionary tendencies, as well as against Stalinism and reformism.'

Within a year of its inception the ex-WRP core had been augmented by about a third of the Revolutionary Communist Group, several cadres from IS and a majority of the Trotskyist Opposition of the IMG. But for many of these cadres the WSL was to be a stepping stone on the road to genuine Trotskyism in the iSt.

Shortly after the WSL's formation the iSt offered the following tentative assessment of the organisation:

'Both because of its claim to stand in the anti-Pabloist Trotskyist tradition and because of the prominence of its leading cadre, the WSL should be regarded seriously....

'Without clarity on the central question of the Fourth International and on the concrete tasks involved in reforging the Trotskyist party of world revolution, the WSL will either disappear into the Labour Party or be taken over by right centrists such as the [now reformist French] OCI....

'At present the WSL is most clearly defined negatively, by its break from the Healyite organization in opposition to the WRP's sectarianism and brutally undemocratic internal regime. While its future programmatic course is not definitively predictable, the WSL's failure to develop the internal struggle against Healy much beyond the democracy issue, and its rejection of Healyite "ultra-leftism" while maintaining some of the most rightist-revisionist aspects of the SLL/WRP, would seem to define the WSL as a split to the right from a badly deformed and characteristically English-centered version of fake "Trotskyism."' (After Healy, *What? WSL Adrift*, *Workers Vanguard* no 69, 23 May 1975)

The centrism of the WSL continued to be defined primarily negatively, but thereafter in reaction to the Trotskyist challenge posed by the Spartacist tendency. Indeed the rightist 'fusion' taking place this month is the end-product of a process of political clarification imposed upon the WSL by the iSt through a series of splits to the left. This is what Workers Power, which is currently undergoing a parallel, albeit somewhat belated, process is referring to when it painfully recognises that 'the WSL has been ravaged by two splits to the sectarian [sic] Spartacist League' (*Workers Power*, June 1981). For those members of the WSL/I-CL (and WP!) who are having second thoughts about a lifetime career as Labour-loyal Stalinophobes, now is the time to absorb the lessons of those previous splits: better to be 'ravaged' by Trotskyism than seduced by social democracy!

Soon after the establishment of the London Spartacist Group, we wrote a letter to the WSL leadership in reply to its 'International Perspectives' document, noting (*inter alia*) its 'unwillingness to break from and confront the influence and strength of the Labour Party reformists'. From its inception the WSL had adopted the slogan 'Make the lefts fight' from the arsenal of late 1960s Healyism. And while the early *Socialist Press* made sharp denunciations of the betrayals of the 'lefts', and categorically refused to support Tony Benn's campaign for the Labour leadership after Harold Wilson's resignation, its strategy remained one of pressurising the 'left' Labourites. When a number of WSL cadres, rebelling against Thornett's refusal to openly confront the political questions posed by the Spartacist tendency, moved into opposition to form the Trotskyist Faction (TF) in 1977, they took up

continued on page 6



Spartacist Britain

Founding conference of SL/B: Trotskyist Faction split from WSL to join in building authentic Leninist vanguard nucleus.

to join the I-CL in a fight to 'renovate the labour movement' on a 'roughly adequate' programme as an organic faction of the Labour Party.

This right-centrist regroupment is significant -- but not, as its authors would like to claim, because it will demonstrate an alternative to 'sectarianism' and augment the forces fighting to win Labour to 'socialist policies'. Rather it is a clear expression of the political forces acting upon ostensible revolutionaries in Britain today. It is 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. Imperialist hostility to the Soviet Union is today again the primary feature of world politics and again it is forcing those who lack the programmatic bearings to stand up to the pressure ever deeper into the bosom of the social democracy. In the case of this outfit, it is captured by such lurid *Daily Mail*-style newspaper headlines as 'Russia Threatens Poland' (*Socialist Organiser*, 27 June) and by the fact that one leading Socialist Organiser supporter, Rachel Lever, is literally a member of Benn's election campaign committee. Indeed the Matgamna outfit has for the past year and a half explicitly theorised the possibility of an organic, peaceful road to socialism via a 'left' Labour government (a position now tacitly endorsed by the WSL). These are the political credentials of this lash-up.

murderous feudalist gangs who want social progress to stop at the borders of Afghanistan, who don't relish explaining the virtues of class traitors like Tony Benn to militant workers, the only place to go is the iSt. The history of the WSL proves it.

'Ravaged by the iSt'

When the WSL was founded in 1974, after tinpot dictator Gerry Healy had expelled Thornett and some 200 supporters from the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP), the new organisation exercised an attractive pull on the 'far left'. Thornett was a prominent BL Cowley shop steward and the WSL boasted of a predominantly proletarian composition. More importantly, to a large milieu of left-centrist cadres disillusioned with the 'third campism' of the Cliffite International Socialists (IS), the impressionistic tailism of the IMG and the bizarre political banditry of the WRP (which was soon to take it out of the workers movement entirely) the WSL claimed to stand on Trotskyist principle. The early *Socialist Press* used to regularly claim:

'Our record shows that we continue to fight uncompromisingly to expose all those who attack and revise Marxism -- not only the WRP but also the "rank and file" policies of the IS group who refuse to defend the Soviet Union as a workers' state, and the IMG, who liquidate the revolutionary move-

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With CIA-backed reactionaries in Afghanistan

USec calls

for Soviet defeat



The line the Times (10 January 1980) liked: USec, like Brzezinski (here at Khyber Pass), aims its sights at Red Army in Afghanistan.

British left condemns intervention by Moscow
 By Ian Reddy
 The three largest left-wing parties in Britain have condemned the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, while carefully distancing themselves from the tone of official protests by the British and United States governments.
 The Morning Star, the Communist Party's daily paper, has published its full support for the national liberation struggle in Afghanistan.
 Mr Tariq Ali, the head of the International Marxist Group, said yesterday that the decision of the Soviets to occupy Afghanistan must be condemned on every count. It disregards the rights of the inhabitants and it will aid the most reactionary and backward forces in the country.
 The Socialist Workers Party also condemned the intervention. Its executive committee said yesterday that the decision was a gross violation of the rights of the Afghan people and that the Soviet Union was acting in a purely imperialist and self-serving manner.
 The Labour Party's National Executive Committee also condemned the intervention, but did not say whether it would support the national liberation struggle in Afghanistan.



USec echoed imperialist anti-Sovietism; SL hailed Red Army in Afghanistan at protest outside US consulate, London.

In a dramatic demonstration of its accommodation to Cold War anti-Sovietism, the fake-Trotskyist United Secretariat (USec) of Ernest Mandel has now adopted a line openly calling for the defeat of the Red Army at the hands of the imperialist-backed feudal cabal in Afghanistan. The USec has thus culminated a year and a half of fence-straddling, disarray and internal disension -- a year and a half marked by ever-deepening capitulation by the centrist European sections to the parties of the social democracy -- with a position so nakedly reactionary that it is scarcely differentiable from that of the most virulently anti-Communist elements in the camp of imperialism.

For those members of the USec who refuse to trample on the keystone of the Trotskyist programme, who will not stomach being on the same side as the CIA against the USSR, then now is the time to remember: *There was exactly one position fought for inside the United Secretariat which upheld the banner of Soviet defence in the face of the imperialist anti-Soviet outcry and refused to make any concession to 'third campism'.* It was the position fought for by cde Harney at the February 1980 IMG National Conference in favour of support to the Red Army intervention in Afghanistan in the germinal struggle of the now-expelled Communist Faction to assert the fundamentals of Trotskyism within the USec. We reprint below the resolution put to that conference and excerpts from a CF leaflet distributed to a recent IMG Revolution Youth public rally from which the CF and SL were excluded. But exclusionism and other bureaucratic measures will not stop the programme of Trotskyism from being heard!

In backing off from its initial 'Soviet troops out' line, authored by Tariq Ali, the IMG grudgingly admitted at the time of the Afghanistan crisis:

'We dissociate ourselves utterly from the bureaucratic and reactionary motivation behind the Soviet invasion, but in the present situation a call for the immediate withdrawal of troops would be tantamount to being in favour of the victory of the rightist forces and the reversal of any gains by the Afghan workers and peasants in the last decades.' (*Socialist Challenge*, 17 January 1980)

But now the USec is for the victory of these rightist forces! The situation in Afghanistan has not changed. But today the price of 'entrism sui generis', of tailing the social democracy and anti-Soviet pacifist 'mass movements', is opposition to the Red Army in Afghanistan. Thus the CP/SP government the USec called for in France is firmly premised on Mitterrand's Cold War socialism.

The American SWP prepared the way for the line change when it repudiated its previous 'left' position of defending the Russian-backed Kabul regime while denying that defence of the Soviet Union was posed. These confirmed reformists recognised soon enough that any sort of support to the Soviet presence in Afghanistan was sharply counterposed to their social-democratic appetites. That their Australian acolytes fell out over this question reflects only upon the difference in national terrains, in particular a pro-Soviet tinge in the left-wing of the Australian Labor Party. USec dissidents seeking consolation in the Australian

Harney resolution on Afghanistan

This Conference of the I.M.G. affirms that:

1. The central issue for Marxists in the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan is the principle of unconditional defence of the U.S.S.R. against imperialism and counter-revolution. On this question, the class line was drawn between those who defend the Red Army in Afghanistan and those who oppose it.
2. The line expressed in Socialist Challenge Nos.128 and 129 of 'Soviet Troops Out Of Afghanistan', therefore, was a counter-revolutionary line. It placed us on the wrong side of the class divide in a situation of the biggest threat to the Soviet Union since the Cuban missile crisis.
3. The subsequent line 'correction' in Socialist Challenge Nos.130 and 131 represented a political evasion on this central question of principle. It characterised the counter-revolutionary slogan as merely tactically inapplicable 'in the present situation' and consistently played down

SWP line should recall that its 'left-wing' line refuses to raise the defence of the Soviet Union as a central principled issue and that in every other respect it is just as cravenly reformist as its American mentor, enthusing as effusively as ever over the 'Iranian revolution' which provides ideological inspiration to the anti-Soviet rebellion in neighbouring Afghanistan.

The IMG may well draw back from the USec's explicitly Soviet-defeatist line, as the Swedish KAF has already done in running a disclaimer alongside its announcement of the line change in 18 June *Internationales*. But continuing with a line which ducks the Russian question will not weather the pressures of the Cold War. We noted a year ago:

'After years of sweeping the Russian question under the rug, the USec is now reaping the reward in the form of a massive anti-Soviet bulge in the face of American imperialism's warmongering over Afghanistan. Whether the USec's deeply ingrained cynicism toward program can stave off sharp and even factional polarization over the central questions of revolutionary orientation in a period of heightened bourgeois anti-Sovietism remains to be seen.' (*Spartacist* no 29, Summer 1980)

USec members: don't wait to find out! In his struggle to defend Trotsky's Fourth International against the Soviet-defeatist Burnham/Shachtman faction, James P Cannon said: 'The Russian question has been and remains the question of the revolution.' If you want to make a proletarian revolution, the only choice available today is to pursue the road of the Communist Faction toward the international Spartacist tendency.

Communist Faction leaflet

The Communist Faction was expelled from the IMG for fighting for Trotskyist positions on the key issues facing revolutionaries today. And that fight began with a struggle to assert the defence of the Soviet Union against the imperialist Cold War drive unleashed over Afghanistan. The leadership's suppression of that struggle -- at the 1980 conference and since -- has now been carried through to its ugly, logical conclusion: the International Executive Committee has now adopted the 'third camp' line of 'Soviet Troops out of Afghanistan!' According to the paper of the KAF (*Internationales*, 18 June 1981), that was what the May meeting of the IEC decided:

continued on page 6

the very real imperialist war threats against the Soviet Union.

4. The Soviet military support to the P.D.P.A. regime in Kabul is directed against a *reactionary* Islamic insurgency backed by imperialism both directly and through General Zia's Islamic republic of Pakistan and supported by Khomeini's religious fanatics in Iran. It is therefore not only to be defended but welcomed, just as we welcomed Cuban military support to the M.P.L.A. regime in Angola against the South African invasion.
5. The incoming C.C. is directed to publish this as the I.M.G.'s position on Afghanistan, to firmly repudiate the line of 'Soviet Troops Out' as counter-revolutionary, and to make clear that this is not a tactical but a principled question for all who would call themselves revolutionaries. It is furthermore directed to call on the United Secretariat and all sections and sympathising sections to adopt this position without ambiguity.

Presented to February 1980 IMG conference

Usec...

(Continued from page 5)

"The Soviet bureaucracy's barbaric methods in Afghanistan must be condemned", says the Executive Committee, and the troops withdrawn. Instead the progressive forces which grow out of the national struggle and against the occupation powers must be given support. These forces are developing today, according to the resolution, mainly among the Afghan national minorities, radical organisations which have stood in opposition to the government in Kabul since it took power in April 1978, and among groups which are now leaving the Karmal government, foremost the so-called Khalq faction in the steering party.' (emphasis added)

Opposition to the Red Army; support to the openly reactionary feudal forces who have stood in opposition to the reform regime 'since it took power', who are funded and backed by the CIA (as was confirmed again only last week). We all know what that means: A free hand to feudal reactionaries to enslave women, shoot schoolteachers and commit barbarities on Communists. Acquiescence to the establishment of a bastion of anti-Soviet aggression and CIA dirty tricks on the border of the USSR. Reversal of any prospect of social progress for the Afghan peoples.

Whose line is that, comrades? It's the line of Tony Cliff -- whose 'third camp' politics have always been informed by the need to 'hate bloody Russia'. It's the line of international social democracy -- the price of cabinet posts in the government of Mitterrand. And it's the line of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher -- who are ready to threaten the world with nuclear holocaust in their bid to 'roll back Communism'. But now it's going to be the line of the IMG.

The CF stood for the victory of the Red Army in Afghanistan, for asserting the centrality of the defence of the Soviet Union against the imperialist war drive. The IMG leadership called that 'left sectarian'....

If being a Trotskyist in Britain means anything, it means at least this much: hate Labourism, defend the Soviet Union and fight the imperialist murderers in Ireland. That's what the CF fought for inside the IMG, that's what we intend to keep fighting for with the perspective of joining with the comrades of the SL/B in a common organisation to carry through that fight -- the fight for proletarian power.

Now there's a choice. If you want to be a handraiser, there's not much we can say. But if you thought you were a Trotskyist then it's time to face reality. We were expelled by a leadership scared of political combat, but the programmatic questions on which we fought will not disappear -- Ireland, Iran, the Labour Party, the Russian question -- the key tests facing proletarian revolutionaries today. What will disappear, if you go along with them, is any commitment to building a vanguard party of proletarian revolution -- sapped through the cynicism and demoralisation that issues from putting up with a bankrupt centrist programme and perspective.■

Ireland...

(Continued from page 8)

coalition government which stands or falls at the sufferance of a handful of 'independents'.

Of the nine prisoners in the Maze/Armagh who stood in the complex multi-seat elections for the Dail (four other candidates, three of them ostensible Trotskyists, also stood on an 'H Block platform'), hunger striker Kieran Doherty was elected for Cavan/Monaghan, 'blanketman' Paddy Agnew was elected for Louth, and all the rest received sizeable votes which impressed -- and dismayed -- even the staid bourgeois press. Yet alongside the unexpected victory of the two H Block candidates, there was also the election of such pro-imperialist 'independent socialists' as Jim Kemmy of 'Socialists Against Nationalism', supported by the British and Irish

Communist Organisation, proponents of the pro-Protestant ascendancy 'two nations' line. Indeed it was Kemmy's vote in the Dail that gave the Fine Gael/Labour coalition its one vote majority.

What the election outcome demonstrated as much as anything is that few voters could perceive a choice between the Tweedledum of Fianna Fail and the Tweedledee of Fine Gael. While Fianna Fail postures as the more republican of the two, and bitter memories linger of a particularly anti-republican and repressive Fine Gael/Labour coalition in 1972-77, the *Times* (30 June) haughtily summed up the measure of the Haughey government 'as seen from London':

'The chief criterion of virtue in a Dublin prime minister as seen from London, is that he should be cooperative on cross border security. Mr Haughey has been excellent.' Yet the fake-Trotskyist People's Democracy (PD -- co-thinkers of the International Marxist Group), who stood two candidates for the Dail, one of them in Haughey's constituency, could only urge Haughey to come 'off the fence'. Locked into the Green nationalist project of a 32-county Ireland (with 'socialism' somewhere at the end of the rainbow), PD can do nothing but pressure Fianna Fail into really fighting for forcible capitalist reunification. For PD, 'It is simply not adequate to repeat truisms that Fianna Fail is just another capitalist or pro-imperialist government' (*Socialist Republic*, vol 1, no 3), as they said at the time of Haughey's election in 1977. The *Economist*, smug mouthpiece for imperialism, put it plainly:

'Ireland's great attraction (to foreign investors) is that its politics are not about economic principles at all. Nobody wants to take anybody else's property away. The staunchly capitalist Fianna Fail party faces across the floor of the House the implacably capitalist Fine Gael party, which now and then wins office in coalition with the barely socialist Labour Party.'

In a working class where the memories of class-struggle fighters like Jim Larkin are still alive, where children are raised on stories of the Dublin Lockout, PD offers an 'alternative' of pink-tinged pacifist republicanism. Unemployment stands at 10 per cent, inflation at 20 per cent, with the international bankers closing in as the debt sky-rockets; only two years ago some 100,000 workers converged on Dublin in a mammoth trade-union march. Yet the crowning plank of PD's election platform was to 'tax the multi-nationals and other forms of capitalist wealth'. Across the border, the Catholic minority faces vicious repression and pervasive discrimination -- PD calls for 'mass picketing of army patrols'. And with a Protestant working class in the North under the grip of Orange reaction, with Paisley ranting for Orange mobs to 'kill the killers' of the IRA, PD's 'enlightened' programme against entrenched clerical backwardness goes no further than a woman's right -- not even to 'choose' -- but to 'control their fertility'.■

For a Trotskyist party in Ireland!

The IRA and IRSP at least have the courage to 'pick up the gun' for the misguided cause of Republicanism. The various Green nationalists and pro-imperialist economists who litter the Irish left masquerading as revolutionary socialists are simply bankrupt. What is needed is a Trotskyist party with a perspective of uniting all workers -- Protestant and Catholic, North and South, in Ireland and, in Britain -- on a class-struggle programme. A revolutionary programme for working-class power throughout Ireland would both strike a chord among the Southern workers and offer a beacon to Protestant as well as Catholic workers in the North who see in the prospect of forcible capitalist reunification aggravated misery and a regime of religious bigotry.

In Britain, the potential power of a class-struggle fight against imperialism -- and its counterposition to all variants of Green nationalism -- was strikingly demonstrated at the 13 June march in London, the key demonstration in support of the hunger strikers this year. The anti-imperialist contingent jointly organised by the Spartacist League and the Communist Faction was the largest single organised contingent. And given their relative size, it is a criminal indictment of the entire spectrum of fake-revolutionaries on the British left that this was the case. Nor was it a question primarily of organisation. With no perspective other than capitulating to republicanism or social democracy or both, with the Liberals fleeing from the hunger-strike issue and the Labour Party putting forward one imperialist alternative after another, the fake lefts are disoriented.

And because we refused to accommodate to the minimalist 'humanitarian' demands of the nationalist march organisers, we had to assert our right to put forward the only anti-imperialist line on that march, the only line in outright opposition to the murderers of Bobby Sands and his comrades. After rumours of an outright exclusion, the organisers then threatened to call the cops to keep us out of the march if we refused to comply with the 'official' chants -- which did not even include the call for 'Troops out now!' But march we did, and our chants pointed the way to a mobilisation of the proletariat on both sides of the Irish Sea to defeat British imperialism:

- Free the Republican prisoners -- Political status now!
- Smash Britain's torture camps -- Troops out now!
- Trade unions, take a stand -- Black military goods to Ireland!
- Not Orange against Green, but class against class!
- For a workers republic in Ireland! ■

WSL...

(Continued from page 4)

opposition to Labourism as a central aspect of their fight. In its faction declaration, 'In Defence of the Revolutionary Programme', the TF stated:

'Rather than offering an alternative to the betrayals of the right, the "Make the Lefts Fight" slogan only serves to lend our authority to the "left-wing" credentials of the thoroughly rotten counter-revolutionary parliamentary cretins in the Tribune group and thus serves to tie the political development of the working class to a wing of social democracy.' (reprinted in *Spartacist Britain* no 1, April 1978)

And the WSL majority responded:

'Until such time as significant sections of workers look to alternative revolutionary leaders, we must take the workers through the experience of trying and testing the alternatives that exist.'

Leninists do not abandon the masses to their misleaders, but neither do we lead them to the slaughter under the guise of 'trying and testing' every class traitor on the horizon. As we said in 'The Rebirth of British Trotskyism' (*Spartacist Britain* no 1, April 1978), 'But the WSL does indeed mean to take British workers through a new experience of reformism -- first the Callaghans and Healeys, then the Foots and Benns, and then....'

The WSL's Labour loyalism led, after much confusion, to its call for a vote to workers parties standing in popular-frontist coalitions, a particularly burning question given the Liberal-Labour pact signed earlier that year. In the course of the TF struggle, the WSL also came down with a hard position of tailing Green nationalism in Ireland in reaction to the fact that three out of the four members of its Irish Commission had been won to the iSt's class perspective on the question. By the time the struggle was over, Thornett had lost one-fifth of his entire membership, who went on to fuse with the London Spartacist Group and found the Spartacist League/Britain.

Two years later, Thornett lost another sizeable chunk of his central leadership including three National Committee members, when he expelled the Leninist Faction in early 1980. Impelled towards the iSt particularly by the WSL's tailing of clerical reaction in Iran and its pursuit of unprincipled manoeuvres with Pabloists and virtually everyone else in the so-called 'world Trotskyist movement', these cadres stated point blank that the fight for Trotskyism meant a fight against centrism in the WSL. In the course of that fight, Thornett demonstrated the end logic of his 'mass work' fakery and tailing backward trade-union con-

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sciousness -- by *scabbing* on a national engineering strike. Indeed as we said previously in projecting the present 'fusion':

'It all conjures up the classic social-democratic "division of labour" between the political and industrial wings: Matgamna could run the footslogging for Labour while Thornett runs the scabbing in the unions.' (*Spartacist Britain* no 28, November 1980/January 1981)

Yet while studiously ignoring leftward-moving developments like the recent Communist Faction (CF) expulsion from the IMG, this is the 'regroupment' to which the going-nowhere centrists of WP devote their hopeful attentions. Hoping to pick up some dissident elements, WP conjures up a myth of past 'golden days' for the WSL and urges members of both organisations to 'examine their past positions' -- to what effect?! -- before entering into this 'unprincipled' fusion which, as it points out, is not even based on a common position on the nature of Stalinism. How true! But WP fails to mention that from one branch to the next it does not have a 'common position' on this same question. And with galling cynicism, it never once mentions its own unprincipled fusion with Matgamna six years ago, when differences on defence of the Soviet Union, the Labour Party, and Ireland, were said to be of no importance!

Matgamna's wedding, Thornett's funeral

The WSL comes to the end of the line politically degenerate, organisationally traumatised, a demoralised, rightist rump hoping for a new lease on life in the Labour Party. It is safe to project that in this horse-and-rider combination, it is Matgamna, one of the slickest operators on the centrist left, who will be the rider. But Matgamna the manoeuvrer has also undergone a political degeneration in recent years. From attempting to carve out a niche somewhere to the left of the IMG, he has gone on to seek a niche inside Benn's electoral apparatus. He may succeed -- but at the price of any pretence to revolutionary politics. If *Spartacist Britain* was somewhat premature in characterising this right-centrist as having completed the journey to reformism (see 'NATO "Internationalists", Little England Socialists', *Spartacist Britain* no 30, March 1981), it must nonetheless be clear that liquidationist Labour-entrism is the political graveyard of many a clever centrist.

There is an alternative: a complete break with all varieties of centrism and serious examination of the politics of the iSt. That was the road followed by the TF and LF from the WSL, and now by the expelled comrades of the CF from the IMG. That is the only way forward for those supporters of the soon-to-be Socialist Organiser Alliance who would rather not wait until their August 4th creeps up on them. For the rebirth of the Fourth International! ■

Benn...

(Continued from page 1)

continued capitalist ownership of industry, finance, transport and land!

● For undying defence of the Mother of Parliaments!

Indeed, even though (to his credit) Benn renounced his hereditary peerage twenty years ago, today he can't even get it together to criticise the obscene Royal Wedding spectacle!

Benn's appeal lies not in his programme but in 'socialist' chatter and verbal distance from the last Labour government. But what about Benn's record in that government? Whilst Callaghan and Healey were implementing their wage-cutting job-slashing programme hand-in-hand with the TUC, Benn raised not one word of protest. When troops were sent by Labour to break the strikes of the Glasgow dustmen in 1975 and the firemen in 1977, where was Benn with his calls for democratic rights and pro-working-class speeches? Or when the lorry drivers and public sector workers were doing battle against the Labour government's five per cent? He was safely ensconced in the Cabinet backing strikebreaking to the hilt under the cover of collective responsibility!

In 1976 Benn backed the South African occupation of Namibia by agreeing to a uranium deal with the Rio Tinto Zinc-owned Rossing mine. And he went from supporting the despatch of troops to Northern Ireland in 1969 to annually endorsing, with nauseating regularity, the vicious Prevention of Terrorism Act -- an uncomfortable fact for those who now hail Benn's latest imperialist solution for Ireland as a step forward. This is Tony Benn's wretched 'left' record; he has never repudiated it and his programme today is completely consistent with it.

The fake revolutionaries who today hail Benn for inching away from the government of Callaghan/Healey/Foot/Benn are no less hypocritical than he is -- they all called for a vote to that government of Social Contract and Lib-Lab coalition! The fake lefts' support to Benn today is not just passive propaganda either: Workers Socialist League (WSL) leader Alan Thornett almost managed to force a pro-Benn vote against the manoeuvres of the chairman at the recent TGWU national conference. And in mid-June a conference of 150 one-time 'far left' luminaries, from Robin Blackburn to Hilary Wainwright and Tariq Ali, got together to discuss forming a new intellectual grouping for the Labour left ('a sort of Marxist Fabian Society', observed one).

So why does the fake-revolutionary left cheer Benn on till their throats go hoarse? The most honest answer, perhaps, comes from the centrist Workers Power (WP) group, whose sense of etiquette dictates a 'critical' distance from outright treachery:

'We advocate a critical vote for Benn in the Autumn election. Benn's careful manoeuvrist strategy together with his programme, offers no way forward. Yet his limited mobilising appeal must be exploited, because through Benn the rank and file express their elemental hostility to the candidate of the IMF and Fleet Street and the CIA. Against Healey we stand with Benn and his supporters. With Benn's supporters and against him when necessary, we stand for a programme of action to launch an immediate and meaningful fight-back.' (*Workers Power*, June 1981, emphasis added)

This has nothing in common with the Leninist tactic of critical support ('a critical vote?'). Benn's 'appeal' must be exploited, yet Benn's programme offers no way forward -- on what issues then is this appeal to be exploited? Support to import controls? Support to NATO? Support to Parliament? Their *only* reason for supporting Benn is that ... the workers are doing it.

Lenin's famous formula is that critical support is extended the way a rope supports a hanging man. It aims to exacerbate and expose the reformists' contradictions for the purpose of splitting the base away and winning it to the only consistent programme in defence of the interests of the proletariat -- the programme of proletarian revolution. It is a *tactic*, to be used when and as it is advantageous to the communist vanguard -- and only if principled considerations allow its use in the first place. In the case of parliamentary elections, it can be extended to a bourgeois workers party standing against the open parties of the bourgeoisie if the vote expresses a stance of class against class. But this is by no means always the case. Take this month's by-election in Warrington: with the full impact of bipartisan imperialist brutality manifested in the treatment of the Republican hunger strikers and Labour's essential agreement/acquiescence to the anti-Soviet war drive, and with the old Social Contract gang still not displaced from the Labour leadership, there is no reason or motive to call for a vote to Labour.

And for the tactic of critical support to be employed within the labour movement, as in the case of the election for deputy leader, it is necessary to be able to point to a fundamental break with reformist, pro-imperialist class collaborationism on at least some significant issue of the class struggle. But what is there in Benn's programme which moves the working class one iota towards a mobilisation of its class power in its class interests, which a communist vanguard can point to when Benn betrays that programme? Nothing, absolutely nothing. A revolutionary opposition in the Labour Party would be based on such central programmatic demands as:

- Down with NATO! Defend the Soviet Union!
- British troops out of Ireland -- no imperialist 'solutions'! Victory to the hunger strikers!
- No to import controls! Smash racist immigration controls! For trade union defence guards to crush the fascists!
- Miners, steelmen, dockers: use your industrial muscle. Workers: don't wait for the Westminster elections. Get the Iron Lady now!

The logic of Labour loyalism

It is a telling indication of the absence of any programmatic basis for support to Benn that his cheerleaders have little more concrete to offer than his chatter about Labour Party democracy. Trotskyists are for democracy within the Labour Party -- like an end to all proscriptions -- to further the possibility of waging a struggle for communist politics inside it. But even were that what Benn was talking about, which it is not, that would still not provide a basis for principled support. Every careerist on

the make is for 'democracy' -- a fine 'ideal' which means all things to all men and nothing in practice. The struggle against the exploiters will not be won, or even aided, through rewriting the Labour Party constitution.

But there is a perspective implicit in the focus on internal party democracy -- even if in many cases it is meant as nothing more than a cynical excuse for tailing Benn -- that through democratic control by the rank and file this prop of the bourgeois order can be transformed into a vehicle for the socialist transformation of society. Benn, to give him due credit, may well sincerely believe this. But the rogues gallery of fake Trotskyists who have become or are becoming organic factions of the social democracy seem to be coming to believe it as well. Groups like the WSL openly speculate that 'the Labour Party now threatens to fall into the clutches of the very workers it has fraudulently claimed to represent for three quarters of a century' (*Socialist Press*, 8 October 1980).

How contagious this disease is is demonstrated by the recent 'historical' speculation of the International Marxist Group (IMG). Citing the British Communist Party's argument in 1922 that the Labour Party, which had never yet been elected to office, could conceivably be transformed into an instrument for revolution, *Socialist Challenge* (18 June) adds: 'Some things have obviously changed since the 1920's.... But the same general approach is valid.' Only a decade later Trotsky had explicitly ruled out this perspective as valid even at the time it was considered. And in 1924 there were Labour MPs who were prepared to stand up in the Commons and call on the soldiers to mutiny against strike-breaking when the CP offices were raided for making a similar appeal!

The IMG has an entire arsenal of arguments to justify its crawl to Benn. Perhaps the most pathetic is that Benn's campaign raises issues confronting the working class. So does every election campaign! Hitler's campaign for Reichskanzler in 1932 certainly 'raised issues'!

Particularly in its internal justification for its turn to Labour, the IMG also claims that Benn is somehow different from previous generations of Labour 'lefts' like Bevan. There is indeed a more 'Marxist' colouration to some of the rhetoric of the Bennites -- thanks in large measure to the flock of fake Trotskyists to his banner -- and the decrepitude of British capitalism today leaves less room for manoeuvre and an increasing polarisation among the reformists. But basically there is nothing different about their capitulation to 'left' reformism.

Nowhere is the attractive pull of the Benn phenomenon on the fake left clearer than in the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), which recently announced its support for Benn. The SWP, with its own reformist niche firmly carved out on the basis of 'rank and file' trade-union economism, prides itself on organisational independence from Labour. But with the 'rank and file' backing Benn, the SWP has to do as well. For the SWP, the alpha and omega is catering to the present-day consciousness of the working class (and staying one step ahead of the mainstream of the social democracy on anti-Sovietism). So when workers 'fight back' on Benn's programme, the SWP painfully sheds the syndicalist mask with which it hides its reformism. What matter that backing Benn is in fact *counterposed* to seriously 'mobilising the rank and file' against capitalism?

The only alternative to Labour's betrayals is the communist programme. Enough of the Labour traitors, accomplices in imperialist butchery, stalwart defenders of exploitation, enemies of the workers' revolutionary gains! No support to Benn -- no support to reformism, right or 'left'! Not Labour in Westminster but a revolutionary leadership of the working class! Down with the bosses' Parliament -- For a workers government! ■

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SPARTACIST BRITAIN

Trade unions: Crush fascist scum!

On Friday evening, 3 July, coachloads of skinheads entered West London's Southall. In the Hambrough pub they chanted racist slogans as a 'skin' group played. The 'gig' was a gathering for lumpen youth followers of the likes of the fascist National Front (NF) and British Movement. And for Southall's mainly Asian population, which has faced a rising tide of fascist attacks, it was a promise of terror. But this time, when four thugs went out to a shop, smashed windows and assaulted the shopkeeper's wife, Asian youth acted to defend their community.

The would-be stormtroopers were chased back into the pub and crowds gathered outside. Police were rushed from all over West London to put a ring of riot shields around the fascist scum, who were busy drawing swastikas

on the windows. As incensed youth let fly with bricks and Molotov cocktails the Hambrough was torched, over 60 cops injured, and several fascist hoodlums given the beating they deserved as they were evacuated to safety. But what the fascists intended for the people of Southall they intend for the workers organisations and all racial minorities if they are allowed to grow strong. And it is only the proletariat that has the social power to crush the fascist threat. *No victimisations of the Southall youth! Drop all charges now! For mass labour movement action to crush the fascists!*

Fascist terror is on the rise. On 20 June three Nazis struck the International Marxist Group's Other Bookshop in Islington. Sheila Malone, who was manning the shop, was murder-

ously attacked. Today she is in hospital with a fractured skull -- but luckily expected to make a full recovery. Like a nearby community printers burnt down on 29 June, the bookshop was on a local 'hit list' published by the NF. Even as the glass and rubble was being cleared in Southall a community relations office was set ablaze. In South London's Old Kent Road a young Nigerian was stabbed to death in a fish and chip shop. In Coventry, hard hit by the fascist plague, black people are attacked every day. In the Britain of chronic economic decay, Nationality Bills, 'sus' laws and Lord Scarman's cover-up 'enquiries', the fascists have a fertile breeding ground. They must be swept away along with the system that spawned them. *Crush the fascist scum! Build workers defence guards! For a revolutionary leadership of the labour movement!*

H block protests shake Southern elections For an Irish workers republic!



Spartacist League/Communist Faction anti-imperialist contingent at 13 June march in London.

Last month's respite in the grisly flow of coffins out of the Maze prison did nothing to lessen the repercussions of the Republican hunger strike. And now hunger striker Joe McDonnell awaits his turn to die at the hands of an intransigent British imperialist state, with another six prisoners standing behind him on Margaret Thatcher's death row. If these valiant men have failed to budge the Iron Lady one centimetre, their readiness to die for the Republican cause has nevertheless had a profound impact on the course of Irish politics from Northern Ireland to North America, from Westminster to Leinster House.

Ever since the returning officer for Fermanagh and South Tyrone declared Bobby Sands elected Member of Parliament on his fortieth day of a fast to the death -- demolishing with one blow the myth of IRA isolation -- there has been a glut of 'solutions' on offer. There are endless new 'scenarios', putative new substitute 'peacekeeping' forces -- like Benn's call for the UN butchers of Korea and Lebanon and Owen's imaginary EEC forces -- schemes for federal councils, Northern Ireland advisory councils, devolution, repartition, grandiose plans for a united capitalist Ireland to be painlessly achieved by the 'free consent of all'.

Behind the dizzying parade of bourgeois schemes and 'solutions' is an increasing, intractable polarisation in the North, an increasing disorientation and war-weariness in Britain,

an increasing concern among politicians over Britain's 'image' abroad. When the Prince of Wales visited New York last month, three thousand angry demonstrators, including a militant contingent from the Spartacist League/US, greeted him with a protest of outrage against the imperialist barbarism in Northern Ireland. It garnered international attention in the press. Indeed the size of the protest prompted Buckingham Palace to cancel a forthcoming visit to the US by Princess Margaret, leading to the observation that the United States had become a 'no-go area' for the royal family.

The defeatist mood is reflected in surveys claiming that a majority of the British people want out of Ireland -- and that an ever growing number of Catholics in the North want them out. And it is reflected in the growing talk -- though *only* talk -- by Labour politicians of a break with bipartisanship. GLC 'left' Labour leader Ken Livingstone, speaking at the 13 June Ireland protest in London, denounced the British presence in Ireland as designed to 'intimidate the minority into submission'. Nor is it just the 'left': Callaghan now calls for an 'independent Ulster' and Labour's Northern Ireland committee is mooting the perspective ('eventually') of a unified Ireland. When Thatcher introduced a Commons bill to prevent further H Block prisoners from standing for Parliament, bourgeois observers murmured uneasily that this was not the best way to win the propaganda war,

arguing that it was far preferable the IRA resort to the ballot box than to the bomb.

There is only one just resolution to the hunger strike: that this criminal ruling class grant their demands immediately and unconditionally; that Britain's torture camps are smashed and all the victims of imperialist repression released; that the troops get out *now*. And there is only one lasting, equitable solution to the problem of Northern Ireland: the mobilisation of the Irish proletariat, Protestant as well as Catholic, to smash the pervasive discrimination against Catholics in the North, to sweep away their native exploiters and imperialist oppressors and establish workers rule.

26 Counties: economy in chaos

That would require a revolutionary intervention not only in the North, but in the South as well -- an intervention counterposed to the perspective of the Republicans and their fake-left followers for a capitalist reunification of the thirty-two counties. As the IRA ventured into Southern electoral politics last month, it quickly revealed the explosive effect of the Northern question on a South already wracked by economic crisis. The significant H Block vote pushed the elections to the precipice of a 'hung Dail' for the first time in thirty years, and the outcome was a minority Fine Gael/Labour

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