

Thatcher's Britain burns, racist cops rampage

The 'troubles' come home

In the aftermath of the hot July days and nights that ripped the mask of social peace from the face of Thatcher's Britain, the guardians of this decaying capitalist order wasted no time in strengthening the machinery of state repression. While the conflict on the streets still raged, Home Secretary William Whitelaw was giving his go-ahead to chief constables to stock up with the hardware of military/police repression familiar to the residents of Northern Ireland. And even as Thatcher and Whitelaw gave their assurances of official support, the thugs in blue took matters into their own hands to exact revenge for every brick and firebomb hurled at them.

In an hour of unbridled vandalism at 2am on 15 July, Assistant Commissioner Powis unleashed

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Thatcher's Britain means cop terror and dole queue misery for blacks and youth. Workers revolution the only road out of capitalist despair.

Not Green against Orange but class against class!

Free the Republican prisoners!

Nine Republican prisoners have now died on hunger strike in the H Blocks of Belfast's Maze prison. And the Westminster butchers continue to deny the hunger strikers' five basic demands for improved prison conditions. Both the Tory government and the Labour lackeys of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition see no road out of the

**No to forced reunification!
For an Irish workers republic in a
socialist federation of the British Isles!**

impasse -- only more of the attrition that culminates centuries of oppression and bloodshed.

Since 1 March, when the current hunger strike campaign began, a wave of outrage against murderous British imperialism has swept across Ireland. According to official figures released on 6 August, 51 people -- almost half of them cops and soldiers -- have died in 'terrorist attacks' in the North. Over 1000 have been injured in a five-month period marked by 1000 demonstrations, 1700 arrests and the firing of 7000 plastic bullets by the army. Just the day before the figures appeared a new wave of explosions signalled the possibility of a new Republican bombing campaign.

In the South an upsurge of anti-British, nationalist feeling has confronted the fragile, incoming Fine Gael/Labour coalition of Dr Garret

FitzGerald. On 11 July only the brutal intervention of the Gardai stopped over 10,000 marchers from reaching the British embassy. At least 100 were clubbed down and many hospitalised as baton-wielding cops cleared the streets to prevent repetition of the February 1972 torching of the Dublin embassy after the British army's Bloody Sunday massacre of thirteen civilians in Derry. The *Times* (31 July) captured the mood: 'The black flags are flying in Dublin'.

Even if, as is now being mooted, the Republicans call off the fast to the death in favour of another tactic, this will not defuse the highly charged situation brought to a head by the hunger strike. The frustration of the British ruling class with the intractable situation in the North is exemplified by the sharp increase in talk even among right-wing Labour leaders of an end to Tory/Labour bipartisanship. Much of the debate at the upcoming Labour Party conference promises to centre around the Irish question, with over fifty resolutions submitted for discussion. But whether it be 'federal councils', or Tony Benn's call to replace British imperialist troops with United Nations imperialist troops, or the current Labour Party idiocy of an Ulster referendum on the subject of a 'united Ireland', class-conscious militants must intransigently oppose all the 'liberal' imperialist schemes. *Free the Republican prisoners! Troops out now!*

Throughout the mobilisations in Britain

in response to the hunger strike, the Spartacist League (SL) has maintained its insistence that the elementary task facing British revolutionaries is to fight for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops. Virtually every other tendency -- historically capitulating to the social democracy at home and to the Republicans in Ireland -- seeks to restrict slogans on demonstrations to support for the prisoners' five demands. Thus they fall in line with the Republicans' attempt to appeal to liberal 'humanitarian' sentiments and pressure imperialism into negotiations.

Communists understand that the imperialist military presence in Ireland in any form can only reinforce the oppression of the Catholic minority and act as an obstacle to proletarian class mobilisation. But unlike much of the British left, we foster no illusions that a troop withdrawal in and of itself will resolve the national question in Ireland or end the national oppression of the Northern Catholic minority. In attacking ex-prime minister James Callaghan's call in the Commons for the establishment of a 'broadly independent state' in the North, the fake-Trotskyist International Marxist Group (IMG) declares that the Orange state,

'... has maintained its existence because ultimately the British have safeguarded that existence by military might. If Britain was no longer prepared to do so, the state would

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The 'troubles'...

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his shock troops upon the black inhabitants of Brixton's Railton Road in an orgy of racist terror. Claiming the existence of a mysterious 'petrol bomb factory' as the pretext for their search and destroy rampage, they tore apart one residence after another in the early morning hours. While Tory 'golden wonder boy' Michael Heseltine was busying himself with his 'inquiry' into the problems of inner city Liverpool, Chief Constable Kenneth Oxford gave his men the nod to launch a campaign of motorised terror. On Monday, 27 July, Paul Conroy was rammed against a wall by a hit-and-run police vehicle, to be left with a broken back. The following day, a police van mounted a grass verge at high speed aiming for a group of youths walking along the footpath. They hit David Moore, unemployed, aged 22, crippled since childhood. Murdered by the cops. The van dragged his crumpled body for 25 yards -- and sped on. Oxford warned the public to stay off the streets or face the consequences: 'we are not conducting a Roman carnival'. We demand: *Jail the killer cops!*

If Britain's police forces lack the weaponry of their continental or North American counterparts, they clearly have the will to make up for it with sheer brutality. A local white doctor who attended some of the victims of James Anderton's Manchester constabulary expressed his horror: 'In the past week I have seen and witnessed injuries that I never expected to see in England.' Other residents described scenes of Anderton's snatch squads indiscriminately attacking and beating passers-by. One victim of Oxford's murderous sadists reported that the cops had attempted to castrate him with a machete. And the CS gas canisters which they had used were suddenly discovered to be labelled by their manufacturers as potentially lethal if fired directly at their targets. That is exactly what the cops did, wounding at least five blacks.

Thatcher's 'long hot summer'

The mood of outrage and despair, the elemental hatred for the police, which impelled thousands of Britain's youth into street battles for two weeks in July was captured by one Toxteth youth who declared, 'My aim was to kill a policeman.' Britain's rotting capitalist social order oozes decay from every pore. Faced with no future except life on the dole queue, barely kept alive by starvation-level welfare benefits, kept in line by truncheon-wielding cops, working class youth took to the streets to give vent to their pent-up fury and frustration.

That black youth were in the forefront came as no surprise to anybody. Imported from the colonies to be cheap labour and left to rot now that their labour isn't needed, hounded by the cops, denied their rights by the state and set up for the kill by emboldened fascist thugs, Britain's blacks have increasingly been made to feel like they have nothing to lose. Indeed the first 'riot' was no riot at all -- as Asian youth in Southall defended their community against an invasion of fascist thugs and clashed with the cops who protected them. In a special *Spartacist Britain* supplement (17 July) we wrote:

'It's been a long time coming. The first tremor rocked Bristol more than a year ago, when the black ghetto of St Pauls exploded in fury against a virtual cop occupation. A year later it was Brixton, with the fury aggravated by the official racism of the Nationality Bill and police refusal to re-

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cognise, much less prevent, the sharp rise in racist murders....

'And as the flames ignited on Toxteth's Upper Parliament Street spread from slum to slum, as the number of skulls cracked by police truncheons climbed, as the number of arrests skyrocketed to the point where the government was compelled to improvise concentration camps, it was clear that the mythologised Britain of the orderly bus queue and "unarmed" bobby was a thing of the past.' '... The labour movement must act now -- to demand the dropping of charges against all those arrested in the massive police dragnet; that the cop invasions of the ghettos stop; that the new repressive measures and weaponry be withdrawn.'

'Britain is coming apart at the seams', we said, in describing the sense of social polarisation and the social decomposition which is the corollary of Britain's economic decay. That the fury and anger is expressed in directionless and often anti-social street outbursts instead of organised class struggle is the crime of the working-class misleaders. The crisis of leadership which debilitates the labour movement is symbolised by the fate of BL's huge Rover Solihull SD1 operation, about to become yet another in the seemingly endless series of plant closures. Self-proclaimed revolutionaries in the leadership made no attempt to mobilise serious struggle, but offer Bennism as an answer to everything.

Meanwhile the fascists push themselves to the fore, capitalising on the passivity of the labour traitors to recruit lumpen white youth to their 'programme' of race war and genocide. In Liverpool British Movement thugs hit the left-wing 'News from Nowhere' bookshop five times in two weeks at the end of July, and attacked left paper sellers in the city centre -- and fascist activity was relatively insignificant in Liverpool until recently. The escalation in fascist activity is underscored by the near permanent ban on street marches, a dangerous attack on democratic rights which will not stop the fascists.

As the month came to an end, the bourgeoisie looked to the obscene pomp of the royal wedding in the hope that the institution of the monarchy would fulfil its task of refurbishing a frayed and fragile sense of 'national purpose'. A leader in the *Times* (29 July) summed up the hopes of the bourgeoisie:

'The shocking and mysterious outbreaks of street violence this summer have shown how fragile the civil order is.... But today's ceremonies ... are capable of refreshing the spirits of a people depressed by persistent economic malfunctioning and with new grounds for self-doubt presented to them.'

The Tories, aware that their Britain has nothing to offer its victims save more poverty and deprivation, prepared for more to come. Recognising that the extent of decay of British capitalism rules out the methods of urban aid to 'restore the decaying inner cities', the Tory response was wholeheartedly for the strengthening of the repressive capabilities of the state. A delegation of senior police officers was despatched to Belfast to study the methods and weaponry of the RUC. And if the point was not clear enough, Whitelaw announced a 13.2 per cent pay rise for the cops, breaking massively the government's 'cash limits' level being enforced with determination against civil servants.

And with thousands of jobless youth being rounded up in massive police dragnets, Labour was concerned only that the capitalist order be enforced 'fairly'. In response to the Railton Road raid, Michael Foot rose in the House to express the fears of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. As the *Times* reported (15 July 1981):

'The opposition, he said, was as determined to stamp out illegality as anyone else, but he wanted that to be done by fair methods which would be supported by the population, and not by methods that would drive a wedge between the police and the community.'

So concerned were the reformists to maintain their constitutional respectability that when the Tory press latched on to the timid propaganda of the Labour Party's tame left house opposition, the Militant group, which simply put forward the elementary demand for the dropping of charges against those arrested by the police, the Labourites, headed by erstwhile 'left' Eric Heffer, leapt into the forefront to condemn the propaganda. But the Militant propaganda was mild indeed. Centring as it did around the absurd reformist demand for 'community control' of the police, it was in fact but an extension of the Labour leaders' Dixon of Dock Green fair-play mentality.

While the Labour leaders made much of their campaign to force various Tory ministers to admit the obvious fact that unemployment was part of the root cause of the conflict, their economic strategy of capitalist reflation is a platform of no hope to the chronically unemployed of the cities. With cities like Coventry, ten years ago the industrial boom town of full employment now rapidly on the road to becoming another ghost town of deserted factories and empty shops, only senile social democracy could imagine that the long term decay of the British economy could be halted by a little bit of capitalist reflation. The truth is that British capitalism is down the drain. And just about everyone knows it! When Chancellor Howe blurted out some nonsense about the recession being over, everyone from the Labour front bench to the CBI and other Tory ministers joined eagerly to point out how foolish this was.

For labour/black defence against fascists

The choice posed today is more concrete and immediate than at any time since the 1930s: either socialist revolution or fascist reaction. Last year's thirteen-week steel strike came close to triggering a general strike which could have given a lead to the working class, drawn behind it the despairing middle classes, galvanised the outrage of the youth around a programme of class war and not race war, and turned around the Tory/employer austerity drive. Only the treachery of the trade union leadership prevented that eventuality. The railways are now threatening to strike over their wage claim and the possibility of a powerful miners strike looms in the autumn. If they combined their forces in a joint strike now -- not simply for their justified wage claims, but around demands aimed at the cuts in social services, the massive job losses and the entire gamut of Tory/employer attacks -- they could point a way out of the despair that provides fertile ground for the fascists.

But the fascists cannot be ignored even today. We salute the Southall youth who gave them a taste of the treatment they deserve. But what is needed is a mobilisation of the social power of the trade unions to smash the fascists wherever they rear their heads. Many Southall residents work at Heathrow Airport, and London Transport and Ford Dagenham are other examples of integrated workforces which concretely pose the possibility of launching labour/black defence guards to defend minority communities and crush the fascist danger.

It is only the undying support of the Labour and trade union leaders for the shabby circus of bourgeois democracy that condemns the working class and minority communities to a future of progressive degradation. No matter how determined the street resistance to the police enforcers of that degradation may be from time to time, it is only the working class that can mobilise all the oppressed behind it in a struggle for the only antidote to capitalist decay -- a workers state and a socialist planned economy. If the reformist blight that infects the British workers movement is not to give way to a fascist plague what is urgently required is the construction of a communist leadership, a Trotskyist vanguard party. ■

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SWP's 'alternative' to Labourism

Shopfloor Bennites

Some 1000 trade unionists turned out to pledge their support to Tony Benn's bid for deputy leadership of the Labour Party at the 18 July conference of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee (LCC) in London. With Benn still on his sickbed Yorkshire miners leader Arthur Scargill stole the spotlight, ranting against the Tories, threatening massive class battles ahead (if only someone else got them started!) and raving about the socialist future which a Labour government committed to 'socialist' policies could usher in. Benn's campaign, waxed King Arthur, was 'a fight for the soul of the party itself'.

And the delegates concurred. Following some significant successes for Benn at the summer round of trade union conferences, the LCC gathering showed the kind of machine which is being built for the 'new Labour left' inside the unions. Alongside several hundred lower- and middle-level union officials, a large chunk of the LCC delegates were ostensible revolutionaries who have climbed upon the Bennwagon in droves -- including most notably a substantial contingent from the Socialist Workers Party (SWP).

Boasting that 150 delegates were SWP members and another 200-300 supporters of its Right to Work Campaign, *Socialist Worker's* (25 July) conference report could only moan that more union activists were not present: 'Given the spread of Benn's ideas amongst workers we are bound to ask why so few turned up.' The more pertinent question, given the SWP's favoured posture as a 'militant' alternative to the betrayals of Labour, is why so many SWPers turned up. After trying for months to keep some distance from the Bennite tide, the SWP too cannot resist playing election broker and political adviser for the left Labour reformists.

No support to Benn

Against the fake revolutionaries who have joined the Benn crusade, the Spartacist League has consistently pointed out that his programme of capitalist reflation, economic protectionism and 'little England' chauvinism is not simply 'insufficient' but positively counterposed to working class interests. In the absence of a decisive break from pro-capitalist Labourism on any key issue there is absolutely no basis for supporting this left reformist against the right-winger Healey. We counterpose to both present wings of the Labour Party a fighting programme including such key demands as: No imperialist schemes for Ireland -- Troops out now!, Down with NATO -- Defend the Soviet Union!, For trade union/black defence guards to smash the fascists! Against all import and wage controls! Don't wait for '84 -- Mobilise the industrial strength of the working class to get the Iron Lady! Our strategy -- to which all tactics like critical support, entrism etc are subordinate -- is to split Labour's working-class base away from their treacherous misleaders by building a *revolutionary* opposition to all wings of putrescent British social democracy.

In contrast, the SWP's pseudo-syndicalist anti-Labour stance has always been more myth than reality. Over the past dozen years they have carved themselves a sort of niche to Labour's left based centrally on economist trade union militancy and taking single-issue 'movement' politics (like the Anti Nazi League) onto the shopfloor and/or the streets. But as left reformists themselves, the SWP really doesn't have many significant programmatic differences with the now resurgent Bennites.

Ireland? Like the pro-imperialist Labour traitors, the SWP has done a good bit of chauvinist bleating about IRA 'terrorism' against the army, like in the aftermath of the 1972 Aldershot barracks bombing. If Benn today calls for UN troops, it must be remembered that in 1969 the SWP joined him in supporting *British* troops to Ireland. And more recently it has been all too willing to drop the elementary 'Troops out now' demand at the behest of Republican nationalists or liberal imperialists.

The Cold War? The SWP is, if anything, more virulently anti-Soviet than the Bennites. After all, Benn doesn't talk about the need to 'hate bloody Russia' like the SWP leadership! On the question of the capitalist armed forces, the SWP attacks a Bennite pamphlet, 'Trade Unions and Socialism', for being against increased arms

spending but saying 'nothing about *cutting* the arms budget' (*Socialist Worker*, 18 July 1981, their emphasis). *Cutting* the arms budget means *supporting* an arms budget; revolutionaries demand 'Not a penny, not a man, for the capitalist army!'

Import controls and the Alternative Economic Strategy (AES)? The SWP points out that Benn's vague promises of nationalisations are to the right of Labour's commitments in 1950 and 1951 (and even 1973), and rails against the protectionist AES as 'not particularly radical', let alone revolutionary. But when the *workers* are fighting for protectionist quotas, the SWP too supports the demand, as it did when South Wales miners picketed the docks against US coal imports in December 1979.

And what about industrial struggle? For all its militant rhetoric, in the last analysis the

that the SWP was seeking to ignore, not politically combat, the Bennite tide because it has no strategy for dealing with the Labour Party. (Socialist Organiser's 'strategy' of course is to champion 'left' bureaucrats and try to transform Labour into an instrument for socialism.) And the IMG journal *International* (May 1981) managed to ask one correct question: 'A furious fight is going on in the Labour Party. Does this have no impact on workers' struggles?' Once the ever impressionistic SWP saw that the Bennite phenomenon was having an 'impact', if not on 'workers struggles' then at least on the consciousness of the militant trade unionists and workerist petty-bourgeois intellectuals who are its normal constituency, it had no alternative but to come out for Benn.

The SWP was able to do some anti-Labour posturing so long as they perceived the new Labour



SWP joins with Bennite reformism in the streets and on the shop floor.

SWP is just as much a staunch defender of the bourgeois order as the Labour lefts. It clearly demonstrated this last year when, despite a massive upsurge of sentiment at the base, it actively opposed the fight for a general strike in the midst of the mammoth steel strike. Heavily influencing several strike committees and having a small but significant base in the steel union, an organisation the size of the SWP *could* have had a big impact in turning this struggle into the urgently necessary counteroffensive to smash the Tory government's attacks. Instead they hid behind the 'dangerous consequences involved' to argue for limiting the struggle, since 'a General Strike, by its very nature, raises the question of power. It is a bomb that you cannot play with' (*Socialist Worker*, 1 March 1980). The SWP's attacks on Benn for rejecting industrial action to bring down the Tories ring more than a little hollow under the circumstances!

Shopfloor minimalism meets parliamentary cretinism

What dislodged the SWP's forerunners from their Labour Party nest in the mid-sixties was not a sharp programmatic break with Labour but an appetite to attract a layer of militant union activists and others disenchanted with the party's betrayals. Ever since, when it counts the SWP inevitably swings into line behind Labour -- as in the 1979 election when Callaghan & Co stood so proudly on a platform of Social Contract strikebreaking. Moreover they have a consistent record of support to 'lesser evil' Labour lefts.

Yet only a few months ago the SWP was posing as far more of an opponent of Benn and Labour in general than today. But their reasons for this were telling. In a *Socialist Worker* (7 February) piece, Paul Foot could do little more than deride the view 'that all the action is taking place in the Labour Party' and fall back on a feeble call 'to seek to rebuild the industrial confidence of ten years ago' inside the unions. The problem was not the Bennites' programme, but where they operated.

Various fake revolutionaries, notably the International Marxist Group (IMG) and Socialist Organiser shrieked (and still shriek) about SWP 'sectarianism', 'syndicalism', even 'ultraleftism'. This reflects only their *own* gross Labour cretinism -- but they have been able to score some points. Socialist Organiser pointed out

left's influence to be restricted to the constituencies. But today wherever the SWP turns it finds the Bennites encroaching heavily on its turf. Thus a major article in *Socialist Review* (July-September 1981) contains a 'case for keeping out of the Labour Party' which is based on simple organisational self-preservation. 'Something is happening in and around the Labour Party the like of which has not been seen for at least a generation', says the SWP, adding, 'Any socialist who ignores Benn's strengths is on a rapid journey to sectarian irrelevance.' The SWP frankly admits that Benn's political positions are not among his 'strengths'.

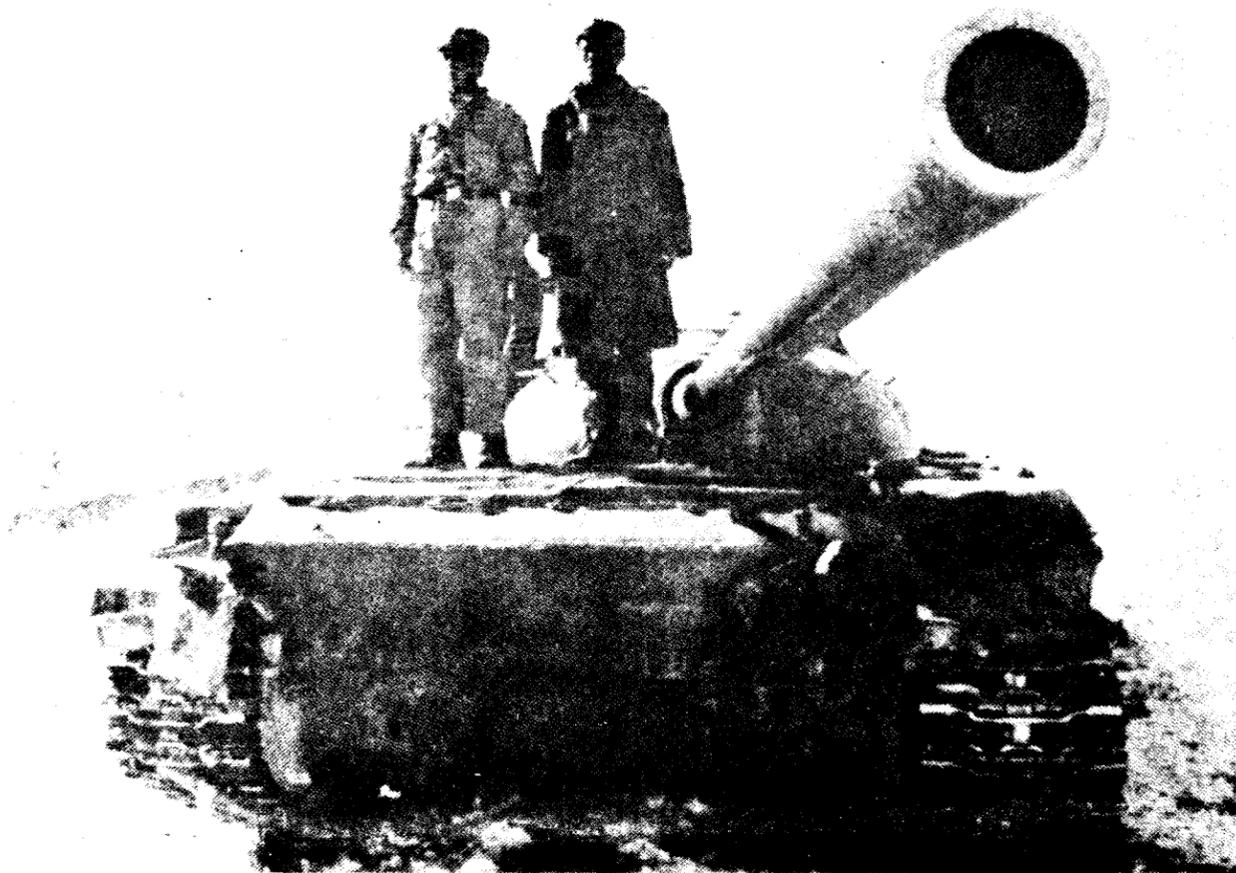
But all this is secondary for Cliff & Co. Worried by the downturn in industrial struggle, lest a whole layer of potential recruits pass them by in favour of left Labourism (and indeed lest its membership begin to bleed away towards the Labour left), the SWP must point to the 'resonance that Bennism has among many thousands of activists, particularly trade union activists' and its support among 'full time officials' ... and capitulate. After all, it's either tail Benn or face 'sectarian irrelevance'. They have no political basis to do otherwise. Indeed the SWP's primary attack on Labourism is the correct but completely insufficient understanding that 'politics' is not the exclusive domain of Parliament.

SWP/Right to Work spokesman John Deason put their strategy at the LCC: 'We need to unite politics and trade unionism. The idea that politics is in Parliament and trade unionism in the branch is fundamentally wrong and weakens the movement.' The conception that Labourite reformism is *defined* by parliamentarism is exploited by the SWP (and implicitly accepted by the rest of the fake-revolutionary left), who foster the illusion that 'politicising the unions' is intrinsically a break towards class-struggle politics.

But this is absurd. Social-democratic politics on the shopfloor or in the streets is no more 'revolutionary' than in Westminster. And Labour in opposition is quite willing to take to the streets as an adjunct to parliamentarism, as in the recent anti-unemployment protests. The Labour Party/TUC's willingness to channel the anger and frustration of the unemployed into such impotent protest has stolen the thunder

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IMG silent on USec 'third camp' line shift Trotskyists say:



Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!

defencists were expelled when they became an obstacle to the IMG's liquidation into Bennite social democracy, as other USec sections today stand poised to liquidate into the parties of Schmidt, Mitterrand et al. But the warning remains for those USec supporters who have not yet grown comfortable with the prospect of 'deep entry' into the Second International: there is no middle ground in the Cold War.

For Trotskyists, support to the Red Army in Afghanistan should be an elementary political reflex. The Soviet army and its left-nationalist PDPA allies are fighting an imperialist-backed counterrevolutionary melange of landlords, money-lenders, tribal chiefs and bandits committed to serfdom, usury, the bride price, the veil and mass illiteracy. US imperialism's exploitation of Afghanistan as a pretext for a renewed Cold War offensive against the USSR posed point blank a defence of the Soviet workers state, which rests on the historic social gains of the October Revolution despite its subsequent Stalinist degeneration. The international Spartacist tendency (iSt) said: Hail Red Army in Afghanistan!

But when the Red Army moved in, the USec pulled out. Having hailed the beleaguered PDPA regime, they denounced the Red Army when it rolled across the border to rescue it from a feudal-reactionary onslaught, or else they opposed it outright, or (like the American SWP) they simply defied credibility by denying that the Soviet intervention was an issue. With every conceivable rationale they closed their eyes to the fact that US imperialism had chosen to make the war in Afghanistan a test of the relationship of class forces and of the balance of military power in the region. But there was no middle ground.

The new position is not a line reversal, but a line *shift* -- carrying to its logical conclusion the capitulation to imperialist anti-Sovietism expressed in the USec's refusal to forthrightly defend and support the Soviet intervention in the first place. First announced in the Swedish KAF's *Internationalen* (18 June), the new line has since been reported in the French edition of *Inprecor* (6 July), which reprints (in typical USec style) majority and minority resolutions, which received respectively 20 and 9 votes, with a number of abstentions. The minority roughly upholds the previous majority position. The only substantial difference between the two is that the majority has found its 'third camp' while the minority has not.

Jack Barnes led the way

The character of the capitulation was manifested in a chemically pure form by Jack Barnes' American SWP, which swung over to a line in favour of Soviet withdrawal almost a year ago. Somewhat surprisingly the shamelessly reformist SWP initially supported the Soviet intervention, but it did not take long to work out that backing the 'Afghan revolution' was not quite the same as backing 'revolutionary Grenada'. The bourgeois liberals and social-democratic trade union bureaucrats whom these 'respectable socialists' seek to ingratiate are all for 'a woman's right to choose' -- except when that right is enforced by Soviet tanks and helicopter gunships! And what would backing the Red Army do to the SWP's 'socialist Watersuit'? Indeed, in his document 'Correcting Some Errors on Afghanistan', Barnes credited the iSt with bringing him to his reformist senses. Having read our article 'Hail Red Army!' it made 'me think about the devastating political logic that could be drawn from some of the assumptions we were starting from' (see 'SWP's About-Face on Afghanistan', *Spartacist* no 31-32, Summer 1981).

With shameless gall, the USec resolution offers up the Kremlin bureaucracy's treacherous policy of 'peaceful coexistence' to excuse its own treachery:

'The military occupation of Afghanistan cannot be supported in the name of defence of the USSR... The politics of the Kremlin past and present towards the worst capitalist regimes and dictatorships on its borders (Daoud's Afghanistan, the Shah's Iran or Turkey) and, in return, the attitude of these latter to the USSR confirms this assessment.' Against such woolly-minded detente *Realpolitik* a Trotskyist opposition in the USSR would far prefer the current Moscow joke that the Red Army is about to withdraw from Afghanistan in two columns -- one through Pakistan, the other through Iran. Only those who share the Kremlin's blind faith in the possibilities of 'peaceful coexistence' with imperialism -- without sitting in the Kremlin hot seat -- could say that the victory of a CIA-backed rightist movement in Afghanistan would pose no threat to the USSR. The *Guardian* (3 August) reports that:

'A year and a half after Soviet troops marched into Afghanistan, the US Central

the USec majority position until recently: virulent condemnation of the Soviet intervention laced with concern for the welfare of the 'Afghan revolution' in the event of Soviet withdrawal. The IMG's youth paper, *Revolution* (February 1980), recognised 'a global conflict between Imperialism and the USSR' in Afghanistan. And the Trotskyist line of *welcoming* the Red Army intervention advanced in a document by Harney ('So you thought defence of the Soviet Union was not a central issue?'), which laid the basis for the CF struggle, garnered one-sixth of the delegate vote at the February 1980 national conference despite the fact that all four competing factions opposed it. But what loomed larger for the IMG majority than formal Trotskyist principles was the Labour NEC's unanimous condemnation of the Soviet intervention and dreams of 'fusion' with Tony Cliff's British Socialist Workers Party (SWP).

No middle ground

'Contrary to the illusions of the so-called "third camp", there is no middle ground: the defeatist position crosses class lines', warned a second document submitted by Harney and seven others ('Afghanistan and the defence of the Trotskyist programme'). 'The growth of Soviet-defeatism in our ranks must be halted and reversed.' It was not halted; rather the Soviet-

Last month we reported that the rotten-bloc United Secretariat (USec) which now and again still mutters something about being 'Trotskyist' adopted an openly 'third camp' position in favour of Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and support to CIA-backed anti-Soviet forces at a meeting of its International Executive Committee in May (see 'USec calls for Soviet defeat', *Spartacist Britain* no 34, July 1981). Afghanistan is hardly a secondary question in international politics. Yet three months after the fact, the USec's British affiliate, the International Marxist Group (IMG), has yet to break a stony silence on the line shift, and many IMG members have come to know of it only via a polemical statement distributed by the expelled Communist Faction (CF), which was forged centrally in a struggle against the IMG's deepening capitulation to anti-Sovietism in the wake of the Soviet intervention.

The IMG has cause to tread softly. When the Afghanistan crisis broke, it threw the IMG into a maelstrom of conflicting appetites, impulses and pressures. There still remain IMG cadres who have not forgotten that they were won to the organisation in counterposition to the Clifflite 'state caps'. The initial 'Soviet troops out' line authored by Tariq ('I remain unrepentant') Ali led to an explosion of furious denunciations in the letters page of *Socialist Challenge*. After two weeks it was altered to what was to be



First women parachutists in Afghan army (above). USec line would return them to the veil. Soviet intervention opens possibility for liberating Afghan women from hideous oppression.



Intelligence Agency is coordinating a complex, far-flung programme, involving five countries and more than \$100 million, to provide the Afghan resistance with the weaponry of modern guerrilla warfare.'

But the USec tries to have it both ways. It argues detente to deny the Soviet Union is threatened and then turns around and blames the Soviet bureaucracy for provoking the imperialists into warlike behaviour:

'The [invasion of Afghanistan] also facilitated the anti-Marxist and anti-communist campaign of the bourgeoisie. It served as a pretext for imperialism to justify its politics of rearmament and to seek to dissipate a mass opposition to military spending. It enabled it to reclaim legitimacy for its interventionist projects in the Middle East, in Iran and in Central America.'

This is the real position of the USec: if only the Soviet bureaucrats would desist from defending their borders against imperialist intrigues, we could go about our 'butter not guns' pacifist campaigns and vicarious support for 'colonial revolutions' in peace -- at least until the first H-bomb fell on Moscow. Are we to presume that the Soviet Union was wrong to send aid to the NLF in Vietnam, that we should have opposed Cuban troops to Angola and that today the Soviet bureaucracy is correct when it refuses to give aid to the left-wing insurgents in El Salvador?

As a fig leaf for its support to the reactionary anti-Soviet jihad, the USec claims opposition to 'undifferentiated support to the "Afghan resistance"'. On the contrary, it has discovered a 'progressive wing' -- in particular the 'Popular Organisation for the Liberation of the Afghan Peoples' and the 'Front of Mojahed Fighters', both creatures of Maoist-oriented groupings:

'These organisations maintain a programme whose social content is at least as advanced as the programme of the PDPA. They could become an active pole of opposition to the integrationist Islamic or pro-imperialist forces.'

Leave aside that these 'socially advanced' organisations were fighting the PDPA regime when it attempted to introduce social reforms well before the Soviet intervention, if the PDPA regime were toppled through Soviet defeat/withdrawal it would necessarily mean the imposition of a pro-imperialist regime of feudal reaction. This is at best a classic 'third camp' position, and as always it is a flimsy cover for support to the camp of reaction. Even the minority resolution ridicules the view that the 'Maoist origin of certain groups' implies 'that their opposition to the regime has a revolutionary orientation'. Peking today is an integral component -- and by far the most trigger-happy -- of the anti-Soviet military alliance (see 'US/China anti-Soviet war axis', this issue). One of the five countries involved in the CIA's 'complex, far-flung programme' is ... China. As the *Guardian* notes:

'The Chinese agreed to permit overflights of their territory for planes carrying arms bound eventually for Afghanistan. The Chinese would also help supply the SAM-7s and RPG antitank rockets. And if the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan were closed, the Chinese would take over the trans-shipment of weapons....'

Fortunately for the Afghan masses, the US and its allies are having little success. Though the USec will take little heart from the news, there is little evidence that the Red Army has run into major difficulties in containing the reactionary insurgency. The *Sunday Times* (26 July)

reported that it is 'very rare to find anyone in Afghanistan who has actually seen a dead Russian soldier'. A recent *TV Eye* programme which featured the first Western newsfilm to come out of Afghanistan since the Soviet intervention eloquently cut through some of the more transparent Cold War lies that come out of Pakistan's Peshawar spy nest under the name of 'military communiques'. The *TV Eye* cameras filmed a Russian convoy peacefully making its way, without need of air cover, at a spot where the insurgents' radio claimed they were inflicting heavy casualties and destroying Soviet tanks! Indeed the only thing that can account for the ridiculously inflated body counts put out by the anti-Soviet rabble is that they are killing each other. The 24 July *Guardian* reported that 'two bands of anti-Marxist rebels' started slaughtering each other when they could not reach agreement on tactics for a joint attack on a Soviet air base. Right on, rebels!

Extend the gains of October to Afghan peoples!

The closest the USec comes to a 'Marxist' justification for its position is to invent the 'principle' of inviolability of 'political sovereignty'. Not only did Trotsky reject this when the revolutionary Red Army marched successfully on Georgia and unsuccessfully on Warsaw, he also rejected it for the Red Army of Stalin.

IMG 'class struggle left wing' A vulgar betrayal

On Wednesday, 8 July, a mass meeting of the Rover Solihull SD1 workforce voted 2-to-1 against a shop stewards' motion to prevent the movement of machinery to the Cowley plant in Oxford. Two months after the 12 May closure announcement by Leyland management -- part of the latest phase of Michael Edwardes' scandalously misnamed 'recovery plan' which has already destroyed over 60,000 jobs -- the death knell was sounded on yet another BL plant, on yet another 2000 jobs in the Midlands. For months militants in the plant, and the neighbouring Four-by-Four plant, had argued for occupation. Supporters of the Spartacist League (SL), in particular, had emphasised the necessity of a dramatic, militant stand which could mobilise not only the entire BL workforce, but galvanise support throughout the British proletariat (see *Spartacist Britain* no 34, July 1981). What better place to trigger a fight against the jobs slaughter than in this once militant combine reduced to cap-in-hand beggary? But the weight of treachery, the disorientation of misleadership hung too heavily on the SD1 workers. Pat Hickey, SD1 deputy convenor and *Socialist Challenge* supporter recorded the final decision:

"The recommendation is defeated; the plant will close." I add, although I had promised myself I would not, "You can now join the dole queue. I hope you enjoy it." (*Socialist Challenge*, 15 July)

He 'promised' himself he wouldn't say it! But you couldn't resist, could you, Brother Hickey? While they stand on the dole queues waiting for the miserly payments which will keep their families ever one step removed from starvation, they will be able to remember that the

When some elements in and around the international Left Opposition, notably the French syndicalist Robert Louzon, supported Chiang Kai-shek's demand that Moscow give up the Chinese Eastern Railroad in 1929 in the name of national self-determination, Trotsky replied:

'The highest duty of the proletarian revolution, it appears, is to carefully dip its banners before national frontiers. Herein, according to Louzon, is the gist of Lenin's anti-imperialist policy! One blushes with shame to read this philosophy of "revolution in one country." The Red Army halted at the frontier of China because it was not strong enough to cross this frontier and meet the inescapable onslaught of Japanese imperialism. If the Red Army were strong enough to assume such an offensive, it would have been duty-bound to launch it.' ('Defence of the Soviet Republic and the Opposition', *Writings* 1929)

Even more so is this the case in a country as backward as Afghanistan, where the benefits of the socialist revolution -- and for that matter, the bourgeois-democratic revolution -- can only be introduced with the aid of the Soviet proletarian dictatorship and its armed forces. That is why Trotsky wrote in *The Revolution Betrayed* that 'the Soviet bureaucracy still carries out a certain part of the progressive work':

'This is especially true of the backward nationalities of the Union.... The bureaucracy is laying down a bridge for them to the elementary benefits of bourgeois, and in part even pre-bourgeois culture.'

And that is why the iSt today raises the slogan: Extend the gains of October to the Afghan peoples!

US SWP calls on Soviet Union to disarm

Barnes (and advocates of a 'troops out' line inside the IMG) also claimed an 'orthodox' precedent for his position in a 1946 Fourth International resolution calling for the withdrawal of Soviet troops from East Europe. It was one thing for the Trotskyists in 1946-47, severely weakened by the loss of cadre in the war, to be disoriented by the extension of the Soviet military power. They saw imminent proletarian revolutions sweeping across Europe destroying both capitalist-imperialism and the Stalinist bureaucracy. Thus they believed that the Red Army in East Europe, like the Stalinist CPs in West Europe, could only play a counterrevolutionary role in the face of European-wide proletarian revolution. As the ensuing Cold War

continued on page 6

man who sold them out; who for months argued against every single proposal for militant action, who counselled patience in the face of management provocation, who lobbied Tory councillors while workers pleaded with him to organise an occupation, also had the evident capacity to twist the knife he had thrust into their backs.

He didn't do it all by himself, of course. He had the assistance of his convenor, Mick Clarke, and the TGWU tops who, Hickey whines, did not offer a 'clear lead'. It's true, they didn't -- from the day Derek Robinson got victimised, through to the imposition of Edwardes' redundancy plan and last year's strike betrayal, the union tops sold BL workers down the river at every available opportunity. No surprise. They are reformists, committed lieutenants of the capitalist class within the labour movement. Hickey is supposed to be a 'revolutionary socialist' a supporter of the so-called International Marxist Group (IMG), a 'Trotskyist'. *Socialist Challenge* hailed his 'resistance' week after week. Where was his 'clear lead'? He led the workers only to the slaughter. And in the time-worn tradition of class traitors, he turned around and blamed the men he was elected to lead for his cowardice. With a less 'civilised' workforce, he would have been lucky to have walked out on his own two legs. A few might well have remembered that a year ago this 'militant' distinguished himself by arrogantly prancing across the picket lines of Four-by-Four workers who were prepared to fight.

Having stabbed and spat upon his men, then, Hickey tells us, he resigned as deputy convenor,

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Afghanistan...

(Continued from page 5)

demonstrated, the 1945-47 period was but a respite in which the victorious 'democratic' imperialists under US leadership rebuilt their forces for new assaults against the USSR -- facilitated in no small measure not by Stalin's march westward, but by his assistance in the reconstruction of capitalism in Western Europe. To call for Red Army withdrawal from East Europe in this situation was objectively tantamount to calling for the disarmament of the USSR.

And today that is precisely what the USec does call for -- from Barnes' open criminal appeal for unilateral Soviet disarmament (calling on Brezhnev to 'announce that the USSR is destroying a big part of its nuclear arsenal') to the furore against the 'workers bomb' in the IMG last year to leading IMGer Brian Grogan's call for Soviet arms reduction. When US imperialism, playing for time while furiously building up its anti-Soviet arsenal, was prepared to talk 'détente', these charlatans denied that defence of the Soviet Union was an issue. Today they call on the Soviet bureaucracy to forsake any defence in order to appease the imperialist warmongers. And in order to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with 'NATO socialists' like Benn and Mitterrand, they will find themselves increasingly, and of necessity, disowning struggles against imperialist exploitation and oppression, as they today repudiate the possibility for social emancipation for the Afghan peoples. When a Trotskyist party leads the Soviet workers in a political revolution to sweep out the bureaucracy, it will be for the purpose of restoring the revolutionary-internationalist policy which guided Trotsky's Red Army, not for further emasculating the Soviet power. Hail Red Army in Afghanistan! Forward to the rebirth of the Fourth International! ■

Bennites...

(Continued from page 3)

from the SWP's own oft-repeated and equally impotent Right to Work marches.

The People's March in particular illustrated how slim are the political differences that separate the SWP from the Labourites. The bureaucracy were able to congratulate themselves on a successful, more-or-less apolitical popular-frontist campaign which covered for their complete failure to mobilise the class against the Tory (not to mention past Labour) onslaught on workers' jobs and conditions. But the only substantial criticism *Socialist Worker* had was that there should be more of the same! Thus the Right to Work march to the Tory conference in Blackpool is presented as a continuation of the People's March initiative; like all such SWP marches it dovetails neatly with Labourism.

A June *Socialist Review* editorial summed up the SWP's current position:

'We urge the Labour left to help us initiate joint action against redundancies, the six per cent limit, the cuts, the decline of trade union membership and the dangers of working-class demoralisation.'

This is what the SWP is reduced to today. With Labour on the streets, with the ANL no longer drawing the crowds, and with other 'movements' like the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament increasingly under Labour's sway as well, they can only come up with the most feeble mimicry of, and overtures to, the Labour left.

The Labour Party, left as much as right, is the biggest political obstacle for the workers of this country in the struggle for proletarian power. Bennery today occupies political centre stage in the minds of many militant workers -- ground down by capitalist attacks and decay, betrayed by their misleaders, perceiving no genuinely revolutionary alternative -- as a hideously pale reflection of the class struggle. With its undignified prostration before the new Labour left, the SWP once again demonstrates that it too, in its own smaller way, is an obstacle to the building of a revolutionary party and the emancipation of the working class. ■

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Prisoners...

(Continued from page 1)

collapse and the Irish majority would be in a position to assert itself.' (*Socialist Challenge*, 9 July)

The existence of the Orange state is necessarily oppressive of the Catholic minority. But Northern Ireland is not a nationally homogeneous area seeking liberation from imperialism. The Workers Power (WP) group and its sister Irish Workers Group (IWG) put forward the position that it is even more explicitly than the IMG, and make it a central foundation of their proto-Stalinist strategy of an 'anti-imperialist united front'. This is the WP/IWG rationale in calling for



H Block protest in South.

votes to Republican candidates, as they did when Bobby Sands stood in Fermanagh. But far from representing a stand against imperialism, let alone a stand of class against class, such a vote represents political support to petty-bourgeois Republican nationalism -- and in the case of communally divided Northern Ireland, a vote of Catholic against Protestant!

Self-determination for the Irish people as a whole?

Intrinsic in this position is the call raised by the IMG, WP/IWG et al for 'self-determination of the Irish people as a whole'. But there is no such thing as the 'Irish people as a whole'! The Protestants constitute two-thirds of the population in the North and a quarter of the whole island and are a distinct community. The 1974 Ulster Workers Council strike, which smashed the 'power-sharing' schemes of Westminster, was only the most graphic example of the Protestants' determination to resist anything seen as even a step towards forcible incorporation into the Irish Catholic state. Northern Ireland is a case of interpenetrated peoples, like Cyprus or Lebanon, where the will of the Protestant community must be taken into account in any genuinely democratic solution. Otherwise the likely alternative is the inter-communal civil war that tore Cyprus and the Lebanon apart.

The IMG's seemingly innocuous call for 'the majority asserting itself' is nothing but a veiled call for genocide and forced population transfers. All that is uncertain is who the main victims will be. With 100,000 legal guns in the North, most of them owned by the Protestant community, any attempt by the oppressed Catholics of the North to 'assert themselves', even with southern aid, could well be drowned in blood. As the Spartacist tendency noted in its major document on the Irish question, 'Theses on Ireland', 'the social organisation, weaponry, military expertise and alliances of the Protestants, make a "Zionist" solution entirely conceivable' (*Spartacist* no 24, Autumn 1977).

And the closer the Republicans come to uniting the Catholic nation into one state, the harder the Loyalists will fight back. Today, Ian Paisley sees leading that fight as his destiny. Indeed, the escalating communal polarisation in the North is ample testimony to that, as well as underscoring the ludicrous character of talking

about an 'Irish people as a whole'. Last May's local elections swept Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party into well-nigh unchallenged leadership of the Loyalist camp. Amid growing uncertainty about the intention of Westminster towards the long-term status of the Orange state, and against the growing strength of the Provisional IRA, Paisley recalls the traditions of Sir Edward Carson's armed resistance to the 1912 Home Rule Bill -- and demonstrates in the process that 'Loyalists' have interests divergent from those of their British imperialist allies.

To the mass of Protestants this reactionary bigot looks like the only promise of salvation from 'Papist' rule. On 3 July the Irish National Liberation Army fired at the police car taking Paisley home from BBC studios in Belfast. And Paisley's explanation of the assassination attempt was all too cogent and true:

'I think probably what has happened is that the republicans realize that I am in a position, because of being elected leader of the Ulster people, to mobilize men -- men who will defend themselves and their families. The fact that they felt they must attack me and try and kill me shows that I am being effective.' (*Times*, 4 July)

And at a 1000-strong rally at Sixmilecross on 2 July, Paisley raised the spectre of pogroms and inter-communal slaughter that haunts the North: 'Shall we allow ourselves to be murdered or shall we go out and kill the killers?'

The palpable threat of Loyalist terror and inter-communal slaughter, and the Republican strategy which consists not only of defensible military acts against imperialism, but also allows for (and has at times carried out) indiscriminate terror against Protestants, sharply underscores the demand for integrated, anti-sectarian workers militias to combat Orange and Green terror and imperialist rampage. The actual arming of the workers is hardly the problem in the North. What is key is providing such militias with a broad and strong programmatic basis, fundamentally requiring the existence of an authoritative revolutionary cadre.

The national question and the class question

Paisley's 'kill the killer' rhetoric should put paid to hare-brained ideas that the Protestant workers can be written off without risk of a genocidal bloodbath. One of the central 'theoretical' rationalisations for this by ostensible Marxists is that these workers represent a 'labour aristocracy' based on the marginal privileges they 'enjoy'. Again WP expresses it most explicitly:

'The way in which the Protestant working class will be mobilised will be by showing them that their privileges are worthless in comparison with the possibility of a socialist united Ireland. To come near to achieving that the Orange state will have to be smashed first, with the help of the protestant workers if possible, against them if necessary.' (*Workers Power*, September 1980)

The WP schema falls into a classical theory of stages: first bourgeois unification through smashing the Orange state, then socialism. WP's strategy is explicitly based on the hope that 'the Green Tories in the south would be forced ... to render assistance' in bringing such a unification about. But even if it were genuinely a perspective for a 32-county united workers republic it would still break apart on the shoals of conflicting communal claims. Possibly the Ulster Protestant workers can be won to the programme of a unified Irish workers state -- which would necessarily have a secular character -- but such a workers state cannot be created through the forced incorporation of the Protestant community.

Communists would have opposed the 1921 imperialist partition in favour of seeking to cement revolutionary unity in the struggle for independence, but we are not nationalist irredentists. As we explained in 'Theses on Ireland':

'We struggle for an Irish workers republic as part of a socialist federation of the British Isles. While the establishment of a united workers state of the whole island may be preferable, the above demand is algebraic, leaving open the question of where the Protestants fall. This recognises that the nature of the Protestant community has not yet been determined in history.... Placing the demand in the context of a socialist federation has the additional advantage of highlighting the essential relationship of the

Theses on Ireland

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proletarian revolution in the whole area and the virtual impossibility of the resolution of the Irish question on a working-class basis outside this framework. This, and the strong representation of Irish workers in the working class in Britain, points to the demand for a British Isles-wide trade-union federation as a method of promoting joint struggle and cutting across the divisions in the working class in Ireland.'

Even in the absence of national/communal barriers, workers are divided by sectional interests which can only betray the struggle for revolutionary programme. And the lack of such a programme is what compels the fake lefts to tail Republicanism or counterpose 'anti-nationalist' pro-imperialist economism. Those who adapt to reformist/nationalist consciousness among the workforce today will find themselves counterposed to class unity on the morrow. Just as the Orange Order deliberately poisoned the possibility of class unity in the Belfast shipyards in 1919, so the Republicans actively sought to disrupt it when it began to bloom during the unemployed workers movement in the early thirties. In Cyprus -- where the terms of oppression have been reversed four times between the interpenetrated Greek and Turkish communities in several centuries -- there was one such example in 1974. When a reactionary Greek Cypriot coup attempt endangered the lives of Greek leftists, Turks came to their assistance. Unlike the Stalinists who had been compromised by their consistent support to Greek communalism, a revolutionary party could have intersected this opportunity to lead a combined working class response to the reactionary threat which could have gone on to smash the state.

The instances of class unity -- though infrequent in a situation poisoned by sectarian hatreds -- indicate that the opportunity can arise for a Leninist vanguard organisation, even if hitherto isolated and small, to intervene with a programme to alter the course of the conflict towards a class determination and proletarian revolution. Today Republican prisoners demonstrate their self-sacrifice and commitment by their readiness to die an agonising death. But Trotskyists look forward to the day when the martyrs are avenged by the establishment of proletarian dictatorship throughout the British Isles. Then it will be fitting to recall the appeal made by the Northern Region Congress of Soviets, on the eve of the Russian October Revolution, to the political prisoners held in the Crosses prison in Petrograd: 'Halt your hunger strike and marshal your strength because the hour of your liberation is close at hand.'

Betrayal...

(Continued from page 5)

'because I can't be part of implementing the closure agreement' -- ever the moral gentleman! But just in case anyone was worried he would be 'resigning from the labour movement', Hickey reassures us:

'I was more determined than ever to take up the fight in the TGWU on the question of the bloc (sic) vote and the deputy leadership.' That sums up the alternatives pretty succinctly: revolutionary class struggle or Labourite reformism. A proletariat which finds itself suffocating in the faces of a moribund capitalism is offered the perspective of Tony Benn's social-democratic deodorant. And in the unions Hickey has twice demonstrated the end logic of the IMG's search for a 'class struggle left wing' counterposed to the hard fight for a Trotskyist programme: scabbing and betrayal. So the gentle rap on the knuckles for Hickey's 'softly, softly approach' by the Labour-loyal *Socialist Organiser* (30 July) does not cut much ice. They can think of no greater glory than to boost Benn all the way into Downing Street. Nor

should it be forgotten that the Socialist Organiser Alliance includes one Alan Thornett, the fake-Trotskyist Cowley shop steward who has his own history of scabbing and has been happily co-existing with Hickey in the misnamed 'Leyland Action Committee'.

So patently treacherous was Hickey's role in defusing any struggle at SDI that, as he recorded in the next-to-last instalment of his 'diary of resistance' (sic): 'Rumours start that the convenor, Mick Clarke, and I have been offered full-time jobs with the TGWU' (*Socialist Challenge*, 9 July). Don't worry, Pat, you're probably not good enough for Moss Evans -- but don't hang around the picket lines when your former workmates do start fighting. ■

US/China...

(Continued from page 8)

overall anti-Soviet containment strategy. Reagan/Haig are looking to demonstrate American military power. The targets are Afghanistan, Vietnam, El Salvador, and perhaps Angola/Namibia.

So when Haig went from Peking to a meeting of ASEAN in Manila it was Vietnam in his gunsights. A State Department official said the US 'will seek, if we can, to find ways to increase the political, economic, and yes, military pressure on Vietnam' (*New York Times*, 18 June). Given the recent rise of attacks against the Vietnamese on their borders, the US/China war axis may be planning another attempt at a 'bloody lesson'.

The 1979 invasion of Vietnam by China should have been a watershed for Maoists who had been born into political life as supporters of the Viet Cong against US imperialism. But those pseudo-leftists who didn't back China outright wailed over the spectacle of two 'socialist countries' at war with each other. At the time the Spartacist League emphasised that China was acting de facto with US complicity, demanding 'China Don't Be Cat's Paw for US Imperialism', and calling on the Soviet Union to honor its treaty with Vietnam. Now the overt US/China alliance has confirmed that analysis. Thus a future attempt to 'teach Vietnam a bloody lesson' will more likely be a combined imperialist and Chinese attack on a deformed workers state, part of a wider US military thrust against the Soviet Union.

If Vietnam is the immediate target, it is Poland which casts the darkest shadow over the China arms deal. The precise military results for China cannot be known until the weapons are actually in Peking's hands. Thus more than one commentator has treated the announcement as a mystery while some speculate that it might be a mistake which could get Haig into trouble with the White House. But the announcement was intended as a *political* provocation precisely calculated and of global proportion.

Consider the timing and effect of the announcement. Since April when Caspar Weinberger spoke about the 'linkage' between China arms sales and a possible Russian invasion of Poland, US liberals have talked about holding up arms to China as a 'deterrent' and 'bargaining chip' with the Soviets. That is why Vance is screaming about the China arms deal as playing all the US' China high cards in 'no trump'. He means that now the US has nothing more to offer the Soviets in the way of a deal.

But he mistakes the Reagan purpose completely, which is not to deter the Russians, but to *provoke them*. The announcement is thus finely tuned and calculated to urge the Russians toward an invasion of Poland. Reagan and Haig want nothing more than to see Russian tanks roll into Warsaw and Gdansk. They want to see the Russians dragged into a massive bloodbath in Poland while their troops are tied down at the Chinese border. So go ahead, says Reagan. There is no SALT. No bargains over Chinese guns. Nothing.

Reagan's goading of Russia over China is part of a strategy of global confrontation. He is now talking openly of the 'end' of Communism, while pushing for nuclear end-game. Last week, against the background of the China arms deal, multi-million-dollar weapons packages for Pakistan ('non-proliferation' be damned), the Rapid Deployment Force, the build-up of strategic and conventional forces in Europe and a projected trillion-dollar war budget, Reagan made the general case. 'Communism', he said, is an 'aberration ... not a normal way of living for human beings'. We are seeing 'the beginning of the end' (*Washington Post*, 19 June).

While the talks were going on in China, Reagan spoke of Poland as the 'first beginning cracks' in Soviet domination of Eastern Europe. The comment was supposed to be 'off the cuff', but it was quite calculated. As bourgeois Russia-expert Hedrick Smith wrote in the *New York Times* (18 June): 'That kind of remark from an American official is likely to harden the Kremlin's resolve to curb the movement for

liberalisation in Poland and possibly push ahead with military intervention despite the upheaval that is likely to ensue.' When liberals like Cyrus Vance wail that Reagan has misplayed his foreign policy hand, that he has too early and too provocatively 'played the China card', they assume that he is engaged in a game of diplomatic pressure tactics. In fact it is a big step toward war.

Defend the Soviet Union!

Where does the US anti-Communist war strategy leave its 'Chicom' ally? 'You can't say that China will be Marxist forever', an American official recently told nervous Southeast Asian ministers at Manila. Indeed, any 'security' China imagines it can purchase with a US military alliance will backfire. American imperialism is hostile to the expropriation of capitalism *everywhere*. The Reagan government particularly is anxious to see the eventual restoration of capitalism in China. And their handling of the issue of Taiwan is the tip-off.

The 'sellout of Taiwan' has long been a hot issue between US bourgeois liberals and the far right. So far the Reagan administration, sensitive to the Taiwan issue with its natural constituency, and Deng & Co who for internal political reasons cannot appear to be 'soft on Taiwan' have submerged the issue of Taiwan to their overriding anti-Sovietism. Despite wrangling among US liberals and conservatives, the anti-Soviet war drive is a bipartisan consensus in the bourgeoisie. The US/China axis was developed steadily from Nixon/Kissinger through Carter/Brzezinski to Reagan/Haig.

This administration remembers the maps from the 1950s with rings of containment around the USSR and they are out to make it real. From Japan, through Asia and the Middle East and into Europe, Reagan is surrounding Russia with fire-power meant to contain, isolate and ultimately destroy the USSR. In this conflict there can be no neutrals. Trotskyists unconditionally defend against imperialism the Soviet bureaucratically degenerated workers state and the remaining social/economic conquests of the October Revolution!

In 1969, the SL noted the 'objective possibility -- given the tremendous industrial and military capacity of the Soviet Union -- of a US deal with China' ('Development and Tactics of the Spartacist League'). All of the Stalinist bureaucracies, whether Russian, Chinese -- Mao or Deng -- or Vietnamese share the anti-international conception of 'socialism in one country'. In its name they stab one another in the back seeking deals with imperialism for illusory national 'advantages'. The Russian Stalinist bureaucracy is one of the most conciliatory outfits imaginable. But there are limits, as Hitler found out.

Socialist revolution in the capitalist West is indispensable in order to destroy imperialist militarism -- and to sweep away the Haigs, Weinbergers and Reagans who would incinerate the world in their anti-Soviet crusade. And in the degenerated/deformed workers states not simply economic advancement but survival itself demands that the workers, led by a Trotskyist vanguard party, oust the Stalinist betrayers who bind them to the class enemy. As the US/China war axis threatens to turn the Cold War nuclear hot, one had better believe that the very existence of the planet depends on this. ■



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Defend Vietnam and the Soviet Union!

US/China anti-Soviet war axis



General Haig's announcement at the end of his China trip in June that the US will arm Peking with 'lethal weapons' is the most dangerous provocation against the USSR since this most provocative Reagan regime took office six months ago. It is not merely another finesse of 'China card' diplomacy. The deepening US/China alliance has now become an openly declared anti-Soviet military axis -- a deal for action against the Soviets and to 'increase the political, economic, and, yes, military pressures on Vietnam' (*New York Times*, 18 June). Like the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, now recognised as the very first shots of World War II, the US/China arms deal may well be the direct prelude to WWIII.

Joint American/Chinese military support to anti-Russian Afghans and anti-Vietnamese Cambodians is envisioned. The Chinese bless the Americans to deepen their military commitment in El Salvador and against Nicaragua and Cuba. Surely an attempted military 'roll-back' in Angola and Namibia, to be fronted by South

tary can absorb and pay for in the immediate future is not now known. But next month, their generals will be taking the short march to the Pentagon with a considerable shopping list.

Even Cyrus Vance, Carter's hapless Secretary of State, called the deal 'needlessly provocative and smack[ing] of bear-baiting' (*New York Times*, 24 June). But the baited Russian bear responded with deliberately measured language in a *Pravda* article under official signature, calling the arms agreement 'highly dangerous', and 'an escalation of reckless policy' (*New York Times*, 28 June). The Russians have warned many times of the consequences of the US arming China with strategic weapons. And [the following] week again Russia warned simply and without bluster that 'nobody should doubt that the Soviet people, who have good nerves and powerful means of curbing aggression, will not yield to provocations and will be able to stand up for themselves, to defend the interests of their friends and allies'.

The Russian perception of the US/China axis is well known. Few things this side of an actual US military adventure against the Soviet Union, Cuba or the Eastern bloc could be as provocative as the arming of China. The view from the Kremlin is that China is even more likely than the US to squeeze the nuclear trigger in a bout of fanatical anti-Soviet frenzy and miscalculated geo-political strategy. And the Soviets may well be right. It is more than their traditional fear of encirclement by hostile powers that accounts for their obsession with China. Mao and his heirs have seemed quite crazed in their view of nuclear war. The most recent *Pravda* article, for instance, notes that 'Peking has its own interests to pursue, namely to set the United States and the Soviet Union against each other so as to be able to dominate the world after a nuclear conflict'. And this view of China is not new. Khrushchev recalled a conversation with Mao Tse-tung as they sunbathed at poolside in Peking in 1954:

'Mao replied by trying to assure me that the Atomic bomb was a paper tiger! "Listen Comrade Khrushchev," he said. "All you have to do is provoke the Americans into military action and I'll give you as many military divisions as you need to crush them -- a hundred, two hundred, one thousand divisions." I tried to explain to him that one or two missiles could turn all the divisions in China to dust. But he wouldn't even listen. And obviously regarded me as a coward.' (*Khrushchev Remembers*, 1970)

The US/China war axis is certainly a sinister and strangely complementary affair. Reagan and Haig dream of being the victorious survivors of a nuclear war against Russia due to high-tech 'Star Wars' weapons superiority, while their Russian-hating allies in Peking nurture survival fantasies based on technological underdevelopment -- sheer numbers.



Haig and Deng seal anti-Soviet military alliance in big step towards World War III.

It was Carter and Brzezinski who launched the present thrust toward war with the Soviets, and Reagan has escalated it dangerously. There are some things the Russians cannot abide, and Reagan knows it. When Harold Brown, Carter's defense secretary, went to China to point the way toward overt military collaboration, he wrote:

'It is simply too dangerous for the Russians if the US doomsday machinery is placed in the hands of the Chinese. For the Russians playing the China card is no diplomatic game; it is a matter of life and death.' ('Russians Fed Up', *Workers Vanguard* no 249, 8 February 1980)

For the Russians, taking out the Chinese strategic weapons is not at all unthinkable. Last January, Leonid Brezhnev pounded a desk in Paris and laid out the Chinese tripwire for World War III. He was quoted by the president of the French national assembly as saying:

'Believe me, after the destruction of Chinese nuclear sites by our missiles, there won't be much time for the Americans to choose between the defense of their Chinese allies and peaceful co-existence with us.' (*New York Times*, 30 January 1980)

Vietnam, Poland ... the world

When China gets the guns, China intends to use them. As Haig and the Peking leaders exchanged smiles, toasts and condemnations of the 'main enemy', Soviet 'expansionism', they also agreed on the regional 'danger'. Russia's ally Vietnam is the more immediate target in the global war against 'Soviet hegemonism'. The US imperialists long to punish Vietnam not only because of the Vietnamese military victory -- historic evidence of US decline -- but also because an attack on Vietnam fits into Reagan's

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Africa, is foreseen. But the one-family-run Saudi Arabia and the hated Zia of Pakistan are less than slender reeds. And as for Begin's Israel: whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad. Considerable arm-twisting of West European allies and increasingly of an uneasy Japan are also in the cards if an effective Chinese/American bloc is to be consummated -- at a cost of hundreds of billions of dollars from an economically weakened United States. And for what? It's a lot easier to hunt down and forcibly abort black welfare mothers ('Right to Life' not withstanding) than to try the same on the Red Army.

Now Haig shouts in the face of the Soviets that two years ago -- when Washington lost its 'listening stations' in Iran with the mullah victory over the US-backed shah -- the US built a super spy station embedded in the Sinkiang mountains near the Soviet border. The Chinese spy station is the one place where US imperialism can monitor Soviet missile tests from launch through flight over Siberia to dispersion of warheads. Together the Chinese Stalinists and their CIA 'advisers' gather the most sensitive military intelligence to use against the Russians: missile range, accuracy, payload, communications guidance.

The shift to an announced military alliance opens the way for Peking to modernize its arsenal with US guidance systems for strategic weapons, anti-tank missiles, fighter planes, a delivery system for its primitive nuclear weapons and every kind of combat hardware. Just how much of this war machinery the Chinese mili-